

Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council
GENERAL MEETING: TUESDAY, January 14, 2025, Noon to 1:30 PM

Present: 21 in person, 14 online. A list of those who signed in appears at the end of the minutes.

Welcome

Opening Prayer

Acknowledgment of Indigenous Lands and Peoples

Brief Reports:

Congregations for Kids (Nancy Jacobs) Nancy shared from her heart that people in the district are really hurting. The program has ordered several cases of backpacks in advance, to protect against price increases that might come with the threatened tariffs.

Legislative report (Elizabeth Dickinson) The [Faith Action Network](#) is urging active support for the Rent Stabilization Bills, HB 1217, with its Senate companion, SB 5222. In Washington state, nearly half of renters are paying more than 30% of their income on rent, and a quarter are paying half or more. She asked us to share stories about how high rents are hurting people. Her report is posted [here](#). Recommended action items are

- [FAN Action Network Letter](#): Personalize, sign and send.
- Comment on HB 1217 and SB 5222: <https://leg.wa.gov/bills-meetings-and-session/bills/how-to-comment-on-a-bill/>
- Call the legislative hotline to let all your legislators and the governor know that you support rent stabilization: [1-800-562-6000](tel:1-800-562-6000)

MAIN PRESENTATION TOPIC: Legal Needs in Dangerous Times

Jerry Kroon, Executive Director, [Eastside Legal Assistance Program](#) (ELAP)

Introduced by David Bowling, Eastside Foundation and EISCC Board

ELAP started in 1989 doing volunteer free legal work. They soon added a part-time attorney for domestic violence issues. The Eastside cities fund them for the domestic violence work which now employs six attorneys who handle 400 cases per year. Domestic violence is a terrible scourge that reaches every part of society.

In the COVID era, ELAP saw the need for legal assistance on housing issues, particularly eviction. They bring the parties together to resolve conflicts. There is currently \$45 million in past due rent in King County, a hangover from the COVID era that is expected to peak soon. Before the eviction moratorium, ELAP was handling 300 cases per month; that number is now 1000, with all the additional cases in housing.

ELAP currently has 100 volunteer attorneys, who hold 32 clinics a month on a wide range of legal issues. They serve only low-income clients, who pay nothing.

The current pressing issue is immigration. In 2017, ELAP joined with Bellevue Lifespring to address that year's immigration crisis with Know Your Rights workshops, involving police,

school districts, and mayors. They have started those workshops again and found that many of those who came were deeply concerned about what would happen to their children if they were deported. In response, ELAP has begun offering Safety Planning Workshops, which give the opportunity to fill out paperwork that establishes guardianship if parents are removed. These are being offered quietly because one school district received threats. ELAP welcomes the opportunity to partner with congregations on either of these workshops. They are also distributing Know Your Rights wallet-sized cards, in 14 languages. Contact Jerry (jerry@elap.org) if you are interested in offering or attending a workshop or receiving cards to distribute.

Jerry stressed the importance of the faith community in standing up and acting for the principle of loving our neighbors.

Questions from the floor:

- Do service providers need to be concerned about safety in their facilities? Probably not in East King County.
- Do asylum seekers face a different set of issues? Yes. ELAP refers them to the Northwest Immigrants Right Project.
- Does ELAP work on the challenges faced by those who have experienced continuing difficulties with housing, employment, credit, and jobs? Yes. They work with people who have experience serial evictions and they refer people to programs at local universities to “expunge” prison records. State legislation doing this automatically, as Canada does, would be welcome.

The President thanked Jerry for his presentation and for everything ELAP is doing.

TABLE TALK

Susan Cozzens presented a few examples of answers to the Table Talk questions at the October meeting. Those in attendance today, both in the room and online, shared answers to the following: What does your nonprofit need most? What do its clients need most? What does your congregation have to offer? The Board will receive and act on this information.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Elizabeth Maupin (eli410maupin@gmail.com) asked us to share **stories of people who went from unhoused to housed** successfully, so that the broader community can learn what works, what helps people experiencing homelessness to thrive and does not add to their oppression.

Elizabeth Dickinson (**Faith Action Network**) invited us to [Interfaith Advocacy Day](#), February 20, to meet with our legislators jointly to express our values on issues we care about.

And from the EISCC inbox:

Eastside for All offers support and resources to the immigrant community through their [Safe Haven Cafecitos](#) program. Join monthly “Cafecitos” meetings to identify advocacy priorities, share information, and collaborate to support local immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. Many members worked to support local families impacted by anti-immigrant policies during Trump’s first administration, and the group is strengthening its resources to prepare for

2025. Safe Haven members collaborated with the Eastside Legal Assistance Program to develop a [resource guide](#) for families at risk of detention and deportation. For more information and to sign up, contact [Guillermo Rivera](#) (email) or phone 425-209-0707.

The **City of Bellevue** is hosting two stakeholder information sessions as part of the kickoff to the recently launched update to the City’s Affordable Housing Strategy. Organizational partners are invited to join to learn more about the project scope, ask questions, and get involved in the process. Join us either in-person or virtually! Staff will share the process for updating the plan and how the city hopes to engage with different groups. One has already passed, but one will take place virtually on Wednesday, January 22, 2025, from 12:00-1:30 pm. **To register, [sign up here](#)**. These events are tailored towards our organizational partners – developers, providers, and community organizations connected to affordable housing in Bellevue. Feel free to share this invitation with your colleagues and partners. City staff will be hosting a hybrid public information session for the general public on Thursday, January 30, 2025.

Closing prayer



NEXT GENERAL MEETING: Tuesday, February 11th, noon to 1:30, at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, Bellevue.



In attendance on January 14, 2025 (corrections welcome)

Last Name	First Name	Organization
Aho	Mele T.	Aldersgate UMC (need email)
Barry	Tricia	Kidvantage
Bentsen	Nadine	Cross of Christ
Bien	Alaric	City of Redmond Human Services
Bowling	David	Eastside Foundation & EISCC Board
Burrus	Sue	Eastside Friends Meeting
Delongpre	Ispa	Aldersgate UMC
Duncan	Megan	The Sophia Way
Fischer	Jennifer	Bellevue Lifespring
Harris	Jean	Aldersgate UMC

Hillesheim	Linda	Unity of Bellevue & EISCC Board
Hutchko	Condise	Catholic Community Services
Jacobs	Nancy	Congregations for Kids
Johnson	Michael	St. Louise Bellevue
Kalisa	Isabelle	Hero House
Kidd-Miller	Joyce	Baha'is of King County North & EISCC Board
Kroon	Jerry	ELAP
Mabbott	Art	All Saints Episcopal
Maupin	Elizabeth	Issaquah Sammamish Interfaith Coalition
McKee	Shauna	Hero House
McKnight	Cole	AUMC
O'Hare	Pauline	First Congregational & EISCC Board
Perry	Charles	Unity of Bellevue
Phelps	Ellen Weiss	Temple B'nai Torah & EISCC Board
Quijano	Nicolas	City of Bellevue
Richards	Diane	St. Margaret's
Shirmohammadi	Nasrin	Kirkland
Spohn	Betty	Newport Presbyterian
Thorsos	Terry	Eastside Friends Meeting

