Children's Cabinet Notes – NOVEMBER 14, 2023
See last meeting's notes.

Attendees:
George Scarpelli (Parks and Rec), Jennifer Mancia (Workforce Development), Jaime Lederer (CHA), Ashley Zsofka (Childcare Access Coordinator), Kristina Bergquist (Youth Services Division), Nancy Bacci (HHS), Susan Yerkes (Parks and Rec), Kathleen Bailer (Director of SPS Early Education and Care Department), Rosanna Paribello, School Committee Member Ellenor Barish, Blair Wong (Digital Bridge Initiative), Brooke Metivier, Ruth Santos (Director of SFLC), Nikki Spencer (Mayor), Rafael Vieira (SEF), Jason Behrens (SHS), Chad Mazza, Ana Nieto (SFLC)

Updates:
- Cambridge Health Alliance:
  - Alexis Sarpong joined CHA as the new Program Manager with Somerville/Medford geographic responsibilities
  - On election day we had a full training group of SPS staff for youth Mental Health First Aid!
  - Our Career Pathways Program is in the final stages of reviewing applications and interviewing with a plan to hire 15 teens/young adults for placements at CHA Jan - June, 15 - 20 hrs/wk.
  - We want to celebrate and recognize ECAC for hosting a great meeting in October!
- SEF partnership with DEILab and SHS Robotics Team:
  - The Somerville Robotics League has now enrolled over 100 students at six schools including MLE and SpEd students at Winter Hill.
  - Field trips are being provided to Somernova
  - Programs have been able to scale up because of the initial investment of the SomerPromise Department. In SY22, 20-30 students were enrolled compared to over 100 in SY24.
  - Additional robotics and coding classes are being offered at Somerville High School.
  - The Innovation Lab plans to expand programming to school age children (grade 3-5).
  - get pics from Jason
- **Please take time to review the Pulse of the Community Early Childhood Advisory Council 2023 Report.** This report was informed by key stakeholder interviews as well as the ECAC meeting on October 24th with City, Schools, and community organizations including family child cares and center-based providers.
- Somerville Partnership for Young Children:
  - We are in the final stages of completing our universal screening process.
  - Preschool and Kindergarten information sessions are being held across this month.
  - There have been 15-18 referrals from community partners for students to the MTSS Itinerant team.
  - Community partners and SPS teachers have been meeting in groups to develop the curriculum kits. A Lending Library has been rolled out for centers to collect kits on demand.
  - SPYC invited to speak at the ASHA Conference on November 17, 2023 https://convention.asha.org/ Growing Equity in Early Literacy Instruction: A Model District Based Program: This session describes a model program for the implementation of equity-based preschool early language and literacy practices in a

public school and community-based collaboration. An open-source core curriculum organized around thematic 'Big Ideas' will be described that includes, language and literacy practices, social emotional learning, anti-bias and anti-racist education, and mathematical thinking. Assessment and progress monitoring practices, coaching strategies, and interprofessional team roles will be described.
- New Chief of Staff for Superintendent: Amara Anosike, aanosike@k12.somerville.ma.us

City of Somerville Digital Bridge Initiative:
- Project Contacts: Blair Wong, Luis Quizhpe, Jennifer Mancia
- Project Timeline:
  - o 2019: Internet Access Task Force Report
  - o 2020: COVID19 Pandemic
  - o 2022: Looking at Recommendations again based on today's world
  - o 2023: Creation of the Digital Bridge Initiative
- Digital Divide → Digital Equity → Digital Inclusion
  - o All people have the technical skills to use the internet
  - o Removing barriers for marginalized communities to make sure everyone has access to the internet.
- Vision: We want Somerville to be one of the first US cities where everyone can use the internet with ease.
- Objectives:
  - o Connect everyone
  - o Get the right tools (devices)
  - o Teach Digital Skills
- We would like to hear from everyone to get as much input from direct service providers as possible. Please reach out to bwong@somervillema.gov
- Feedback from group – other organizations to reach out to for the focus group:
  - o Mystic Learning Center is upgrading their computer lab and has asked for support. Rafael: please re-invite them to the focus group.
  - o SCALE may be a goof place to start.
  - o Welcome Project
  - o

Teen Programming:
- Brooke is overseeing teen programming at the Powderhouse space.
- Flyers are being updated in order to reflect the shifting locations of teen programming in Somerville. Parents were having confusion in the shifts because of language barriers.
- Numbers of teen center participants are decreasing because the time centers run has been made later (6-8pm) instead of directly after school. Additionally, the space provided to the Edgerly Teen Center is only the gym and does not have the classroom spaces from last year.
- Recommendation: Teen Center Working Group at Cabinet-level
- Please connect with bmetivier@somervillema.gov for questions – attach the new teen center flyer in english

The Future of the Child Care Access and Affordability Program:
- The ARPA funding for the tuition assistance program ends in December 2024, despite being originally planned to end in 2026.
- There is a strong correlation between parent fees and the cost of care for other expenses (rent and workforce cost increases).

- SomerPromise recommends a large upfront spend of the remaining ARPA funds, which we believe is best-leveraged by incentivizing developers in Somerville to build child care centers and/or repurposing existing spaces.
- We are currently seeking out potential spaces in the City to purchase in order to establish a childcare center and reduce the cost burden of rent on individual centers.

Summer planning:
- Meetings are happening now with the City and Schools to better align our program procedures and improve our communication channels with the community.
- Recommendation: later stage meetings about sharing summer programming information and assisting in registration/enrollment
- Biggest barrier to city funded summer programming – we cant engage in contracts as early as January for programming to start July 1st. ARPA funds, on a different cycle from our fiscal year, has allowed us to contract with programs earlier in the year.
- How do we find City funds in order to cover the planning period and have a continuity of care from the last day of school?

Advocacy Opportunities:
- [Please see our virtual presentation and conversation with Somerville Public Space and Urban Forestry Department and the Growing Center](#) responding to issues identified in the Pulse of the Community exercise:
  - Licensing for outdoor spaces for family child care centers is done on an individual basis. Some centers have access while others were denied access based on EEC standards for the same outdoor spaces.
  - More advocacy is needed around clarifying standards from EEC to license more spaces adequate for the entire community.
  - We need to increase community awareness about park design through education.
  - We will administer a survey to support access to the green spaces we have in our city.

December Cabinet Notes

Agenda:
1. Out of School Time System Building
2. Summer Programming

Attendees: Ashley Zsofka, Ellenor Barish, Christopher Hosman, Madeleine Werner, Councilor Kristen Strezo, George Scarpelli, Jaime Lederer, Jennifer Mancia, Kristina Bergquist, Lisa Robinson, Maria Teresa Nagel, Greg Nadeau, Nancy Bacci, Ana Nieto, Ruth Santos, Sue Yerkes, Superintendent Carmona

Summer Programming Jamboard SWOT Analysis: [View here](#)
Policy recommendation memo – where are decisions needed from city, sps, and community partners?

- Strengths:
    - Variety of options
    - Package of affordability and meal availability – addressing barriers
    - Programming itself is less a strength than the systemic pieces supporting families – equity in "how" and "where"
    - Collaboration and cross-sector work
- Weaknesses:
    - Timeline of signing up for programming is a major issue
    - The communication piece is not timely enough since registration is so early, and there is a disconnect between program start dates.
    - Scholarships may not always be used even though they are awarded.
    - Staffing was not listed as an issue – why?
        - Lack of facilities and gap in August caused by school getting prepped for the year.
        - Seasonal staff gets lost whether from colleges or in the high school students in the summer who return to athletics in mid-August
    - Transportation
    - Timing of summer guide becomes redundant when programs are scrambling to find space, while other programs are starting registration as early as January
    - How does summer increase academic excellence?

Opportunities:
- Professional development of teen workers
- Recruiting new arrivals who are struggling to find work but are enthusiastic to be employed
- Partnership between Workforce Development and Youth Services team
    - Partnering further with SOIA
- Streamlining applications through the digital bridge initiative
- Change timeline for referral only programs
- ARPA money will still support this summer, and will be commuted to an RFI to so that we can pilot process of getting programs contracted in January to fund professional development opportunities in June to prep for summer. This removes fiscal year start time barrier

Recommendations:
- OFAHC:
    - Help to amplify the summer guide when it comes out
    - Continued collaboration with Rec to provide healthy meals
    - Proposal for space to hold summer activities (and OST)
- Rec:
    - Continued collaboration with SPS to hold Rec full day programs at school spaces
    - Training for youth workers
- Youth Services Division:
    - How can we leverage teams? Summer learning loss addressed by youth worker involvement (ie teen empowerment).
- SFLC
    - Collaborating on the activities guide and its distribution
- CHA:
    - Mental health first aid training – build capacity during spring time for regular staff, and PD for teen and/or seasonal staff
    - Supporting navigation of summer opportunities
- Please email mwerner@somervillema.gov in order to be included in the guide. Even while spaces are in fluctuation on where the program is being held, it is better to have information about registration included in the guide and parents can secure a spot for the program in time. The guide needs to be printed by the beginning of March as many programs have already opened registration by mid february
- SomerPromise
    - Support in registration for summer programming
    - Summer Activities Fair
- HHS:
    - Ensuring we are sharing the information out as soon as possible
- City Council:
    - Implementation is unclear
    - How can we carry our initiatives forward to address problems in OST?
    - Disconnect between school vacation and vocational schools
    - Special municipal employee positions
    - More money
- SLFC: workforce development in EEC positions
- Workforce Development:
    - Small business owners collaboration to hire youth employees and provide business mentorship
    - More intentional placements in the summertime via CTE program
    - More feedback from daycares participating in CTE partnership

Threats:
- Funding, staffing and space
- Emphasis on staffing
    - Inappropriate/untrained staff members imperils the quality of our programs and safety of students
    - Staff need more training
    - Legal issues incoming due to new regulations on staff regarding paraprofessionals in recreation settings

Recommendations:
- Improve access to summer programming for high need families by:
  - Include human service providers in outreach about summer programming to increase timely registration and enrollment for those families which need to access the lower cost options most.
  - Broader policy for summer programs in the City of an income-based pay scale and/or sliding scale, with higher rates for high income families to supplement lower costs to high need families.
  - Programs holding a % of slots for high need and new arrival families that are released closer to the summer so that families who did not get into SPS programs still have affordable summer care.
- Increase coordination between City, School and community programs by:
  - Having a round table discussion about summer programming in January.
  - Assess new organizations that have recently formed in the community and provide them with opportunities for growth through partnership with the City and/or Schools.
  - Creating a summer program timeline to orient program partners prior to June PD time.
- Create more spaces for summer activities to take place by:
  - Create a space assessment landscape to prioritize available spaces in the City that community partners may use to host summer activities.
  - Increase communication between community partners and Parks and Recreation to coordinate use of public outdoor spaces.
  - Development projects which prioritize creating indoor spaces suitable for recreational activities to increase safety from the heat in the summer.
  - Increase the amount of shade in public outdoor spaces via coordination with the Park Development Office using landscaping and semi-permanent structures such as tents.
  - Incorporate accommodations for summer and OST activities in new school design and development (ie Winter Hill).
- Improve the Annual Summer Guide by:
  - Amplify outreach to community partners for inclusion in the Guide.
  - Highlighting more regional opportunities for summer activities in the guide to reduce the burden on Somerville programs and encourage families with means to choose options that are higher cost so that high need families can remain in Somerville.
  - Diversify and increase the dissemination of the guides to more community events, such as the School Markets.
- Increase the workforce for summer programming via:
  - Recruiting staff for summer programming directly from teen programs, such as recruitment in teen spaces and awarding practicum credits to students in the CTE program.
  - Implement supports to prevent staff burnout through universal interventions, such as Youth Mental Health First Aid training, as well as provide individual or group follow up support through partnership with a community organization.
    - Is there an existing embedded program serving teacher's mental health?
  - Coordinating staff recruitment and hiring timelines.
    - Could there be a universal application for summer staff as there is for Mayor's Summer Jobs, and we are able to place available people at the right place at the right time as a community?

- o Orientation for new staff in Summer of Yes to better understand the staff structure and spaces that programming takes place in.
- o Develop partnership with higher education institutions to have mature, trained providers that can receive practicum credit at their university (BHCC etc.)
- o Increase employment recruitment via MassHire.

Updates:
- Early Childhood:
  - o We are starting to plan the Week of the Young Child and are looking for collaborators.
  - o Date:
- CHA:
  - o We are opening our 2nd Community Behavioral Health Center site in the new year (soft opening next week) in Malden at 195 Canal Street - Somerville residents now have 2 sites to choose [Cambridge other]
  - o WIC has moved and is officially open in its new location: 120 Beacon St, 2nd Fl, Somerville
  - o Somerville Teen Connection will be closed during the school break and reopening on 1/2; patients will be provided info on any care needs during this time, see details on instagram page; phone will be answered and properly routed
  - o Please help promote the following open positions:
    - Hiring for a CHW, Spanish or Portuguese language a ++, position with a Somerville focus: https://www.chacareers.org/job/community-health-worker-i-community-health-improvement-grants-human-and-social-services-cambridge-5558-3/
    - Community Health Educator, Bilingual (Spanish) for Somerville: https://www.chacareers.org/job/community-health-educator-ii-sexual-reproductive-health-human-and-social-services-malden-6571-10/
  - o Accessing health insurance at school enrollment or other city sites:
    - CHA is able to provide families with physicals, vaccinations, etc. for school enrollment (especially through Teen Connection). However challenges come up for follow up care (i.e. accessing medications).
    - Is there supports in the school or city, such as a Community Health Worker to work with families for insurance enrollment? We understand this is a motivator for getting kids in school however some challenges have come up for additional care and awareness of resources.
- OST:
  - o Jenee Riley has been hired and staff restructured to support OST programming.
  - o We will now have an OST position in the SomerPromise department to coordinate resources (staff and space) for programs that are not housed within SPS.
  - o Coordination of OST taskforce
  - o ARPA funds were awarded for two consultants to support the system of OST, one focused on early child care and one on OST for school age children.

  - o