



Cambridge Peace Commission

A Department of the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts

Report to the City Manager From the Cambridge-Haiti Sister City Committee 2013 Delegation to Haiti *Executive Summary, December 2013*

The January 2010 earthquake that devastated Haiti had a real impact on Cambridge, where so many people from Haiti and of Haitian descent live and work. On January 11, 2010 – by coincidence, the eve of the earthquake – the Cambridge City Council adopted Policy Order O-5: “That the City Manager appoint a committee to pursue the possibility of establishing a sister city relationship in Haiti.”

The Peace Commission, having responsibility for establishing and maintaining Cambridge’s sister city relationships, developed a proposal to establish a Cambridge-Haiti Sister City Committee (the “Committee”) in response to the order. The committee was established to develop and implement a strategy to build an assets-based, sustainable, long-term, sister city relationship between Cambridge and an appropriate city in Haiti. That committee was appointed by the City Manager in January 2011 and began working with the Peace Commission.

Recommendations

Based on the work undertaken to date (described below), the Committee recommends:

- **That the City of Cambridge establish a sister city relationship with Les Cayes, Haiti**, based upon three focus areas: public health; education and youth; and infrastructure and the environment;
- **That the Committee continue to lead the work and the relationship**, under the auspices of the Peace Commission; and
- **That the Committee develop flexible volunteer teams** for each of the focus areas, as resources for training, exchanges, planning, and delegations.

Course of the Committee’s Work

In its initial meetings, the Committee identified three areas of support and collaboration with a sister city in Haiti:

- **Public Health:** short- and long-term support for public health initiatives, infrastructure and related ongoing efforts;
- **Education and Youth:** support for local efforts in Haiti, through schools and the arts, including materials, sponsorships and exchanges; and
- **Infrastructure and the Environment:** providing expertise and support to enhance and create public infrastructure and help reverse environmental degradation in and around the city and the surrounding area due to deforestation.

Over the course of two years, the Cambridge-Haiti Sister City Committee met regularly to discuss the various aspects of the proposed sister city relationship. Through that work, the Committee identified the City of Les Cayes in the Sud Département (the Southern Department – the equivalent of a state in the U.S.) as the most appropriate community. The Committee recognized that it needed to learn more about the situation, the possibilities, and the challenges of working in Haiti. To do that, the Committee invited academics, representatives of U.S. and Haiti-based nonprofit organizations, and medical personnel working in Haiti to brief the Committee on their efforts and experiences.

The Committee and its members have met with:

- Christine Low and Abner Joseph, co-directors of the Matènwa Community Learning Center in Cambridge and Haiti respectively, who provided a great deal of background and context, and will be a resource for work in Haiti and in the U.S.;
- Dr. Alix Cantave, formerly of UMass Boston and now leading the grantmaking and program work of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) in Haiti; and
- Dr. Brian Swann, Chief of Dental Services for the Cambridge Health Alliance, who has been part of dental health teams to Haiti;
- Jacky Poteau and Gabrielle René of FATEM (Fondation pour l'Avancement Technologique et Economique de Mirebalais) which works in the central part of Haiti to promote self-sufficiency, education, access to information and communication technology, all to support the economic advancement of the area;
- Dr. Roosevelt Clérisme, founder of CORRECT Health for Haiti, which has run rural health care programs in southern Haiti for many years;
- Dr. Claire Pierre, Executive Director of the Cambridge Health Alliance Center for Local and International Health Partnerships, who for months after the earthquake worked in Haiti full time as Senior Advisor and Sector Lead for Health for the Haiti Interim Recovery Commission;
- Dr. Amy Smith, director of the D-Lab at MIT, which develops and promotes use of appropriate technologies and sustainable solutions to improve the quality of life through creation and implementation of low-cost technologies;
- Danielle Thomas, Director of Professional Ambulance Service's Center for MEDICS and its METI Project, which promotes sustainability in healthcare through medical education, training, and improved infrastructure in under-served areas of the world, and was launched in 2013 by addressing critical medical needs in Haiti.

These consultations led to a partnership with WKKF, which funded the Cambridge-Haiti Sister City Committee's fact-finding delegation to Haiti from May 23 through May 31, 2013. The members of the delegation were:

- Brian Corr (*Executive Director, Cambridge Peace Commission*)
- Claude-Alix Jacob (*Chief Public Health Officer, City of Cambridge*)
- Linda Cundiff (*Senior Director of Community Affairs, Cambridge Health Alliance*)
- Sylvio Hyppolite (*Retired teacher, Graham and Parks School, now working for Partners In Health in Haiti*)
- Dr. Marie-Louise Jean-Baptiste (*Physician, Cambridge Health Alliance*)
- Jean Jeune (*Coordinator of Haitian Services, Cambridge Multiservice Center*)
- Charlene Julien (*Faculty, Bunker Hill Community College*)
- Debra Wise (*Artistic Director, Underground Railroad Theater*)

Summary of Delegation Activities

Day 1: Thursday, May 23: Arrival in Haiti and Orientation

The delegation arrived in Port-au-Prince at noon, and began its work with an orientation from Dr. Jean-Rénauld Clérismé, director of the Centre for Research and Training in Social Behavior, covering: the history of Haiti; the social and political context of Haiti; what to expect in Mirebalais and Les Cayes; sites of interest to the delegation; how to evaluate projects; traveling through the mountains; the environment; and safety tips.

Day 2: Friday, May 24: Visit to Partners In Health Hospitals in Mirebalais and Cange

The delegation visited the new public hospital in Mirebalais, built by the Haitian Ministry of Public Health (MSPP), with support from Partners In Health (PIH). This visit provided information about what can be achieved in Haiti, and included meetings with administrators and doctors, and a tour of the hospital. The 300-bed capacity hospital has high-quality examination rooms and wards, computerized medical records, a pharmacy, and state-of-the art radiology and imaging equipment with trained staff to operate it. The delegation next visited the original PIH-supported public hospital in the nearby town of Cange, and then a local MSPP/PIH clinic in the rural community of La Colline, to increase their understanding of the local context and how the different facilities work together.

Day 3: Saturday, May 25: Travel to Les Cayes, Orientation, and Debriefing

The delegation drove five hours to Les Cayes, and on arrival took an orientation tour by vehicle. This provided the delegation an overall sense of the community and its infrastructure, and the challenges Les Cayes faces regarding traffic, sanitation, and drainage. At the end of the day, the delegation debriefed about their experiences to date and reviewed plans for their time in Les Cayes.

Day 4: Sunday, May 26: Visit to Île-a-Vache and Preparation for Les Cayes

The delegation traveled by boat to Île-à-Vache, an island located ten nautical miles off the southern coast of Haiti, where there are two WKKF-funded projects. Although the island is only eight miles long and two miles wide, the delegation was not able to reach the WKKF projects due to the lack of roads and the difficulty of travel on the island. While on the island, the delegation had the opportunity to talk with volunteer leaders of Archangel Airborne, a U.S.-based NGO which organizes five-to-seven-day missions to conduct medical clinics in rural areas of Haiti using their own aircraft. They had just finished a mission, and provided interesting perspectives on their experiences working in Haiti and with local officials in the Southern Department.

Day 5: Monday, May 27: Focus on the Environment and Sustainable Agriculture

The delegation visited a number of projects run by Compassion for Haiti (CFH), a joint Haitian/U.S. NGO that: works with farmers in several parts of Haiti on new and sustainable methods of farming; provides training for agronomy students from Haitian universities through placements on their projects; and helps farmers to create cooperatives to obtain better prices for their produce. The delegation met with Étienne François, director of CFH, who explained the organization's work, then spending most of the day touring four CFH project sites. These included a demonstration cornfield that provides training in sustainable agriculture, and a demonstration goat farm that provides training for agronomy students in veterinary science and field work and provides employment for local people who manage and staff the farm.

Day 6: Tuesday, May 28: Site Visits to Educational Facilities

The delegation spent the day visiting the École Sainte-Famille, a private elementary school; the Lycée Philippe-Guerrier, one of two public high schools in Les Cayes; the American University of the Caribbean, a private university with an American president; and the regional office of the Ministry of Education. The delegation learned about the challenges and opportunities in education for students of all ages, and about the state of education in Haiti in general.

- At the high school, the delegation addressed and more than 200 students at impromptu assembly, followed by dialogue with the students, giving the delegation a chance to hear directly about the students' experiences, hopes and concerns.
- At the university, its president discussed plans to transform it into a local center to provide information, expertise and coordination of local and international efforts to improve conditions in Les Cayes.
- During its meeting with the Ministry of Education, the delegation got an overview of the education system in Haiti and the specific conditions in Les Cayes. The educational system in Haiti faces serious challenges in three major areas: the language of instruction being French, not Haitian Creole; insufficient staff education and training; and a lack of financial resources and equipment. The ministry provided detailed information about the number of students at each educational level in the region. The delegation also learned about planned changes to instructional methods to create interactive classrooms and schoolwork, instead of learning by rote and repetition.

Day 7: Wednesday, May 29: Public Health and Youth-Focused Site Visits

- The delegation visited the public hospital in Les Cayes – *Hôpital Conception Immaculée* – meeting with the hospital's administrator and the chief of staff, followed by a tour of the entire facility. The hospital is more than 90 years old, with open wards and screenless windows, and is often flooded – even during minor rains. The delegation found that the hospital's facilities ranged from an inadequate dental clinic to a state-of-the-art laboratory created with international support.
- The delegation visited IDEJEN, a vocational training program funded by WKCF and U.S.-based YouthBuild. IDEJEN provides instruction in trades including construction, auto repair, window installation, refrigeration, computer systems, and community health work.
- The delegation met with Dr. Jean Bernard Fevrier, the Departmental Director of the National Ministry of Public Health (the equivalent of the State Director of Public Health). He provided information about the state of public health in that region of Haiti and in Les Cayes, and shared his understanding of best practices for creating sustainable partnerships. He noted that it would be important for a future delegation to visit other sites in the Southern Department, in addition to the hospital in Les Cayes, to understand the range of needs in the region. He observed that in his experience, the most effective projects have been based on performance measures, with financial support tied to deliverables, and noted that there is a particular need for help with treatment for chronic diseases.
- Then the delegation met with Serge Chéry, the Delegate of the national government (the equivalent of the state governor). Delegate Chéry spoke in detail about conditions in and around Les Cayes and the challenges facing the region. He noted that there are efforts to develop tourism to boost the local economy, but hotels,

restaurants and cultural activity are necessary, as well as proper health care and infrastructure. He also highlighted: the difficult situation for young people; gaps in infrastructure, especially firefighting equipment, ambulances and emergency vehicles, and systems and vehicles for collecting and removing trash; and managing traffic and the increasing number of motorcycles in the city.

Next Steps

Based on the delegation's findings while in Haiti, next steps include:

- **Reporting officially to the City of Cambridge government** and the wider community about the delegation, its findings and next steps, beginning in Winter 2013-2014.
- **Confirming the relationship between the two communities** by establishing an official sister city connection between the City of Cambridge and the Haitian government in the Southern Department and the City of Les Cayes.
- **Establishing an ongoing collaboration with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation**, as well as identifying and connecting with other funders and partners, by Winter 2013-2014.
- **Creating teams of people from Cambridge** for each of the three focus areas, who can serve as potential delegates, on work teams, as resources for ongoing efforts, etc.
- **Organizing a delegation from Les Cayes** to Cambridge in mid-2014, consisting of individuals the delegation met from all three areas of focus. The itinerary would include: seminars; visits with Cambridge officials, local organizations, and academics; opportunities for delegates to “shadow” appropriate people for a day to promote learning and relationship building.
- **Organizing a second delegation from Cambridge** to Les Cayes in late 2014, with teams in each area of focus that can be instated for specific projects and also build links, relationships, and long-term connections.
- **Using the convening power of Cambridge** as the U.S. partner to help to build a cadre of people in Haiti with shared experiences, in order to catalyze collaboration and joint efforts in Les Cayes.
- **Creating remote continuing education and learning systems**, as well as ongoing connections, for professionals in Les Cayes (educators, healthcare staff, administrators, etc.).
- **Tapping into the assets and resources in Cambridge** for future teams, and with expertise in planning and evaluation, training, and implementation.