



City of Cambridge Police Department

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Robert C. Haas
Police Commissioner

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

August 13, 2012

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City Manager

Re: Discussion on Violence and the Youth Perspective

Sir:

On Monday, August 6, 2012, the Cambridge Police Department hosted a discussion on violence and the Cambridge youths' perspective. The purpose of this discussion was to gain youth perspective and assess the City of Cambridge's reaction to the Willow Street shooting and evaluate whether a youth forum is needed, in response to the City Council Order #1, dated June 11, 2012.

The discussion took place with youth from the Youth Police Academy sponsored by the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program, Cambridge Community Safety Audit participants, and the City Peace group sponsored by the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program from the Moore Youth Center. The discussion was facilitated by Deputy Superintendent Christine Elow, Officer Michael Daniliuk, Brian Corr of the Peace Commission, Kwame Dance, DHSP and I. The discussion was observed by Lieutenant Leonard DiPietro, Officer Oswaldo Ortiz, Officer Christine Levesque, and Officer Buckowe Yam.

Under the direction of Kwame Dance, the youth participated in an activity to facilitate the discussion on violence within the City of Cambridge. Many of the youth indicated that after the Willow Street shooting they were fearful that there would be revenge shootings and the summer would be a violent one. They expressed their relief that retaliation violence did not occur and noted the increased police presence in their neighborhoods.

When asked if they felt safe in the City of Cambridge, not a single youth reported feeling unsafe. However, some youths did report being conflicted in how to answer the question and classified themselves as "in the middle", citing the frequent disagreements between certain neighborhoods within the City.

During the discussion, only one youth reported feeling that the City of Cambridge had not done enough to address the shooting that occurred this summer, citing the fact that the defendant has not been caught and her feeling that the shooting has been forgotten. I spoke directly to the group regarding this matter and explained the complexities involving an investigation of this nature. After an explanation as to the inability to discuss an ongoing case, she seemed to be more content. In addition, I plan on meeting with

District Attorney Gerry Leone to discuss improving our communication with the community in regards to ongoing investigations. It is my hope that we can continue dialogue with the community to assure them that we are still working towards resolution of the investigation.

The participants in the discussion were presented with a detailed list of all the activities that occurred in the City as a response to the Willow Street shooting. When asked if they felt the City of Cambridge had done enough to address the shooting, the majority classified themselves as “in the middle”, citing that they had not heard of most of the listed items. This revelation led to a discussion about how the youth feel the City of Cambridge does not adequately inform them of activities that are occurring throughout the City. While acknowledging it is harder to distribute information to them during the summer, the youths agreed they frequently utilize social media and could often be reached that way. Several of the youths stated they would be willing to help the City spread messages to other youths.

It was disconcerting that many of the youths reported they felt they were unable to have an impact on the violence in the City and that neighborhood disagreements were unavoidable. Many reported that the disagreements were so deep rooted and the participants in the disagreements were so passionate that they would never change. I believe that we can be instrumental in helping young people realize just how powerful they are when it comes to stopping violence, influencing friends, and being the voice of reason when such a void exists. Recently, I had the opportunity of listening to a presentation on the **Green Dot initiative**. The Green Dot initiative offers a comprehensive approach to violence prevention which capitalizes on the power of peer and cultural influences. I am interested in seeing if there is interest to put together an interdisciplinary team to further develop this concept in the City of Cambridge, and thus help the young people of Cambridge realize their true potential in ending violence in the City. For more information, please visit their website at http://www.livethegreendot.com/staff_dorothy.html.

In addition to the Discussion of Violence and the Youth Perspective held at the Police Department, the City Peace youth, with the support of Kwame Dance and the Mayor’s Summer Youth Employment Program, held a pro-peace event, **Reach for PEACE Basketball Tournament** on Saturday July 28, 2012 at Sennott Park and the Area IV Youth Center. The tournament promoted equality and community everywhere, through entertainment and peace activities. In partnership with the Mayor’s Summer Youth Employment Program (MSYEP), the City Peace program helped to increase peace awareness in Cambridge through a peace fair and basketball tournament. The peace fair provided opportunities for the 300 plus Cambridge teens who attended, to gather information on peace promotion initiatives around the city, and facts and statistics related to promoting awareness. The youths involved in the City Peace program have worked throughout the summer to promote peace among their peers. Enclosed is a description of their event held on July 28th, the Reach for PEACE Basketball Tournament.

Lastly, the department in collaboration with the Department of Human Services Youth Programs (DHSP) ran the annual Night Games Basketball League at the Gately Youth Center. As a new component of this program, Tyrell Dortch of the Frisoli Youth Center and Officer Daniliuk facilitated a men’s group discussion that focused on violence prevention and the need for unity within the neighborhoods. During these sessions, there was discussion on how to bring neighborhoods together, making better choices for life success and hearing stories from a victim of a shooting. This was an impromptu discussion that involved young men ages 14-19. In addition, Dr. Jamie Barrett, Cambridge Health Alliance and Safety Net Collaborative partner alongside Kwame Dance and Officer Daniliuk facilitated a program called **“Fight Navigator”**. The workshop focuses on how to provide a practical framework for supportive adults to help teen boys navigate situations where there is pressure to fight. We anticipate that our Youth

Resource Officers will be trained and others in this curriculum to assist youth in violence prevention in the upcoming weeks.

The department will continue to work with our community partners to support youth in the community and foster building relationships and ideas to create a safe community for all. It is my hope that these discussions with youth and support for young people will continue to grow as we work with all our community partners, employees and parents who will reach out to one another when they see a young person in need of assistance or direction as we continue to build a community of trust.

Please let me know if you require any additional assistance. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert C. Haas".

Robert C. Haas
Police Commissioner

Enclosure

Cc: Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager
Brian Corr, Peace Commission

RCH/mm

August 2, 2012

TO: Ellen Semonoff
FROM: Robert Lightbody
RE: City Peace

Below is a description of the event that was held by the teens in the City Peace program:

The City Peace program is operated by the Cambridge Youth Programs, out of the Moore Youth Center, it is a six-week internship program for Cambridge youth, ages 14-18 years old, that provides an opportunity for youth to learn about peace promotion, leadership, mediation, community issues, facilitation, and conflict resolution. Program participants create legacy projects that speak to peace promotion and violence prevention in Cambridge.

The goals of the program aim to create youth-led opportunities for young people to safely mediate conflicts and learn new skills to resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner. The program provides a “safe-zone” for youth from different neighborhoods of Cambridge to work together, breaking down perceived and/or existing barriers, facilitating a culture of mutual respect and “nonjudgmental attitude.”

At the core, City Peace’s creates the medium by which the teens of Cambridge are able dream and develop peaceful opportunities for their peers and the community at-large. Through events and thought provoking activities, the young people interact with a diverse cross section of peers and members of the Cambridge Community. The youth develop ways to work with the greater community to inform their process; as well as, become resources to their peers and others. In short, City Peace’s create opportunities for young people to voice their opinion.

As the teens started their work in City Peace this summer, they were well aware of the tragedy that took place on Willow Street in Cambridge. Under the leadership of Kwame Dance, the Moore Youth Center’s Teen Program Director, the teens set out to create a project that would speak to the incident that occurred. Initially, the teens explored creating an event about the violence in Cambridge, but after deeper exploration, conversations among their peers, they arrived at what they thought would better serve themselves, their peers, and the Cambridge community. They decided that the promotion of peace among their peer would have a strong legacy impact.

Thus, July 28, 2012 in Sennott Park and the Area IV Youth Center, City Peace held the Reach for PEACE Basketball Tournament that promoted equality and community everywhere, through entertainment and peace activities. In partnership with the Mayor’s Summer Youth Employment Program (MSYEP), the City Peace program help to increase peace awareness in Cambridge through a peace fair and basketball tournament. The event was divided into two components: The peace fair and a basketball tournament. The peace fair provided opportunities for the 300

plus Cambridge teens who attended, to gather information on peace promotion initiatives around the city, and facts and statistics related to promoting awareness. Additionally there were several guest speakers; hip hop, dance, and vocal performances; and activities for youth to earn food and prizes. Community partners included: The Margaret Fuller House, Phoenix Charter Academy, Jabstep, Teen Empowerment, and Cambridge Pop Warner. The most notable speakers included: Michelle Farnum – who gave an overview on the importance of peace in Cambridge; Brian Corr – spoke about the programs that are currently working on peace in Cambridge; and Richard Harding – dreamed with us on the future of peace in Cambridge.

Through the event, the young people of Cambridge were able to increase awareness of peaceful initiatives and resources in Cambridge; promote healthy, peaceful competition through athletic activity; enhance youth capacity to find their own supports, mediate their own problems, and avoid situations that can potentially result in violence.