

Islington Seniors' Shelter Community Liaison Committee Meeting #1 Summary

Thistletown Community Centre
The Barker Room, 3rd Floor
925 Albion Road, Etobicoke
Monday, February 4, 2019
7:00 – 8:30 pm

Background

In February 2018, Toronto City Council directed Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) to open 1,000 new shelter beds to the shelter system to address the growing pressures faced by the system by 2020. Following this Council direction, SSHA opened a new seniors' shelter in north Etobicoke on December 15, 2018, as one of the three emergency shelters being opened in 2018. This shelter is operated and managed by The Salvation Army.

As part of the new community engagement process for shelter development in Toronto, SSHA and the Salvation Army have created a Community Liaison Committee (CLC). The CLC is an advisory body that works collaboratively with the Islington Seniors' Shelter and relevant City agencies to achieve a successful integration of the new shelter into the neighbourhood. The CLC is guided by a Terms of Reference, which can be found on the Salvation Army's website (<https://www.torontohhs.org/shelters/islington-seniors-shelter/>).

Community Liaison Committee Meeting Overview

On Monday, February 4th, 2019 the Salvation Army hosted the first Community Liaison Committee meeting for the Islington Seniors' Shelter. Eighteen people attended and participated in the meeting, including local community service providers, local residents, representative from community organizations, Councillor Michael Ford's office, representatives from the Salvation Army and the facilitation team.

The purpose of the first meeting was to kick off the Community Liaison Committee by reviewing the draft Terms of Reference and identifying initiatives the CLC may assist the shelter with to ensure that the shelter is a good neighbour and a valuable community asset. Bradley Harris from the Salvation Army also shared some general shelter-related updates with participants.

Swerhun Inc. (an independent third-party facilitation team) has been retained by the Salvation Army to facilitate CLC meetings in 2019. Swerhun Inc. prepared this summary and shared it in draft with participants for review prior to finalizing it. It is not intended to serve as a verbatim transcript; rather it captures key discussion points and meeting outcomes shared by participants.

Summary of Discussion

Matthew Wheatley, part of the independent facilitation team, reviewed the draft Terms of Reference with participants. There were no questions or objections to the proposed Terms of Reference at the meeting. Matthew asked participants to **share any additional comments or questions about the draft Terms of Reference by Friday, February 8th**. After this date the Terms of Reference will be finalized.

Salvation Army Shelter Update & Questions

Following the review of the Terms of Reference, Bradley Harris from the Salvation Army provided a brief update on the shelter since it opened on December 15, 2018. Key points covered in the update include:

- The shelter currently has 45 seniors living on the third floor, with 28 men and 17 women. Once the renovations are complete there will be space for up to 90 beds, which is in line with the what the City's Shelter, Support, Housing and Administration division has asked us to accommodate.
- The residents served at the shelter will need to be 55+ and be able to care for themselves.
- The shelter receives its residents through the City's Central Intake system. Once residents come to the shelter, we work with them to understand their housing experiences and needs in an effort to help them find more permanent housing options. The shelter system is not meant to house people for an extended period of time. This helps to prevent people from arriving at a shelter where there may not be any available beds. That said, if a senior (55+) does arrive here on their own, we will check to see if we have availability.
- The designs for the renovations to the 2nd and 1st floors are currently in the planning stages. The 2nd and 1st floor will include additional beds, office space, program space, and a community room.
- Mauricio (the shelter director) and Krystina (the community program coordinator) work at the Islington Seniors' Shelter, and we are currently in the process of hiring additional staff to handle case management. Case management is a three-step process that includes: case workers that work with residents to understand their needs; housing workers that work with landlords and housing providers to help find housing options; and community follow-up workers that follow-up with past shelter residents to help with a successful transition to their new housing.

Following Bradley's update participants asked a few questions of clarification. The questions are included below in **bold** with responses provided by Bradley in *italics*.

- **What do the shelter residents do during the day?** *Since we have opened at the end of last year, we have set up cable TV and are in the process of establishing a variety of programs for residents.*
- **Do you have a desired ratio of males and females at the shelter?** *We do not have a specific target as the City has asked us to remain flexible to the need. We anticipate there will be some couples and others that have pets.*
- **Does the shelter provide food for the residents?** *Yes, the shelter provides breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks to the residents. The food is prepared on-site by Aramark.*

Key points of feedback shared by participants:

Participants shared a number of suggestions on how the CLC and shelter can work together to ensure the shelter is a good neighbour and community asset, including:

- **So far, the community feedback is positive.** Participants shared that although some community members expressed concerns about the shelter prior to its opening, the participants have not heard any negative feedback since the shelter opened in mid-December last year. One participant heard from shelter residents that the shelter is a beautiful and safe place.
- **Connect with Humber College.** A participant suggested that a representative from Humber College be invited to join the CLC and shared contact information with the facilitation team.
- **Connect with local high schools.** Shelter staff could speak to students in co-op programs, and potentially take placement students at the shelter. This could help students understand the needs of people experiencing homelessness and potentially have more people start a career in social services.

Bradley explained that the Salvation Army is working on an initiative to talk about the Salvation Army work in colleges and universities, and added that high schools could be incorporated as a next step in this initiative.

- **Exchange information with Etobicoke General Hospital in advance.** It would be helpful for the shelter to share information with the hospital about residents ahead of their visit to help with care at the hospital.
- **Identify the needs and wants of shelter residents.** It would be helpful to understand the kinds of programs and supports shelter residents need and want so that the local community knows how to help support shelter residents.
- **The local library offers a variety of programs that could be beneficial to shelter residents.** Some of the programs offered by the library include: computer training; job searching; and resume workshops. Library staff could work with shelter residents directly and/or train shelter staff to offer similar programs.
- **The Rexdale Community Health Centre (RCHC) offers a number of health promotion, social recreation, primary care, and allied health programs and services for seniors.** Some of the programs offered that could help integrate shelter residents into the local community include: ESL classes; low and high impact fitness classes; computer training; a community choir; and lunches. the RCHC also offers TTC fares and translation services to help seniors access their programs.
- **Create a resource to help inform residents of local services.** It would be great to provide shelter residents with an easy to read resource (e.g. a pamphlet with a map) that outlines the variety of services and programs in the area.

- **Toronto Public Health (TPH) offers a number of health programs.** Some of the programs offered by TPH include: mobile dental services; sexual health; fall prevention training; and healthy eating and nutrition.

Process Feedback Participants shared the following feedback related future meetings:

- **Consider hosting the meeting at the shelter.** *Bradley Harris from the Salvation Army said this is something they could consider in the future. They need to, however, consider potential impacts on the shelter residents, and well as the future construction plans starting this year.*
- **First Tuesday evenings of each month generally work well for the group.** The second Tuesday of each month should be avoided because the Toronto Police Service Community Police Liaison Committee meetings are held on these days and Mondays do not work well for the Toronto Public Library.

Post Meeting Feedback

A few participants shared the following feedback with members of the facilitation team after the meeting:

- **Provide updates on how the shelter is spending any funding from the City.** Members of the public pay taxes and would be interested to know how any funding provided by the City are being spent.
- **Toronto Public Health may be able to add the shelter to the list of pilot sites for Nicotine Replacement Therapy.** If this is determined to be a need TPH could offer training for shelter staff.

Next Steps

Bradley Harris thanked participants for their participation at the first CLC meeting. Bradley also shared that the Salvation Army is open to a discussion for a potential name change for the Islington Seniors' Shelter. He shared that New Hope Leslieville was a name that was developed by the community for the relocated Hope Leslieville shelter.

Matthew Wheatley reminded participants to share any comments on the draft Terms of Reference by Friday, February 8th. Following this date, the Terms of Reference will be finalized, shared and posted to the Salvation Army's website. The facilitation team will also share a draft meeting summary with participants for review prior to finalizing it and posting it to the Salvation Army's website.

The tentative date for the next CLC meeting is Tuesday, March 5th. The team asked CLC members to hold this date and said they would be in touch to confirm the date and location and share and agenda for the meeting;

Attachment A. Meeting Agenda

Community Liaison Committee Meeting #1

Islington Seniors' Shelter

Thistleton Community Centre

The Barker Room, 3rd Floor

925 Albion Road, Etobicoke

7:00 – 8:30 pm

Meeting Purpose

To kick off the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) by confirming the Terms of Reference, identify the initiatives CLC may assist with, and share general shelter related updates.

Proposed Meeting Agenda

- 7:00 pm Welcome**
Bradley Harris, The Salvation Army
- 7:05 Introductions, Purpose and Agenda Review**
Matthew Wheatley, Swerhun Inc.
All
- 7:15 CLC Mandate and Draft Terms of Reference**
Matthew Wheatley, Swerhun Inc.
- 7:25 Facilitated Discussion**
All
- Do you have any questions or suggested refinements to the Draft Terms of Reference?
 - Is there anyone else who should be invited to the CLC?
- 7:55 General Shelter Update**
Bradley Harris, The Salvation Army
All
- Any initial community feedback regarding the shelter?
 - What can the CLC and the shelter work on to ensure the shelter is a good neighbour and a valuable community asset?
- 8:25 Wrap-up**
Matthew Wheatley, Swerhun Inc.
All
- Next CLC meeting date
 - Process next steps
- 8:30 Adjourn**

Contact:

If you have any additional feedback, please contact the facilitation team:

Matthew Wheatley, *Swerhun Inc.*
416-572-4365
mwheatley@swerhun.com

Jacky Li, *Swerhun Inc.*
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Attachment B. Participant List

Participants:

Ann Sabo, *Toronto Public Health*

Cathy Bunce, *Toronto Public Library – Albion Branch*

Dahab Ibrahim, *Rexdale Community Hub*

Gabriel Mesmin Lecques, *Elementary School Catholic Saint-Noël-Chabanel*

Jag Bhogal, *Toronto Police Service – 23 Division*

Jenn Brzozowski, *Toronto Police Service – 23 Division*

John Anga, *Thistletown Ratepayers Association*

Karen Merriot, *Etobicoke General Hospital*

Lizia Renna, *Community Member*

Rosemary Fortini, *Thistletown Ratepayers Association*

Trent Jennett, *Councillor Michael Ford's Office*

Wendy Caceres-Speakman, *Rexdale Community Health Centre*

The Salvation Army Staff:

Bradley Harris, *Executive Director, Toronto Housing and Homeless Supports*

Mauricio Urtecho, *Shelter Director*

Krystina Damyanovich, *Community Program Coordinator*

Swerhun Inc. Facilitation Team:

Matthew Wheatley

Yulia Pak

Jacky Li