

Core Leadership Meeting Minutes, August 8, 2016

In attendance: Stan McKenzie, Rich Detering, Melinda Lilley, Rick Wilson, Janice Zahn, Patty Ferguson, Robbin Price

Guests: Angela and Karina from Sophia Way

This meeting was essentially a fact-finding and discussion meeting focused on the proposal that we host the Sophia Way Emergency Women's Shelter for a portion of early 2017.

The meeting started with Angela and Karina answering questions and sketching out how the Sophia Way shelter program would work. The winter shelter is open from October 15 to May 15, seven days a week. The women who use the shelter are women who are waiting to get into the Sophia Way regular shelter, which is always full and in high demand. The women have often been born and raised on the Eastside.

Until October 15, there is nowhere for these women to go on the Eastside.

What brings these women to homelessness varies but it comes down to not enough money for rent. Some are battling with disability, some with the aftermath of divorce, and some suffer from mental issues. Often they have domestic violence in their past.

In past years the women's shelter and the shelter for families have been at the same site. This year they need to be at separate sites, which is why this opportunity has come up. Sophia Way would love for us to do a three month time period (January 2 to March 31). It is difficult for the women when the site changes frequently. Overlake Park Presbyterian is doing April and May.

Typically the women are older, and there are usually 22 to 26 of them. They are not always the same women night after night. Typically they are women being served by the Sophia Way Day Center, and this year the shelter staff will also work at the day center, which provides nice consistency for the women.

What they need from the host church: They need a bathroom, but no showers, access to the kitchen, some refrigerator space, and a place to sleep. Sophia Way provides a storage pod for materials, which fits in a parking space.

It was pointed out that we had a program 6 years ago that was only on weekends and had only 10 sleeping mats. This would be a much larger commitment.

Timing: The Sophia Way staff arrive at 8:00 p.m. to set up, and the women arrive at 8:30 p.m. There is a meal provided by the Sophia Way staff; donated meals are welcome, and one can sign up on the Sophie Way website. The Sophia Way staff stay

all night. In the morning, the women leave at 7:00 a.m. after a cold breakfast. The Sophia Way staff clean up and are gone by 8:00 a.m.

Volunteer help from the church is always welcome, but Sophia Way doesn't require it (our church, however, does, as someone pointed out, so we would need volunteers every night and morning while we are hosting the program).

If we want to invite the women to church events, the SW staff is happy to help us advertise, but if we want to plan an event specifically for the women, SW staff need to be there.

The pastor at Saint Peter's said there were no issues with crime or cleanliness when they have hosted in the past. The only significant issue they saw were things put away in the wrong places.

Given the timing, it is clear that the Aldersgate preschool and the shelter would not overlap.

Sophia Way carries insurance, and if we host we would be listed on their insurance for the time they are in our building, so we would not need additional insurance. And SW has money to pay us for extra utilities, janitorial service, and bathroom supplies.

Currently, King County is trying to get homeless individuals access to resources as quickly as possible, so they are using a vulnerability survey with anyone they can identify as homeless. Catholic Community Services is running an Enrollment for All program to help in this endeavor, so we might see additional staff onsite occasionally conducting these assessments.

Someone asked if there were significantly disabled women who would need grab bars in the bathroom, or other assistance we don't have. We were told that such serious disabilities were rare, and that they try to steer these women to other places.

Sophia Way doesn't need an answer immediately, but soon would be helpful. And they'll let us know if someone else grabs our "spot." They did ask that if we couldn't do the entire January to March period, that we should work backward from April 1 and fill as much of that time as we feel able to do.

Rich wondered how much square footage would be needed if we were to create a temporary building at our site to use as a shelter (much like the portables used at overcrowded schools). We agreed that this was impressive outside-the-box thinking and an interesting idea.

At this point our guests left and we discussed what we'd heard. Rich pointed out that if we are serious about considering this, we need someone to spearhead the effort,

and a Mission Action Team to look at the logistics, plan the implementation, and be held accountable. He expressed frustration that past endeavors have not always gone well. We all firmly agreed that if we move forward with this, none of the work can be allowed to fall to the church staff in any way.

Patti also expressed concern about how housing this program would impact Jen and her work with youth and family ministries. She proposed that limiting the program to 1 month or 6 weeks would be helpful, and that she didn't want Jen to feel stressed or overly limited in her work to build the youth program.

In the end, Janice offered to help lead the team to explore this opportunity. Robbin volunteered to help. They will be asking Colleen Ollerman and Jean Harris if they would be willing to help as well, and Rick offered to announce at worship that anyone interested in the project could get involved. Their goal will be to have a meeting to create a detailed plan of action that they can then present at the next Core Leadership meeting (September 12). At that time, the entire Core Leadership can decide whether to move the plan forward to the Common Table meeting on September 19. The hope is that at that point a final decision can be made.

And at this point the meeting ended.

These minutes respectfully submitted by Robbin Price. All mistakes and omissions are mine, and corrections, as always, are most welcome.