

Islington Seniors' Shelter
Community Liaison Committee Meeting #5 Summary
Thistletown Community Centre
Hall Room, 3rd Floor
925 Albion Road, Etobicoke
Tuesday, October 1, 2019
7:00 – 8:30 pm

Community Liaison Committee Meeting #5 Overview

On Tuesday, October 1, 2019, the Salvation Army hosted the fifth Community Liaison Committee (CLC) meeting for the Islington Seniors' Shelter. Sixteen (16) people attended the meeting, including local residents and staff from local community organizations; the City of Toronto's Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA); the Salvation Army; and Swerhun Inc. See Attachment A for the full list of participants.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide CLC members with updates related to the shelter and renaming process; check-in on community feedback since the June CLC Meeting #4; and discuss potential volunteer and donation opportunities. See Attachment B for the meeting agenda.

This meeting summary was prepared by Swerhun Inc., an independent third-party facilitation team retained by the Salvation Army to support their engagement with the CLC. It is not intended to serve as a verbatim transcript; but rather to capture the key discussion points and meeting outcomes shared at the meeting. A draft of this summary was shared with participants for review prior to being finalized.

Overall Summary of Discussion

The following points emerged as key points of discussion during the CLC meeting. These points are meant to be read alongside the rest of this summary:

- **Ongoing communication is crucial.** A few CLC members said and several others agreed that communication with the community is very important. Members said that CLC meetings are helpful and they would like to continue receiving updates from the shelter. There was also a suggestion for the shelter to produce a flyer with updates to be distributed to the community.
- **Consider relocating the temporary smoking area to the back of the building.** Some CLC members shared concerns about the temporary smoking area in front of the building because of its visual impacts. The CLC members said they understand that there are challenges with relocating the temporary smoking area during renovations. They suggested the shelter investigate ways to create a safe smoking area at the rear of the building during renovations.
- **Interest in volunteering and donations.** Several CLC members expressed interest in volunteering and providing donations and were keen to continue discussions at future CLC meetings to organize a volunteer/donation process.

Detailed Summary of Discussion

General Shelter-related Updates

Bradley Harris, Mauricio Urtecho, and Krystina Damyanovich from the Salvation Army shared several general shelter-related updates including:

- The Salvation Army is continually establishing partnerships and relationships with other local community organizations and service providers. Some services that staff has recently connected with include: hepatitis C screenings, library services with the Toronto Public Library, financial literacy from the Canada Revenue Agency, voter registration, fire safety training, legal training from Rexdale Community Legal Clinic, interview/resume help from Humber College, and live music on Sundays. Other organizations that staff have recently connected to includes North York Community House, and the Delta Family Resource Centre. In the future, we are looking to host movie nights for residents, and organize community volunteer opportunities.
- We have 3 front-line staff on site at all times during the day, and the days are split into three shifts. We also have on-call management staff. The Islington Seniors' Shelter is also looking for opportunities to hire additional case management staff.
- The Phase 1 renovations finished in June 2019. Phase 2 of renovations may be delayed until next year. We are working with the City on securing contractors for the upcoming renovations, and we are also looking to include repairs to the exterior stairs into these contracts as well.

Community Feedback

Following the updates shared by the Salvation Army, CLC members asked questions and provided feedback. Responses and comments from Salvation Army and City staff, where provide, are noted in *italics*.

- **Interest in relocating the temporary smoking area from the front to the back of the building.** Some CLC members had some concerns about smoking in front of the shelter and the associated visual impacts. CLC members expressed understanding that there are challenges to providing a temporary smoking area in the back, including safety, security, and access, but suggested that staff investigate ways to expedite relocating the smoking area. Some CLC members suggested that by providing a permanent or temporary outdoor smoking space in the back of the building could alleviate the visual impact of smokers in front of the building. One CLC member expressed that shelter residents have a right to smoke on the shelter property, noting that this is their current home.

Staff from the Salvation Army and the City shared that a proper outdoor smoking area in the back is part of the renovation plans. At the moment, however, it is challenging to provide an accessible smoking area at the rear of the building because the only monitored and controlled entrance/exit to the building is in the front. Salvation Army staff also discussed potential opportunities to expedite the relocation of the smoking area to the rear of the building and explained that they will continue to investigate ways to create a space that is safe and accessible for the residents.

- **Interest in a recent emergency incident at the shelter.** Some CLC members asked about a recent incident where they saw emergency vehicles in front of the shelter. *The Salvation Army staff confirmed that emergency vehicles were at the shelter recently because someone in the building smelled smoke and the fire alarm was used. There was not a fire but everyone in the building evacuated quickly and smoothly. Salvation Army staff also explained that community members can connect with the Salvation Army between CLC meetings with any questions or concerns by contacting Krystina Damyanovich at 416-688-5486 or Krystina_damyahovich@can.salvationarmy.org.*
- **Interest in how the shelter supports helping residents transition to permanent housing.** CLC members were interested to know how many people from the shelter have transitioned to permanent housing. They also suggested investigating ways to share these statistics with the community. *Salvation Army staff explained that they do not yet have hard statistics from the shelter but could look at ways to make them publicly available as the statistics become available over time. They also explained that the housing situation for each client is different; some clients may require more time to find appropriate housing and get settled into the community. There are currently 45 residents in the shelter. This shelter has probably served about 120 clients since it opened in December 2018. Shelter staff do not have too many stats at Islington Seniors' Shelter yet since it is just the first year of operation.*
- **Interest in the use of programs and services provided by the shelter.** CLC members were keen to understand if/how residents are participating in the various programs offered and/or coordinated by the shelter. *Salvation Army staff explained that residents are highly engaged with the programs and services provided within the shelter and it is fantastic to see some of the residents become more social over time. Once renovations are complete, it will allow us to do more things more frequently and with more staff.*
- **Interest in ongoing supports for residents once they transition to more permanent housing.** A CLC member suggested that staff could provide clients with a package of resource materials about independent living. *Salvation Army staff agreed this a great idea and also explained that they provide newly transitioned residents with connections to food banks and community organizations that can help with the transition. They also explained the shelter is in the process of hiring a follow-up worker who will work with people to prepare them for living on their own.*
- **Provide and promote education to community members about mental health and addiction.** There were some strong concerns raised about having residents from the shelter with mental illness, including addictions, in the community. In part because members of the community may not know how to or feel comfortable interacting with people with mental illness. There was a suggestion for the shelter to offer resources (e.g. courses and educational materials) for community members on mental health and addictions to increase awareness and reduce discomfort. One CLC member said that there have not been any negative incidents in the community since the shelter opened. *Staff from the Salvation Army agreed education is a good idea and said they can investigate opportunities to help raise awareness support education in the local community. They also noted that the Salvation Army has partnerships with other local community organizations who do this work, which could be leveraged to help support the local community. They also reiterated that the shelter has well established protocols to ensure the safety of shelter residents, staff, and community members.*

- **Strong support for keeping this location as a seniors' shelter.** CLC members said they were happy that this shelter serves seniors exclusively and asked if it is possible that this may change in the future. *City staff explained that they have not seen a City shelters change the population it serves and that if a change were ever contemplated it would require a significant process. Both City and Salvation Army staff also explained that the most significant increase in the homeless population is currently with seniors, and this building has been set up to accommodate seniors; therefore, there is no expectation that this shelter would change from a seniors' shelter.*
- **Ongoing communication with the community is crucial.** CLC members shared that communications between the Salvation Army and the community is very important. CLC members also said education about homelessness is very important in reducing misconceptions and fighting stigma. There was also a suggestion to distribute flyers to community with updates about the shelter on a regular basis. *The Salvation Army staff agree with the CLC members that communication and education is crucial to successful integration of the shelter in the community. They said they could look into provide a flyer or something similar to the community with updates and are also open to other feedback and suggestions on working together. A key purpose of the CLC as well as Krystina's position is to have a place to answer questions, share information, and provide a point of contact from within the shelter.*
- **Interest in the process for future CLC meetings.** A few CLC members said and several others agreed that these meetings are useful for keeping the community updated and connected with the shelter. One CLC member said that is beneficial to have a third-party facilitator act as mediator between the community and the shelter. Another CLC member said that it is important for the City to stay involved with the CLC. There was also a suggestion to use part of the December CLC meeting to discuss the process for holding CLC meetings going forward, including how often then meetings should be held. It was also suggested that each CLC meeting have time allocated to discuss the agenda for the following meeting.

Swerhun Inc. and the Salvation Army confirmed that Swerhun Inc. has been retained to facilitate the CLC meetings until the end of 2019, including one more meeting anticipated to take place in December. The Salvation Army also confirmed they intend to continue holding CLC meetings on a regular basis going forward. The Salvation Army reiterated that community members are always welcome to engage with the Salvation Army directly between CLC meetings.

- **Appreciate that the Salvation Army is the shelter operator.** A CLC member expressed appreciation that the Salvation Army is the shelter operator since they have a good reputation as an organization.

Renaming Process

Bradley Harris provided an update on the shelter renaming process. He explained that through consultation with the CLC membership, shelter residents and staff, City of Toronto staff, as well as the Councillor's Office, the Salvation Army has narrowed it down to five potential names. The Salvation Army will be hosting a survey until the end of October to gather additional feedback from CLC members and the broader community on a new name for the Islington Seniors' Shelter. CLC members are encouraged to share the survey with their respective organizations

and constituents for feedback. Once the survey is live, the team will share a link with the CLC membership.

Volunteering and Donations

Matthew Wheatley shared that the team is aware there is a keen interest from members of the CLC and other community members to volunteer and help organize donations. This CLC meeting and the next one in December is an opportunity to formalize some of these processes and to organize them with Krystina. CLC members discussed the following regarding volunteering and donations. Responses by the Salvation Army, where provided, are noted in *italics*.

- **Neighbourhood BBQs and holiday meals are a good idea.** A few CLC members expressed interest in a community BBQ as it is a good opportunity to meet neighbours. CLC members also expressed an interest in helping to organize and staff a meal/event in the shelter for residents around the holiday season (e.g. a large meal in the shelter near the end of the year for residents where community members can cook, serve, etc.).
- **Provide clarification on accepted donations.** A CLC member shared that a friend tried to bring food and clothing to the shelter, but it was not accepted. *The Salvation Army explained that shelter does not accept food donations because they have a company that prepares all the necessary food for residents. They do, however, accept seniors appropriate clothing. The Salvation Army said they would follow-up with their staff to ensure policies around accepted donations are clear and would also explore creating a list of acceptable donations that can be shared with the community.*

Next Steps

The project team thanked CLC members for attending the meeting and their continued participation and committed to sharing a draft meeting summary in the coming weeks. They explained that the next CLC meeting will likely take place in the first week of December 2019 and the team will notify CLC members as soon as a date is confirmed.

The link to the naming survey can be found here: <https://www.torontohhs.org/shelters/islington-seniors-shelter/>

Attachment A. Participant List

Participants:

Ashley Brown, *Local Resident*
Bruno Palozzi, *Local Resident*
Carmen DeSantis, *Local Resident*
Danielle Xavier, *Local Resident*
Domenica Venir, *Humber Summit Branch, Toronto Public Library*
John Anga, *Local Resident, Thistleton Ratepayers Association, D23 CPLC*
Lizia Renna, *Local Resident*
Rose Fortini, *Local Resident*
Stephanie Conant, *North York Community House*

The Salvation Army Staff:

Bradley Harris, *Executive Director, Toronto Housing and Homeless Supports*
Mauricio Urtecho, *Shelter Director*
Krystina Damyanovich, *Community Program Coordinator*

City of Toronto Shelter, Support & Housing Administration Staff:

Morag Perkins, *Housing Consultant*
Sandra Vaughan, *Agency Review Officer*

Swerhun Inc. Facilitation Team:

Matthew Wheatley
Jacky Li

Attachment B. Meeting Agenda

Community Liaison Committee Meeting #5

Islington Seniors' Shelter

Thistletown Community Centre - 925 Albion
Road, Etobicoke
304 Hall Room – 3rd Floor
Tuesday, October 1, 2019
7:00 – 8:30 pm

Meeting Purpose

- Provide general shelter-related updates and specific updates on the naming process.
- Check-in on any community feedback since the June CLC meeting.
- Discuss potential volunteer opportunities

Proposed Meeting Agenda

- 7:00 pm** **Introductions & Agenda Review**
Swerhun Inc.
- 7:05** **General Shelter & Community Update**
Salvation Army
- Any community feedback regarding the shelter since the June 4th CLC meeting?
- 7:35** **Shelter Naming Process Update**
Salvation Army
- 8:00** **Future Volunteer Opportunities**
- 8:25** **Wrap-up**
Swerhun Inc.
- 8:30 pm** **Adjourn**

Contact:

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

Jacky Li, *Swerhun Inc.*
416 572 4365
jlj@swerhun.com

If you would like to get in touch with the shelter staff, please contact the Salvation Army:

Krystina Damyanovich, *Salvation Army.*
416 688 5486
Krystina_Damyanovich@can.salvationarmy.org