

SISTERING

Sistering Advisory Council Meeting Agenda

June 14, 2018

Sistering, 962 Bloor Street West

6:00-7:00pm

In Attendance:

Chairs Shelley Walters (Shopkeeper), Patricia O'Connell (Sistering)

Marian Lupu – Sistering Fundraising Associate,

In Attendance:

Sonya Williams- Resident/Paradise

Stephen Spencer Davis- Resident

Simone Weir- Outgoing BIA representative

Melody Grant- Sistering Drop In Coordinator

Sally McLean- Resident/Sistering Volunteer

Stephanie Nakitsas - Councillor Layton's Office

Roona Maloney – Resident/ED of Local Organization

General introductions:

- Patricia Introduced herself and welcomed everyone
- All participants introduced themselves

Follow up to Issues discussed at May 10th meeting:

- Sistering's phone number has been posted outside Sistering to accommodate the public calling about complaints/issues,
- In order to control behaviours outside the building, a Sistering staff member is posted outside 8 -9 hours per day
- Initially peer workers were outside, but it didn't work well as it's difficult to "police" behaviours with your friends, so for past 2-2 ½ weeks, Sistering Staff has been posted outside
- Not sure about how long the financing for this will be available; jobs may have to be shuffled in order to continue this initiative
- Staff has conscientiously spoken to participants about being mindful of their behaviour outside the building
- Sistering has asked for funding for a full time " Community Support Worker " position
- The Community Support Worker will work with the committee and liaise with the community to deal with issues. They will have the skills to deal with the community and the counselling skills to work with participants

- Pat has a meeting tomorrow (June 15) to discuss funding for this position, to last until next fiscal year, at which time it will be reviewed to see how it's working
- A question was posed if someone has approached the neighbours directly?
- Response - No one has approached neighbours as of yet, that will be the responsibility of the new Community Worker Position
- It was agreed that in general everyone is pleased with the efforts being made by Sistering, but it is important to show others that an effort is being made, and dialogue with neighbors is very important
- The job posting for the new "Community Service Worker" liaison should go out Monday; it will be posted for 1 – 2 weeks and then interviewing will begin
- It was asked if Sistering has had many calls stemming from the number posted outside on the Sistering window
- Pat responded that Sistering did not have many calls; the neighbours who complain the most complain directly to her, and she deals with them personally
- It was suggested that the phone number be published by the BIA and also be put up on Sistering's website, so more people know about it
- It was agreed that the number and blurb will be posted and published on BIA sites. This buys good will and also informs public that steps are being taken to deal with issues
- The time frame for staff being outside Sistering is currently noon to around 8 pm; that time frame seems to be the most problematic.

General discussion

- Sandwich boards and other items such as bikes, carts and garbage also add to the general appearance of clutter on the sidewalk, making the congestion around Sistering worse and making it hard to navigate the street; maybe clearing some of the visual mess will help
- Do the businesses have a permit for the sandwich boards? 311 will be called to tag items cluttering the street and the city can remove them
- Judith's suggestion to look to Fred Victor as a resource was discussed
- Pat noted that both organizations were created to be low barrier 24/7 drop-ins, but Fred Victor is not as low barrier as Sistering.
- Shelley suggested that Fred Victor did much of what was already discussed (community liaison, etc) but that they had rules in place to govern the participants
- Pat explained that it is very difficult to have rules when dealing with women who were very ill. Sistering's women have nowhere else to go; either other shelters are full or they would not be allowed into other shelters or organizations due to their behaviours. It's actually a problem if there is nowhere else available to send them. Many women can't take care of themselves
- Pat told the story of a woman who has been at Sistering for weeks, who is very ill; she is completely incontinent, has nowhere else to go; Sistering staff has to clean up after her as well as PSW's who come in to help
- The public needs to know personal stories like this; try to focus on advocacy for the individuals, pointing out there are no other choices for the women
- Another issue is the public doesn't know the difference between the different types of shelters, and that people get turned away; they don't know Sistering is the only drop in in the city this tolerant and doesn't turn anyone away, even if their behaviour is disrespectful

- It was also pointed out that the women are connected to the area and may not want to leave
- There is an increase in the visibility of people with addictions; the corner of Ossington and Bloor has become a scary corner with a lot of addicts hanging out there and in the alley behind MacDonalds
- Streets to Homes were contacted about the situation
- Men hanging out in the alley behind MacDonald's help to keep the women there
- It was suggested that bringing attention to the fact that Sistering was a drop in and trying to do good work may lessen some of the frustration and irritation the public feels about the crowds of women hanging out in front of Sistering
- Maybe put a larger sign in the window so people see the name. The concern with this is that some of the women with a background of abuse want to be anonymous and wouldn't be comfortable with a big advertised name and phone number. They may also not want it known that they are associated with Sistering
- Another suggestion was to display Sistering's tag line: "Changing lives, one women at a time"
- The tag line may not say enough – maybe put something stronger to show pride in what Sistering is doing
- Council discussed the fact that the lack of space may be the biggest obstacle to Sistering's objectives
- A feasibility study was done to look into the option of either building up for more interior space or of building a rooftop terrace so the women have some outdoor space to hang out; this would all have to be paid for by Sistering; the landlord will not contribute to renovations
- Maybe something as simple as moving the craft display table in front of the dentist's window will help resolve the women smoking in front of their office and hanging out on their ledge
- This may add to the crowded visual of the space, but maybe someone in the community can help to design a way to make the visual more appealing
- Sistering applied for and received a building improvement grant to fix up the façade of Sistering
- One of the members may be able to contribute funds to fixing up the façade as well

Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting: Thursday July 12 6-7:30pm Location TBD
 June 27th AGM Sistering 6pm