

March 1, 2010

To: City Manager Robert W. Healy
Police Commissioner Robert C. Haas

From: The Cambridge Review Committee

Regarding: Progress Report

Since its initial meeting on October 11, 2009, the Cambridge Review Committee, formed in the wake of the July 16th arrest of Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has worked to carry out its mandate. The mandate as communicated to the Committee is to examine the encounter between Professor Gates and Sergeant Crowley with an eye toward identifying lessons that can be learned, what can be done to prevent such incidents in the future, suggestions for improving the relationship between the Cambridge Police Department and the Cambridge community at large, and make recommendations for other police departments and the communities they serve.

Toward this end, the Committee's work has been broad-based and thorough. Many records and reports have been reviewed; a number of people have been interviewed; and presentations on various subject matters have been given. In its deliberations, the Committee has focused on topics such as police authority, conflict intervention, the role of the community to work with their neighbors and the police to ensure their own public safety, as well as strengthening a sense of trust between law enforcement and the residents of Cambridge. Also discussed is the concept of legitimacy in policing – the idea that people's willingness to comply with the law is related to the manner in which they are treated by authority. The Committee has met several times, had numerous conference calls, and has begun drafting its final report.

The Committee also has formed several subgroups that have worked independently of the larger group focusing on police discretion, community responsibility and engagement, and training. Police procedures and nationally recognized best practices have been reviewed. The Cambridge residents leading the Community Subcommittee held two citywide public meetings and have attended several neighborhood meetings to share the work of the Committee and receive input from residents. They also have met with city residents, have briefed city councilors, and intend to continue to attend community meetings.

The Committee notes that efforts already are being undertaken in the community to address the issues of trust that are the focus of the Committee's work. Similarly, the Committee is encouraged by various efforts initiated by the Cambridge Police Department. For example, the Department has begun experimenting with alternate solutions in citizen complaint cases, and it has begun to adopt the nationally recognized Tools for Tolerance training program for officers.

The Committee will meet again in March, and hopes to produce its final report in the late Spring. That report will include recommendations that reflect the important contributions from discussions with the community and from the Cambridge Police Department, as well as best practices of police departments and communities throughout the country, and the experiences of the committee members.