

Cambridge Matters – September 9, 2023

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Several weekends ago, we have a number of shootings and a killing here in Cambridge. We are a community that has seen gun violence go on for too long with an expectation that the Cambridge Police Department with the help of other law enforcement agencies can solve the multiple challenges that exist here; and they can't. We, the government and the community, have to be part of the solution. We have to start working together and not against one another. We have to listen to those who have suffered personally or through the loss of family, friends, or loved ones. We have to find our strengths and start to spread them across the city.

At our last city council meeting, citizens came forward and spoke out clearly that something needs to happen to change the culture that exists here within our community that causes the kind of behavior that takes lives for no valid reason at all. As a result of what I heard, I started looking to see what I might do with the help of others. I reached out to old friends and colleagues and found one that had suffered the loss of a child through a random bullet that had been fired indiscriminately. He gave me some direction that I have followed and wanted to share with you about what I have been doing since that last city council meeting.

I was first given the names of some people in Maryland who have been involved in the gun violence reduction mission. I also looked back at the work of the Cambridge Gun Violence Reduction Task Force that had been created here in the summer of 2022 and what work that they had done. I spoke with a representative of Moms Demand Action who is here in Maryland and learned about an organization called Mayors Against Illegal Guns. I found that there are a number of mayors in Maryland that have joined that organization so I looked at what they were trying to do and have added Cambridge to that growing list of communities that include Easton and Salisbury.

I heard that representatives of CAN were meeting with the Cambridge Police Department to talk about the recreation of Neighborhood Watch programs throughout the city that the police department will support. I attended the meeting along with Commissioner Laurel Atkiss and learned some of what needs to happen to get these programs up and running. We also learned that the police department will provide us with some handout materials on how to get these programs started in the city.

I was then introduced to Mary Hunt Miller, who is a member of the Upper Shore Maryland Moms Demand Action and learned about a gun violence reduction event that they are planning for here in Cambridge on September 30<sup>th</sup> from 2:00 – 6:00 p.m. at the Empowerment Center on Pine Street. Please put that on your calendar and come.

At the same time, I have been reaching out to people that I know in our community to recruit them to a Mayor's community engagement committee that I am forming under my role as a Mayor Against Illegal Guns. I already have 10 people who have offered to help develop our plan of work, vision and mission, and community engagement so that the community will be the moving force to help reduce crime, reduce gun violence and illegal guns, and redevelop a community wide effort to support one another as we work to improve the quality of life here. If you would like to meet and talk about what we are and will be doing and what your vision might be, please email me so we can find a time to meet and talk.

This past Friday I had a chance to meet with Mary Hunt-Miller where we were able to discuss her plans for September 30<sup>th</sup> and to finalize the speakers who will make a presentation on gun violence reduction at our city council meeting on Monday September 11<sup>th</sup>. In addition to Mary, Suzanne Todd will be present in person and Lisa Molock will be presenting virtually as she lives a distance away. I hope that you will join the meeting that will be at the Empowerment Center, due to work being done on city council chambers, or on [www.townhallstreams.com](http://www.townhallstreams.com) Cambridge at 6:00 p.m.

The goal for all of what we are starting to do is to develop a vision for Cambridge that will make us a community that works together to be safer for everyone and with fewer illegal guns. We hope to do that by all parts of our community reaching out and supporting one another while collaborating with the Cambridge Police Department and churches, groups, and nonprofits to seek to reduce crime and in particular gun violence in our city.

I hope that you will be willing to join this effort and play your part in making it happen. We have not arrived here quickly and we will not be changing the culture here quickly either, but with your help it will happen.

Thanks for reading.

Steve