

# **ResiStat Meeting for Spanish Speakers in Somerville March 3, 2008**

## **City Officials Present:**

Hon. Joseph A. Curtatone, Mayor of Somerville  
Stephanie Hirsch, SomerStat Director  
Monica Lamboy, Director of Strategic Planning and Community Development  
David Guzman, Planner, Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development  
Capt. John O'Connor, Somerville Police  
Officer Eric Ubeda, Somerville Police  
Herenia Hernandez, Facilitator and Parent Liaison for SPS Parent Information Center.  
Jaclyn Rossetti, Public Information Officer  
Ethan Field, ResiStat Analyst  
Hai Tiet, Junior SomerStat Analyst

## **Community Organizations Represented:**

Tito Meza, Somerville Community Development Corporation

## **Resident Comments:**

### **Engagement with the Spanish-Speaking Community:**

- Because turnout for the meeting was low, the discussion began by with the question of why non-English speakers don't participate as much in public meetings in general.
- A resident responded that many Spanish speakers are embarrassed that they don't know English very well, and are worried that they won't understand everything that is happening at the meeting, or that they might sound ignorant if they try to say something.
- Tito Meza suggested that it depends very much on the issue being discussed. He said, if it's not an important issue to a particular person, that person won't come.
- Mayor Curtatone agreed that the urgency of the topic is important. He noted that after the East Somerville Community School fire, a very large number of Spanish-speakers came to the public meeting.
- Residents agreed that sending information home to parents through school children is effective.
- Residents recommended that the next meeting be held at a place where Spanish-speaking people are already gathering, such as a church or a classroom.

### **Contacting the Police for Service:**

- A resident reported that sometimes when she calls the Police, it's hard to describe the problem in English and she gets directed to the wrong person. She said she often ends up feeling like she is bothering the Police and that she should not have called.
- A resident told about a time when she requested a specific Officer's assistance because of the nature of the problem, but was told the Officer wasn't available. This resident eventually found the officer by herself. Capt. O'Connor responded that it's possible that the officer she'd requested wasn't listed as being trained to deal with the specific kind of incident. If the need

is very specific and the person on the phone isn't giving a resident the service needed, the resident can always ask to talk to the person's supervisor.

### **Spanish-Speakers as Police Officers:**

- A resident asked Officer Ubeda how he feels as a Latino serving the Latino community. Officer Ubeda responded that he is committed to serving the entire community, regardless of ethnicity. He acknowledged that his knowledge of the language is a skill which allows him to contribute in a unique way.
- Capt. O'Connor said that the Police are actively looking for talented, dedicated people to be Police officers, and that having more bilingual officers helps the SPD better serve the whole community.

### **Small Business Development:**

- David Guzman told participants that the City is very interested in small business development. He said Spanish speakers who are looking for advice in developing a local business can call him any time. The City also offers a packet for new business owners.
- A resident asked if the materials are on the web. Monica Lamboy responded that some information is on the web, but it's better for people to call David. This is because issues and spaces available change quickly, and David can help by addressing a caller's unique situation.

### **Particular Crime Concerns**

- A resident shared a concern about suspicious activity seen in the Gilman Square area.
  - Another resident shared a concern about activity happening on a particular school bus.
  - Capt. O'Connor noted the details of these situations and took steps to address them.
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### **Next Steps for City Staff:**

- Follow up on specific criminal activity reported.
- Hold the next meeting at a location where Spanish-speaking people are already gathering, such as a church or a classroom.