

## **Minutes of the Mayor's Special Advisory Committee on Neighborhood-Based Resiliency**

May 30, 2017—795 Mass Ave, City Hall, Ackerman Room: 6:30 P.M.

Members present: Suni Dillard; Gary Dmytryk; Julia Holloway; Craig Kelley, Chair; Ethridge King, Vice-Chair; Gail Kubik; Sam Seidel; Steve Wineman.

Committee staff: Wilford Durbin, *Executive Assistant to the Committee*

Mr. Kelley thanked everyone for attending, and said that he had planned on making a Powerpoint presentation to the group, but they are not very effective. He said the Committee should be discussing what their final project should look like, and have an idea by the end of June.

He stated that he thought of the project as starting with the individual, then broadening to the household, the neighborhood, and then the city. Above that were NGOs, businesses, the state, and federal agencies. The Committee has not had state or federal reps in the meetings, but he said he has talked with many local representatives, Lesley University, MIT, Harvard University, the Cambridge Innovation Center, etc.

As an offshoot of this effort, he said he'd been going to a lot of conferences, on Urban Resiliency in NYC, meetings in St. Paul, MN, etc. In reading all his notes, he would pull out sections that seem relevant even if the Committee didn't necessarily talk about it in here.

He stated that he wanted to make sure people felt comfortable with that approach. He invited members to incorporate those discussions and talking points that they'd like to include.

Ms. Dillard said the Committee had never really talked about the City's other committees, such as Planning Committees, NetZero, Envision Cambridge, and Climate Vulnerability. She suggested that they may want to reach out to them.

Mr. Kelley said that's something they can do, and there is a lot of other work and discussions. The City has the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment that will turn into a Climate Change Adaptation program. He stated that they need to acknowledge the other things the city is doing, and that they are not the only ones talking about resiliency. Certainly, NetZero is doing the same, he said.

Ms. Dillard said that it was discussed about the Committee being the bridge between the many different groups.

Mr. Wineman stated he had a thought inspired by the Envision Cambridge process. One of their categories is resiliency and adaptation, which was really striking to see. Leaving sustainability aside, he stated it was really striking to see resiliency broken out as a distinct category. He was already concerned that what the Committee was doing would be seen as too niche, whereas they should strive to be more pervasive. Resiliency is over-arching, he said, and should be a part of housing, transportation, education, and public works. Everything the city does should be measured by how it contributes or takes away from resilience. We could advocate for that to be the case.

Mr. Kelley said that a common thought at the conferences is every decision needs to be passed through the lens of how resiliency fits into it. There is this strong thought that you can't stick

resiliency into just flooding, he said, but rather it's about racial equality and justice, and housing equity.

Mr. Seidel stated that the Committee had previously talked about a measuring stick for resilience, and asked if they could come up with one or recommend one for the City to use.

Mr. Kelley acknowledged that it was discussed, but they had never come up with one. He said their efforts should fall into what Mr. Wineman said about needing to be pervasive. The Envision process seems to be overly concerned with flooding and heat, he said, but the City's approach needs to be more sophisticated.

Ms. Kubik said that Jonathan Rose is looking at resilience on a block-by-block basis in NYC. Via Verde in Harlem and Sedino Verde as well. Resiliency efforts were focused on rebuilding Red Hook after Hurricane Sandy. The question is how to translate those resiliency efforts to the density of Cambridge.

Ms. Holloway said that they could have invited other organization to measure Cambridge.

Mr. Kelley said that Northeastern University has a survey that they could offer us. That would be one yardstick, and he said it would be an interesting thing to do.

Mr. Seidel asked if the Committee should recommend need next steps.

Mr. Kelley said that the Committee will have to create suggestions, yes. One possibility is that they begin a process to secure special authority from state to create special flood planning overlay district, he said. Other suggestions such as different parking requirements would be interesting.

Ms. Holloway said that the Committee could focus on creating water bottle filling stations around the city, and other low hanging fruit.

Mr. Kelley said that he needed to parse out the best 10 things to encourage resiliency, and then give next steps. The City would like to go to the state to ask for a home rule petition for different resiliency zoning, he said. He asked if the members had any other thoughts. He said he was hoping to leave here with an okay to jump forward, then by the end of June members can give approval.

Mr. Dmytryk said he liked the idea of scaling up resiliency from individual to community.

Mr. Seidel said he has no objection to including comments that were discussed at conventions, but not necessarily here.

Mr. Kelley gave an example from a recent Environmental Business meeting. He stated that they discussed how to create resilient grids. Cambridge is talking about a micro-grid, and one of the discussions going forward is that Cambridge needs guidance on how those resources need to be used. He stated that gasoline and food may be important provide, but there are no rules on who could buy gasoline and who could buy food when a state of emergency is declared. That has become a sticking point for other people when discussing islanding, he said, and people are concerned that residents of other communities may come in to buy up the resources the City provides in a hypothetical emergency.

Ms. Kubik said that a community in Connecticut has the only successful example of a micro-grid and that is not up and running yet. Buying into the micro-grid is a major concern when the utility company won't buy in, she said, and recommended that people read Jonathan Rose's book which discusses micro-communities in NYC that would have power, water, hospitals, etc. She recommended that members focus on the block scale. When Sandy came through, there were communities cut off, people couldn't get medicine and food. When those areas were rebuilt, they used some of Rose's ideas she said. She recommend that members look into NICHIA.

Mr. Wineman said that because NYC is so dense it would be difficult to translate solutions there into something useful for Cambridge. He asked if Rose talked about that.

Ms. Kubik said perhaps he's still working it out.

Mr. Kelley said a major take away in many resiliency discussion is the need for density. All the discussed benefits occur only after a certain density. He gave another example of using youth centers as shelters with services during an emergency, but a generator for that use is only rated for so much power and it consumes so much gasoline. It requires fuel, and that supply might be challenged.

He said that during a conversation in NYC, he heard that wherever residents were during Sandy, they were told the City can't get to them under a certain amount of time.

Ms. Kubik said that these systems fail, generators don't work, and if the gas trucks can't even get into the city then that infrastructure is worthless.

Mr. Wineman said that our systems also need redundancy. If one use is removed because it doesn't work, what then he asked.

Mr. Kelley said that the underline assumption is that one needs to be prepared for 10 days of break in service form the City.

Ms. Dillard said that there were interesting organizations called eco-districts that are thinking about different power sources and how to engage with the community.

Mr. Kelley reiterated that he felt the city doesn't necessarily have it all covered. If a generator is only good for so much amount of time, then you no longer have a situation covered afterward. Maybe they need to have worse conditions to learn the lesson he suggested.

Mr. Seidel said that was sort of where they started, back at the individual level. It's as much a mindset issue than anything else, he said. There are systems, and city issues, but in the end it comes back to mindset. He stated that it's as much how he approaches daily life and interactions, that builds resiliency. What can I add in terms of resiliency in my life? The Committee started with observations that there are a lot of people looking at the system issues, but perhaps that's not as true as they thought. Either way, he said, the daily interactions are predictors on what will happen when stress is added to the system.

Mr. Kelley said that it sounded like he was talking about social cohesion.

Mr. Wineman said that the next question in coming up with useful recommendations, and what are the strategies for forming those relationships. The city can tell people to make better relations, he said, but what are the actual mechanisms, the interventions to make that happen.

Ms. Holloway asked what a win would be out of the report. To her it's some commitment to the values therein, a sustained discussion on resiliency. It could be that Cambridge wants to be the number one city of its size for resiliency, for example. It could be that the City sponsors more block parties. She said that the city has so many resources, but not everyone knows how to access them. They can be very silo-ed, she said. It would be a big win to build the multi-dimensional aspects of resiliency.

Mr. Seidel asked where one parks such ideas. Mr. Kelley thought that maybe they didn't get parked anywhere. Ms. Holloway wondered if issues were embedded would anything get done.

Mr. Wineman offered two thoughts. One is that they sponsor more community meetings where resiliency is just brought to the neighborhoods as an issue, even if just to start a conversation. A whole conversation needs to happen, he said. He said he wondered if the Committee should recommend a chief resiliency officer to facilitate operating at all these different levels. That person would need to be bringing it to the community level, he said.

Mr. Kelley said that get people involved was a common thread at conferences, but no one knows how to do it. Some people give food, other offer childcare at events. He asked what happens when the grant money runs out. The Committee should at least be able to identify the gaps, even if they can't fill them.

Mr. Wineman said that when the resiliency people were here, they recommended a solar powered generator for cell phones, but he couldn't find one to purchase.

Mr. Kelley said that the City sells rail barrels, and could do something similar with solar charges and other things we want people to have access to.. Perhaps the city could help vet best brands, he said. He asked if there was a way for the city to buy blocks of these things and then distribute to residents.

Ms. Holloway asked if the Committee had discussed the "wins" as brought up in the last meeting.

Mr. Kelley asked her to define a win.

Ms. Holloway stated that she was thinking that if they draft something, they should consider what the filters are. If they pick half a dozen audiences, she asked if it is a win if they read the whole report.

Mr. Kelley stated that he thinks it's a win if you can talk to your friends at the dinner table about resiliency and be comfortable with it. He stated that he would like to have a report that people outside of government can look at and get 1-3 things out of it to support daily things.

Mr. Wineman stated that he was more ambitious, and that the Committee should come up with more concrete deliverables that resources may be devoted to programs that get implemented and information is accessible to and used by people.

Ms. Holloway said that the Committee could have a pamphlet be one of the deliverables. Then one of the future recommendations could be how to publicize the information.

Mr. Seidel stated process is important. Three wins could be that the Committee direct somebody to do something. It could also be a broader awareness of this thing we call resiliency. There is this

concept, he said, and there a lot there to unpack in resiliency. A third piece could be that even if this isn't the standard report, this could become part of the canon of the resiliency movement.

Ms. Holloway asked if it was indeed a goal to be thought of as leaders in the country on this topic.

Mr. Kelley said yes, he has this idea that we will be thought leaders in resiliency.

Mr. Wineman said that he has a strong reaction to that, and it reminded him of the Georgetown Prize. He asked what the difference was if we win it versus someone else. He would like to see a more collaborative process on this. It would be good if the City was great on this, but equally good if they learn from other communities and they from us. If they are the only ones to weather certain situations, what is the good in that he asked.

Ms. Holloway said that there are so many conversations to engage with, but in order to make this project survive, they needed to figure out what to do with this collective knowledge. What are best practices? How can you get people to do things?

Mr. Kelley said that at the conferences he'd been to the problem is truly existential. Communities need transformational change, and he was trying to figure out how Cambridge can be the city that figured out transformational change.

Ms. Holloway said that was the opening paragraph of the report. The world is spinning faster and faster and there is frequently more anxiety, but she wanted to know what happens when transformational change occurs.

Mr. Kelley said the thing that was challenging to everyone is how to include as many voices as possible in the conversation. Getting people to show up to share their stories on resiliency is a challenge, he said.

Mr. Wineman asked what members thought about recommending a chief resiliency officer.

Ms. Dillard asked how their recommendations translate into action.

Mr. Wineman said that if they make this as a recommendation, it would be a key recommendation, and they should flesh out what exactly it means. For their recommendations to be adopted on the ground, instead of just as a niche suggestion, they need to define goals clearly he said.

Ms. Kubik said 100 Resilient Cities aims at achieving this, but their programs are funded through grants. Once the grant money is exhausted, these positions will go away.

Ms. Dillard said the Committee needed to consider an implementation plan.

Mr. Seidel said there may be an interim step to hold a chief resiliency officer conference in six months after the grant money is exhausted and to invite all these resiliency officers to come and speak. He said the city could fund it.

Ms. Holloway said a huge win could be just to impress how rich the discussion can be, and how deep the discussion can go in each of the side pockets of conversation. What does a resilient government look like.

Mr. Seidel said a good readable report would be a good outcome.

Mr. Kelley said he imagines Harvard or MIT being interested as well.

Mr. Wineman stated that the devil is always in the detail. Consider if they make this recommendation, and host the conference, then who is responsible for organizing the information and moving things to the next step he asked.

Mr. Kelley said there needs to be money for such a thing. He said there are models where other people have stumbled through this stuff before, but having someone that can tease out the challenges would be useful, he said.

Ms. Holloway stated that when talking about a resilient government it may be necessary to lay the bureaucratic stuff aside, and jump into projects.

Mr. Kelley said during the December fire in the Wellington-Harrington district, it appeared from the outside like the city shut down all non-essential programs during the aftermath to deal with it.

Mr. Wineman said it might not have been the response but the process that tied people up. He asked if the departments are talking with each other and what the level of confusion was. Having a process to talk through issues is important.

Mr. Seidel said he thought the fire incident should be include in the report, and that there should be a write up (perhaps a lengthy one) because this seemed to be the perfect case study. Maybe our report suggests a formal followup.

Ms. Holloway stressed that they should still drill down on the tangibles in order to make it accessible, look at a couple of examples through our specific lense.

Mr. Seidel said the Committee should still incorporate something on the fire, perhaps a whole section.

Ms. Holloway said they could recommend the need for resilience volunteers, professionally trained, to respond.

Mr. Kelley said that he had been accepted to be trained in vulnerability response, and also to help cities identify vulnerabilities. He said some cities have resiliency ambassadors, but when the money is gone, not he questioned how much good they do.

Ms. Holloway said programs need to have redundancy. She gave the example of how crossing guards can be trained to do more.

Mr. Kelley agreed, and added that the City could empower librarians to do more, and even that resiliency training is something they can park at the library.

Mr. Wineman agreed to the training, but also building more into current processes. He said they should not consider that they dealing with blank slates. There are a lot of resources built into the neighborhood, and they need to help identify the resources.

Mr. Seidel noted that we need to learn from each other.

Mr. Kelley said he had attended three NY State sponsored Disaster Response training, and during those events they have the same slideshow, and give out bags with supplies, but they consider that training. He didn't think that went far enough.

Mr. Wineman said he wanted to reinforce the thought of a resilient city government, and said he would love to see that as a heading in the report. He thought it was a great phrase.

Mr. Kelley stated that at some point this summer, they will have a public meeting. Harvard will invite Steve Bannon to speak soon, he thought, and the City will need to talk to whoever has to be involved in getting ahead of this thing, but he didn't know who makes these efforts resilient.

Mr. Wineman agreed that being proactive is a key component to resiliency, as well as being able to coordinate and communicate, and also to put egos aside.

Ms. Dillard said that the head of Middlebury had written an interesting response to the riots there outlining what they will do from now on. The president's response was to not act out as individuals.

Ms. Holloway said that resiliency is a response to something that happens and the system as constructed can't respond to that event. The question is whether a community is able to bounce back efficiently. There is also something to consider about whether the system as formulated may work for the event that happen. She stated that it's often the thing you didn't plan for that sets you back the most. The question becomes can the system transform or evolve and get to a better place. It has to adapt in some way it doesn't know it needs to, and that can be hard.

Mr. Seidel stated you cannot know the specifics of future stress, so it is about a mindset. If you are pre-disposed to think about this issue in a certain way, you're more likely to make better choices. He stated that there was power with naming things, or knowing them, which should be included in the report. He gave another observation, saying that one wants to know their neighbors, but only to a certain point. This notion that one wants your neighbors to know you is limited by a desire for privacy.

Ms. Holloway said naming and defining resiliency is also important.

Mr. Wineman recommended that lessons from Amanda Chen's visit be included in the report.

Mr. Kelley said cities often regard resiliency in terms of heat islanding and flooding, but Ms. Chen's problem is kids that don't have a safe home to go to, or enough food. The people she deals with are outside of my daily life, he said, I can't easily understand how they view resiliency.

Ms. Holloway asked if the Committee could develop examples of different kinds of resilience. Aspects that others might not see as resiliency. Ms. Chen has this social justice program that starts with diverting kids from jail, and then gets quite concrete to the terms of the program providing actual support, etc. She was a great example of living resiliency, she said.

Ms. Dillard said it was important that their report doesn't just include climate issues.

Mr. Kelley said that one of the more interesting people he had talked with was Doorway to Dreams. He recounted a recent bike trip where he saw people needing to cash their check at a liquor store and get charged a premium on accessing their money.

Ms. Holloway recommended that he give members an assignment, and they could all write something.

Mr. Kelley said his assignment was to send in resources or stories that should be in the report, then they can kick around what should be in the report. He said members should forward the information by June 20, and that will give him enough guidance to draft something. The plan is to use the summer to fill in the gaps.

Mr. Kelley asked for a motion to accept the minutes from last meeting.

The minutes were approved.

Mr. Kelley said they were done here tonight, and thanked them for their attendance.