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Lopez, Donna

From: C. Shipley [mc.shipley@verizon.net]
Sent: Sunday, June 17, 2012 10:59 AM
To: City Council
Cc: Lopez, Donna
Subject: FW: Community Schools article

Please enter into the official record of the City Council. Thank you.

Attached is a link to a very nicely written article by Mary Holbrow, a retired journalist, who writes for the CCTV Media blog. I thought you would enjoy reading it. On behalf of all the Neighborhood Councils, I want to thank you for your past and continuing support of the Community School Programs.

<http://www.cctvcambridge.org/CommunitySchools>

Thank you,

Carolyn Shipley
15 Laurel Street
Cambridge, MA 02139
617-492-0601

-----Original Message-----

From: Mary Holbrow [mailto:holbrow.mary@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, June 14, 2012 10:24 PM
To: Carolyn Shipley
Subject: Community Schools article

Hi, Carolyn,
I've posted the Community Schools piece for circulation. The link is now
<http://www.cctvcambridge.org/CommunitySchools>,
Mary

Home > Blogs > mholbrow's blog
Budget Issues for Community Schools
June 9, 2012 - 9:25am - mholbrow

Photo: This charming turtle is also a rattle, created in the spring semester ceramics class at the Morse Community School at 40 Granite Street. Displays and demonstrations of after-school activities will be featured there Friday, March 15, at the Community School's Semester End Showcase and Cookout from 5 - 8 p.m., according to Director Stanley Rogers. Students in the program choose from a rich mix of classes that includes gymnastics, drum circle, sports and games, story-telling, math and science, film-making, Scouts, and lessons in art, music, dance, and cooking.

As Chair of the Citywide Community School Council, Carolyn Shipley (photo, left) has been going to bat for Cambridge's Community Schools for more than 22 years.

The city's eleven Community Schools are not public schools, although they do use public school facilities. They are OST (out-of-school time) programs that take place after regular school hours, during school vacations, and in summer.

The Community School program is deeply rooted here. In 2009 Shipley and others active in it were honored at the Glitter Gala celebration that marked its 40th anniversary. The event was

reported in the 2010-2011 edition of "The Cambridge Life," the City Manager's guide to city resources and events.

(See link, p. 11.)

"Community schools got started in Michigan back in the 1930s," says Shipley, a local landscape designer. "Some people there said, 'Our tax money is paying for these nice classrooms and this wonderful gym; we should be able to use them when school isn't in session.'"

The idea sparked after-school programs nation-wide. Community schools now range from individual projects in small communities to large urban coalitions in New York, Chicago, Tulsa, Houston, Philadelphia, and other cities.

Each of Cambridge's Community Schools has a Director employed by the city's Department of Human Service Programs. Teachers' salaries are covered by fees collected for program offerings; the rest of the people who make things work are volunteers. A Neighborhood Council associated with each Community School helps organize activities and raises funds. (Left, scene from Easter egg hunt organized by the Martin Luther King, Jr. Neighborhood Council and Community School, Riverside Press Park, April 7, 2012.)

Right now, given the national political deadlock over government vs. private funding, programs like this are a hot political issue. Comedian Jon Stewart took it up with U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan during "The Daily Show" on February 16. Their comments recall the thinking of those Michigan community school activists three-quarters of a century ago.

"Here's this building filled with classrooms, and chalk," Stewart says. "And we only use it until three."

Secy. Duncan reels off a list of amenities in the country's 95,000 public schools: classrooms, libraries, computer labs, gyms, pools.

"Mascots?" Stewart interrupts. (Laughter.) Duncan accepts the frivolous addition and goes on to argue passionately that the items on the list are not private property.

"They belong to the community, and we have to open them up." His hometown, Chicago, has 150 community school programs, he says.

Cambridge's eleven Community Schools-soon to be twelve, when a new one opens up for the relocated Amigos School-have activities for all ages. There are after-school enrichment programs for kids during the academic year, camping (see attached file), excursions, Arts in the Parks during the summer, and much more. There are family events, adult education and recreation, and dance classes. For seniors there are field trips and social occasions like the big Valentine party earlier this year.

A landmark undertaking for the Community Schools was the publication last November of an oral history, "From the Heart of Cambridge," by the Longfellow Neighborhood Council and Community School. The book was the subject of a presentation at Porter Square Books on June 7.

"Yes, our programs offer tremendous benefits," Carolyn Shipley says. "BUT . . . every couple of years Cambridge has a budget crisis that involves the Community Schools, and we're constantly trying to put our finger in the dike. That's what's going on right now."

The amount allocated to Education in the City of Cambridge Submitted Budget for FY 2012-2013 is \$144,987,705, up 3% from the current year. The figure represents 29.7% of the total city operating budget of \$488,228,565. (See pp. I-2, I-12, and II-38 of the budget document, now on view in book form at public libraries (left) or on line via a link at

<http://www.cambridgema.gov/budget.aspx>.)

Big changes for the public schools-and big capital expenditures-are in the works. Under the direction of Superintendent Dr. Jeffrey M. Young, the system is undergoing a major reorganization. On pp. 10-11 of the Cambridge Public Schools FY 2012 Adopted Budget he discussed the changes: "The restructuring of the district's existing elementary education program from a system comprising 11 JK-8 (junior kindergarten through 8th grade) and one JK-6 elementary schools to a system comprising 11 JK-5 schools, four Upper Schools for students in grades 6 to 8, and one JK-8 dual immersion language school is a complex task."

Shipleigh suggests that this restructuring will have negative effects on Community Schools. Public school populations will be reconfigured, and in addition, where reconstruction of school buildings is planned-notably in the M. L. King, Tobin, and King Open districts-the schools will transition into the former Longfellow School building on Broadway during the process. In the process, Community School programs developed over years or even decades can expect to be dislocated or crowded into less space.

The Community Schools allocation appears in the Human Service category of the city budget, and unlike the Education allocation it shows an actual cut for the coming year. Its total for FY 2013 is \$2,815,430, down \$9,300 from the previous year (p. IV 349). That's a drop in the bucket compared to the Education figure, but the cut could indicate more problems for an already sparsely-funded program.

Shipleigh has produced a study comparing costs for the city's professionally-run youth centers to costs for the Community Schools' OST services. She cited data from it in a recent petition, signed by close to 700 people, asking the City Council not to cut the Community School budget. In part the petition reads:

"If there were a program that serves 1,400 children, 200 seniors, hundreds of families and adults with offerings of 1,700 enrichment classes, dozens of exciting day trips per year, and immensely successful summer camp programs serving 900 children, and Arts in the Parks program for hundreds of city children during summer school vacation, all at very little cost to the city per child or adult served, WOULD YOU CONSIDER IT A GREAT PROGRAM WORTHY OF FUNDING?"

That question may not be answered any time soon. Meanwhile, Shipleigh adds, "We're going to try in 2014 to get the city to put the Community School Program on a more stable financial base in order to compete with the far better endowed Youth Center programs."

Stay tuned.

For a complete list of the city's after-school, summer vacation, and extended learning programs, including Community Schools, see http://www.cpsd.us/GAP/after-school_city-wide.cfm.

Summer Camp 2012 Community Schools.pdf 1.66 MB

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