

**Welcome:** Ms. Nancy L. Walters, MARCC President, United Methodist Church/Ohio River Valley District

**Prayer:** The Reverend Connie Simon, Pastor of First Unitarian Church, representing Unitarian-Universalist Council of Greater Cincinnati

**Minutes:** Delegates Council Minutes of 10 April 2019 – approved.

**Agenda:** Delegates Council Agenda for 8 May 2019 – approved.

**Today's Attendance: 26**

**AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES, USA, Miami Association:** *Absent.*

**ARCHDIOCESE:** James Bramlage, Tom Choquette, Bob Ehram, Mary Gallagher, Karen Martin, Connie Widmer

**BAPTIST MINISTERS CONFERENCE:** Aaron Greenlea

**CINCINNATI ISLAMIC COMMUNITY CENTER:** *Absent*

**DISCIPLES OF CHRIST:** *Absent*

**DIocese OF SOUTHERN OHIO (EPISCOPAL):** Elizabeth Brown

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA:** *Absent*

**FRIENDS RELIGIOUS SOCIETY (Quakers):** Doug Burks, Tim Leonard, J.P. Lund

**INTERDENOMINATIONAL MINISTERIAL ALLIANCE:** *Absent*

**JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL:** Justin Kirschner, Alice Perlman

**MARCC:** Margaret Fox, Alice Skirtz, Angela Wright

**PRESBYTERY OF CINCINNATI:** Bob Clary

**UNITED METHODIST ORV DIST:** Mary Beth Owens, Nancy Walters

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST/SONKA:** *Absent*

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST COUNCIL:** Rae Jane Araujo, Carol Fencl, Joy Haupt, Lee Meyer, Dan Schneider,

**VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA:** *Absent*

**Guests:** *Josh Spring*, Greater Cincinnati Homeless Coalition; *Rev. Connie Simon*, First Unitarian Church.

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**Please be mindful to place your cellphones on silent before each meeting begins. Thank you.**

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**OPENING REFLECTION & PRAYER – Reverend Connie Simon, First Unitarian Church, Unitarian-Universalist Council of Greater Cincinnati.**

I am glad to be here today. I hail from SE Pennsylvania in a tiny Amish town. I've been an attorney, a small business owner, a professor, a program editor for a non-profit, a political consultant, finally I decided to go to seminary. People ask what do Unitarian-Universalists believe? What is your creed? We do not have a traditional creed. Our roots are in Christianity. We are a denomination of Theists, Humanists, Agnostics, Atheists, seekers, believers in God, nature, humanity, and that thing which has no name. We recognize that we do not have to think alike to love alike. We trust our members to engage in their own free and responsible search for truth and meaning. We are a covenantal faith, bound by a set of principles that guide our

relationship to one another and the larger world. Among these are the inherent worth and dignity of every person, justice, equity, compassion and human relations, respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are all part. These principles guide our dedication to service and quest for loving, peace-filled justice-based communities. Our theology is love. We know that none of us are free until all of us are free. We strive for beloved community which all equally share the wealth of the earth, where hunger and homelessness are not tolerated. A community where racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry, poverty, and prejudice are replaced by that all-inclusive spirit of love. A community where hunger and homelessness are not tolerated because our standards of human decency won't allow it. There is room for all at the table. We fight oppression. That's why we support MARCC. My ministry within Unitarian-Universalism is helping people to heal from the inside out so they can do the outside in work that our world so desperately needs. I believe that is why all people of faith are here because we carry that commitment to love and to do justice. There is so much work to do. We'll keep pressing forward, seeking change, moving toward loving community.

**Prayer:** *'Spirit of light and love; God of many names, may we always be mindful of our neighbor's struggles and committed to the eradication of poverty, and a place in the world where everyone has a place to live, enough to eat, and the opportunity to be – regardless of the color of their skin, how much money they have, who they love, or where they were born. May we remain dedicated to service and committed to using our power to heal with love; help with compassion; bless with joy, and to serve with the spirit of freedom. May we ever be committed to the building of a loving community here on earth. In gratitude for all we have been given, for the promise of what we can still achieve, and in the name of all that is holy. Amen.'*

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### **MARCC UPDATES – Margaret A. Fox, Executive Director, MARCC**

**MARCC and the Homeless Coalition Press Conference** – We have joined with The Homeless Coalition and other religious leaders to participate in a press conference to be held tomorrow, Thursday, May 9th, 2 PM at the Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses, 901 Findlay Street, 2 PM, in support of the Wade Street and Central Avenue Tenants United in the West End. FC Cincinnati served them eviction notices to leave. The Tenants and the Homeless Coalition have been working diligently together to have this order reversed. MARCC's position on this issue is as follows, that FC Cincinnati:

1. Cease immediately any threat of eviction before an agreement on the Compromise is reached with the Tenants;
2. Renovate 1559 Central Avenue and give ownership to Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses, to allow current resident at 1559 to stay there and 421 Wade Street tenants to move over once the 1559 renovation is completed;
3. Pay any associated moving and related costs to each affected Tenant.

Alexis Kidd, Executive Director of Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses (SHNH) in the West End, came to make a presentation to our delegates in May 2018, to talk about a West End Community Benefits Agreement. The CBA was signed in relationship to FC Cincinnati. SHNH would be the holder of the ownership of the renovated or new property for the Tenants United-Wade Street and Central Avenue. As many of you that can, please join us tomorrow to support them at 2 PM.

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### **INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER – Ms. Nancy Walters, MARCC President.**

Due to technical difficulties, the showing of the documentary "Faces and Facets of Eviction" by the Affordable Housing Advocates & the Northern Kentucky University Students' Partnership was not shown. Please visit the link to view the documentary: <http://bit.ly/2LxiQ2B>

### **TODAY'S PRESENTATION**

*'What Eviction Looks Like Locally and Its Remedies'*

**Josh Spring, Executive Director, Greater Cincinnati Homeless Coalition**

(For Mr. Spring's bio, please see attachment)

### **Mr. Spring**

In case you don't know, the Homeless Coalition of Cincinnati is a collection of 60 different direct service providers throughout Cincinnati and Hamilton County. They are as numerous as the people currently experiencing homelessness.

Our mission: To eradicate homelessness through systemic focus, community organizing, public education, and coordinating services.

There was a study in 2017 by the Xavier Community Building Institute which showed an affordable housing shortage of 40,000 units = 12,000 in Hamilton county and 28,000 in Cincinnati, specifically honing-in on households that are 0 – 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI). This equates to \$0 - \$14,000 annually. Affordable is to mean you pay no more than 30% of your monthly income for your housing – whether it be by mortgage or rent and utilities. We know more than 100k people in this county are paying more than 50% of their income for those basic needs. When we have such a high shortage number in housing, the consequence is homelessness. It is as worse as it's ever been. Many times, people try to make homelessness and housing complicated, especially politicians.

We have a triage number that individuals and families can call to access shelter services, (513) 381-SAFE (7233) from 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM Monday through Friday and 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM Saturday and Sunday. They predominantly serve families with children. The lack of housing and the need for shelter is so great that on an average day in 2018, 90% of families that called our triage helpline were turned away. This may cause one to think we need more shelters, no, we need more affordable housing. It is not possible to program ourselves out of this problem. We try to create new programs that look good with a happy-sounding name. That is not enough. All of our member organizations are operating well with generally good outcomes, but the fact is, with the resources that are currently made available, every case worker, every executive director, every person experiencing homelessness could utilize the services perfectly - it still would not be enough because of how we got to this point: we have allowed for-profit developers to determine who and what our city is to look like, who can live where and when, not making housing about people but profit.

Our organizations' partnership with Legal Aid Society and others are currently organizing residents in approximately 10 different properties directly threatened. Housing Opportunities Made Equal is our local watchdog that receive contacts daily from folks being asked to leave their homes – not because of breaking their leases or for doing something wrong, but because a developer wants to take their home and move someone in with more money. This problem is so significant that we and our partner organizations cannot keep up. Recently, our fights have been with the soccer club in the West End. We've already been to 2 city planning commission meetings with another coming up. It's been the same story. Lack of affordable housing has become this big, deep hole that is getting deeper. To fill it, someone must begin passing a filling agent to fill it back up.

Until we effectively pass legislation against this, and the shortage begins to lessen, we will keep having these individual 'street fights' with developers, winning in one and losing in another. We have put together an entire packet for legislation that could be passed by city council that would make a big difference. One way we can refill is by having an Affordable Housing Trust Fund. The Homeless Coalition and the Affordable Housing Advocates last year successfully convinced city council to pass the legislation to create this. We are continuing to work diligently to get more legislation passed that would create significant, annual contributions from the city into this dedicated Trust Fund only. This would have an oversight of people that have experience to decide how the money is distributed and that have accountability built in. This would prevent the housing built from being flipped over a few years later into expensive condos. The quality must stay up to par.

Some ways to fund the Affordable Housing Trust Fund:

- Impact Fees. These would be required for the zoning and permitting approval of market rate developments (likely a specific dollar amount per square foot).
- Linkage Fees. These would be to make it such that people working in these market-rate spaces can afford to live nearby, helping reduce the economic burden on single-family homes or smaller developers.
- Entertainment Tax. This could be associated with sporting events, concerts, restaurants, bars, etc.
- Proceeds from the sale of public land.

We are consulting with organizers from other cities that have had success in this area in the range from \$75 - \$100 million annually. We must make it more difficult for people to be evicted from their homes. Out of the 50 largest metropolitan areas in this country, Cincinnati has the 10<sup>th</sup> highest rate of evictions. These officially take place in 'Housing Court' at the

courthouse which most refer to as eviction court because this is what usually happens there. Most that must go to Housing Court are not legally represented. The attorneys that represent the landlords know the ins and outs and the tenants usually lose. Once an eviction is on a record, it makes finding the next place for housing even more difficult.

- Pay to Stay Ordinance. Simply, if a person pays their rent, they should be able to stay in that housing. Currently in Cincinnati, if a person gives their landlord what is owed on this month's rent, the landlord can refuse it. This allows the landlord to go to court to file against that tenant that their rent was not received. That tenant can then be evicted. This leaves an opening that allows a tenant to be evicted for any reason, whether truthful, legal, or not.
- Just Cause Eviction. This lays out a set list of reasons a household may be evicted of which a landlord must be able to prove that the tenant is in breach of their contract. This would also include documentation showing the landlord has made conversational efforts toward conflict resolution with the tenant about the infraction, i.e. payment plan, corrective action plan.
- Earned Revenue as Leverage Toward Affordable Housing. As residents of this city, revenue over and above the original value is leverage we're not taking advantage of because the city is giving it away. Building incentives should not encourage and allow people to be displaced from their homes. Our city gives out property tax abatements with not many questions asked. If incentives are given to a developer, a percentage of their development must be affordable at private cost not public cost. This fills that hole back in with new housing and lessening the rate that hole deepens. As it now stands, building new structure on a property, or improvement on an existing property, the owner is only required to pay taxes on the original value. FC Cincinnati stadium will pay no property taxes because the land it will sit on will be loaned to them through the Port Authority in a series of 1-year leases. The Port Authority doesn't pay taxes.

The law is not on the side of lower income folks that already have places to live, pay their rent, have built into community with their neighbors with someone check on them when sick and help to walk their kids to school. Someone should not be allowed to buy a building from these neighborhoods and give eviction notices that will uproot them from all these things that make a community. It starts a downward cycle: if finding a place to live falls through, a call to a shelter for their family is made, but there's no room – now they're living outside and breaking the law, can be arrested, or even have their children taken away; or if a single person, once arrested they're put in jail, but the incentive to the developer that is only interested in earning money started the cycle. This does not make moral or economic sense.

What do we want our city to look like 4, 10, 20 years from now? If we don't find practical ways to address these issues, it will look even worse as the years past. People are already dying because of homelessness, 100 this past year. Please support our efforts and attend events like (see white handout) the upcoming press conference for the Wade Street & Central Avenue Tenants United. This will take place tomorrow, Thursday, May 9 at 2 PM, Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses, 901 Findlay Street in the West End.

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## Q & A SESSION

**Bob Clary, Presbytery**

**Statement:** Speaking to the move out – there were approximately 40,000 people living in the Kenyon-Barr lower West End in the 1950's (now known as Queensgate); the West End now has less than 6,000 residents. Back then, that project displaced more than 20,000 people with each given a 30-day eviction notice to leave. And now it's more.

**A: (Spring)** We need to get across to our elected officials to look back at our history here in Cincinnati. That huge moving of people out of their neighborhood was racist. When we look back on this time will we be saying what was being done to prevent this?

**Mary Beth Owens, United Methodist**

**Q:** Commercial tax abatements in the city is in the millions of dollars to these developers. Is there any study on this? I've noticed the city has been very active in submitting ordinances to get free tax abatements made.

**A: (Spring)** Yes, this has been studied by us and the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers have also done an excellent report. An Impact Fee would place less of a burden on the residential/family developments and more on the commercial/big developments. If we change the way we do property tax abatements, i.e. limiting what neighborhoods they could go into. The original idea of a tax abatement was to incentivize development in poorly developed places, but places like Hyde

Park are not poorly developed so they don't need this. We could change the amount of money we bring in in property taxes and have more revenue with the average person probably not having to pay anything more if we place the burden in the right place.

**Bob Ehram, Archdiocese**

**Q: At one time, wasn't there a city ordinance that required a developer to have set aside a certain amount of affordable housing? Is this still in effect? What the story on that?**

**A:** (?) I think it was only in one or two communities.

**Martha Stephens, Unitarian Universalist Council**

**Q: Where do we stand on public housing? Maybe evictions wouldn't be so horrible if people could apply for public housing, yet I understand the waiting list is long. Why can't they build new public housing?**

**A: (Spring)** Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority is the largest operator for public affordable housing. They operate public housing in two ways – 1) site-based, which are buildings; 2) by vouchers. Every few years, when the voucher pool opens, 20 – 25,000 people apply. This gets whittled down to a few thousand people. Some people die waiting to be accepted on their waiting list. CMHA's site-based buildings stay at full capacity. In 2012, the federal government passed legislation (The Rental Assistance Demonstration Act, RAD). Through this, congress has consistently cut funding to public housing providers. They don't have enough money to maintain their existing properties. Instead of fixing this problem, RAD allows them to sell their public housing to private companies. These private companies don't reinvest it. Tenants lose many rights in this process and allows for significant housing loss. The RAD says that it is to allow one-for-one replacement, but in the fine print if they lose 5% of their housing, it's still 1 for 1.

**Tim Leonard, Religious Society of Friends**

**Q: What is the impact of the Air BnB market on the affordable housing crisis?**

**A:** We don't yet know. Legislation was finally passed out of Councilmember David Mann's office. Increasingly individuals and companies have purchased whole buildings and several buildings for Air BnB's. This removes spaces for affordable housing from the market. This also disrupts community. I would think people would rather have permanent residents as their neighbors than folks coming in and out for tourism sake. The ordinance that passed was extremely watered down from where we started it. It does include a 7% excise tax on Air BnB's and other such ventures that would go to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. The estimated income this will generate is \$700,000/annually.

**Margaret A. Fox, MARCC Executive Director/Statement:**

MARCC lobbied to have this Short-Term Rental Ordinance passed. Under this ordinance, all Airbnb's must register with the city, whether renting a room or an entire house. Up until now, there has been no registration list. Certain neighborhoods are targeted for people to come in, purchase property, renovate it – with no registration and no taxes, other than property taxes. At the minimum, hotels are paying 17.3%. When the Legal Aid Society, Homeless Coalition, Affordable Housing Advocates, MARCC, and several other organizations lobbied, we saw that collectively the Airbnb's were strong and to get something passed, there was much renegotiating. This was a small win but there is much more to be done. The neighborhoods of Walnut Hills, Clifton, Northside seem to be the ones newly targeted for these tax abatement incentives.

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## **REMINDERS**

**Thursday, May 9, Central Avenue and Wade Street Tenants United Press Conference, 2 PM,** at Seven Hills Neighborhoods Houses, 901 Findlay Street, Cincinnati, OH 45214. MARCC will join other faith leaders and the Tenants United to speak in support of the Tenants Compromise to FC Cincinnati.

**Wednesday, June 12,** MARCC Delegates Council Meeting, Presenter Jessica Powell, Esq. – Vice President of the Cincinnati-Hamilton County Land Reutilization Corp., 12 Noon-1:15 PM, Synod Hall, St. Peter-in-Chains Cathedral, 325 W. Eighth Street 45202

### **Attachments:**

Bio – Josh Spring