



HUMAN SERVICES & VETERANS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Tuesday, August 10, 2021

5:00 PM

Remote Meeting

The Human Services and Civic Unity Committees will hold a joint meeting to discuss measures the City should be taking to address the increase in gun violence.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alanna Mallon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
E. Denise Simmons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Timothy J. Toomey	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5:45 PM
Dennis J. Carlone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

HUMAN SERVICES AND VETERANS COMMITTEE

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS, CHAIR

COMMITTEE MEETING

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

AUGUST 10, 2021

5:00 PM, SULLIVAN CHAMBER

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: This is a Civic Unity Committee. We will hold a joint meeting to discuss the City, what measures the City is taking to address the increase in gun violence.

Please let me read the words that we use for most of these meetings relative to viewing by Zoom: "Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 adopted by Massachusetts General Assembly and improved by the government, the City is authorized to use remote participation at meetings of the Cambridge City Council in its committees.

In addition to having members of the City Council participating remotely, we have also set up a Zoom teleconference for public comment. Please be aware that Zoom is primarily being used for public comment and in order to watch the meeting, please tune into Channel 22 or visit the Open Meeting Portal on the City's website.

If you'd like to provide public comment, please visit the City Council's section of the City's web page and the instructions on how to sign that are posted there. Once you've completed the sign up procedure, you will receive a link to the Zoom meeting. We will not allow any public comments sign up after 5:30.

Mr. Clerk, would you please take the roll of the members present?

City Clerk Anthony Wilson called the roll:

Vice Mayor Alanna M. Mallon - Present

Councillor Patricia M. Nolan - Present

Councillor Timothy J. Toomey - Absent

Councillor Dennis J. Carlone - Present

Councillor Marc C. McGovern - Present

Councillor E. Denise Simmons - Present

Present-5, Absent-1. Quorum established.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Okay thank you, Mr. Clerk. All of our meetings will be by roll call. I just want to say, good evening, Councillor McGovern, will -- my -- who's co-chairing this process and this meeting with me will be joining us shortly. He may be having some difficulty as some of us have had trying to get online. The call of this meeting has been read. We have a packed agenda and we do also have a hard stop. Councillor, Councillor McGovern is in the chambers. Um,

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Can you, can you, hear me, Madam Co-Chair?

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: I, I can hear you well

and see you even better.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Ok, thank you.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: And Madam Co-Chair, this is Dennis. I've been here since the beginning.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Thank you. So please let the record show that Councillor Carlone and Councillor McGovern are present and audible.

CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON: So recorded.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. So we're gonna -- we have a packed agenda and we have a hard stop at seven so I want to make the best use of our time and dive right in as, as, as all of you know that there's a, a Peace Vigil on those stairs of the City Coun - - of City Hall, right after this at 7.

Over the past several months, we've seen an unmistakable rise in the episodes of gun violence in our communities. In some cases we believe that bullets have just been fired at inanimate objects.

In some cases, people have, have been wounded by these gunshots. In a couple of cases, people have lost their lives to gunshots. This is totally unaccept, totally unacceptable. And the focus of our discussion tonight needs

to be on gaining a sense of why, seeing what is provoking this series of incidences, which involve gun violence and what strategies can we put to, put in place?

What strategies are currently being, uh, in place and what do we propose that we might be able to do as a policy-making bodies, City Council, to stop this rash of violence although it has been focused primarily in the port, it affects the entire city.

My concern, my very strong concern is how it's affecting small children, not only the feeling's with small children that are living in this area. Personally, right next door to the building where I reside in the home of a long time Cambridge family, who whose apartment, they're unit's on the second floor, gunshots went through their window. So people are concerned and we're beginning to have a feeling of fear and in the port in particular.

I believe we have representatives of the Cambridge Police Department and the Human Services Department and perhaps the Cambridge Health Alliance to speak with us this evening. Councillor McGovern and I are going to first ask the Cambridge Police Department to provide an update on what information that they can share with us about this

uptick in violence and what strategies are being taken to address the immediate problems in front of us.

As you may know, over the years, I have been having Safe Streets, Safe Neighborhoods meetings and we've always tried to be proactive, but at, at this point, we seem to be in a place where we are playing, playing catch-up, trying to stay ahead of this and also engage our residents across the city and foster a sense of security. After hearing the CPD and taking questions and comments from our colleagues, we'll have, we'll ask even services department to share any information they may have about the programs designed to turn this type of violent activity.

Now what's particularly going to be important this evening is what we do know and you'll probably hear is a lot of this violence is not happening from the 12 to 18-year-olds, but the 20-35. So I'm, I'm personally gonna be particularly interested in hearing what we are doing for that age group. What are we doing for these older individuals who are feeling disconnected from the community or have a sense of loyalty to violent distribution, violent settling of disagreements?

Um, I, I hope part of our conversation is going to be

doing me a new program, which I think we're going to hear a little bit about doing the two old programming. Do we lay down some program that has been in place, but has not quite worked and based on what is driving this activity.

Um, what we can do sort of, uh, put away between it. We also realize that this is not a problem that we ourselves own; we know some of this is been -- being dri -- driven from activity in Somerville and we also know that it's almost a decade old. We really, and I've said this, I see as being in a state of emergency and as, as seeing it as that, we have to take some very direct and very immediate action.

As I said earlier, I will note that we will be holding a vigil for peace and healing, peace and healing. This is not gonna be focused on what we should do, what we've done, what we've not done, but really about peace and about how we heal ourselves, particularly for those, and most importantly, this vigil is focusing on those who have lost someone to some level of violence and this is gonna be on the steps of City Hall.

So while we do have a hard stop at the time, I wanna remind that people that tonight's hearing is a part of a

larger continuum, um, of a citywide discussion designed to increase our public safety.

There'll be another Safe Streets, Safe Neighborhood, um, meeting coming up very, very soon. I wanted to thank Councillor McGovern, who's -- we have worked on the shoulder-to-shoulder to try to bring around some resolution, uh, in the immediate, but also looking for it.

So, if we don't get to every item this evening, please know that we'll be scheduling additional meetings to ensure that this critical work is being carried forward. With that being said. I'm gonna ask my friend and Councillor colleague, Councillor, Councillor McGovern to share his opening remarks that he might have before we turn the floor over to CPD. So Councillor McGovern, the floor is yours.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thank you, Madam Co-Chair. Uh, I'll be brief. As, as we, as you noted, Councillor Simmons that this is, this has not been the first conversation that we've had around this issue and nor is it going to be our last. But one of the things that I want us to think about, Well, a couple of things I want us to think about as we move forward and have this conversation.

Um, this is obviously the issue around violence in our community. Gun violence, in particular, is a very complicated and complex issue and. and it's, it's about opportunities, it's about the ease in which people can access guns, it's about education, it's about housing, it's about, uh, policing, it's about all kinds of substance use, mental health, all kinds of things and which are all sort of complicated in their own right. But as we are thinking about these long term issues and how to restructure many of these systems that we have in place to better, uh, meet the needs of our young people.

Um, the other piece of this is that we have to also understand that within the last two weeks, there have been several shootings and gun activity within the communities. And so there is an immediate need to this conversation as well. And it made me think of, you know, when COVID hit and the Meals Programs that, uh, supply food to our unhoused residents, all stopped.

Within a week the City had a contract with restaurants to provide food to those programs so that that service could, could continue. That is the type of immediate action that we need dealing with this violence as well. It cannot

be an endless stream of us, you know, debating and commenting and talking and planning and, um, all -- we will do all of that, but I would like the City to -- and my message to the City is what resources right now, tomorrow, are you gonna be allocating and putting in place?

And it's more than just -- I know that there are police patrols increasing and I know the CHA, Housing Authority is, is increasing security more than that though. What, where, how are we getting our outreach workers, where are we getting outreach workers to be on the street talking to these young folks, how -- what are we doing around job opportunities right now?

We have to treat this crisis with the same urgency and immediate need as we treat so many others, uh, in this city and we have the resources to do it. So while we talk about the bigger pictures, I also want to know, what are we doing tomorrow? You know, what are we doing when we wake up in the morning to deal with this because bullets are flying through people's houses. Um, and that's just not acceptable.

Um, I also, um, want to bring into the space, the sort of the secondary effects of trauma. I mean, of course,

those who have lost, uh, family members to this violence are the most impacted and the ones that we need to be rallying around and supporting. But there's a lot of young, young folks in this city who have been threatened with violence. There are a lot of folks who I was in Newtown Court in Washington homes all weekend, last weekend, a beautiful weekend.

No kids were out playing in the playground and when I talked to folks, they didn't want to let their kids out because just this was two weeks ago, I guess, just that morning there were, there were gunshots and so that residual trauma is impacting many, many more people than we may see.

Um, and we may think about and that is something that we have to also start to unpack, uh, and, and work on and how are we gonna bring these communities together and provide the support and mental health services that folks need, who may not be the folks who are necessarily, uh, directly impacted by the gun activity.

So this is complicated. Um, I appreciate everybody being here. Um, as I often say, the, the thing that gives me tremendous hope is that Cambridge is not a large city,

but we have tremendous resources, uh, to deal with the issues that we want to deal with. But the thing that keeps me up at night is that we're not a large city with tremendous resources and we haven't solved these problems. So it's a double-edged sword um, but if anyone can do it, we can and I am in this with both feet. So, uh, thank you, Madam Co-chair, I'll turn it back to you.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Thank you, Madam -- Mr. Co-Chair. Thank you for your remarks. We're now gonna turn this over to the Cambridge Police Department to provide us an update. So from the Police Department, I believe, we have Superintendent Elow. Superintendent Elow, the floor is yours.

SUPERINTENDENT CHRISTINE ELOW: Okay, thank you. Good evening, Madam Chair. Um, since the beginning of the year, we have had 11 gun-related incidents. Um, one homicide, um, of Xavier Lewis Jacks on, uh, March 27th, 2021. We have had five gun-related incidents since July 15th. All of these are of top-priority for the Cambridge Police Department. We have had a deployment plan, where we have had officers, um, specifically in the port, um, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Um since May we have logged in over 4200 hours of officers on patrol in the court reaching out to community members. We are well aware of the trauma. We have talked to neighbors, we have talked to people in the community and how this is impacting them. We are working actively with Cambridge housing authority with the Margaret. Fuller House with My Brother's Keeper, um, and other community members to figure out what we can do, you know, kind of more holistically with trying to understand some of the grievances that are happening.

We're actively working with Somerville Police Department and other surrounding Community Police Departments, again, just to get a handle on what the grievances are. These are for all intents and purposes. What I can let you know is, these are young people with relatively, you know, minor grievances that are solving them with firearms. We had a shooting last night in Somerville, um, that was involving a Cambridge youth.

So every single time there's a shooting in Somerville, we have one of our detectives responding to Somerville, when there's a shooting in Cambridge, we have a Somerville detective responding to Cambridge and we are actively

working together to try to solve, um, what these grievances are.

We are struggling with getting information from community members, we are struggling with developing that trust. That's something that we're really concerned about. Um, our approach in the port has been very purposeful. We do not -- It's, it's interesting in the Cambridge [Houful] and the Cambridge Housing Authority, what we see is groups of young people that are out there sometimes drinking on a late summer night, um, sometimes into the wee hours of the morning. So we've really struggled with how we manage that, uh, because the same areas where people are drinking and congregating are the areas where the shootings are happening.

So we have put, basically, police in those areas to try to engage with the young people to try to get a sense of what's going on. After a certain hour we're asking people to disperse. We've been, again, really thoughtful about how we engage. We don't want people to feel like they're in a police state, but at the same time we want people to be safe. So we are absolutely asking for the community's help, for the public's help. Uh, we are not

going away. We're gonna be there, were gonna be there and be really thoughtful.

We want to engage with our community members. I know we had one meeting a, a couple of weeks ago, uh, Councillor that I think you lead, where we got some suggestions and I reached out to some of the people that were on that meeting that want to work with us, uh, to help us, um, mediate some of the conflicts. So I will stop there and I am available for questions. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Thank you, Superintendent. Elow. Before we go on to Human Services, does anyone from the City Civic Unity Committee going first and then other members that are here like to ask any questions to the Superintendent?

The members of our disc -- Civic Unity Committee and Human Services. but I think I have add our -- myself, the Vice Mayor, Councillor Carlone, Councillor Nolan, Councillor Toomey and for Human Services. my colleague, Co-chair Councillor McGovern, again, the Vice Mayor, uh, Councillor Nolan, myself and Councillor Toomey that's very hardy overlap.

So is there anyone that has any questions at this

time? Otherwise we will go to, um, right to the humans, the Human Services Department. Are there any questions from the members of either committee? Councillor Nolan.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, chair. It's just a quick follow up. Thanks for all your work and for explaining to us what's going on, um, Deputy Superintendent or Elow, [laughs], thank you. That the coordination with community groups and, maybe, also Human Services, I don't know if that's a further in the future question, but it seems that's part of the, the challenge and the, and the attention and the trickiness here.

And I'm just curious as to whether you have more to say about that bringing in those other groups in all your relationship building that has, um, -- that you described and how you're putting more people out there. If you could talk a little bit more about that.

SUPERINTENDENT CHRISTINE ELOW: So we are actively involved with My Brother's Keeper in Human Services Department in Summer Programs. We had a number of different Summer Programs. Um, there was one in Danehy Park, I didn't have a full list, but we were involved, again, with the Mayor's Program and Human Services and My Brother's Keeper

on several summer, Summer Programs uh, aimed at, uh, young people. Uh, just you know, engagement, positive interactions.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Councillor Nolan.

SUPERINTENDENT CHRISTINE ELOW: I can get a specific list. Sorry,

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Yes, thank you.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Councillor Nolan, you have [crosstalk]--

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you. I'll, I'll yield the floor for now. I know we have a really tight agenda and you're bringing forth a lot of, uh, issues. Thank you, Councillor Simmons.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Great. Thank you. Councillor Nolan yields the floor. Do we have any other questions.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Madam, Madam Co-chair.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Councillor and Co-chair, McGovern.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thank you. I'm sorry, I don't have my computer with me so I can't raise my hand on the Zoom so thumb.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Okay.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: I don't want to cut in front of anyone. Um, and obviously, you know, we know that this is, you know, there are many facets to this, to this conversation. But for Superintendent Elow, um, you know, one of the things that we have heard and I understand there may be some things you can't say publicly because of ongoing investigations and whatnot.

Um, but we have heard sort of the rumor mill of the, uh, you know, going around is just the, the ease in which, uh, young folks or anybody really, but in this context, have to access guns and that there are a lot of, uh, firearms that are being brought in.

Some, I've heard about, you know, that there were some arrests and some things about people bringing guns up from New York and in other places. What we're -- do we get a sense of, I guess, you know, I don't want this to be a game of telephone or something becomes, you know, it goes from one person to the other and it sounds like every, every young person on the street ha -- has a firearm. Um, but I've been shocked to hear from people who are much closer to this than I am, how prevalent that is and so do we have

a sense of, where these guns are coming from, how in which kids are getting them?

Um, I think we talked at the, at a previous meeting that there was, um, you know, there was concern about uh not so much guns in the high school, in the walls of the high school, but high school students sort of stashing guns in and around the high school and accessing those, those, those firearms after school, any information that you can provide the community on, on just the prevalence or what, what you see from? Um, you know, obviously being much closer to this than most of us?

SUPERINTENDENT CHRISTINE ELOW: Sure. Through you Madam Chair. So we actually have a number of ongoing investigations and as you said, I can't get into the particulars about some of the manufactured guns and and people ordering parts through the mail and, and try. So we do have a number of investigations going on, um, to try to get to the bottom of who has those.

The question about the stash guns, that's something that we are also, we have heard about and one of the things that we need is more information on that. One of the things that we did after the last meeting that we had was we got

some information that guns were stashed around the high school or in different youth centers. If we get that information, the dogs that we have are able to sniff out. They, they can detect, um, gunpowder.

So if we have information that people believe there's a, so a gun stashed somewhere, we will send our bomb techs out to search for those guns. So it's just a matter of getting that information to us, um, in a timely manner. So I did hear about the community guns and we wanna, again, cooperate with the community.

Even if it's just a rumor, if you hear something about where a gun, maybe we can send somebody out. I mean, I think the biggest thing for us is just getting these guns off the street.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Co-chair, McGovern.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thank you. Thank you Superintendent Elow. Um, and, again, I mean, do you get a sense that, um, you know, if we, if we, if you come in contact with a young person who or you, you hear that, you know, there's a person that might have a firearm, um, what sort of the approach and kind of, you know, reaching out to that, I mean, you know, I know that we try hard not to get

young folks, particularly juveniles into the court system, and wonder what, what sort of the -- what's the process and, because I think there's a lot of folks in the community who are concerned about reaching out to the police because they're afraid of what might happen.

Um, you know, and so can you just sort of describe kind of what, what is the process and, and, and, and maybe that would alleviate some concerns of folks, you know, I'm just throwing this out there. But I just feel like I'm hearing more and more and more about how easily folks are accessing guns.

I mean they're Venmoing, you know, money and a gun gets left somewhere and they go and pick it up. Like it's just -- even in a state like Massachusetts that has the, you know, the strictest gun laws in the country. So, again, I'm just trying to understand this better in terms of the prevalence of this problem.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Right. Superintendent Elow.

SUPERINTENDENT CHRISTINE ELOW: Sure. Through you, Madam Chair. So through our Focused Deterrence Program, we are specifically focused on the young people in our

community, who have been touched by gun violence, by actively reaching out to those people who have either been victims of gun violence or who have either been rumored or perpetrated gun violence. Uh, and just to see what can we do between them and their families, our Clinical Support Unit and our social workers actively working, um, again, with members in the community.

I don't want to give specifics, but there were a couple of young people in our city that we were concerned about being involved with gun violence. And we were working with housing on what could we do to possibly move them or how do, what, what, what can we -- what services can we active -- can we offer? So we really wanna, you know, touch our young people before they get their hands on, on these firearms because they -- people know they're way too readily available even in this state.

So we're really working hard, um, with young people and their families to just try to what, you know, once you put that gun in your hand understanding, you know, the implications of that and actively working with families, working with Roca, our caseworker from Roca has been absolutely phenomenal.

Boots on the ground, she has a number of different people that, um, she is working with. We get case updates with from her weekly, really, you know, having an impact on some of these young people and I can see, you know, I'm getting through to this young person, this person is not responding to my calls.

So we have an idea about who we need to do more follow-up with and we are actively following-up with those young people and their families. The same thing with people who are currently incarcerated, awaiting trial for firearms violations or even other violations, but they have been associated with firearms. We're trying to see what can we do with them while they're incarcerated, for when they come back out, you know, what do you need? What about job training and, you know, what sort of family or therapy do you need?

Uh, so we're actively working with anybody in our community, who has been touched by gun violence, picking up a gun or a victim of gun violence. Uh, we're actively working with [FOCA] and our other city agencies, including Human Services, to try to do we can to help support our young people in their families to find alternatives to this

violence and really, I think, would be helpful is try to figure out how to, uh, you know, resolve some of the minor grievances or find different ways for people to, to resolve these grievances other than gun violence.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thank you. Last question for for now, Madam Co-Chair. You know, I, I know that in, may be, larger cities and, again, I'm hearing I'm hearing different things about sort of national gangs being, you know, working their way into Cambridge, but I know in sort of big cities where there's been, where there's sometimes gun activity between, um, different neighborhoods or gangs. Um, you know, there's their sit downs with members to sort of to call for a ceasefire, to sort of talk this out and say, how can we resolve this.

You know, Cambridge may not have those types of established gangs in the same way as, you know, New York or Chicago or L. A. may have, but we certainly do have -- it's not just a Somerville or Cambridge problem or an average Cambridge problem, we have issues within our city. And, you know, it always strikes me that, you know, you can have, and because we don't have neighborhood schools, you can have a child who's in the fourth grade or fifth grade, who

lives in North Cambridge who's sitting beside a classmate who was in the 4th, 4th or fifth grade, who lives in the port and they play together and they hang out together and they play Little League together, soccer together, whatever.

And then something flips at some point, where, I don't even want, ow there's a rivalry. Are we sitting down with these young folks, I mean, again, this is where we -- like, this is my thing. We know we're not Chicago, right? We know who these kids are. I mean when they read the names at the vigil last week of the young people who have been lost, going back to Jesse McKie, who I was in school with, who I idolized. By the way, two years older than me.

I thought he was the greatest break dancer and rapper. I thought he was the coolest guy in the world and I was devastated when he was murdered. Um, I knew almost 75% of that list, either directly or indirectly. So, we know, so are we sitting down with folks? And why are we -- are doing anything to try and bring some of these young people together?

SUPERINTENDENT CHRISTINE ELOW: So, again, through you, Madam Chair, I, I remember Jesse, I'm a few years

older than him. Uh, and I remember him in school also. So what I will say is that, you know, through our Focused Deterrence Program, through our local worker, through our Clinical Support Unit, we are attempting to do it. But one of the things that I think we really need and this is probably some of the conversations that we're having, is a real, you know, violence, violence interrupters.

Um, I know Chandra Banks at the high school does some mediation, um, with young people, but really having people from the community, those trusted um, individuals, mentors that the young people look up to, to be able to sit down and have those meaningful conversations about the implications of gun violence. I think, you know, Russell Harding was doing a great job of that when he was at the Margaret Fuller house. But that is really the influence that we are lacking right now in the City.

Yes, as the Police Department, we are doing our best to try to mediate these complaints and try to, you know, interrupt this violence and, and let people know the implications. But we absolutely need community support, uh, when it comes to really mediating some of the deeper conflicts with some of these groups. So that's something

that I, I , I think we're trying to build and maybe when, when Human Services talks about it, Ellen can expand on it more. But that would be one gap that, that we need to fill.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thank you. I yield, Madam Co-Chair, I yield.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Thank you, Co-chair. I was gonna ask you to to yield. I wanted to see if the Vice Mayor wanted to ask any questions. Madam. Vice Mayor, do you have a question?

VICE MAYOR ALANNA M. MALLON: Thank you, Madam Co-Chair. I don't have a question as much as I just wanna, um, highlight what Superintendent Elow saying, we do need a program that really talks about that violence interruption and brings mentorship programs. People are thrust into the community to interrupt that cycle of violence, to work with our young people who are already a trusted capacity and actually maybe even have, um, knowledge of the Carceral System, right? Who have been through the system, who can say, to the young people, "Look, this is what your -- this is what you're heading for".

Um, and I think we, we will hear from in public comment, we do have, um, some folks from Equity Roadmap,

who want to talk to us about a program just like this that is, um, based on a model in Richmond, California. So I look forward to them talking about that. But I really wanted to highlight that because I think that is that critical missing piece that we really need to focus on right now. So thank you Madam Chair, you go.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Thank you, Madam Vice, Vice Mayor yields the floor. One thing I do want to say, Madam Vice Mayor, and see that you brought up, probably a good time to mention it now. Um, a number of us have been speaking to, uh, native Cantabrigians or current Cantabrigians about Violence Interruption Program. Isaac Yab, Yabelo, [inaudible 00:30:48] General Bernard and a number of others.

I think we're well on the way to developing that, that model with another program that I've been working on it. It's sort of like the OG Model and, we, we talked about bringing people in that have had those experiences. Some of those individuals have turned their life around and lived in our community. And that's where the OG Program comes from. Because here are people that have walked that walk.

Uh, being able to utilize those skills if they're not

already gainfully employed, being gainfully employed, interrupting this violence. But the most important about this OG. Model is that they already have roots here because oftentimes this violence is being perpetrated by people who have roots here. May have moved out but their roots are here and they come back and that's where they settle their disputes.

So I just wanted to say that we'll probably hear more about that as well. I want to go to Councillor Toomey and then Councillor Carlone, uh, before we go to the non-members of the committee, including the Mayor. She'd like to speak. So I wanted to turn the Councillor Toomey if you're -- do you have a question or comment you wanna make. A question, pretty much. Hearing none, I'm gonna move to Councillor Carlone. Do you have a question that you would like to put on the floor?

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: Thank you Madam Chair, um, Superintendent. Um, I know you do as a department, you do a lot of research. You reach out and see what's happening in other cities. You're probably very well aware, um, of both the problems as well as other solutions that are working. And I understand why you might not be able to

talk about a program that you're doing, that, you're just initiating.

But is there a city that is on top of this? Richmond was mentioned earlier, I believe, by the Vice Mayor. Um, is there something that is emerging that other than Human Services when Ellen Semonoff or Brian Corr might talk. Is there something that we're looking at? Is it really getting more people on the street -- police, I mean, or a sub-service or we're already doing that, and, um, that's not enough. I know that's a broad question, but -- and there might not be an answer, but, um, I don't -- this is not my field, for sure, and it is your field, um, that's why I'm asking such a broad question.

SUPERINTENDENT CHRISTINE ELOW: For, um, -- through you, Madam Chair, there, there are a number of different communities that are doing it, uh, differently. The one thing that the research has -- it, it that speaks to me is that, you know, zero-tolerance approaches, police going in being heavy-handed, you know, sweeping mass arrests, those sort of approaches do not work. What we need when they talk about -- you know, they, they talk about kind of accountability along with empathy. Right?

So, understanding some of the systemic issues, so we do have to hold people accountable who are, you know, picking up guns. I think there's something in. um, Los Angeles, they're doing -- they have some great, um, community outreach community service workers, uh, and it really is about going in, building trust in the community from the police side, and, and we have to really do that by not using heavy-handed tactics, by going, going in and building that trust by building trust and rapport, you know, with our young people.

But we really have to do that, I believe, in collaboration with other community members. I really, truly believe in the Community Policing Model where we are a part of the community. I mean, I grew up in Cambridge; I've been here my entire life and really care about, you know, our young people, I do not want to see another, you know, episode of violence in our community.

So I think, you know, the communities pick up on that and when we're out, out there, I believe, you know, that procedural justice and legitimacy, I believe in that wholeheartedly, um just as a police approach, but I also know that we can't do this alone and we really need, you

know, the help of the community, we need, you know, other people, you know, that can reach the young people besides the police.

So I think it's working really as a full Cambridge Human Services, the school department, uh, families, everybody working together. Um, and I think there are some models of that throughout the country.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: Madam. Chair, may I follow up

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Councillor Carlone.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know, you know, this Superintendent, Counselor McGovern mentioned in it and just about every other Councilor has in the past. There's nothing more important than helping those who need the attention and care and, um, and we look to you and Human Services and social workers, like Councillor McGovern, to teach us and show us as Councilor McGovern said, we have the funds and nothing is more important and we all know we have to start early, but we have people who are in this terrible time now that we also have to help.

So please know that the Council is there. We, we need, perhaps, to be better educated and, and directed and I know

you know that, but I wanted to say it to make it very clear, thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Thank you, Councillor Corlone. Councillor Carlone yields the floor. Just very briefly, um, to you -- through the Chair to you, Superintendent. Um, one of the things I think it's gonna be important is a part of this discussion is what I call common language. Often times, I, I hear the word, you've used a lot and youth for me means, 10 to 12 to 18 and I think we have a plethora of programs for that age group.

When I -- or there were young people. When I say young people, I, I'm thinking about young men and women 18-35 now, maybe because I'm, well, older than that, that's the category. I think of, but I also know, when it comes to program, at least, I believe, please correct me if I'm wrong, that in terms of that age demographic, it seems like we don't have programs for these individuals.

And when I talked to a lot of the OGs, one of the things that they say is, not only is there not work, but the work that they are often given is demeaning and this and, and makes them feel disrespected. So they're not--- it doesn't very well so they're not inclined to want to do

that kind of work. I mean, we don't have public works with that. We have Human Services.

And I know that there was some conversation of how do we change the week -- nine-week program particularly for that older demographic, but not just nine week program the way it used to be the nine week program with a lot more on to it. And I'm hoping that that's gonna be part of what we do, going forward. So, you know, I, I want us -- all I'm saying is the Superintendent, but I want us all to think about the common language.

So when we say, youth and when we say, young people, again, I'm thinking of 18-35 year olds. The other thing I just wanted to ask, but just more of a question is what collaborations, programmatically speaking, do we have with the City Seeing that it seems our risk seems to derive primarily from Summerville, Do we have any programmatic strategies with the City of Somerville?

SUPERINTENDENT CHRISTINE ELOW: Um, so, Madam Chair, you know, informally we're working together to solve the grievances, but not formal programs. Uh, when I think about what would be helpful, I I think about, you know, mediating the conflict. Uh, and just your for your comments about the

youth and young people, I, I kind of think, you know, young people really for me it's 30 and below now.

Uh, and you know, when you get out of high school and I really feel like I was one of those kids, I was 18, not ready for college, not ready for, you know, anything. And you know, figuring out what I was gonna do with my life. And what I see now is those young people who are out of high school, maybe not working, or working kind of a dead end job, how can we somehow steer them towards a profession?

You know, maybe not the police for everybody, but, you know, public safety or other, you know, the trade fields, there are so many different fields for people who might not be college-bound, but really highlight those, uh, sort of opportunities for people and, and you know, help, you know, guide them, um, in those directions and whether it's the police or human services or city council or wherever. There's so many people in this community that want to help. So it's just a matter of putting the right pieces in place that will help guide our, our young people.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Thank you for that answer. I mean, I know that I've reached out to the

Sheriffs, both of Suffolk, Middlesex County, and I know they're interested in terms of pre --pre-post release kind of programming. But clearly what I think we need is organization, collaboration, coordination, and cooperation. We have to get all those things in the mix and I'm hoping that we walk away, we'll walk out of this meeting on that platform to build something that's going to work for the largest amount of people that are impacting our community.

Uh, we're gonna now move to the non-members of this committee and I'll go to, first go to our mayor who's present, Mayor Siddiqui, do you have a question or comment you would like to ask after which we'll go to Councillor Zondervan. Mayor Siddiqui, would you like the floor?

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Thank you, Chair. I guess my only -- I guess it's -- maybe come later, but I am curious about just the role of the Peace Commission. Um and a lot of this work, I was looking at just some programs in the past. Um, you know, maybe back when you were on council, Councillor Simmons, but I wanted some more information on that. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Uh, thank you. Thank you. Uh, interesting. And I believe I saw Brian Corr's --

Uh, oh yeah, there he is. The Peace Commission was -- came to being while I was with the City and it was around nuclear disarmament. Uh, I think we have stretched and broadened the role of, uh, Mr Corr. I don't know if we pay him any more, but I know we broaden the scope of work, uh, but I'll let him take the floor to explain, um, what he has done in around peace work and the larger, the larger definition of peace.

Uh, Brian Mr. Corr, I will give you the floor.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRIAN CORR: Thank you, Madam Chair and through you Madam Chair. I, my, my best guess would be that you, Madam Mayor, you're probably looking at some of the information from the Summer of Peace Initiative and for a number of years, that was an initiative that the Peace Commission did, primarily through me, working to bring together other City partners and Nonprofit organizations, um, to have conversations before the summer, really about, um, what people were anticipating, what trends they were seeing and so it involved many different partners.

And the main reason that that initiative came to an end was really that other programs and departments were taking on pieces of it and being a small department, a lot

of times, the best thing that the Peace Commission can do is really try to be a convener and bring people together who might not otherwise, either have those relationships or have a space to come together and share information.

So for I'd say, for about three or four years it was very helpful and as we moved into the 5th and 6th year, it really became one of those initiatives that, um, it was, it became another meeting that people had to go to because people had those relationships. People from churches and schools and youth centers and community group, um, so that that would be my, my best guess as a response.

And then I guess the last thing I would say, is that through the work with the Cambridge Community Response Network, which is looking at, constantly, how to respond to events that have traumatic impact on the community. Before COVID, we met regularly in person to both respond to things as they came up, but also to be proactive and to be honest with the pandemic, the inability of meeting in person, all of the crisis we've been facing.

Um, that group has not met as such really because everyone in that group almost has been responding constantly to the pandemic and all the things that come

with it and all the needs that have arisen. So, again, being aware of the time, I think the last thing I would say is that, um, primarily I personally work to be a good partner to other City departments to be helpful, for example, vigil tonight, I'll speak briefly.

Um, and I, I guess I, I'm always available and people I work with are always available to be part of conversations, help convene things and try to, again, bring that perspective of, um, looking at peace through a lens that's aware of the traumatic impact of events. Whether it's the gunshots that have been happening and the terrible killings that have happened, the impact of the pandemic, which is really a long term mass traumatic event, or, the, the nature of what's happening in our whole country around issues of policing, racial justice spoke. Um, I longer than I intended. So, let, let me pause there.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Corr Mayor Siddiqui, any follow-up to that?

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: I think I'm, I think I'm sad. I think, I do think the moment calls for some kind of, you know, some kind of convening or something like standing that it's like, you know, around the City's work, related

to the gun violence because it just feels, you know, yes, we have our committees, but, you know, how do we -- a consortium is not the right word, but something and I just wonder, you know, perhaps if it's time, maybe, for the Peace Commission to, to be more, you know, it could be either [inaudible 00:45:07] because, I think, times like these do require, um, I don't know, maybe thinking about that. So that's just a thought. Thanks.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: And thank you, uh, uh, Mayor Siddiqui. One of the things just about the time when the Peace Commission was developed, there was a department, which was called Civic Unity Committee which was disbanded in 1991, I want to say. And it was not replaced. And so that worked which was, in part, convening groups of people, individuals, community members, as well as department heads sort of got spread across what remained.

Uh, the idea was that -- the thought was that it would be absorbed by the human -- no, it's improper now, I can't get together right now. But that department was set up for to be reactive and not proactive and we have not put anything in place since the Civic Unity Committee was disbanded until several years ago, when I under -- with the

support of the council as the, um, same manager to appoint another Civic Unity Committee so that we could have some proactive, uh, programming and convening.

What's, what happened, Madam Mayor as you can well understand if you do not have a full-time or even a part-time designated person for a group that's working, that work is, is stilted and stunted because everyone on the committee that's working in that particular field or area is a volunteer and maybe doing other things on top of that.

So, it may be a conversation that we want to discuss, going forward, as to how -- if that's the way to go. Um, but I, I just wanted to give you a little history that there was something that sort of was in that sort of proactive role until the City, um, disbanded it. We'll now move if there's no other questions, Madam Mayor, we'll go to the non-member participants here. Will be in the following order: Councillor Zondervan and then Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler .

So Councillor Zondervan, you now have the floor.

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Thank you, Madam Mayor. um, Madam Chair, excuse me, as, as has been said earlier, um, this is obviously a very complex issue, but as

we're speaking specifically to the, the recent shootings, I wanted to ask through you to you to the Superintendent. Um, given that, you know, Xavier was, was murdered in in March and, and this is not the first summer that we have seen an uptick in shootings.

It's, it's quite a well-understood pattern, not just in Cambridge but across the country, sadly. Um, what steps were taken prior to the summer to anticipate and, and try to diffuse some of the violence that, that we knew , um,would, would be coming.

SUPERINTENDENT CHRISTINE ELOW: Through you Madam Chair. So every year and I believe it's under Councillor Simmons' Safe Streets meetings. We talk about our, you know, Deployment Plan, but also talk about Summer Programming and the things that we're gonna do with our young people to be in that preventative mode. Um, you know, reaching out to the young people.

I mean, for me, we were in preventative mode all year round. We're not just waiting for the summertime. We do see the uptick, uh, in the summertime. So what we do is, change our deployment strategy, but our outreach remains consistent with our young people who are at risk, um, of

picking up a gun or who have been, you know, victims of gun violence that is year round.

Um, you know, gun violence can happen at any time and we do see it, the uptick in the summer and that's really where we change our, our deployment strategy, at times, with bikes when we can, walking patrols. We have added with our new officers there now on walking deployments for, for their first year, where they are in the areas that are most active, uh, just to be out in the community, a lot more community engagement, um, is our focus and then trying to work with other groups like My Brother's Keeper and even Margaret Fuller House or Cambridge Health Alliance to figure out, okay, what are some, you know, little grievances that we should worry about? Who should we be talking to?

We've, um, increased our, uh, work with Roca in our meetings with Hannah, again, just to get a better handle on, um, you know, what's happening and, you know, what's happening out in the street and what we need to do in a preventative mode. But we're in prevention mode all year round and we increase our patrols and, again, the Summer Programming, uh, to, to prevent gun violence. But I do feel

like having some more help on the street. Um, and, and, you know, at the legitimate kind of building those trust figures, uh, that can really touch -- reach out and touch some of our young people who are prone to gun violence is something that we're, that we're lacking.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Superintendent, if I might add, uh, through the best Safe Streets, Safe Neighborhood, Safe Cities conversation several years ago, we had a real problem behind the restaurants that was between Brookline and Sidney Streets and because we were proactive and we got involved with that very quickly, we were able to shut it down. It took an enormous amount of work. But and a lot of people, Council included, did not hear about it because we were on it, because we were able to meet back in February and March prior to the summer.

That's just one instance, another instance, um, we all got together, again. I, I often recall these meetings um, in February, March, April to sort of be proactive and we, we saw that there was a problem brewing at Cast I and Cast II. At this -- at that point, our Commissioner Bard was with us. We walked through there, we did walks, we did talks, we did neighborhood presence and we were, with the

help of the property owner who was extraordinary, we were able to tap down the activity.

It took a lot of work. It didn't rise up to the attention of the City Council because, because of those meetings and because of being proactive, we were able to deploy the services and the resources of the Police Department, Human Services, the neighbors themselves that got involved and held that in place. And so what it really calls for is what the Superintendent is saying, is trying to be and finding ways to be as proactive as possible.

Safe Streets didn't launch as early this year because we were, we were in lockdown from, from COVID and so and I certainly would say, as we have these conversations, we continue to beef up that proactive model so we will have -- we won't have to continue to be as reactive, Councillor, do you have another question?

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Thank you, Madam Chair, through you. Um, I appreciate that explanation as well. Um, and, I mean, it's clear that, you know, despite all the hard work and, and effort that we're not getting as much of a handle on this problem as we would like, I mean obviously we want zero shootings and, and that's not

happening. So what new things can and should we be trying that might be able to get us there?

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: That's a great question, Councillor, and that's part of why we're here. Councillor McGovern and I, you know, who live in the lower part of the city that do have deep roots in the poor, particularly me who lives there every day for the last 40 years, that's why this meeting is happening because we want to bring together the best of what everybody has to say to bring some attention that is immediate as well as sustaining.

So I, you know, I thank you for reiterating the need, um, that was said by a number of others that we do something that's quick and immediate, but something that is proactive so that we don't no longer have to be reactive. Do you hear the floor Councillor because if so I will go to Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler.

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Thank you ma'am. So I believe Superintendent Elow wanted to respond.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Superintendent, did you want to yield or you want to speak?

SUPERINTENDENT CHRISTINE ELOW: Just really quickly

through you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to add the work that we're doing with the District Attorney's office through bringing really the grand jury process and bringing people who are witnesses and involved in shootings that are not cooperating.

We're using the grand jury process and the District Attorney has been more actively working with us, um, again, to try to bring some resolution to these shootings and I will add, we worked with some federal partners and we made a pretty major arrest of somebody, uh, that is involved in -- we believe is involved in some of the Cambridge shootings, we're still connecting the dots, but that came out, I believe, in the press the other day. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Thank you, Madam Superintendent. I'll move now to Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, you have the floor.

COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER: Thank you, Madam Chair and through you [inaudible 00:55:47] [clears throat] Vice Mayor Mallon. I have more comments than, than questions. But the one was as we're talking about violence interrupters and, and thinking about how to add some of those positions. I, um, since we were also talking about an

alternate public safety proposal and the HEART program and that there, there may be a natural connection there in terms of, um, providing those responses.

So just trying to keep that in, in mind. Um, and then the second piece was, um, and this goes back to a Safe Streets meeting that you had shared, um, that I went to before I was on the council, going back to 2018, I think, at the Pisani Center. Um, I was just impressed with that, that meeting about half of it, it seemed like was, uh, ended up being dedicated to discussions about jobs and economic opportunity as a way to address, uh, some of the, the causes of, uh, community violence, um, and just trying to make sure that's part of the conversation here.

And I don't know if it was a short answer about it tonight, but, but really thinking about, you know, addressing some of the underlying pieces and thinking about our current economic opportunity and trying to really, um, piece together, you know, what, what resources the City can provide that aren't, aren't there at the moment and really targeting some of those resources. So, um, I think that, that's all I had for now and I'll yield back.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Uh, thank you,

Councillor. And there have been some conversations, as in previous, um, Safe Streets, Safe City meetings where we talked about how do we employ -- deploy services and employ citizens that may need that extra warmth. And, and I know that some of the proposals that would be coming forward and you'll be hearing from over the next several weeks are going to speak exactly to that.

So thank you, uh, for putting -- reiterating and saying that because I think it's important. Uh, having heard from the members of the committee and the others, I'm going to move now to the Human Services Department. I believe you have Ellen Semonoff before. So Miss Semonoff, I will give the floor to you. The floor is yours.

ELLEN SEMONOFF: Thank you very much, Councillor Simmons. Um, I'm trying to think of the best way, um, have, I guess, several different points I'd like to make. Thank you for the opportunity to be here and I do understand the sense of urgency. Um, and I also want to say, that some of what we're trying to accomplish here, um, is there are some pieces of this that really relate to what do we do to prevent where we are, as well as what do we do to interrupt the violence that's happening right now.

And what I want to say, is from Human Services Department perspective, our expertise and the expertise of the programs that we support in the community are often more on the prevention side than on the immediate interruption of violence. So I just want to be honest about where our expertise lies.

The second thing in response to a question that, um, I can't remember which Councillor asked of, um, Superintendent Elow about some other programs. I just want to mention one: um, it's a model called Cure Violence, which the Annie Casey Foundation has supported in both Atlanta and Milwaukee. I'm not saying, it's the perfect model, but I am saying, it's a community-driven model in which community process produced the information about what was impacting that community and ultimately resulted in members of the community being the people who were hired to actually work on what was happening at all levels, but particularly to respond within their community and to support community members.

And so, um, I just point those out as possibilities of the kind of models that eventually the City might want to look at. Um, on the prevention side--

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Ms. Semonoff, before --

ELLEN SEMONOFF: Yes.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: you're going to prevention side, you mentioned, I didn't quite hear you.

ELLEN SEMONOFF: I am sorry, it's called Cure, C-U-R-E --

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Okay, Cure.

ELLEN SEMONOFF: -- Violence and that's the underlying model, that Annie Casey Foundation, um, supported it in both Atlanta and Milwaukee and both the communities implemented it somewhat differently. Um, someone sent me an article about it and I could forward it, um, to, um --

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: The clerk.

ELLEN SEMONOFF: -- and make sure that it then gets forwarded, um, to the rest of you. So I'm not saying, it's the perfect model, but I thought what was particularly interesting about it was the degree to which it was born out of a community process in which it -- were the members of the impacted community, who were identifying both what the challenges were, what they thought the solutions were and then individuals from the community were the people who actually worked -- hired and worked on, um, implementation.

Um, so what I would say, is for the -- on the prevention side, both this department itself and many of the community agencies that we fund and partner with, there are lots of programs that start, you know, from the earliest, you know, Baby University to, um, After School Programs, Preschool Programs, um, the Youth Centers, there are lots of programs which are actually significantly engaged with our young people in ways and with parents of young people in ways that, um, end up deeply supporting young people across the board.

But what I would also say, is that there are gaps in what we currently have. And somebody, I think it was Vice Mayor Mallon, who mentioned this. I'm really interested in understanding more about the equity roadmap possibility because I do think that many people in this community can identify in fifth grade, sixth grade, young people who are at high risk of not ending up with the future that their families want for them. And we don't right now have robust systems.

We have individual programs, we have individual efforts, but we don't have robust systems that ensure that both the young people and their families get the support

that they might need. And so I think that when we think about prevention, um, that's an area where we don't have all that we need. And I'm not trying in any way to diminish what I think are wonderful programs run both by community agencies and by the department, but the depth of the programs that hold young people and support their families across the board, I would say, we don't have, um, the depth of what we need there.

Um, when we think about some of the things that we've done, again, our strength and talk a little bit about what our department does for 18-30-year-olds, but a lot of the strength of the department actually is in the programs that are up through young people graduating high school. And the -- we have some Jobs Programs and we have College Success Programs, but that the depth of our expertise and of our significant programming is actually birth to 18 and then other programs that go for other adults.

Um, so what I would say, is when we look at, you know, the Mayor Summer Youth Employment Program there, you know, 800 young people this summer through our department were deployed in largely valuable programming that supported them, most of it in person this summer. Some of it still,

excuse me, some of it's still virtual, but the majority of our young people were working in person.

Um, the program that, um, -- someone, one of the Councillors alluded to or maybe it was, um, Superintendent Elow the, um, MBK Program that operated, um, or is continuing to operate this week at, um, Danehy Park, which provided strong support to 14 to 19-year-olds in, um, intensive programming this summer.

So it's not that there aren't programs, we have, um but what I would say, is the, um, through line that, that holds individual children and individual families across the board is not as strong as it needs to be and it's particularly not strong enough when, when families are in crisis. Um, and what is it that we have and what can we have that would better support families?

Um, I wanted, and I want to talk a little bit about what our department does do within the 18 to 30-year-old realm. Um, I think many of, you know, um, about the College Success Program, so the work that's really deeply the part of the department rather than schools is as young people leave the high school, those who are first generation and attending Local Community College or thinking they're

attending Local Community College, but may not actually be registered or enrolled.

We have staff who coach those young people and who help ensure that they get attached, support them once they're there. Um, so these are young people who, many of whom are on a good path, but lots of them, their attachment to college, both for financial reasons or family reasons, for economic reasons, for social emotional reasons may be less secure than it needs to be.

And what I would say, is we added a new another coach last summer during the pandemic because the depth of support that our young people needed, um, was more than the two coaches we had could, um, develop and I think we've talked a little bit about mental health, the need for mental health and social emotional support for those young people is fairly strong.

But what I would say, some of the things that we collectively need to work on is the young people who graduate and don't have a good plan. Many people could have identified that much earlier. And so while the program we have is valuable, it would be much more valuable and it could be, if the same efforts were happening much earlier

because when you leave high school and the plan isn't really there, it's much harder. Whereas, the work that could be done and maybe for everybody, it's not college, I'm not saying, it has to be, but to the extent that that is part of what's the aim here, some of the work that needs to happen, engagement that needs to happen, not when they're graduating and not in the spring of their senior year.

That needs to be much more robust because there's so much that can happen. But that support would be more valuable if we were able to do more of that work earlier. Um, there was reference made to, um, the jobs program and, um, I think many of, you know, but the Cambridge Works Program, which was designed, I'm gonna say, 15 years ago, but I might be off maybe it's only 10 years ago by now, but it was designed as a piece of a community safety process at the time identifying, um, the need for program other than the City's nine-week-program, um, that would provide much more case management and support and a better job for individuals 18-35, who were disconnected from the workforce, many of whom had, um, significant criminal records.

Um, and that program over the years has provided incredibly valuable support to, I don't have the numbers with me here, but it's, um, maybe 150 or more, probably more than that. Um, and many of you have been to the graduations at different times and I want to say, that, you know, not everyone makes it through the program. And part of that has to do with, you know, we have using the 'young people' term because they're 18-35, but we have young people who end up getting arrested on drug charges.

We have young people who sometimes get arrested on gun charges. And, um, some of the time our staff were able to get people, particularly the drug charges, get people to be able to come back, um, into the program. Um, but what I will say, is part of the design of that program was that if you don't have strong supervision and you don't have strong case management, then just giving someone a job not is -- is not necessarily enough.

So the rationale that the nine-week-program, which really was a program designed for the Public Works Department, needs someone to throw trash. They need someone to work in the, um, uh, parks and most of the jobs through the nine-week-program do not necessarily involve intensive

supervision and support or necessarily lead to a pathway, but I will say that, um, and I believe that Councillor Simmons was involved in this right when Commissioner Bard came to town, was the idea was, was there a possibility of a pathway for individuals who were coming out of prison, um, or who were otherwise involved in violence? Was there an easier pathway to help get people a nine-week-job?

Because Corey wasn't necessarily a barrier and when Russell Harden was working for the Margaret Fuller House as street worker, Russell had the, um, pathway to bring people for the nine-week-program. Um, and get them hired. The challenge there is -- and not all that many people were ultimately successful, although some were. was that if people could show up for work every day and if they were -- and some people were able to do that, but a lot of people wasn't enough money, it wasn't enough support.

And so that was why the Cambridge Works Program was designed. But what I would say, is the Cambridge's problem isn't an end in itself. What was valuable and is valuable about it is what started as mostly City jobs have now largely become transitional jobs in private sector. Um, Spaulding Rehab is one of the places where the a number of

folks ended up with full-time permanent jobs at Spaulding and are now the supervisors of the people who come through the transitional jobs program, The MIT Finance office has for a long time been a strong partner. The, uh, CambridgeSide Mall has for a long time been a strong partner.

Um, what I would say, is that ultimately the Cambridge Works Program is a first step for someone. It does not in and of itself lead to an economic situation which is can set someone up. If right now, the way you're making your money is selling drugs, you are not gonna immediately get from the Cambridge Works Program, enough money to replace the income. And so the program works as a stepping stone and it works for people who've made a decision or in a place in their life at the moment to separate themselves.

But what needs to follow it are more robust job training opportunities and I think that we have -- there are a number of training programs that already exist and there are a number of opportunities to create potential training programs that could better meet the needs and that's both something that ARPA funding could help with and something that as, I think, many of, you know, we did the,

um, report with the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority, with U Mass Boston and there's a lot of important information in that report about who's not being served currently and what are some of the opportunities to provide that service.

But I would say, the last piece on that is if there are a large number of training programs that currently exist, both in Cambridge and in Boston. And one of the things that happens is a number of our residents, who seem like logical individuals for those job training programs end up struggling as they apply or as they get into those programs.

And so what are the set of, um, supports and what are the set of experiences prior to the training programs that will make it possible for our Cambridge residents to actually be successful because it's not that those programs aren't there, it is that many of our young people are not successfully able to access and complete those programs. Um, I'll stop there. I'm not sure what else might be useful.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Let me open the floor to see if there are any questions from the committee.

People put their --

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Madam Co-Chair.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Well, first before I go to you, Councillor Co-chair. I want to acknowledge the fact that Councillor Toomey is with us.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Yeah, I don't have to go. I don't have to go first. I just can't see who has their hand up so I'm just putting my name in the queue.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Okay, thank you. Councillor Toomey, did you have a question or comments you wanted to raise?

COUNCILLOR TIMOTHY J. TOOMEY: Not at this time, Madam Chair. Not at this time.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Okay, thank you, Councillor Toomey. Councillor Toomey yields. Um Councilor Vice Mayor Mallon is in queue, followed after -- followed by Councillor Nolan. Vice Mayor.

VICE MAYOR ALANNA M. MALLON: Oh, thank you, Madam Chair through, um, through you to Ms. Semonoff. Thank you for that presentation and, um, I think it's helpful to have some of this context and understand, you know, the DHSP is aware that we do have cap -- you know, gaps in our -- currently have gaps in the programs that exist right there,

Places where we don't have a program that exists or even a community program that exists like the Violence Interruption Program that maybe we were all talking about. I, I met a kid on Sunday, who just graduated from RSTA, the Carpentry Program.

I asked what he was doing and he said that, you know, I'm working at a grocery store and I, uh, I think I'm gonna go back to school at Benjamin Franklin in February for construction management. Not sure. And I was like so you know that there's a Carpentry Union here in Cambridge, you could just call them up and apply. And he was like what is a union? Right. So we let this young man graduate from a program, who did not understand the next step from an actual technical high school experience into a job placement program. So I appreciate that you said that out loud that we let a lot of our kids graduate without a plan and we know who they are. [Bobby Fabbro] was one of those kids, right?

So that really is something that we deeply need to think about and talk about; how we can both grab those kids at those those points along the way. Um and we, we need to make sure that they have a plan, but we also need to think

about where we can also make the biggest difference, right?

We have a great Summer Program for kids through the Mayor Summer Youth Employment Program. How do we create a yearlong mentorship and internship program for our kids during the school years so they have access to like the business that exist here, the pharmaceuticals that exist here, all the jobs that happen here. How did we get them out into the community to see them? Um, I think thinking about the Workforce Program and understanding that that was created 50, 10, 15 years ago, that will -- it needs, it needs a hard look and figuring out how and who it's serving and how it could be strengthened to serve more people.

Uh, and, maybe a more robust way, you know, thinking about even how much it's paying, right? It's \$15 an hour; the Cambridge living wage is almost 17. How do we think about saying to kids, "We want you in this program; it's important to get to the next job then, you know, a career. We were gonna pay you to come here and do this in a way that it's gonna be more attractive than, than some of the other things that you're doing".

Um, how do we think about, you know, McDonald's, I think, is actually venmoing employees every day, right?

Rather than even waiting a week. Like how do we be creative about thinking about this community and this population that we're trying to serve and their needs and how we can respond to them, um, in a more modern fashion, right? Like we're gonna like 2021 this whole situation because I think we, we have a unique opportunity right now, both with the ARPA funding with, um, COVID, coming out of COVID and thinking about how to recover equitably.

How do we have a reset? How do we think about transforming what we already have to better serve the needs of the kids that were really thinking about right now and, you know, I'm thinking about those 18 to 30-year-olds, like, like you were mentioning earlier, but I'm also thinking about our, um, younger kids, right? If we think about Baby University, um, which is a tremendous program, which I think really does that deep connection when, you know, young families are entering into having a family and getting those connections and those resources.

It's currently, I think it has, um, you know, it has a maximum limit. Like how do we grow those programs that are really working and really helping to connect families right at the beginning so we catch them? Um, how do we think

about growing those programs and making sure that they are more robust? Um, I, I think that's probably -- I think I had some other thoughts about the Youth Centers and maybe those could be open at night or on the weekends, you know, I was just at the Cambridge Community Center and they open their gym up on Saturdays and they get 30 to 40 young people that come and play basketball.

You know, those are those opportunities where you can have those community members, those community mentors who are doing that deep connection work and asking those kids, you know, "What are you doing? How can I get you connected to that Carpenter's Union or a Job Readiness Program?"

Um, I think we need to be really thoughtful about thinking about how we can both make what we have more robust and more intentional about reaching these kids, um, and also thinking about those resources that -- it doesn't necessarily cost more money right? It's not a new program; it's opening the Youth Centers on a Saturday, getting those community mentors in and making sure that there's programming for them, making sure we have these Job Readiness Programs laid out and ready so that those mentors know this kid can go here, this kid can go here or even

have a warm handoff.

I think, thinking about, you know, Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler said it like when you think about gun violence and you think about trauma, you really need to go back to like Workforce Programs and programs that help uplift and support our kids. So I really hope that in this moment we are willing to be transformational, we are willing to have a big reset and think about how we as a community are gonna come together and really focus on our kids because we know who they are and we've lost, tragically, a number of them and I think it's, it's incumbent on us to figure out how to not lose one more. So those are all more comments and questions. Sorry, Madam Chair, um, I'll yield the floor back because I know I see so many hands up there. Thank you for allowing me this time.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Thank you, Madam. Vice Mayor, the Vice Mayor yields. A few things: we're coming up on 6:22. After we've heard from each member, I'm going to hold the floor to go to public comment because I know there are three people waiting and I want them to at least have their opportunity to speak. Afterwards we can come back and

resume, time permitting.

So I, I say, that for a few reasons, um, to acknowledge to my colleagues that this is not gonna be the last conversation we're gonna have on this. Um, and so in order for us to be able to go into that public comment, I would ask if we could maybe have one question that we ask. Go to public comment, we'll come back to the floor.

I have a hard stop at 7, but I do know my Co-Chair is here, um, and if with the, with the agreement of the voting members here, if we hit 7 and we're still needing to have more discourse, um, with, with the support of my Co-Chair, I can ask if we could have meeting go for another 15 minutes or so, but I will have to leave. Uh, Vice Mayor yields the floor.

But let me just say this, Madam, Vice Mayor can make some very good comments, but let me add one thing and not, not an objection, but in support of what you're saying, I want to reiterate, I said it earlier. I think it's very important and that's why I called the OG Project that we speak to people who we have failed because they are going to give us the best roadmap to what we could have done.

So one OG could have said, if I had, um, if I hadn't

been pushed toward college, which wasn't for me, it might have been a different scenario. I don't want to give the examples, but I think it's gonna be very important we hear from those who we failed in order to know what we can do to cure. So all of what you said, but in addition to hear from again, I think the OGs are richest resource when it comes to this conversation.

Um, Councillor Nolan, you have the floor after Councillor Nolan, it's Councillor, after Carlone there is um, Councillor McGovern, Councillor Toomey, I'll come back to see if you still want to take the floor. After which we'll have public comment and then we'll come back to the floor and take the non-voting members if they still wish to speak. Councillor Nolan, you have the floor.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, Chair Simmons, and I will try to be brief. I really appreciate what you just said about us, making sure that we reach out to people whom we have failed and their peers and their, uh, colleagues and their, and their families to understand what would have been better. And I really wanna, uh, echo what the Vice Mayor said. Because constantly this all comes down to a couple of different things. We need to be talking

to every single kid, we should be talking to every single kid.

There is no reason why every single kid in this city and as the Vice Mayor and we've all been saying, we know who they are, they should be also be able to answer the question, "Who's been checking up on you, who's been calling you, who's been helping you, ho's been supporting you?" And like the Vice Mayor, I often talk to, um, young people in that, in that age group, particularly as they come right out of CRLS and it's been pretty disappointing sometimes for me on the side of policymaker whether it was when I was in school committee or not here.

We have all these programs, we're doing it all and then to hear directly from the kids that it's not reaching them. they don't know, they have not been followed up on, in particular. It maybe they've been offered a program, but if no one is going to then go follow up, we know what is gonna happen, which is, we will see me more and more kids fall through the cracks.

I have heard it over and over again and I have tried to always communicate that to the people to say this is what I'm hearing because if you're not hearing it and you

don't know what, you won't know enough to fix it. But we, we should never have a situation where we can't talk to any program and say, "Who are the kids you're following, who are you in touch with, who have you outreached to? What is it that they need?" We really can get there.

We are a small enough city that we can get there. We should get the and I think as we bring these programs together, whether it was the ones we heard about from Superintendent Elow or from, uh, Director Corr or, um, Ellen Semomoff or really reaching back into the community for the programs, wherever they are. We are not doing enough to really make sure that there's follow through, follow up and accountability for the programs that we have and this has to be a moment when we take advantage of it to say, we are not going to let this happen again.

So I, I hope we are doing that outreach again. It is something that we can do, we know how to do and we know that we haven't always followed through. We provide programs and somehow seem to think, "Well, if it's out there, people will come", no, it's the kids who and the families and the young adults for whom are not coming to the programs that we need to make sure that we are doing

actually much more active understanding of what their needs are and reaching out to them to ensure they know about it, particularly if they're struggling at all in any area, they're not going to come forward and say, "I need help."

And we know that, that that is the best way that we can reach them if we actually offer it and have strong relationships with them over time, which means that we will then be able to help deliver those, those services that we do have in the programs. That's, that's -- I just want to echo all that, I won't say too much more. I asked questions because I know you want to get to the public comment, Chair Simmons, I really appreciate you and Chair McGovern having this joint meeting so that we could hear about this and talk about it.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Thank you. Councilor. Councilor Nolan yields the floor. Councillor Carlone.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: Thank you, Madam Mayor and, um, thanks to Ms. Semonoff as well. Uh, we all celebrate what Human Services does for the City, um, and yes, we do more than other cities, but I greatly appreciate Mrs. Semonoff's thoughts that we have to fill the gaps. I know how successful Cambridge Works is. I always enjoy the

presentations, but I also know that not enough people sign up for it, that there's greater capacity.

So we have to look at that program and others, perhaps, maybe there's a bonus, financial bonus that's, uh, included in it, that the City helps pay for. Um, I've, I've been on -- my wife and I were mentors for 15 years to kids and that had an incredible effect on the kids, just having somebody outside of their family and their teachers who followed them through elementary school, through high school to college or beautician school and we were like aunts and uncles and it wasn't always successful. One boy died tragically, um, but most of them succeeded beyond what people thought they, how they would succeed.

Uh, they also had After School and Summer Programs and to say, yes, uh, program and I think we have to seriously look at a Mentor Program. I know other Councillors have brought that up, but I just wanted to mention that and this gets to even a broader idea.

I personally have always felt, maybe many of you do, there should be a two-year public service nationally and if it's not nationally, maybe we sponsor it in Cambridge that my, both my boys went to college right after high school

and stopped after a year because they didn't know what they wanted to study were much like has been brought up, I believe, by Ms. Semonoff, we could sponsor something like that for the kids and they get paid for that two-year service and they begin to helpfully figure out what they want.

So, in short, as Councillor McGovern said at the beginning, we have funds, we have problems and we can work out programs that help people through difficult times after high school, dropping out of high school and, um, now is the time to do this. Thank you, Madam Chair, I yield.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Thank you, Councillor Carlone. Councillor Carlone yields the floor. We now move to Councillor McGovern.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thank you, Madam Co-Chair. Um, just real quick, I would as a Co-Chair, I would prefer not to extend. I want to be at the vigil as well on time. Um, we're gonna have more conversations about this and we could probably stay here all night talking about it.

So I, I'm gonna just I'm just gonna fly through these really quickly, um, Ms. Semonoff, I don't expect you to answer these, but just if you can take note and, and, you

know, for further conversation, um, when we're talking about, uh, programs that we have implemented and I, and I agree with, um, Councillor Simmons about, you know, making sure that we reach out to folks that we have failed to see where we might have gone wrong, but it's also reaching out to, uh, young people, who are in the system, now about what they actually want and what they actually need.

We have lots of programs, but clearly there are some folks who aren't accessing those programs, don't want to access those programs, maybe, don't know about those programs or for some reason those programs are not appealing. So when we're designing programs, we need to have the voices of those younger folks at the table, telling us what it is they want and what will get them into the door because once we have them in the door, we can have much more success.

Um, I also want to say, um, you know, we talk all the time about Cambridge having a lot of dots, but no lines. Um, you know, we have a lot of programs, how do they work together? How are they interconnected? How do we make sure that people know about them? Right. Uh, you know, where is the central easy to find resource of?

And you know, find a Cambridge does a great job with this. Um, but where's the central resource where, you know, as I could go to either as a parent or as a younger person interested in services and say, "These are all the things that are open to me, uh, in the City that that I can apply for and I'm not sure we do a great job of that.

Um, you know, and, you know, this is a challenge that I, I would like to throw out there to the City. Um, and, and Ms. Semonoff, you mentioned, you know, the mayor's Summer Work Program, which is great, but we also know that if you're 17 or 18 years old in high school, you don't get a placement typically, right? Because we place the younger kids first because the thought is the 17-year-olds can go get a job in the community.

I got news for you: a lot of those kids don't go get a job in the community and can't. And so, you know, or as the Vice Mayor mentioned of Baby University, I don't want to see any family or child who is at risk and they in need in the City, sit on a waiting list somewhere and not getting the services that they need. We have the money to, to add the staff that we need.

We have the capability to add it. You know, when,

when, when I was in the Mayor's office and the Mayor's office doesn't have much to do with the Mayor Summer Work Program, ironically, but when I was in the Mayor's Office and I'll get calls from parents saying, "You know, my kid is 16 years old or 17 years old and didn't get a job. And I don't know what the heck is going to do all summer and I don't have the money to do something constructive." That's our failure.

And so I want that challenge. I don't want any anybody else sitting on a waiting list because we say, we can't serve them. And then lastly, I would say, um, you know, and Ms. Semonoff, you talked about, um, the Jobs Program, the Works Program and you mentioned that not everyone finishes because they pick up a charge, which is sadly true.

Um, but I want to know who picks up that kid when they leave the work program and pick up that charge? Right, where's the hand off to something else? You know, the the young people who go through the program, who, who aren't dealing with, you know, aren't picking up charges or are really able to engage and work the program the way it's meant to be.

Those young folks get on, get on the pathway to, to

jobs. The ones who don't make it, who's picking them up? Where are the services are gonna, who's reaching out to them and say, "Hey, you know, you didn't make it in the jobs program, but here's something else." Because, I think, probably most of those young folks disappear into the wind and those are the ones who are more at risk of falling into violence. And, and, and so, um, those are just my thoughts.

Um, you know, we, we, we really need to wrap our arms around all of these, all of these, uh, you know, young folks and that goes up to at 52. I think a young person, someone who's 30 as a young person. Um, and uh, but, again, there's too many gaps and there's too many cracks. So thank you, Madam Co-Chair. I will yield.

ELLEN SEMONOFF: Councillor Simmons, if I could just say, one thing I know we're trying to move along. Um, I just want to say first, we changed the Mayor Summer Youth Employment Program, um, Councillor McGovern, so we don't turn aw -- we shifted.

First of all, we didn't turn away any young people this summer, but I also want to say, um, we shifted last summer, summer before this to, um, ensuring that regardless of age that we served all low and moderate income young

people that we shifted from a 14 -- from it being aged-based to it being, um, income-based so that we wouldn't be abandoning low and moderate income, 17 and 18-year-olds.

And the second thing I want to say, I would not pretend for a moment that every young person who goes through the Cambridge Works Program, um, and gets arrested, um, in the end gets connected. But I do want to say that our case management staff go to court with people, do follow up with people, do stay in touch.

And so I'm not saying, it's perfect, but I wouldn't want to leave the impression that they don't, um, stay connected and that, that's not the end of the line for someone,

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thank you, I appreciate that Ms. Semonoff.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Councillor McGovern yields the floor, we're now going to go to public comment. Uh, the Clerk is going to handle public comment for us this evening. So we will now turn the floor over to the Clerk to take us through public comment. Councillor McGovern will be in the chair.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thank you, Madam. Co-

Chair. Mr. Clerk.

CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON: First speaker in public comment is Debbie Bonilla. Debbie, you have the floor, you can speak.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Debbie Bonilla, a mother of three children and the co-founder of a Nonprofit called Equity Roadmap, spoke in response to the gun violence. She said that she, along with her team, had submitted a proposal to the City Council the month before, which includes a proactive and reactive response to gun violence. In order to reduce gun violence and gang activity, she proposed that through Equity Roadmap, the City agree to monetarily support a program that employs formerly incarcerated people.

She affirmed that with their connection to young people in Cambridge through their work in the schools with families and through Friday Night Hype, they are familiar with many young people in Cambridge. Equity Roadmap, according to her, will provide consultation to identified youth for program and connect them to mentors with funding from City.

She said that, if this proposal is supported, Equity

Roadmap will collaborate with Safety Net and ROCA to identify youth engaging in criminal activity in Cambridge and function as a consultant and referral to the mentoring program. Identified youth will then be invited into a fellowship to work with formerly incarcerated mentors to engage in an 18-month program, she explained.

Mentorship, she claimed, will focus on the process of pro-social engagement, focusing on changes in cognition through cognitive behavioral therapy. She added that mentorship will also work with Cambridge agencies to connect youth with transportation benefits, housing assistance, behavioral health care, long term job retention services and other vital resources to help them meet their personal and professional goals. Therefore she concluded by asking for a financial and political commitment from the City to support the aforesaid measures.

Ms. Jennifer started by thanking Councillor Nolan for highlighting the mental health aspect because she claimed that her son suffered from PTSD and also a severe panic disorder after facing gun violence in the city. She wanted to know if there was anyone at all to show up for her son or so many other families that suffered under similar

circumstances.

She said that she was there to emphasize the importance of mental health aspect as kids that were impacted by gun violence needed to know that it's okay to be afraid and also be reassured that people are there for them. She further confided that she also has a stepson, who is directly involved with gun violence and has restraining orders against him from entering certain parts of the city because he's deemed to be a danger.

She also said that she was sick and tired of Zoom meetings and insisted that the need of the hour is for the City to get out into the pavements and meet with these kids, understand what they're going through and then think of taking steps that will pull kids out of the tag of being a danger. This can be only done by taking measures to bolster their mental health, she opined. She concluded by stating that people have been sitting too long on this issue and it's time to act.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thank you. Good. Mr. Clerk.

CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON: Next speaker is identified as PC. PC, please raise your hand. PC. Please go ahead. PC

if that you identified as Deborah, please go ahead. Mr. Chair PC does not appear in the Zoom.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Okay. Thank you. So that is -- that's everyone who has signed up. Mr. Clerk, again, I don't have my computer in front of me so.

CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON: That is correct. That is everyone who signed up to speak.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Alright, on a motion by Councilor Carlone to close public comment. Roll call.

City Clerk Anthony Wilson called the roll:

Vice Mayor Alanna M. Mallon - Yes

Councillor Patricia M. Nolan - Absent

Councillor Timothy J. Toomey - Yes

Councillor Dennis J. Carlone - Yes

Councillor E. Denise Simmons - Yes

Councillor Marc C. McGovern - Yes

Yes - 5, Absent - 1. Motion passed.

CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON: Motion passes 5 in favor 1 absent.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thank you. Uh, and again, Mr. Clerk. Um, I'm a little bit in the dark here without my, uh, Zoom right in front of me. So we have about

15 minutes left. Um, prior to public comment, members of the committee, uh, spoke. Are there non-members of the committee that have their hand up, Mr. Clerk?

CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON: I see Councillor Zondervan.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: Mr. Co-Chair, did we take a vote the Clerk call, public comment?

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: We did.

COUNCILLOR E. DENISE SIMMONS: We did. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: So Mr. Clark, do you call them, the first non-member of either of these committees to speak please?

CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON: I see Councillor Zondervan's hand up.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Councilor Zondervan, you have the floor.

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Thank you, Mr. Co-Chair and to you and through you, um, appreciate this conversation and really agree with a lot of what my colleagues have said and I'm particularly struck by the sense of urgency that's, that's being communicated here, um, because while it's true that this is both long-term and

short-term problem-solving, there are some things that we can do immediately that we know will have long-term effects.

Um, for example, we could fund our Universal pre-k and After School Programs fully starting this fall. And, and as you had asked make making sure that nobody is on a waiting list to gain access to these programs. And we have a presumably once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to do this immediately because we have \$65 million dollars in the bank that could be spent towards these priorities right away. We heard in, in public comments that we need more Mental Health Services. I couldn't agree more and, and for years the City has disinvested in Mental Health Services as has the health line.

We, we've heard a lot about economic opportunity which obviously we need to invest in and, you know, for a lot of people and a lot of younger people, by the time we try to address their, their needs with, with something like the Jobs Program, it's, it's largely too late. So, again, we need to invest much earlier in, in people's education and, and then much earlier in their careers.

Um, we need to fully fund the Heart Program and, and

I've been really encouraged by the City Manager saying that, that's the plan. So I hope that we can move very, very quickly on, on doing that.

So, I guess, one question I do have for Ms. Semonoff is, can we fund our university pre-k programs and After School programs fully this fall? What, what stands in our way at this point from fully operationalized in those programs because they are great programs? And the only thing is that we're not able to provide enough of it.

ELLEN SEMONOFF: Through you, Mr. Chair, um, what I would say, is that we, um, the funding is not the primary challenge, I would say, at this moment the issues for After School Programs are largely issues of staffing and space. Um, and I do think that, um, this is an issue that's not just a City issue, it's, uh, an issue that our community programs are facing as well.

Um, and it's, um, longer term, we have great opportunity, I would say, in the immediate September, the opportunity to fund every child, um, even if we provide support, which I believe is quite possible to provide scholarship assistance for, um, community programs, the issue right now is space and staff as well. But you're

right to be, I mean, right, -- I agree with you that, um, providing more opportunities is very much something that we need to be paying attention to.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Councilor Zondervan.

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Thank you and thank you through you, Mr. Chair, I appreciate the, the challenge, but funding and you know, staffing and space constraints can be resolved largely through the application of more money. So I guess I'm still confused why applying more money wouldn't allow us to address those, those challenges?

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Are you looking for an answer to that question, Councilor?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I guess if there is one, maybe there's one.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: I, I mean I would just say just, you know, I mean, I. I agree with that money for us is not the issue, but I think where it comes into -- and I actually I think space, there are some opportunities now with space because the storefronts that we didn't have two years ago necessarily or even last year, um, and that is a question of, are we willing to sort of, you know, I was

just at the Fresh Pond Mall and there's tons of big huge spaces there that are empty, you know, I don't know if that's -- if we're willing to do that.

I think the, the staffing can often be difficult finding, I mean, you can throw all the money in the world out, but you gotta find people who want to do it and are trained to do it and that could be a challenge, but certainly, you know, if you're paying someone 25 bucks an hour, 30 bucks an hour as opposed to 15 bucks an hour, you might get, you know, more bites at that apple. So money is always a good thing. Um, but it's not always the only thing that matters, but I, I hear, you know, I think we need to be spending more.

Um, thank you. Back to you, Councillor.

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Thank you, thank you Mr. Chair and to you and through you. I mean if this is our top priority then let's at least try. I understand it may be hard to hire people or to rent space. But are, are we even trying to do that? Um, you know, at least increase the number of people that we can service this, this fall. What I've heard so far is that well at best get back to what we were able to do pre-pandemic.

So you know, let's do as much as we can and we have \$65 million dollars in the bank. Um, my, my second question is around Mental Health Services that, you know, my family struggled to find the Mental Health Services that we needed. We've heard it in public comment, again, today, it's, it's just really atrocious that we are not providing this basic needs to our community that we know people need it. And when they don't get the treatment they need, some people can turn to violence.

And I, I don't understand why we are not investing in that basic service that we know would make such a huge difference in our community if we provided more Mental Health Services, um, to, to the people who need it.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Are, are you doing, again, are you directing that? It is sort of a half comment, half question. [laughs]You're, you're looking for an answer?

ELLEN SEMONOFF: Um, to the extent I can give you an answer, um, Councillor Zondervan. Um, what I would say is that, um, our department doesn't provide Mental Health Services that isn't within, but I don't disagree with you that mental health, that we have a crisis around Mental

Health Services. And, um, I also think we have some opportunity, um, again, with our ARPA funding to actually use ARPA funding for Mental Health Services.

I think one of the challenges there and I'm not an expert on this. So I want to be careful. One of the challenges is also, capacity, um, there in terms of, um, my understanding is that the um, uh, dearth of people, um, right now that there is a huge need for more, um, Councillors and therapists. Um, but to the extent that it's certainly something where, um, resources in terms of -- because you're looking largely to contract for services.

And I definitely think that that's something that, um, I think we put on the table as something that it made sense for us to be looking at as a part of the ARPA because we know that this is across the board, both for our young people and for adults. That the need for mental health services is huge

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Councillor Zondervan, um, just as -- I wasn't necessarily planning on mentioning this tonight, but, um, you know I, I have a 10 years or so history of, um, working with and also pushing back a little bit against the, the Health Alliance in terms of their

mental health, some of their decisions, uh, In closing the psych ER there was there was a plan to merge the Adult and Children's, uh, Psychiatric Programs, Inpatient Program so that you would have adults and children on the same floor.

And I fought with Councillor Decker at the time, um, against that and that didn't happen. Um, what I'm hearing now and I don't know if this number is exactly right, but even if it's off by a little bit it's still alarming that there are roughly 800 people on the waiting list for Mental Health Services at CHA and somewhere over a 1000 on the waiting list for psychiatrists for mental health medication.

Um, I am talking with folks, uh, now and we will be having the Human Services meeting with CHA To talk about this, uh, and to talk about what their, um, what the status of their mental health, uh, programs are and what they need and how we can help, uh, to address that, but it is a major, major infrastructure crisis. Um, we say this all the time.

We have a lot of folks, you know, we know, Councillor Zondervan, you and I talked to a lot of folks who are unhoused. Um, you know, you can get someone who says, they

want to get -- they're ready to get into services and, and want to address their substance use and oftentimes it's, you know, "Okay, we'll wait two weeks until we can get you a bed somewhere". Um, and by then you've lost the person and that goes for folks who have mental health, uh, crisis as well when they need to be in therapy and they need that support, they need it.

And if you tell them that in six months they can have an intern who's gonna meet with them for six months before he or she goes back to school, that's not meeting the need and it's not acceptable. So I'm on this and been having conversations and we will pull a Human Services meeting together, uh, in the very near future. Uh, now we have, we have about four, we have about four minutes left because I do want to get to the vigil so Councillor, do you want to yield for now? We will be coming back to another meeting on this subject as well.

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, I'm, I'm done. I just, I just want us to move as quickly as possible and put that money to work so that we can help our community. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thank you. Mr. Clerk is

-- any -- Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler maybe or any other non-member have their hand up?

CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON: I do not see any other hands raised.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Okay. Anyone before we adjourn? Okay. All right. Uh, on a motion by Councillor Carlone because he's sitting next to me, but socially distanced to adjourn. Roll call.

CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON: On adjourn-

City Clerk Anthony Wilson called the roll:

Vice Mayor Alanna M. Mallon - Yes

Councillor Patricia M. Nolan - Absent

Councillor Timothy J. Toomey - Yes

Councillor Dennis J. Carlone - Yes

Councillor Marc C. McGovern - Yes

Councillor E. Denise Simmons - Absent

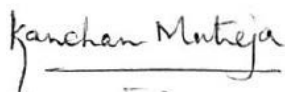
Yes - 4, Absent - 2. Motion passes.

The Cambridge City Council Human Services & Veterans Committee adjourned at approximately 06:57 p.m.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, **Kanchan Mutreja**, a transcriber for Datagain, do hereby certify: That said proceedings were listened to and transcribed by me and were prepared using standard electronic transcription equipment under my direction and supervision; and I hereby certify that the foregoing transcript of the proceedings is a full, true, and accurate transcript to the best of my ability.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name this 30th day of March 2023.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kanchan Mutreja". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Signature of Transcriber