

Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council General Meeting

Tuesday, March 11, 2025, Noon to 1:30 PM

Present: 30 people in-person; 16 online. The list of those who signed in appears at the end of these minutes.

AGENDA

Welcome. President Kevin Folkman thanked St. Margaret's for their hospitality and Eastside Friends Meeting for providing lunch.

The opening prayer was offered by Pastor Stevi Hamill from First Congregational Church in Bellevue.

Brief Reports:

- The Secretaries and Treasurer had nothing to report (see www.eiscc.net for minutes and budget)
- Congregations for Kids. The project is beginning preparations for the fall.
- [Faith Action Network](#) (FAN). Report from Elizabeth Dickinson
 - Elizabeth asked the group to celebrate the success of the rent stabilization bill (HB 1217), which passed the state House on March 10. With the cuts coming from the federal government, Washington renters will need all the stabilization they can find. FAN expects it will be hard to get the bill through the Senate.
 - The FAN website (fanwa.org) has links to many options for advocacy with the state legislature, including how to support the rent stabilization bill.
 - FAN urges continued advocacy for the Housing Trust Fund in the capital budget. Also, the funding for homeless services that comes from a document recording fee needs to be backfilled from general funds, in order to continue to provide shelter and transition services.
 - Governor Ferguson has proposed \$4 billion in cuts in the state budget, on top of the \$3 billion proposed in his predecessor's version. Cuts are projected in food programs and essential services, including summer food for children. While FAN recognizes that some cuts will be needed, they ask our help in insisting that programs for the most vulnerable and the working class not be cut.
 - A member added a warning about a postcard that many on the Eastside would receive shortly advocating opposition to the rent stabilization bill. She pointed out the inaccuracies in that mailing and urged us not to follow its advice.
- There were no reports from Eastside Human Services Forum or Hopelink.

PROGRAM

MAIN PRESENTATION: Do our shelters meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness in our communities?

Kiki Serantes, Planning Manager, [King County Regional Homelessness Authority](#), shared data from the [2024 Point in Time Count](#). (Her slides are available [here](#). A one-page summary of the findings is [here](#).) In January 2024, 16,385 people were experiencing homelessness in King County, 23% higher than in the 2022 survey. 60% were unsheltered and 40% were sheltered; the unsheltered share had increased since 2022. More than half of families and youth ages 18-24 were unsheltered in the count. Certain groups are over-represented among people experiencing homelessness, including African Americans, veterans, victims of domestic violence, and adults with serious mental illness.

Across the east side of King County, there are 18 providers and 16 programs serving those experiencing homelessness. (KCRHA has a publicly available [database](#) of these.) But there are still notable gaps. Multiple municipalities make it hard to coordinate services. KCRHA is working on tailoring programs to the needs of particular populations, for example, vehicle residents, young adults, and veterans.

Asked what congregations could do, Kiki pointed out that private organizations have fewer constraints and might be able to address special needs like temporary housing for couples, single fathers with children under their care, or people just leaving the hospital. Churches have been important partners in the vehicle residency programs. Participating in severe weather shelters might provide a good on-ramp for some groups. Another congregation asked how to find help for individuals who come to them evenings or nights. The answer, while acknowledged as imperfect, was to call 2-1-1.

Tony Machacha, Emergency Operations Manager for KCRHA, who presented his work to this group in December, provided an update on severe weather response this past winter, through a very long cold snap. Through daily coordination, his program was able to expand the number of shelters available and provide transportation services to match people to space. Porchlight, despite expanding capacity, was still forced on many cold days to transport 20 people to shelters in Seattle. Some Eastside shelters got extra winter funding through a KCRHA request for proposals (RFP), but they were still strained because of the large number of severe weather days. There will be another request for proposals in early April for summer severe weather shelter expansion. Congregations with appropriate space may be able to contract for staff through the cities. Tony can provide examples.

Marc Vermouth, Development Director, [The Sophia Way](#), gave a view from their perspective. He recognized that there were not enough spaces in the shelters for everyone who needed them. Once people are in shelters, however, he felt that their needs were being met very well. Individual needs include solving mental health problems, addressing addiction, creating community, income stability, and unpacking trauma. Meeting individual needs is an even bigger challenge than providing more beds, and it is expensive. The community's monetary investment does not match the problem. If tithing means giving until it hurts, our communities are not there yet.

Troy Christensen, Executive Director, [Porchlight](#), took the view that in housing, we are not doing enough to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness on the Eastside. Homelessness increased 23% between 2022 and 2024, but the number of deeply affordable housing units clearly did not. He agreed that places like Porchlight and The Sophia Way are doing a good job once people are in. Funding for that work is shrinking, however. The federal stimulus funding is finished, and the recent federal funding freeze is costing Porchlight \$40,000 a month. People are afraid to come to shelters because of deportation threats; the environment is disenfranchising those who need the most help. But there are not enough resources to increase services to meet those needs.

SPOTLIGHT: [Jewish Family Service](#). Ellen Weiss Phelps, Temple B'nai Torah. Ellen described the histories of three groups of Jewish residents in the Seattle area. Jewish culture is communitarian, with a strong expectation to take care of people in need. Jewish Family Services has a food bank in Seattle and offices in the Together Center in Redmond, focusing on immigrant services. With funding from the German government, they provide homecare for Holocaust survivors. Their services, which include a special project for domestic violence victims, are not restricted to Jews.

Announcements

- Friday, March 14, was Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Day at the state capitol. Reports will be available from the [Washington Low Income Housing Alliance](#), which organized the event.
- Aldersgate United Methodist Church hosted a presentation on March 16 by Ryan Gresby, a mental health nurse practitioner, on the intersection of faith and mental health.
- Nourishing Networks is having its [Spring NetWorkshop](#) on Saturday, March 22, 9 am to 1 pm, at the Together Center in Redmond. All are invited. Information and registration link are on [this page](#).
- Seattle University’s Center for Ecumenical and Interreligious Engagement is having an event on April 29 from 7 to 8:30 pm titled “All Flourishing is Mutual: Faithful Responses to Homelessness. Information and registration link are on [this page](#).

President Kevin Folkman reminded us of the challenge Marc identified to “give until it hurts.” He asked us to continue to consider what we can do individually that is different from what we’re doing now, and what we can do together.

The closing prayer was offered by Joyce Kidd-Miller, Baha’is of North King County



Signed in for this meeting:

Last Name	First Name	Organization
Backes	Sam Johnson	Mary's Place Family Shelter, Bellevue
Belmontes	Ericka	Bellevue Lifespring
Beres	Hunter	Mary's Place Family Shelter, Bellevue
Brandt	Lois	Newport Presbyterian Safe Parking
Burrus	Sue	Eastside Friends Meeting
Christensen	Troy	Porchlight
Collier	Greg	Newport Presbyterian
Cozzens	Susan	Eastside Friends Meeting & EISCC Board
Dickinson	Elizabeth	Faith Action Network
Duncan	Megan	The Sophia Way
Fischer	Jennifer	Bellevue Lifespring
Folkman	Katie	LDS
Folkman	Kevin	LDS & EISCC Board
Godfrey	Dave	Eastside Friends Meeting
Hamill	Stevi	First Congregational Bellevue
Harris	Jean	Aldersgate UMC
Hillesheim	Linda	Unity of Bellevue & EISCC Board
Hoggan	Kathy	LDS Bellevue Stake
Hutchko	Condise	Catholic Community Services
Johnson	Michael	St. Louise Bellevue
Kalisa	Isabelle	Hero House
Kentnor	Jan	St. Monica, Friends of Need
Kidd-Miller	Joyce	Baha'is of King County North & EISCC Board

Mabbott	Art	All Saints Episcopal
Machacha	Tony	King County Regional Homelessness Authority
Marquardson	Warren	LDS & EISCC
Maupin	Elizabeth	Issaquah Sammamish Interfaith Coalition
Mbaye	Amina	Essentials First
McKee	Shauna	Hero House
Noa	Leele	Marysplace
O'Hare	Pauline	First Congregational & EISCC Board
Phelps	Ellen Weiss	Temple B'nai Torah & EISCC Board
Prentice	Juli	Lake Washington Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Richards	Diane	St. Margaret's
Roos	Jack	Newport Presbyterian
Serantes	Kiki	King County Regional Homelessness Authority
Spurgeon	Ben	First Congregational
Spurgeon	Susan	BFCC
Tasy	Beverly	Saint Margaret's
Vermouth	Marc	The Sophia Way
Warner	Edie	St. Monica's
Wattley	Janice	Sammamish Issaquah Interfaith
Webb	Naeemah	LW School District & Nourishing Networks
Weisel	Nancy	Cross of Christ