

## Neighbor Engagement Meeting Outputs - August 7, 2024

**\*\*\*\* If you would like to add your comments to this document, please send an email to [shelterinfo@shcinc.org](mailto:shelterinfo@shcinc.org) or complete the [neighbor survey](#)<sup>1</sup>. An addendum to this document will be issued and hosted on the website for transparency. All comments received will remain anonymous to protect the privacy of respondents. Thank you.\*\*\*\***

**Location:** Somerville Community Baptist Church, 31 College Ave

**Times:** 6.00 PM-7.30 PM

**Format:** Facilitator-led small group table conversations around key topics:

- 1) Shelter Operations
- 2) Church Maintenance and Management
- 3) Communication and Community Engagement

### **Conversational Style Activity:**

Each participant had the opportunity to chose the table topic of their choice, with an option for an 'open table' discussion. The table themes (**shelter operations, church facilities/maintenance, communication and engagement**) were based on the concerns heard from neighbors from the July 10th meeting, July 31st ZBA meeting and individual emails sent directly to SHC's Executive Director Mike Libby, and, First Church.

Each table was equipped with documents including: 7.10.24 transcripts, FAQ's, building map, neighbor survey (all which continue to be available on the website found [here](#)), flip chart paper and sticky notes to aid conversation.

Each participant was given the opportunity to lift up concerns, clarify questions, and identify topics that need further exploration and discussion. This included sharing hopes and concerns for the shelter and ongoing relationships between community members, SHC, and First Church.

Each table had mixed participation from Neighbors, First Church, and Somerville Homeless Coalition (SHC). Three councilors at large were also present and contributed to the discussion.



Please scan to complete a short, anonymous survey to register your comments, Thank you.

---

<sup>1</sup> Please see the QR code above if viewing this document in paper form

## Neighbor Engagement Meeting Outputs - August 7, 2024

### Shelter Operations Table Conversations

#### Concerns

- **General**
  - Concerns about the major increase in beds from 16 to 26
  - Long-term concern – continued management by SHC
  - Are there enough resources to sustain a new shelter? First Church has been falling apart for years (*also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table*)
  - Do the terms of the grant for 26 beds preclude a phase-in?
- **Sex offenders:**
  - Sex offenders policy
  - What is the policy about sex offenders? Will neighbors be notified? How will they be notified? Importance of not expecting neighbors to monitor whether there are newly registered sex offenders.
  - What happens when the shelter closes at 8am and kids are walking by the church on their way to school?
- **Smoking and substance use:**
  - Concern about drinking in the neighborhood. Will there be more nips littered?
  - Concerns about substance use outside the shelter before guests enter
  - Concerns about guests being under the influence in the neighborhood
  - Concerns about smoking outside and the noise from guests congregating at late hours
  - Where will the smoking area be?
- **Delivery and parking:**
  - How will the shelter address medical emergencies/vehicle responses?
  - How often are there emergency responses in the current shelter?
  - How will the delivery trucks access the shelter? Concerns about blocking Francesca and College Ave. Can we look into smaller delivery van options?
  - Concerns about early deliveries and noise
  - How will you manage staff parking?
  - How and where will the shelter manage deliveries? Where, types, traffic options.
- **Low barrier services**
  - Property values for neighbors
  - How long has the shelter been a low-barrier shelter?
  - What are the legitimate risks of low-barrier shelter?
  - What does low-barrier mean?
  - Are there rules and expectations of shelter guests? How are they enforced?
- **Rats/trash:**
  - Concerns about ongoing maintenance of the facility (*also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table*)

## **Neighbor Engagement Meeting Outputs - August 7, 2024**

- Are there enough resources to sustain a new shelter? First Church has been falling apart for years (*also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table*)
- How will you manage trash internally and externally?
- How will concerns about trash and rat problems be addressed?
- Can there be daily or more regular trash pickups scheduled?
- Where will the trash bins be located?
- How many meals will be served? Concerns about how this impacts food deliveries, trash and rats
- **Loitering:**
  - Nighttime wandering/monitoring
  - Concerns about clients lingering before and after hours
  - What happens if people are sitting on my stoop? If I don't want to call the police who else can help?
  - Worried about groups loitering in the space in front of the Church/bus stop
  - How late can guests arrive? Can they come and go all night?
- **Communications:**(*also addressed at Communication and Community Engagement table and Church Maintenance and Management table*)
  - Responsibility for distressed clients?
  - How will neighbors communicate with SHC if there are issues? Will we be able to get in touch with someone? How quickly can we expect a response or follow up?
  - Who will the point of contact be for urgent matters versus things that aren't so urgent? For example trash, people in distress, drug use, loitering, etc.
  - What issues go to FCS vs. SHC?
  - What steps will you take to mitigate neighborhood concerns that arise from the shelter?
  - I appreciate the SHC plans for the main entrance of the shelter on College Avenue

### **Raw notes taken by volunteer scribe**

- How do neighbors reach out to SHC/Church?
- Triage - emergency response vs less urgent?
- When is it okay to call 911?
- Phone tree 'who to call for...' and have a phone answered
- Facilities manager for the church? Not just SHC response. Example: someone is smoking outside my window. Don't want to call the police but would like to have it resolved (*also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table*)
- Concerns with issues beyond the property but connected to shelter/Church (street outreach team can likely assist)
- Provide timeliness to responses regarding concerns
- Confusion of who to contact - Church vs SHC vs both
- Need to contact point no matter the issue
- Contact should be someone who is at site every day/frequently. Want a direct contact.
- 311 is not always the right/correct place to call.

## **Neighbor Engagement Meeting Outputs - August 7, 2024**

- Code of conduct for guests
- Policies
- Smoking
- Substance use - none inside/on property.
- What happens to people who do not have a bed?
- Safety in the threshold - SUD/BH
- Enter via engagement center
- Deliveries – outside vendors timed location? Route to site? Side lot for drop-off or other options.
- Small trucks or vans for drop offs? Cook picks up food and supplies directly?
- Idling concerns
- Number of meals being served a day – full-time cook, details to still be determined
- Phasing – grant for expansion, looking into options
- Jump from 16 to 26 is big
- Concerns with, stubh (?), meals, etc
- Working with city to establish process for emergency
- Concerns with parking – staff parking policy
- Enough money to sustain the shelter and SHC
- What is a low-barrier shelter and how long has it been one?
- Smoking/SUD – policy, place
- Trash/rats
- Property values of neighbors
- Increasing beds phase in
- Sex offenders policy
- Traffic flow
- Morning flow conflict with School travel
- Loitering/wandering policy
- Will other services be added? If so, what is the process for engagement?
- Ongoing maintenance
- Shared vision statement shared statement how to work together resolve concerns shared responsibilities
- Memorandum of Understanding – what happens if leadership changes - organization/Church/vision/option?

**Church Maintenance and Management Table Conversations**

**Concerns**

- **Pests/trash:**
  - Effective rat management (not poison)
  - Improve pest control from baptist church (current shelter)
  - Is the church fined for poor trash management, snow removal etc.?
  - Pests, rats of course, raccoons etc.
  - Location of trash aggregation
  - Lights at night
  - Controlling trash issues, containment/pick up
  - Cleanup Francesca Ave. side of the property
  - Debris
  - Trash
  - Sustainable methods for trash disposables,
  - Hide trash barrels
- **Property management:**
  - A directly responsible individual who is accountable is needed as a contact point for neighbors to escalate questions/concerns/issues
  - Proper property/project management is a concern ongoing for the church, SHC, and the partnership. This is for the church, but also concern about the Parsonage
  - Ongoing maintenance for snow removal, trash, lawn/garden (incl. Crab apple tree), etc. needs to be included in planning
  - + Church accountability and property supervision of their property and programs
  - Lines of contact - who do we contact with immediate concerns or long-term concerns?
  - On-site 24/7 supervision/someone Church affiliated in the parsonage
  - Accountability when things go wrong?
  - What happens if First Church leadership changes? Will previous commitments be honored?
  - 95 College Ave. (parsonage) - management
  - Historically bad at property management at SHC and FCS (mostly concern with FCS)
  - How many are employed to maintain the upkeep of the facility?
  - Permits - they are open which means that proper inspections have not been conducted to close them which is a concern
- **Traffic:**
  - Which entrance is used for deliveries?
  - How often do deliveries and garbage arrive?
  - Entrance ADA only used for ADA (everyone else via College Ave. entrance?)
  - Is the Church still using Duhamel Hall? Is this their entrance?
  - Loitering, smoking, hanging out - there needs to be guidelines
  - Will Francesca Ave be used on a regular basis for entry?

## Neighbor Engagement Meeting Outputs - August 7, 2024

- **Sewage – volume, diameter:**
  - Sewage size pipe appropriate?
  - Are the facilities being adjusted to handle the increasing sewage to avoid issues in the future?
  - If there is a sewer issue due to volume for an abutter to the church, who will pay to rectify?
  - Fix water leak on Francesca Avenue.
  - What is the length of the lease?
  - Public access to plans, maps, floorplans etc.
  - Fire safety
  - Why does an accessible toilet require a corner to be navigated?
- **Communications:**
  - SHC keeps saying they are learning, the shelter needs to be run by professionals who know what they are doing
  - Sheet with specific numbers on it for different issues that may arise
  - A phone tree
  - We need to rebuild trust via transparent, authentic, frequent, and accountable communications

### Raw notes taken by volunteer scribe

- Property management – who to call to communicate with at church?
- Direct line of communication 24-hour contact
- FCS accountability – is the Church going to hire someone?
- Communication with neighbors contact list distributed to neighbors.
- Want to have a relationship but need to know who to contact.
- Rats
- Mitigation, management
- Pest control contract in place
- Can we move hide barrels
- Crab apple tree - rats!
- Share outputs of meeting with attendees and other interested parties
- Would like to see summary doc with headlines and sub-bullets
- Open permits – is work completed? Have inspections been done?
- Smoking guidelines – where allowed? Who to reach out if guidelines aren't followed?
- How will they ensure shelter guests are using College Ave. entrance?
- On-site supervision at FCS?

## Neighbor Engagement Meeting Outputs - August 7, 2024

### Communication and Community Engagement Table Conversations

#### Concerns

- **Communications:**
  - A hope that the community feels engaged with and heard
  - A hope that SHC can rebuild trust with members of the neighborhood who feel the trust was violated
  - Frequency and format of communication
    - Survey stakeholders to identify the best communication channels
  - What is the best process to share concerns as they come up
  - How might we set up a tighter neighborhood feedback and problem-solving cycle in the first 6 to 12 months?
  - How does ongoing community engagement and feedback work with the existing shelter?
  - The church, neighborhood, and SHC will need to be in continual conversation about things once in operation
  - Gossip/hearsay is how I heard the news
  - Lance Davis communication? Has he been communicated with? Who should've announced this?
  - Ensure ongoing neighbor communication continues today/next month/next year
  - Neighbor respectful engagement with Church members and SHC guests
  - While some messages should be joint with Church and SHC, others should be separate
    - Two separate organizations, sometimes should sound like two voices
- **Facilities:**
  - Church involvement moving forward (*also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table*)
  - How do the water/sewage costs work?
  - Do nonprofits pay property taxes?
  - 95 College Avenue: is it church owned? What are the plans?
  - Hope - that there is a group established to meet on an ongoing basis to address operations and facilities maintenance concerns.
- **Trust:**
  - Honesty
  - Inclusive
  - Two-way dialogue
  - Respectful
  - Open communication
  - How do we communicate as a community group?
- **Trade-offs:**
  - \$64 million question: how do we meet the needs of the unhoused and the needs of the neighborhood?

## Neighbor Engagement Meeting Outputs - August 7, 2024

- How do we include the opinions and needs of the houseless community who are most impacted?
- **Relationship repair**
  - How might we think about relationship repair as a goal
  - Framing question – we need to get back in tune with each other to repair the relationship
  - Maybe informal coffee opportunities with SHC and/or First Church
  - Separate communication from First Church
  - Rebuilding takes time

### Raw Notes - taken by volunteer scribes

- How do you meet the needs of the unhoused while still meeting the needs of the neighborhood?
- The shelter will need to have constant communication and conversations need to continue.
- Dealing with a nonprofit is difficult because it is hard to identify a single point of contact but we want to ensure it runs smoothly. Who is said contact? *(also addressed at Shelter Operations table)*
- What is happening with 95 College Avenue? Why is it not being brought up in this conversation? It sounds like a good alternative for use *(also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table)*
- Needs to be a two-way conversation with inclusivity and respect
- How might we think about repairing these relationships? Neighbors feel hurt and blindsided by the abrupt relocation
- Feels like a deliberate or negligent act
- How is it that this happened with an organization that I support? There are feelings of betrayal and distress
- How do we repair that trust?
  - have to go through bumps to repair our relationship when trust is broken one step at a time
- Communicating in this small group format is a step in the right direction
- Upset that neighbors had to find out about the relocation by word of mouth.
- No other ways to communicate other than letters? How can we communicate better to the community? Who is interested in updates/involvement?
- Who am I communicating with First Church, SHC, City? It is confusing *(also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table and Shelter Operations table)*
- Emails are effective in alerting people in the area but if this is going to work it needs more than just an email
- Need to interact with neighbors face-to-face go through the community and hear the concerns
- More outreach and engagement - knocking on doors and inviting conversation
- Need sub-set of people who want to be involved in the neighborhood who will problem-solve
- Engage people who have an appetite to engage (some neighbors are too busy and some do not want to be involved)



## **Neighbor Engagement Meeting Outputs - August 7, 2024**

- Communications are outgoing with people that reached out to SHC but what about the others? How do we communicate with them? And do they want to be communicated with?
- People do not have an appetite for three-hour meetings but smaller discussions like this are helpful but who are the main contacts that we can stay in contact with on a regular basis?
- Identify those who were hurt and start that conversation, which will continue
- Work with those who are feeling relationship damage and those interested in engaging in a dialogue
- Church needs to have more involvement. Church isn't handled to run as a business (*also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table*)
- What is the church's intentions? There is a lack of communication from them (*also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table*)
- Communications from the church pre this relocation were not up to measure, communication with them needs to be much better (*also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table*)
- Need on-site church presence, not just on Sundays - how do neighbors reach out and get a timely response (*also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table*)
- Website reflects love, love did not get expressed to me as a neighbor (*also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table*)
- Honoring agreements
- Combined mission statement from First Church and SHC about the project?
- Felt betrayed by the church and should've alerted neighbors (*also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table*)
- Neighbors are not hearing Church's voice (*also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table*)
- Make it a bit more informal and more casual in terms of communicating with smaller groups
- Relationship with the Church is much stronger than with the current SHC adult shelter, which is one of the reasons why SHC is moving
- Communication with First Church has to be a lot stronger (*also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table*)
- Need an on-site church present at all times (*also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table*)
- How can we change the format for conversation moving forward? What is the stretch going forward?
- What happens if the leadership changes at first Church or SHC now what does this look like? (*also addressed at Church Maintenance and Management table*)
- Agenda and meeting dates need to be in advance
- This feels good to 'break bread' with each other and talk about it
- Small intimate/different voices in small groups, need the presence of Mike Libby to make it official
- Coffee/round table - informal and really listening not official and in opposition and dispute