**Cambridge City Council**

**Health Insurance Benefits**

**Please note two things as you read this:**

**First: This Council has reduced the current City budget because of a loss of funds due to Covid-19. They have frozen hiring, which has reduced the Police Department to 39 officers. They have not hired two inspectors for housing compliance. They did not hire a grant writer to get additional funds for the City. They did not give cost of living increases to City employees. They have reduced repairs and maintenance to City owned property.**

**Second: Both Commissioners Rideout and Hanson are against giving Health benefits.**

 On September 14th, 2020, the Cambridge City Council had the first reading of (proposed) Ordinance 1168 which is designed to adjust the compensation for the incoming City Council Commissioners next year. Earlier this year, the Council’s Benefits Advisory Committee report noted that the City Charter only allowed for salaries as compensation, but the Commissioners were getting much more than that. In addition to salaries, the City was paying for federally mandated Social Security and Medicare, as well as Worker’s Compensation. The Mayor and Council members were also given the option to join the Maryland State pension system, as mandated by the State. Besides the mandated benefits, they also received two optional benefits of Health Insurance and Life Insurance. The City Attorney could not find any public document that authorized any of these benefits.

The Benefits Advisory Committee had no choice but to approve all Federal and State mandates and asked that the City Charter be changed to reflect these benefits. However**, the Committee voted unanimously** to do away with the Health Care Benefits and Life Insurance, for the following reasons:

1. The City insures itself up to the first $100,000 in claims per insured person. Therefore, each City Council member and Mayor, and their spouses and dependents, can cost the City up to $100,000 per person in medical claims. This benefit could cost the City well over a $1,000,000, depending on the number of persons who sign up and file claims. This is an exorbitant amount for a part-time City Council member.
2. The City does not provide Health Benefits or Life Insurance for other part-time employees.
3. The City subsidizes the Monthly premium each employee pays based on a sidling scale. Currently, the City is billed $511.50 per employee and $1,119.50 if the employee’s spouse is covered. However, the current Council members pay only $80 a month for individual coverage and $144 a month if the spouse is included. This leaves the City picking up $431.50 a month for the individual Council member and $975.50 for a Council member and spouse. The current two City Council members who take Health Benefits cost the City $16,884 in subsidized premiums (which do not include any medical claims they may have made.)
4. The Benefits Advisory Committee looked at the **other 158 government** **entities** that make up the Maryland Local Government system, and out of these 158, **only 10 offered health care** to their Mayor and Council members. These included big governments such as Baltimore, Bladensburg and Ocean City.
5. The Benefits Advisory Committee also looked at salaries. Currently, City Council members in Cambridge are paid $10,000 each (annually), and the Mayor is paid $12,000. Comparing Cambridge to cities of approximately the same size, the average salary for Council Members was $6,300, and the average Mayor’s salary was $8,500. Cambridge City Council Commissioners and the Cambridge Mayor receive well over the average for comparable cities in Maryland. It could be argued that they could buy private insurance with their higher than average salaries.

The Benefits Advisory Committee, which had representatives from each Ward, was unanimously opposed to giving Health and Life Insurance Benefits to the Council members and Mayor. Commissioners Rideout and Hanson are opposed to such benefits. The City needs funds to cover existing expenses, so why would we set aside possibly hundreds of thousand dollars to provide health care to our part-time Mayor and City Council Commissioners?

The CAN Board of Directors is urging its members to contact the current Mayor and Commissioners (particularly, Commissioners Sydnor, Foster and Cannon) and express your sentiments regarding providing Health Benefits under the proposed ordinance.

If you don’t contact them, it will appear that the citizens of Cambridge do not care about providing such substantial benefits to its part-time Mayor and Council Commissioners. This is your government and you need to take action to make your views known now.

Commissioners can be reached by email as follows:

Mayor Jackson-Stanley – Mayor@choosecambridge.com

Commissioner Foster- lfoster@choosecambridge.com

Commissioner Cannon – dcannon@choosecambridge.com

Commissioner Sydnor – dsydnor@choosecambridge.com

Board of Directors, Cambridge Association of Neighbors