CAMBRIDGE MATTERS – March-April 2023

Mayor Stephen Rideout

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Soon after my election as Mayor in September, I attended a luncheon that had a panel of mayors from the Eastern Shore. When asked a question by the moderator of the panel, I answered the question. When asked a question by the moderator, all of the other mayors rarely answered the question but rather talked about the great things that were happening in their towns. I was clearly inexperienced in how to be a mayor, but that taught me that talking about the positive things that are happening where I live is part of the job.

There are many reasons for being positive about what is going on in Cambridge. For me it is that I see so much that is good happening here that the general public may not have yet heard about or seen. So talking about the “good” as well as asking for help to improve the “bad” will, hopefully, be my message through Cambridge Matters, interviews, and conversations with you. You need to hear more often about what is happening here.

Earlier this month in my last Cambridge Matters, I mentioned the summer enrichment program that will be held at DCTC for four weeks in July and early August. I mention it again, as it is a real opportunity for our 7th, 8th, and 9th graders to have a fun and educational opportunity this summer. Youth can register for it at [www.pfccoalition.org/SCEP.asp](http://www.pfccoalition.org/SCEP.asp). For more information, you can call 301-772-1552. I also mentioned that there were plans in the works for a fly-in at the Cambridge-Dorchester Airport in late April where students would be able, with parental permission, to take a short flight in an airplane.

Well, I just saw in the Dorchester Star this morning that the County Council announced that the airport will “host an EAA Young Eagles rally” on April 29th from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the airport weather permitting with a rain date of April 30th. The paper indicated that children ages 8-17 can receive a free airplane ride with parental/guardian written approval. In addition to the flights there will be food and other entertainment for everyone who comes. Please let your friends, neighbors, and relatives know and encourage them to come to the airport that day.

There are many other things here in the city that are moving in the right direction. On March 29th I attended the DCPS Teachers of the Year event that celebrated the great work of teachers across our public school system. It was a wonderful event where I was able to provide Mayor recognition certificates to the two winners, Briana Beulah as Teacher of the Year and Wendi Bleyer as First-Class Teacher of the Year, both of whom teach at Sandy Hill Elementary School in Cambridge.

What was especially warming was a video prepared by Valerie Goff that included comments from students about each of the nominees. The video reminded me of the hard and demanding work that our teachers perform every day with children who come from diverse backgrounds and family situations where every school day can be a totally new and different experience. All of our teachers deserve our thanks for the good work that they are doing here, sometimes in difficult circumstances.

Bulk trash pick up has been a challenge recently. With Brandon Hesson coming on as the Assistant City Manager, progress has been made in this problem area. While everything is not being done by Chesapeake Waste as was anticipated in our contract with them, Brandon is working with the community, Chesapeake Waste, and city staff to fix some of these problems. If you have had problems in your area of town, you should see a quicker response in picking up these items. Be sure to contact the city in advance of your planned disposal of these items so you can be put on a schedule for pick up of the items. Placing the items out and then making the call is not the solution or the right way to handle bulk pick up. The number to call is 410-228-1955.

There are continuing concerns about people speeding in town. Work is in progress to set up more four-way stop signs to help slow people down. Our police department is down about ten staff members and is doing its best to address the variety of challenges that the community faces with regard to violations of the law.

In the area of crime prevention and investigation, the city has purchased about 100 additional cameras to place around town in areas that have been subject to criminal activity. This will help to prevent crime and also to obtain information to help catch the criminals. Those are being installed this spring.

As you may have seen, the city, like many other communities and businesses, has staffing needs. Two hiring events have been held, and the city is advertising jobs on the city website. Please check out the city website and let people you know who are looking for work of those possibilities.

Our City Manager is working full-time to address the multiple issues that Cambridge has been unable to address or did not address for many years. Some of what he is working on involves governmental structure and policy that is not something that is immediately apparent to the public. While you don’t see what is happening unless you are at or watch the city council meetings, an improved and long-lasting government structure is being created here. City departments are being restructured. New leadership is being hired or sought such as the Assistant City Manager and the Assistant City Engineer. The city is looking for a new director of Planning and Zoning. The Municipal Utilities Commission has been restructured to run both the water and sewer systems. The Cambridge Shoreline Resilience Project has sought a grant from the state for over $18 million about which there should be news some time in April. The city has held public meetings about the waterfront, a park on Leonard’s Lane, and Ironman that will help city staff understand more about what the community wants with these initiatives.

The city is seeking a $4 million grant from HUD to address some of the houses in the city that have lead based paint and Asbestos problems and to address some of the housing problems that our residents face. The city will be a partner in one or two grant applications to address some of the needs of our children who are victims of violence and trauma. The city is seeking state funding to help with the rehabilitation of the old city administration building and firehouse. The Boys and Girls Club here has received a $1 million grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The city is working on a summer jobs program for some older youth, and I saw that the YMCA is hiring camp counselors. Coastal Hospice is planning on having a summer camp opportunity for youth that have lost someone important in their lives. I have not seen as much activity here in a long time.

While all is not perfect here, much is being done by our city leadership and staff to improve city services and by our police department to address the crime and violence that too many of our citizens have been victims of over the years. The progress to address these issues of crime and delinquency is as much a responsibility of the community as they are the police. Helping the police to know what you know can help prevent a crime and avoid there being victims.

Thanks for reading.

Steve