

EASTSIDE INTERFAITH SOCIAL CONCERNS COUNCIL (EISCC)
GENERAL MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, May 10, 2022 - Noon-1:30 PM (Pacific Time) - Virtual

Opening prayer was given by Elizabeth Maupin

We had a new guest, Robert Sharer.

Jean Harris announced that Initiative 1929 is being circulated to get signatures to repeal the capital gains tax that was passed by the Washington legislature last session. There is a lot of misinformation about this tax. To counteract, get the true facts and join the **Decline to Sign** movement at: investwanow.org.

Program: Law Enforcement & City Services

Molly introduced our speakers: Amir Shabaneh, the Behavioral Health Coordinator for the city of Issaquah, and Major Andrew Popochock, a 19 year veteran of the Bellevue Police Department. Major Popochock began with a reminder that those without housing are also part of our neighborhoods, not outsiders. The police are also there to make sure that they are safe, just like any other person who lives in Bellevue. He acknowledged that they are a vulnerable population who may also be victims of crime. However, they are less likely to call the police department because there is a lack of trust.

The Bellevue Police officers are working hard to build trust. One way that we can help is to get to know a member of the Police force so that we can act as an intermediary, connecting people in need with a police officer whom they can trust. For the general population, there are two issues that leave people feeling unsafe: one the actual crime rate, and the other is the fear of crime. The second may be based on inaccurate perceptions, but both the actual crime rate and the fear of crime can both change behavior in ways that are toxic to the community.

Major Popochock spoke of efforts to prepare for hostings of Tent City 4, putting plans in place, addressing concerns, holding conversations involving multiple perspectives with diverse stakeholders, clarifying expectations of the police, and designing an environment that will work well when there is an emergency. During the encampments a sector captain program will engage issues, early and often. (He invited our help in dealing with disinformation cropping up on NextDoor.) The department strives for transparency. At the end of the encampment they seek feedback, create a report, and prepare an action plan for the future.

The Bellevue Police have conducted a trial of a new unit called the Community Crisis Assistance Team (CCAT). The CCAT teams consisted of one team consisting of one officer in plainclothes and one mental health professional working together in one vehicle and then two teams of two officers in plainclothes. All three teams had specialized training in dealing with those in crisis. They deployed three teams during the trial. All three teams responded to calls from the community. The results of the CCAT experiment are being evaluated and they are getting community input on the future of the program.

The Bellevue Department has a team of 2 officers trained in mental health who go to 911 calls in civilian garments, as well as a program called CARES (Citizen Advocates for Referral and Education Services) whose advocates meet with residents in their homes or may respond to anywhere that there is a need in the community at the request of the police department or fire department as well as providing follow up care and connecting those in need to resources. Their mental health police are able to discern when there is a need for treatment and when to take someone to jail. For the faith community, the Major would encourage looking at joining an advisory council as well as work to address disinformation in the community. While Bellevue has a "co-responder model," Issaquah has only Amir Shabaneh and uses a "referral model" in which there is follow up after a police call to bring resources to those experiencing mental health crises. This is not cutting edge, but is possible for a smaller city. Amir also receives referrals from the jail, court, city departments, the public defender, and individuals. 25% of the initial referrals related to people without housing so the City created a homelessness outreach program.

Issaquah's behavioral health program, is a coordinated effort between human services and the police. It's intended to help residents access to mental health and substance use services in addition to many other services and participation for residences, voluntary and free of charge. In the first year there have been 171 referrals and Amir is continuing to work with 66 of them as some require long term services. He connects proactively to those without housing as homelessness is its own form of crisis. Issaquah's main service connection has been to temporary shelter such as that provided by Congregations for the Homeless. Issaquah has no dedicated shelter, but has been able to place some people in a local motel as a short term solution when there are no regional shelter spaces available.

A major challenge are the local service gaps, shortages of shelter beds, openings for mental health services, and treatment facilities at the time when people are ready to use those resources. Amir estimated a 25% service gap over all with those related to homelessness and behavioral health being the areas of greatest shortfall.

King County Housing Authority housing vouchers have allowed Issaquah to find permanent housing for 10 people, but they could use many more. Amir was not aware of any current plans for Issaquah to open either any temporary shelter or safe parking programs, but he would welcome such resources.

Amir can be reached at AmirS@issaquahwa.gov.

In the Q&A there were questions about Tent City 4, about connecting with library staff, about how one might enter Tent City 4 without an ID, and the best ways that faith communities can help. Support for those providing human services is key because burn-out is resulting in high turn-over.

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Juan, a senior planner for the City of Bellevue and the Community Development Department announced that the City Council launched phase 2 of the Affordable Housing Strategy and is increasing the development potential on faith community properties in single family zones, specifically properties that are located near high frequency transit and other multifamily districts.

Announcements:

from Eastside Friends Meeting (Quakers): We encourage EISCC members to contact the Redmond City Council in support of establishing a Community Responder Program for mental health crises as part of the upcoming public safety levy. A Community Responder Program sends teams of trained health professionals and social workers to respond to mental health crises instead of armed police. Express support at the May 17 City Council meeting or any time through June. An information sheet is available from Susan Cozzens, from Eastside Quaker Meeting.

Next meeting is the 14th of June, about food insecurity

Closing prayer was given by Patty Ebner

In Service,
Elizabeth Maupin, M.Div.
Secretary, EISCC

UPCOMING 2nd TUES. EISCC MTGS.: June 14, 2022, Food Insecurity
EISCC BOARD MEMBERS 2021-2022—President: Steve Roberts, Bellevue Presbyterian; Past President and Eastside Human Services Forum Rep: Linda Hillesheim, Unity of Bellevue; President Elect: Rev. Patty Ebner, First Congregational Church, Bellevue; Secretary: Elizabeth Maupin, Spirit of Peace; Treasurer: Warren Marquardson, The Church of Latter-Day Saints of Jesus Christ; Judy Backmaster, St. Luke's Lutheran; Outreach: Farida Hakim, Islamic Center of Eastside Mosque and the Muslim Association of Puget Sound Mosque; At large: Rabbi Molly Weisel, Temple B'nai Torah.

BOARD CONTACT: eastsideinterfaith@gmail.com.

EISCC Mission Statement--Members of Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council (EISCC) believe we are guided by the moving of God's spirit in our community to work together in a spirit of caring and celebration. We honor and respect each other's religious heritages, welcome and pray for each other, and share information about pressing community needs. We provide a forum to educate, advocate, initiate, coordinate, and support through task forces and other means, to work for the common good, and to address human needs and improve the quality of life of the citizens living in the Eastside communities.