

Homeless Task Force report

May 23, 2021

This is a very exciting time for all of us on the Homeless Task Force! Thanks to Gary and Melanie, we had city representatives including Andria McClellan, Sarah Fuller, Megan Honan, Marla, and Rafael who zoomed into our last meeting on May 11, 2021. They talked with us for about 45 minutes about many things going on with the city regarding the homeless.

The former Greyhound bus station on Brambleton Avenue in downtown Norfolk has been converted into a temporary shelter for homeless adults. Street homelessness has doubled since the Covid pandemic started. The city opened the converted property on May 1 to help people who are not in a traditional shelter and need a place to stay overnight during the summer months. The shelter currently has 55 outdoor tents and bathrooms indoors. The city says it's working to improve the shelter with air conditioning and doors, walls and a roof for outdoor units, expanded sleeping areas and onsite laundry. When renovations are completed the shelter will be able to host up to 80 people. It also has security 24/7 and other services such as cleaning services for the shelter, shower trailers, case management, and housing and employment assistance. They are helping each person to make the next steps to be reliable to continue on their own journey. The city has a goal of getting a permanent location up by the end of 2021.

These are the ways they suggested that churches can help:

1. Volunteering- opportunities to volunteer are similar to NEST. The sign up information is in Ghent UMC's weekly newsletter.
2. The Center needs help with meals such as volunteers to purchase or prepare them.
3. Help spread the word to homeless individuals about the Center on Brambleton Ave.
4. Porta potties with antiviral wipes and hand sanitizer are helpful because access to public restrooms is still limited.
5. Donations of food items are needed such as fruit drinks, individually packaged snacks, yogurt, and soft granola bars.
6. Donations of new back packs, t-shirts, underwear, socks, sweat pants, and khaki pants are needed.
7. Donations of Laundry cards are also appreciated.
8. If someone has a commercial size washer and dryer and is willing to launder blankets for the center, it would be wonderful.
9. Financial donations are also appreciated.
10. They are well stocked currently with feminine products and blankets.

Steve Vegh, Melanie, Lisa (who is the recording secretary for the Task Force), and I attended this meeting so we all know of these needs. Please feel free to ask questions and we will do our best to answer them or get back to you with a response. As for me, I was very excited about the possibilities.

Submitted with Loving Kindness,

Faye Joseph