

Summary of Meeting Minutes

Sistering Community Advisory Council

November 30th 2017

6:00-7:30pm

The Loft Kitchen- Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre

850 Bloor St. West

Chair: Charlotte Empey, Community Liaison Sistering

Meeting Minutes: Claire Burns, Community Liaison Associate Sistering

Introductions: Meeting Attendees

Charlotte Empey - Co-chair

Samantha Vite, CONC representative

Christine McGlade - Bloorcourt resident, volunteer at Sistering

Melody Grant - Drop In Coordinator at Sistering

Deborah Neil - Sistering, past participant, Drop In Peer Support Worker

Angela Burns - Resident, CONC Council member

Susan King - Resident, interest in the work

Simone Weir - Coordinator, Bloorcourt BIA

Ann Marie Quan - Member of the West Scarborough Legal Services, Sistering supporter

Ann Ball - Resident, community activist

Rachel Singer - Resident

Sonya Williams - Communications Manager, The Paradise

Sally McLean - Resident and Sistering Volunteer

Judith Taylor - Resident, Women and Gender Studies professor, U of T (students do practicums at Sistering)

Claire Burns - Neighbourhood arts organizer

David Thorek - Director of Operations, The Paradise

Maya Shapiro - Resident

Lyneisha Adams - Sistering Board Member, former participant

Absent With Regrets:

Kiera Toffelmire

Celia Harte

Anne Chappelle

Robert Cerjanec

Discussion around the Terms of Agreement

- Draft document discussed; additions suggested.
- Include background on Sistering; details of neighbourhood
- Invite MPPs to send representatives
- Membership? Observers? Guests welcome to attend if they contact a co-chair to be added to agenda

- How have the challenges been voiced until now? Complaints went through Sistering, the BIA and Councillor's Office. Councillor Layton's office would contact Patricia O'Connell (Sistering Executive Director) with concerns/complaints. There have been ongoing concerns, hence the need for a community liaison council.

What does the Council want to achieve?

- Community education: how to voice concerns; how to react to a woman in crisis
- Council communication: website? Facebook page? Links on BIA website? Ensure that the neighbourhood shopkeepers are aware of the Council: their investment and participation is necessary
- Potential guest speakers series for the Council - Council members to act as Ambassadors

Co-Chair Discussion

- Sistering will take care of the administrative work of the Council
- How do we nominate/decide?
- Purpose of a Co-chair is to ensure that the community and the agency are cooperatively working on the issues
- Suggest resident and shopkeeper as Co-chairs
- Please email Claire if you would like to volunteer for a Co-chair position

Discussion of Community Issues and Experiences

- Complaints have to do with fear and not knowing how to deal with the disturbing behaviour from women from Sistering
- Children mentioned a lot in email complaints to Councillor's office
- Businesses are trying to maintain their clients, fear that activity in front of the businesses is preventing patronage
- How do businesses handle women who enter their shops?
- How do neighbours feel comfortable to voice their concerns?
- Data analysis needed on how many calls come into Councillor's office
- Shoplifting is a problem - how are the women being treated by shopkeepers and how are they treating the shopkeepers?
- What is the vocabulary around Sistering's responsibility for the behaviour of participants? - Sistering can not be responsible for the behaviour of the women once they leave the building
- Education piece: vocabulary and language - how do we talk to/about the women? How can we encourage humane and respectful language from complainants?
- Sistering front line staff provides context to complainants, how to prevent escalation
- Criminal behaviour vs annoying behaviour - we need to create a sliding scale and appropriate responses
- Complaints about garbage accumulation in and around the agency
- Violence, verbal abuse out front of the agency
- Sistering is understaffed - that is the dilemma - even if we think about ways to develop workable solutions Sistering will need an increase in funding

- There are women who are out on the street because they don't want to access the 24/7 services because they are afraid of the situation at Sistering (too many women staying overnight in a small space)
- Council could work towards getting funding for mental health nurse/staff (professional) to work overnight
- How does mental health care actually work in Ontario? How can people who want and seek help get it?
- Council expectation could include advocating for increased funding
- Problem is actually the space - it was designed to be a drop in, not a shelter, regardless of how many staff are on it's not okay that 60-70 women are sleeping on mats on the floor
- What is Sistering staff's gauge of its own capacity? How did Sistering make the decision to go 24 hours?
- Complaints not necessarily happening at night - can't walk by with my children during the day
- How have participants who have been with Sistering prior to 24/7 opening feeling about the shift to 24 hours?
- Sometimes it's the men who are with the women who are intimidating
- Increase in cursing, fighting, public urination
- How to engage participants in creating and implementing a community code of conduct?
- Facade renovation - update and information necessary for next Council meeting
- Peer support workers help to manage the behaviour of the women on the sidewalk outside Sistering.
- Educate the bar owners to not serve the women if they are intoxicated or have a reputation for getting intoxicated and behaving aggressively

Other Business

- To confirm standing Council meeting dates: 2nd or 3rd Thursday of every month?
- Confirm a date for January (2nd or 3rd Thursday: January 11th/January 18th?)
- Terms of Agreement to be re drafted and sent out