

Minutes
Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council
GENERAL MEETING: TUESDAY, June 10, 2025

Welcome: Kevin Folkman

Opening Prayer

Acknowledgment of Indigenous Lands and Peoples

Participants: 32 in the room, 16 online. Full list of those who signed in appears at the end of the minutes.

BRIEF REPORTS:

- Secretary & Treasurer (see www.eiscc.net for [minutes](#) and [financial report](#))
 - Treasurer Warren Marquardson reported that EISCC accounts currently hold \$165,000 total, of which \$152,000 is designated for Congregations for Kids. He reminded everyone to check the membership status of their organizations on the website and pay dues for 2025 if it was not already noted there.
 - Co-secretary Pauline O-Hare invited everyone to join the EISCC Board when they visit the Islamic Center of the Eastside (ICOE) on Sunday, June 15 at 4 pm. ICOE has an open house every Sunday at that hour.
- Eastside Human Services Forum (Linda Hillesheim)
 - EHSF is not charging dues this year. It's a good year for your organization to join if you are interested.
 - The participating cities were concerned about a lack of urgency from state and federal officials to address funding gaps for human services. They called for a unified and coordinated approach across coalitions to elevate these concerns. EHSF members noted a disconnect between local and regional convenings and emphasized the need for consistent, inclusive communication across groups and the importance of engaging elected officials at all levels. EHSF is working on rising to those challenges.
- Committees. Linda called for volunteers to join the Program and Hospitality Committees and to help with providing food as well as setup and cleanup after lunch.
- Congregations for Kids
 - Funding has been reduced for family engagement specialists in the schools. The number of backpacks needed was larger than anticipated.
 - Nancy shared a story from a family that had been spending nights in the Bellevue safe parking facility, which has been closed. Another story involved a mother and her children who had fled domestic violence in another state. Nancy offered these as examples of the families our backpacks help.
 - The future of the federally-funded McKinney-Vento program is uncertain. It provides education resources for children and youth experiencing homelessness.
- Kevin shared that in response to the call for help with diapers at a previous Tuesday EISCC meeting, one group had delivered 3100 diapers to Renewal Foodbank by Friday. What we are doing here does make a difference.

PROGRAM: Panel presentation -- Growing Food to Help our Communities

Moderator – Tammy Waddell, convenor of the Redmond chapter of [Nourishing Networks](#). Tammy was a teacher in the Bellevue School District when COVID hit. She was worried about getting food to her students and their families, and she met the people on the panel while trying to address that challenge.

Zsafia Pasztor - Founder & Executive Co-Director [Farmer Frog](#).

- Founded 16 years ago, Farmer Frog food was reaching 25,000 families each month in the area before COVID. They were growing food at college campuses, school sites, and on their farm in Woodinville.
- In 2020-21, they joined a larger, national network of networks that together supported three million people in 38 states with over 300 million pounds of food.
- They have now scaled back and are facing hard decisions, as are many community-based organizations. Federal funding is frozen; state funding is running out; donors are getting bombarded from every angle to make up for the cuts in public funding. There are also zoning and permitting challenges. She feels they have what it takes to overcome them.
- They want to make sure they do not see people dying of hunger in our region or getting sick when they are not eating the right food.
- Tammy urged people to go and visit the farm in Snohomish, which is a bustling place where people feel safe to go and get good quality food.

Jim Eichner - Associate Rector at Episcopal Church of the Holy Cross and General Farm Manager at [Food Bank Farm](#) (See their Facebook page [here](#). Signup sheet is [here](#).)

- After a sabbatical at Jubilee Farm in Carnation, he got involved with Three Greens Farm and Market in Duvall, which is run by New Hope Missionary Baptist Church.
- These experiences led him to convince Holy Cross to take up a similar project. They rent acres at Chinook Farms in Snohomish. The project provides renewal for Jim and for the volunteers.
- They grow about 200,000 pounds of food every year. His goal is to produce top-shelf produce; the first and best produce goes to the food bank.
- They distribute mostly through Food Lifeline, but some food banks also send volunteers to the farm to pick.
- The farm has only one paid staff person (Jim) and does its work through 1000 volunteers a year, who do all the planting and harvesting.
- Jim recalled “When you feed the hungry, you are feeding your soul.”
- Tammy shared her experience last fall with getting pumpkins and sweet corn from the farm for Haven Heights, which is permanent supportive housing in Redmond.

Cindy Coleman and Michelle Raymond- Overlake Park Presbyterian and [Marymoor Community Garden Association](#) (MCGA)

- Cindy had been gardening in the community gardens area of Marymoor Park since the 1970s. MCGA was formed in 2003 when King County suddenly cut all the funding for Marymoor Park and the park posted a notice that the community garden was closing. Cindy rallied the gardeners, and they formed a nonprofit to run the space themselves.
- At that time, they set aside part of the garden to grow food to donate to food banks. Thirteen of their garden plots are devoted to that effort. Gardeners also donate extra produce from their own plots.

Many community gardens donate produce, but MCGA is unique in having garden plots set aside exclusively for donated vegetables.

- Every year, they donate about 8000 pounds of organic produce. These are fresh vegetables, better quality than the food banks normally get. Their goal is to make sure that it is fresh, organic, and delivered every day.

Other experiences. Panelists and participants mentioned other food-related opportunities in the area.

- tBug - [The Bellevue Urban Garden](#) – is the creation of Maybin Chisebuka, an artist who grows his art. Panel participants described the garden as “something unbelievable,” which feeds you at all levels. Maybin sings to the plants, and they become “breathtaking.” Maybin is an immigrant from Zambia, and many people join him each summer, sharing immigration and cultural experiences.
- [Orchard Gardens at Holy Cross](#) (on the former grounds of Holy Cross Lutheran Church) has the mission to grow for themselves and their neighbors. Anyone who gardens a plot is encouraged to contribute to the weekly donations which the Garden sends to Jubilee Reach. Contact Jan Starr (jdstarrs@gmail.com) for more information.
- Jeff Reed (Pastor at Highland Covenant Church and active with [Renewal Food Bank](#)) noted that the best quality food they receive is from the farms and gardens. Volunteers are needed at the food bank and as helpers in the vans that pick up food from their grocery partners.
- Participants asked whether the Farmer’s Markets donated any food. Those present did not have a definite answer. Weekend storage can be a problem when the markets are on Saturday and the food banks open on Monday. A participant asked whether the network could find a way to get farmers market excess food to families on weekends, when they need it most. Each market has a manager; Jeff suggested that the effort could start there.
- One congregation had turned a parking lot into a plot to grow food to donate.
- Another participant pointed to a [Little Free Pantry](#) as a way for congregations to share.
- Jan Smith (Issaquah Community Lunch) shared the experience of starting the Thursday community activity. The group started in Bible study, moved through handing out sandwiches in a food line, and is now part of the community. People come for the human touch.
- [Buy Nothing](#) groups sometimes carry offers of food. Zsofia explained why organized food distribution groups cannot accept food prepared in private kitchens.
- Tammy invited everyone to join the weekly [Nourishing Network](#) call for their area: Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond. Check the website for specifics.
- “He is not a believer whose stomach is filled while his neighbor goes hungry.” – Hadith 112

Announcements of Upcoming Events and Current Issues.

- Susan Cozzens, EISCC Co-secretary, asked all participants to share links to their food donation and volunteer opportunities. She will share them on the EISCC website. Send information to eastsideinterfaith@gmail.com
- Elizabeth Maupin shared that the King County Continuum of Care is having its membership convening on June 17.
- Aldersgate United Methodist Church was hosting a session with Janice Zahn on her first session in the legislature on June 15.

Closing Prayer

Signed in at the June meeting

Last Name	First Name	Organization
Belmontes	Ericka	Bellevue Lifespring
Bogarín	Fabiola	Hopelink
Bowling	David	Eastside Foundation & EISCC Board
Buckingham	Brooke	City of Redmond Human Services
Burrus	Sue	Eastside Friends Meeting
Chang	Danny	Psarras
Christensen	Troy	Porchlight
Clacy	Jill	Kindering
Coleman	Lisa	HERO House
Coleman	Cindy	MCGA OPPC
Collier	Greg	Newport Presbyterian
Cozzens	Susan	Eastside Friends Meeting & EISCC Board
Duncan	Megan	The Sophia Way
Eichner	Jim	Food Bank Farm
Folkman	Katie	LDS
Folkman	Kevin	LDS & EISCC Board
Harris	Jean	Aldersgate UMC
Hillesheim	Linda	Unity of Bellevue & EISCC Board
Jacobs	Nancy	Congregations for Kids
Kalisa	Isabelle	Hero House
Kidd-Miller	Joyce	Baha'is of King County North & EISCC Board
Mabbott	Art	All Saints Episcopal
Marquardson	Warren	LDS & EISCC
Mathias	Mike	Anything Helps
Maupin	Elizabeth	Issaquah Sammamish Interfaith Coalition
Mbaye	Amina	Essentials First
Mitchell	Elizabeth	St. Margaret's
O'Hare	Pauline	First Congregational & EISCC Board

Parker	Brenda	Issaquah Outreach Team
Pasztor	Zsafia	Farmer Frog
Pendgraf	Patti	The Salvation Army
Ranheim	Jayne	Newport Presbyterian
Raymond	Michelle	MCGA
Reed	Jeff	Highland Covenant Church

Reed	Angel	Imagine Housing
Rice	Andy	LDS
Richards	Diane	St. Margaret's
Rosenberg	Karen	
Smith	Jan	Issaquah Community Lunch
Tasy	Beverly	Saint Margaret's
Waddell	Tammy	Nourishing Networks
Wallin	Scott	Nourishing Networks
Ware	Michaela	The Sophia Way
Weisel	Nancy	Cross of Christ
Woodson	Jeremy	Highland Covenant Church