

SISTERING

Sistering Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

August 23, 2018

Sistering, 962 Bloor Street West

6:00-7:30pm

In Attendance:

Chair Shelley Walters,

Patricia O'Connell (Sistering)

Marian Lupu – Sistering Fundraising Associate,

Sonya Williams- Resident/Paradise

Stephen Spencer Davis- Resident

Melody Grant- Sistering Drop In Coordinator

Sally McLean- Sistering Volunteer

Debra Neil – Sistering Peer

Meg Marshall – Bloorcourt BIA

Jessica Smith – Paradise Theatre

Roona Maloney – Resident

Karen Harding-Brown

General introductions:

- Shelly called meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance
- All participants introduced themselves
- agenda adopted with addition of emailed agenda items
- Minutes of July 12th reviewed

Review of Minutes:

- Pat spoke with a TDIN hired a consultant who worked with the Yonge BIA. She had reached out to us since our advisory council has been successful
- Q & A on how the homeless population want to be regarded and addressed
- TDIN has training on how to deal/interact with people on the street; we will explore having sessions for staff, volunteers, neighbours.

Review of Previous month:

- Building has been over capacity and hectic. The shelter system is always full, people have been evicted from their residences, and women have been sent to Sistering from hospitals and other shelters that can't support their needs. There are many roadblocks to placing women where they can get the proper support

- Women outside Sistering get very noisy; we get complaints regarding the mess and crowds outside. Staff asked to help; concerted effort being made so grounds look better, and harder line being taken with the women about behavior and eating outside
- staff use the main entrance because it means they see everything that goes on outside
- A frame signs remain in place although businesses have been asked to remove them. We acknowledge that from a business perspective, you want to advertise and make your business known; businesses generally don't even want benches or garbage cans outside their businesses
- A frame signs are also a great barrier for blind people; it was suggested calling the city again to try to enforce the by-law
- The cart outside is very valuable to its owner; we're trying to find space for it. Police took a lot of the participant's belongings out of the cart, which was very upsetting to her
- By-law officers removed some of the bikes outside
- FAQ's will address the street population, how they should be approached. Will also address myths
- A public information night in a central location was suggested to give the community a chance to speak and for us to give information
- Suggestion that it would be better to issue information in a communique on what we're doing and how we're dealing with and trying to rectify various issues, before any community meeting
- We will create a piece to communicate how we are approaching issues and the key things we want to get across; one key issue being why things look the way they do
- We want to address what low barrier means – that it is the only place for most marginalized women to go to. This message must go into the communique: we WANT these women at Sistering because there is no other place for them. We wish it wasn't necessary, but unfortunately it is
- It was pointed out that we are a resource for the women but are not personally responsible for their behaviour. And not all the women who are problematic even go to Sistering
- Shelley mentioned that when she called police services it was out of concern for the women, not to complain
- In the communiqué, it would be nice to add how people can actually help by donating to Sistering (this is what Sistering is doing and this is how you can help)
- The communication to the public can be with a printed communique as well as via email. A committee was established for communiqués
- Sistering has responded to an RFP to run a shelter at Davenport and Avenue Rd. There will be massive advocacy regarding that. MPP Jessica Bell is interested in shelter issues
- we need overarching strategy; if government won't help, reach out for private fundraising
- The Davenport shelter was changed to a women only shelter after advocacy
- We are writing letters advocating for more shelters, as we struggle to find places for women
- It is important to tell the public the real stories of the women's reality here at Sistering
- The system doesn't like to accept women with mental health issues or addictions, so there is no place for them. The general public needs to know/understand that
- The Davenport and Avenue Shelter has 53 beds, to be increased to 80; Sistering is advocating to run it. Letters of Support would be great, from BIA members and community members That should be added to the communique
- Joe Cressy, Mike Layton, Jessica Bell, Ana Bailao, Kristyn Wong Tam are in support

- Lack of shelter space shows that this is a Toronto problem, not a Sistering problem
- Suggested that we put a letter outside for signatures at the street fair; suggestion that the Sistering information table be moved to another corner to remove it from the activity around Sistering. "Ask me" buttons or tags for staff at the table to encourage Q & A
- It was suggested we launch information at the street festival; A community meeting/information session was broached again, where negativity would be put aside and focus would be on the positive actions. It was decided that it's better to have an information communique with positive messages go out first
- It was decided that the meeting date will be changed to every second Tuesday as of October
- A councillor's email was discussed addressing the drug use and activity in and around Sistering. There are more women using the facility now, so more activity/messier than earlier summer, when more women were away
- It is a continuous problem; we're trying to clear things up
- It was noted that there are messes outside other businesses, but we hear about it, they don't. The whole street should be held to the same standard

Meeting adjourned 7:30