

**Social Justice and Caring Committee  
Meeting Minutes of October 5, 2023**

**Present:** Kim Roering, Ann Karner, Julie Ludden, Chris Malec, Margaret Malec, Martha Arko, Mary Weyandt, Anne Weyandt, Chris Igielski, Ann Madlung

**PRAYER**

Led by Martha Arko

**BEACON INTERFAITH HOUSING COLLABORATIVE**

Ann Karner reported on the September 18 Met Council Meeting which Beacon members attended. At present, the majority of project based vouchers go to individuals. Beacon is trying to change that to require a certain number allocated to projects. Legislature approved 5,000 statewide, Beacon is only getting a few of those. The work Beacon does was recognized and the MET council indicated a desire to work with Beacon. There are 12 people from St. Pascal's working diligently with Beacon to push for deeply affordable housing. Here are summary points from Beacon sent out after the MET council meeting:

- *We moved the issue forward and created a discussion that had never happened before. We attempted to get the staff and the CDC committee to engage this issue for the last two years, but they refused. Last year, this annual plan moved forward with little discussion. It is a win that we moved them to discuss this much more and have to take a position on it.*
- *All of the CDC members voiced their opinions on the issue, and while many were sympathetic to our call for more PBVs, none were ready to push staff to change the current plan. That means we lost this year in achieving a reliable annual allocation of PBVs. They will continue their current method, where staff decides an amount that fluctuates wildly yearly and sometimes means no PBVS.*
- *None of the members agree with Beacon that the Metro HRA should partner with other HRAs outside its service area to give PBVS. This creates a more challenging road for our developments outside the service area, Prairie Pointe and Aster Commons (Scott County and Richfield have their own HRA).*
- *They did agree to one substantial change. When they give PBVs to development, the developer can hold those vouchers for two years while the development is trying to secure funding. This is a great win, as before we lost vouchers after one year. Due to the limited funds for affordable housing compared to the demand, developments often get funded in their second year of applying for funding awards.*
- *All members are excited about the new Bring it Home state vouchers and want to consider how to project base them. There is a significant opportunity to return when these vouchers are available. Because of our excellent work this year, we can get new project-based vouchers.*

The next St. Pascal's Beacon Group meeting will be on October 17 at 6:30 pm via Zoom.

Side note: This announcement is in the Pulse of October 5 and the bulletin of October 8 to help parishioners understand how the increased sales tax supports affordable housing.

*Starting October 1 consumers in the seven-county metro area will pay an additional 1% sales tax on certain purchases. While no one likes to pay taxes, in this case it puts your faith into action. This new tax goes to support affordable housing and mass transit. St. Francis, whose feast is celebrated on October 4, would support the tax because it helps the poor and the environment. These are two causes that were deeply important to St. Francis. Instead of grumbling, let's remember the good we are doing.*

### **MERRICK FOOD DISTRIBUTION**

In response to questions from September meeting about the amount of money in the Merrick Food Distribution Fund and the possibility of having non-perishable items on hand to make up extra bags since we have been running out of food earlier in distribution. Kim noted that as of September 19 there was \$3,546.22 in the fund, and there is an estimated \$3,100 now after purchase of non-perishable items for September and October distribution. Comment was made that instead of just having the \$3000+ sitting there, perhaps we could determine a way to use \$500 per month over the next 6 months to supplement food distribution. It was acknowledged there is a sense of urgency to determine some kind of solution as with winter coming and certain aid for families being cut the number of families coming for food will likely be increasing. There have been brief conversations about partnering more with Progressive and determine the best way to get the most for our money in exploring other sources like Every Meal to partner with. Mary Weyandt indicated desire to touch base with and involve those who help with Merrick Distribution. She will try to have a conversation with some between packing and distributing on October 23 and follow up with a Zoom meeting. It was also suggested we looking into once again having parishioners donate something like paper towels, toilet paper, etc. one weekend a month.

### **JUST FAITH**

Ann Karner noted there will not be a JustFaith series this fall as not enough people signed up.

### **PROGRESSIVE FISHES AND LOAVES FOOD SHELF**

Every week Progressive is serving 100+ families. By the grace of God and some creativity the last box always goes to the last people. St. Pascal's volunteers have been helpful, especially when there is a 5<sup>th</sup> Saturday in the month and a call goes out for "all hands on deck" to help with distribution (since there is no set assigned group for a 5<sup>th</sup> Saturday). Ann Karner note that St. Pascal's has been assisting with Fishes and Loaves since winter 2021.

### **PUMPKIN BINGO**

Mary Weyandt invited SJCC members to consider attending, assisting with, or donating prizes for the Pumpkin Bingo event taking place on October 20 from 6:30-8:30 pm. The event is sponsored by Parish Life and Activities Committee. Chris and Margaret Malec indicated they can help with set up for the event.

## **OCTOBER COLLECTION**

The October Donation Closet collection is for Options for Women East. Thank you to Ann Karner and Julie Ludden for the idea of having a playpen in Gathering Space for people to place their donations in. Note that this will be moved into coat room when there is a funeral or wedding but can then be moved back into Gathering Space for weekend Masses.

The November collection will be for Progressive Fishes and Loaves Food Shelf. Ann Karner will find out what items are most needed.

## **PRODUCE SHARING TABLE**

The produce sharing table has been well received. It will likely wrap up soon. Things have been moved to just using a cart due to much activity in the Gathering Space on some weekends.

## **WE CARE CAMPAIGN FOR OCTOBER**

The October We Care collection will take place the weekend of October 28 & 29, 2023. The recipients of funds this month will be:

- NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
- Women's Advocacy
- Merrick Food Distribution Fund

Chris Malec will get information to Thea in the parish office to run in the bulletin and Pulse.

## **OTHER**

At the next SJCC meeting in November we may want to converse about who puts together the agenda and the minutes...if this is something Julie Moore wants to continue to do or if someone else wants to do this. Thank you to Chris Malec for taking minutes for 20+ years!

Also (not discussed at meeting but due to some issues members had)...Kim will start sending the Zoom link and agenda in the same email to SJCC members. Note that through June 2024 the Zoom link remains the same each month.

## **NEXT MEETING**

November 2, 2023 at 6:30 pm via Zoom

Prayer will be led by Chris Igielski

Respectfully submitted by Kim Roering