

Meeting Notes – Emergency Housing Workgroup 9/21/23 – 10am – At UWLCA

Present in person:

Jeff Buscher, Anne Pichette, April Sparks, Theresa Ortega, Dale Nickelson, Emily McVey, Lou Antonick, Ed Johnson, Mark Nay, Kyle Sturgill-Simon, Brian West

Present online – ZOOM:

Kayla Morris, Bobby Soper, Michelle Boyd, Ann Lenik, Angie Hubbard, Meg White, (Gods Love Staff: Ann Miller, David Miller, Rachel Saunders, Jan Wenderoth), Commissioner Melinda Reed, Teresa Kelley Brewer,

Jeff gives background to Group - \$100K from City to establish a supplemental emergency shelter for this winter.

Invite God's Love to share their plans for the coming Winter.

Rachel – Playing it by ear per the weather – We start paying attention in early October.

When it gets cold we will open it up for folks to sleep in the dining room. We are taking bids to re-do the floor – but that is going slow. (\$13K current Bid)

Currently all people staying at GL are working or collecting a SS Check. People are required to have an income to stay here in the warmer months. Family Program (One room available today)

One open bed downstairs. Winter rules – Anyone not physically violent is welcome to sleep in the dining room. Capacity is 35-40 for sleeping on the floor. Biggest night last year was 35 and it was very crowded.

Kayla asked for a list of folks who have been trespassed – response, it is a very fluid list. Clients that may be on the list are always welcome to check in with us and ask to be let in. The list is always changing based on persons behaviors.

Jeff reported on tour of Rocky Care Center adjacent to St. John's. Approx. 40 rooms. All rooms have bathrooms, all have sinks, a few have showers, there are showers down the hall. Rooms would require a refrigerator & microwave. Asking current owner if they would like to generate income from these rooms – from voucher holders. To use it as an emergency shelter, zoning work could be negotiated, but in its current for state – it would be up to the owners.

Ongoing conversation with faith communities about emergency overnight lodging for unsheltered folks during a severe cold snap. So far 3 churches have been approached and they are running it through their leadership teams. Next steps will be to invite fire marshal to tour buildings. Then advertise to community. Also we have talked with Family Promise to be sure we are not overlapping resources. Question from Meg White: Could Emergency Housing Funds (\$100K) be used to get churches up to code for overnight lodging? Lou mentioned the following items that they would be looking at for overnight stays: Sprinkler system & annual Inspections, Fire alarm System, CO2 alarms, Kitchen hood, Egress issues. Exit signs, panic hardware on doors, Fire Extinguishers, Emergency lighting, an emergency plan dependent on Number of people – No hotplates, etc. – Best is a cooking system with hoods, - could do food cooked off-site and brought in for guests. How do we find out if a church asks for modifications, if they would pay for them?

Jan at GL – Offered past experience with Fam. Promise – meals, transportation, Clean-up etc.

But it has worked and it takes a lot of commitment from the local church. Jeff indicated we would not use a church being used by Family Promise at the same time in the event of a cold snap for emergency housing. Also we are still looking for a group to operate this facility. Meg: Could Funds be used to pay staff at this facility? Our group is to find a location, and then we can come up with plan to pay for site and for staff. Commissioner Reed replied that the set aside dollars could be used for site and/or staff. There is additional funds available if needed. Original intent – is to meet the immediate need.

Restrictions? Answer – Unrestricted general funds. If Mayor declares an emergency – could that make funds available?

Ann & David Miller mentioned that Zero Fahrenheit is very cold, we take people in when it gets snowy and miserable, even with a wet snow and wind at 40 degrees – we will take people in.

We have been doing this for 40 years. We house the majority of people through the years.

Jeff explains the value of a supplemental Emergency Shelter for folks who may be trespassed or in the event they are full. We see high numbers every year. Rachel shares that yes, if some could be housed in a low barrier shelter, that would help us at GL. (Her explanation of the difference b/w a Low barrier Shelter = violent ones, who cannot stay at GL / But an Emergency Shelter [like Gods Love] is just for the overflow of folks we cannot house at Gods Love because we do not have the space.) Rachel, “We are not opposed to you guys setting up to take people, we have been doing this for 40 years. We’ve been full every year. So for you all to take 10 or so – we are still going to have 25 or so on the floor. Doing another Emergency Shelter would really help the people of Helena. Summer Rules – have to be working. Winter Rules – Dinner to breakfast – After dinner - the dining room is then set up for sleeping on the floor, then cleaned up in the morning for breakfast. 7am folks have to get out so they set up for lunch. Ann – They would leave to go to Our Place during the day, that worked really well.

Theresa – shared folks come down after breakfast, and we do not turn people away. Caitlin is the interim manager.

Theresa – Our Place status. Hesitant to go forward to create a permanent shelter – until we decide what we are going to do this winter. \$400K+ to make OP an overnight facility. It will depend on what we decide as a community. Again – discussion of who will run a facility.

Staffing Discussion for an emergency shelter? GSM? Currently no staff – it would need to be a new hire. It would be a whole different program. UWLCA – No Salvation Army – Brian West

Discussed with Denominational Higher-ups. Given lots of good data, they run several models. There is much to think through, but willing to staff. We are at the table. They currently have so many programs that they could not be an emergency shelter at current facility.

Location Discussion: Lumberyard on Lyndale – has been sold.

Intermountain facilities not available. Still seeking sites?

Hannon House? Boyd Andrew is looking at it

Our Place – Lou – When you go to overnight – it changes the requirements.

Overnight lodging is a game changer.

Hotel for sale in community – 155/sq ft 4.3M Helena Inn

Hotels could be an emergency option – does decrease staff requirements.

Meg: Hotel Vouchers? Short Term solution? Winters coming – should we start delegating this work. Contacting churches – we should get prepared. Help with transport etc. How can I help?

Which Red Cross Churches are on their list? Also Family Promise? Figure this Out.

Get Lists – FP & RC

Emergency Shelter Grant \$750K per county. GL / GSM / Fam Promise/ UWLCA/ Salvation Army – do a group request for these funds – Every county can only get one- Matching dollars. Meeting 11am Thursday – the 28th Informational meeting online. One Month to write a request. Due end of OCT. if we can get organized and write this as a team – much better chance to get the grant. Q&A on the 28th. Send grant info to all groups. Covers Construction, acquisition, doesn’t cover furniture. Staff, etc. \$25K or more are matching funds or in

Kind donation.

Ann Miller – When we started Gods Love, we did it so people would not freeze to death in a Montana Winter, and I can't say this enough, the people most likely to freeze to death in Montana – are the ones that cannot behave and cannot be housed in any shelter. Staff need to be protected, but we do not want to hear anyone died in the park.

Next meeting - Thurs. Oct. 5th at City County Building – Room 326
Meeting Length 1 hour 7 mins.