



## December 12, 2023, Special Board Meeting

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

GBX Group

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### In attendance:

**NEOCH:** Liam Haggerty and Chris Knestrick

**SAIC Board:** Edna T. Akrish, Clark Broida, Greg Deming, Dan LaGuardia, Dominic Ozanne II, Karen Perkowski, Alex Ragon, Antonin Robert, and Ashley Ross

**Staff:** Emily Dahnert and Mark Lammon

- I. Introductions Karen Perkowski
  
- II. November Board Meeting Minutes Karen Perkowski
  - a. Dan LaGuardia motions to approve the November board meeting minutes. Antonin Robert seconds the motion. **The motion to approve the November board meeting minutes passes.**
  
- III. NEOCH Proposal for Outreach Services Chris Knestrick
  - a. Chris Knestrick, Executive Director, and Liam Haggerty, Director of Street Outreach, are in attendance to present NEOCH's proposal to provide outreach services in the Superior Arts District.
  - b. NEOCH currently has seven dedicated outreach workers on staff.
    - i. One is focused on the LGBTQ+ population.
    - ii. One is focused on veterans.
    - iii. Outreach workers focus on building relationships in the community.
    - iv. NEOCH currently has a partnership with Ohio City, Inc. to provide them with a dedicated outreach worker.
  - c. Antonin Robert acknowledges that there are two sides to the issue.
    - i. How do we work with NEOCH and work with the overarching system to improve outcomes for people experiencing homelessness?
    - ii. We acknowledge that this district is home to many of the city's social services.
  - d. It takes six to eight months to get one person into permanent housing.
    - i. The family shelters in the area are currently full.
    - ii. As a policy, the Norma Herr women's shelter and the 2100 Lakeside men's shelter will not turn anyone away, but they are operating over capacity.
  - e. There is a significant population that is not served by shelters.
    - i. There are about 270 people sleeping on the streets in Cleveland each night that NEOCH knows by name.
      1. That population could be up to 500 if you count abandoned buildings and similar living conditions.
    - ii. Individuals will come off the street if there are shelters that meet their unique needs.
    - iii. Seasonal shelters are targeted to people who are sleeping outside.
  - f. Antonin Robert notes that there are break-in and safety concerns in the Superior Arts District.
  - g. Edna T. Akrish wants to know what the responsibilities are of certain entities, such as NEOCH, the police department, the City of Cleveland, etc.
    - i. NEOCH notes that they are upset with the City of Cleveland right now because there is not enough affordable housing, and landlords often refuse to accept vouchers.
    - ii. NEOCH acknowledges that there does seem to be some motion by Cuyahoga County towards combatting unsheltered homelessness, however.
  - h. Karen Perkowski conservatively estimates that she has lost \$100,000 this year because of the encampments of individuals experiencing homelessness.
    - i. She is concerned about car break-ins and notes that the district is at a breaking point right now.

- i. Antonin Robert is concerned that 911 calls are not being logged.
  - i. He notes that most do not get responded to and wonders if the police department is only logging the calls that are responded to.
- j. Ashley Ross notes that the prostitution in the district is upsetting.
- k. Chris Knestrick notes that NEOCH's role is not simply to stop crime or move people.
  - i. NEOCH wants to work on other options to get people to move and provide them with safe shelter.
- l. Karen Perkowski asks what percentage of the city's homeless population is within the Campus District.
  - i. The Campus District is home to the majority of people experiencing homelessness in the city because it contains the state's two largest homeless shelters.
  - ii. The Campus District does not have the highest number of unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness, however. The Near West Side and many rapid stations are home to more.
  - iii. Many unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness are fairly transient, so it is hard to get exact numbers.
- m. Karen Perkowski asks why the SAIC should pay NEOCH for an outreach worker when they are already servicing our area anyway.
  - i. NEOCH currently has six outreach workers for the entire county and one outreach worker for Ohio City. Hiring a dedicated outreach worker for the Superior Arts District would allow NEOCH to concentrate more time and resources in the area.
- n. Karen Perkowski asks about the potential for individualized relocation plans.
  - i. Chris Knestrick notes that flexible funding was offered to help get people into housing when they were dislocated by impending development along Irishtown Bend.
  - ii. He recommends that the SAIC hire an outreach worker and invest \$20,000 in a flexible spending account dedicated to housing.
    - 1. A single room rental in a boarding house in Cleveland is about \$500 per month. There are single room occupancies (SROs) and boarding houses available throughout the community.
    - 2. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some individuals experiencing homelessness received \$600 to stay out of the shelters. About 75% of individuals overall never returned to homelessness, while about 90% of individuals that NEOCH worked with never returned to homelessness. NEOCH works together with individuals that they have built relationships with to form individualized plans.
    - 3. Three months of funding per person is ideal (approximately \$1,500 to \$1,800 per person). When NEOCH pays for a boarding house, individuals keep their homeless status when applying for benefits.
- o. Alex Ragon asks about the hiring process for an outreach worker.
  - i. Chris Knestrick emphasizes the importance of hiring someone with lived experience with homelessness. He is not sure how long the process would take to hire someone.
  - ii. The outreach worker would be in the neighborhood every day and would check in with everyone in the homeless encampments each day. They would not always be on call for crisis intervention.
  - iii. NEOCH and the SAIC would develop metrics together and draft a memorandum of understanding (MOU).
  - iv. Chris Knestrick acknowledges that it has been a challenge at times with Ohio City, Inc. to balance the needs of business owners and the needs of people experiencing homelessness.
- p. Antonin Robert raises the issues of prostitution and drug use in the district.
  - i. Chris Knestrick notes that NEOCH generally stays away from drug trade issues but does have some experience working with sex workers.
- q. NEOCH offered to have the City of Cleveland hire two outreach workers for the airport, but the city opted to pass an ordinance banning individuals from congregating there instead.
- r. Dan LaGuardia asks how involved NEOCH is in passing out tents to individuals in encampments.
  - i. Chris Knestrick acknowledges that NEOCH does pass out tents, but they do not show up with them. They try to keep people safe and sheltered however possible.
- s. Edna T. Akrish is worried because NEOCH's proposal does not mention business owners or their needs.
- t. Antonin Robert notes that Campus District can hire its own social worker.

- i. Mark Lammon notes that CDI did that three times before without much success or sustainability.
  - u. Karen Perkowski notes that crime is getting worse in the district by the day.
    - i. She suggests that Mark Lammon or someone from GBX Group come up with a letter template to send out en masse.
- IV. Adjourn
  - a. Karen Perkowski motions to adjourn the meeting. Edna T. Akrish seconds the motion. **The motion to adjourn the meeting passes.**

**Board packet includes:**

- November 15, 2023, SAIC Board Meeting Minutes
- November 2023 Clean & Safe Report
- NEOCH Outreach Worker Budget
- NEOCH Outreach Worker Resolution Comment Form
- November 28, 2023, Placemaking Committee Minutes