CAMBRIDGE MATTERS – 2022-02

Judge Stephen Rideout

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Moving Dorchester Forward is working on creating opportunities for public engagement and learning about community needs so that it can be helpful in finding ways to improve educational, social-emotional, and needed services outcomes for children and families in Cambridge and Dorchester County. We just held a work session last week to make plans for our first community meeting on February 1st. Because of the challenges with Covid-19, our first public forum will be virtual. Details on it and links to the platforms for you to participate will be coming soon.

The topics for the first session will be up to you. We know that there are too many things going wrong here – wounding and killing of young men in the community, school challenges, lack of adequate after-school programming, insufficient mental health resources, addressing basic needs of housing and food, and the list goes on.

While we know about some of what is happening or not happening here, we want to hear from you. Because our time will be limited and we think that many people will join the conversation, we want to be as efficient and effective as we can be and so will be inviting anyone to submit questions before the meeting in addition to being able to submit them during the meeting through the CHAT option that will be available. We also plan to have people from the community including some of our youth talk about their concerns and then hear what solutions might already exist. If you have something to say after reading this, please let me know at [swrideout@aol.com](mailto:swrideout@aol.com). I will collect the comments in preparation for our meeting.

Our first aim is to provide the community with enough time to raise some issues of concern and provide, to the extent we are able, people that can let everyone know what services are available, what are limited, where services are, and how they can be accessed. While many of you already know this information, some do not, and we felt this would be a good first step.

Our second aim is to identify those things in the community that are not going well and trying to find out how resources might be located to address those problems and how we might find funding – federal, state, local, or private – to begin to make some changes. This is not something that will happen overnight and is something that the community must speak out for on a routine basis.

Through the Partnership for Learning, Inc., a new nonprofit, a grant request has been submitted to the State of Maryland to obtain funding for programs that we know are needed while we hear your ideas of what else you think is needed.

The initial areas of interest and focus for Moving Dorchester Forward are focused on Education including Mental Health, After School Programs, the Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Court Diverted or Involved Children, and Parent/Family Engagement and Community Advocacy. We anticipate that our meeting on February 1st will bring to light new areas of interest and needs for which we want to find ways to help the community begin the process of making change where change is needed and improving those areas of our community that have not been addressed.

More information will be sent out to you and provided to you in advance of February 1st with more details about how this will all work and the links to Facebook and You Tube where you can join with us, but I wanted to give you this heads up so that you can be sure to put a note on your refrigerator for February 1, 2022 from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. to set that time aside to join us.

Please share this and future announcements about this effort with your friends, neighbors, and family. Let’s see how we can all be part of the solution.

Thanks for reading.

Steve