

WAVOAD General Meeting

December 5, 2023

Meeting led by Marty Grisham, WaVOAD President, LDS Charities

In Attendance

Marty Grisham – LDS Charities, WaVOAD President	Tom Link – St Vincent DePaul
Dave Zabloutny – Habitat for Humanity - WaVOAD Secretary	Geri Chumley – Whatcom County COAD
Ray Shjerven - SWWA ELCA - WaVOAD Treasurer	Eric Williams – Second Harvest
Jim Mahon – Church of Scientology - WaVOAD Member-at-large	Carlene Anders – Disaster Leadership Team
Kathy Bryson – PNW UMC Disaster Response, WaVOAD Vice President	Ben Robinson – Medical Teams International
Andrew Chadick - Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle – SAFE Washington, WaVOAD Member-at-large	Zack Gifford – WA State OEM- Disaster Recovery Program Coordinator
Lisa Arellano – Salvation Army	Cindi Barker – Seattle HUBS
Kyle Christiansen – Whatcom County LTR – Dir. Client Supt.	Allen Scott – Team Rubicon
Randy Bode – World Renew Disaster Response	Jill Watson – City of Seattle Human Services
Celso Rangel – WA State Program Coordinator	Ann Forrest – Seattle Emergency Communication HUBS
Patty Baker – Episcopal Relief & Development	Quinn Butler – WA State OEM
Larry Mays – Adventist Community Services	Jim Cooper – UW PNW

Meeting called to order by Marty Grisham for December 5, 2023, at 10:00am

Minutes Review

The minutes from the October 3, 2023, general meeting were presented. Randy Bode moved to accept the minutes. Tom Link seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial Review

Ray Shjerven shared to following review of the financials:

Segregated Savings	\$5,112.16
Interest earned	\$4.44
Segregated Savings - ending balance	\$5,116.60
Operational Checking	\$19,393.63
No activity	
Operational Checking – ending balance	\$19,393.63

There was a motion to accept which was seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

President's Report:

WaVOAD Leadership Elections

Marty and Kathy updated the group on the Leadership elections. Marty Grisham will be moving into the Past President role in 2024 and Kathy will assume the President role. There are some potential candidates for the VP role, but Marty asked if anyone has an interest or wishes to nominate someone to let him and Kathy know. He did make it clear that the expectation is that the VP would assume the President role after two years. Christie Merrill has agreed to fill the role on an interim basis if needed. Marty did ask for a vote to approve Kathy as incoming President and she was unanimously approved. The Secretary and Treasurer roles will come up for election in December 2024.

Mountain West VOAD Conference Update

Marty and Kathy reported on progress in planning the Mountain West VOAD Conference to be held April 8-11, 2024, at Kent United Methodist Church in Kent, WA. The conference will begin Monday afternoon/evening with Tuesday and Wednesday being full days and Thursday a half day.

The registration site is live, and the cost is \$75 which includes meals. There is a hotel recommendation on the WAVOAD website along with additional information.

The Leadership Team is working on the program and speakers. The Team has also agreed to sponsor the Wednesday, April 10 lunch.

Registration for the conference is \$75, which is consistent with recent Mountain West conferences.

Report Outs:

Long term Recovery Updates:

Okanogan County LTRG – Carlene Anders reported that everything is nearly wrapped up with a few cases expected to carry into the spring. The Unmet Needs Roundtable will run through next summer. There will be a 10-year celebration in June of 2024. Carlene thanked everyone who supported their efforts.

Whatcom County LTRG – Kyle Christiansen – Director of Client Support – Kyle talked briefly about the current flooding situation with the recent heavy rains. He said while there is a flood watch, it does look like the river will not reach flood stage. He shared that the World Renew volunteers left recently and that between 60 and 70 projects were completed in total. A handful of small cases remain. He thanked everyone who supported their efforts.

Spokane County Wildfire Update – Quinn Butler (Gerry Bozarth – Spokane County Emergency Management- was not available)

Quinn noted that State funding has gone to the County. There have been four contracts completed. These have covered debris removal, asbestos testing, transitional housing, and some funding for Disaster Case Management positions.

There has been no response yet from FEMA on individual assistance, but this probably won't happen. SBA support is likely.

Lisa Arellano from Red Cross reported that Disaster Case Management has begun in Elk and Medical Lake and about 30 cases have been opened. They are working on disaster assessments and are looking for space. Ray Shjerven advised Lisa to contact St John Lutheran Church and that they would likely help with space needs.

Current Flooding Situation – Update – Zack Gifford from State Emergency Management reported that the State Emergency Operations Center has been activated. ESF 6 is in place for Skagit County, and they continue to track the system.

Guest Presentation – Riverton Park Update - Kathy Bryson – UMCOR Disaster Response Coordinator – PNW

As with many churches around the Pacific Northwest, Riverton Park United Methodist Church started in the early 1900's. It's located in Tukwila, on a multi-acre property that is just west of I5. They've an active congregation that believes in hospitality, hope, and assistance through housing, nutrition, education, and community fellowship.

They house the Tukwila Panty Food bank in the lower level that serves residents of Tukwila, SeaTac, Burien, and Boulevard Park.

Riverton Park's location is a key element in their housing mission – they're a little over three miles from SeaTac's central terminal or seven minutes driving time. Or an easy walking distance for some people.

Providing temporary shelter is not new for the church. They're partners with the City of Tukwila and Tukwila Police Department to house homeless and other people seeking temporary shelter. They've been a shelter for people displaced by nearby house or apartment fires. For years, they hosted a small, sanctioned encampment for homeless community members.

In 2022 the Low-Income Housing Institute partnered with Riverton Park by constructing a tiny house village on the grounds. Riverton Park Village offers 20 units and is currently housing around 40 people. The Low-Income Housing Institute operates villages using funding from the King County Regional Homelessness Authority. Residents must follow a set of rules, which includes no drugs or alcohol on site. A Low-Income Housing Institute spokesperson recently said that nearly 50 percent of people who moved out of a tiny home ended up getting into permanent housing.

Recently, the influx and nature of those without housing has changed. Many cities have seen an increase in asylum-seekers since the expiration of Title 42, an emergency health authorization by the

Trump Administration enacted during the pandemic. Title 42 allowed migrants to be denied the right to seek asylum creating a bottleneck of asylum-seekers along the US-Mexico border. That's when the asylum-seekers really started to show up on the steps of Riverton Park Methodist Church.

An asylum seeker is a person who is seeking international protection but does not have official refugee status when arriving at the host country. They must first migrate to the U.S. then apply for asylum then wait for a trial to see if they are granted the status. They also don't qualify for housing assistance like refugees do.

The increase of asylum seekers in Washington State really began in late 2022. The largest concentration of migrants and asylum-seekers on the West side of our state wasn't necessarily within Seattle city limits but on the outskirts, places like Tukwila and Riverton Park Methodist church. The number of asylum seekers showing up on the Riverton Park doorstep has steadily been increasing. Seekers heard about the operation by word of mouth or by people already living there. The increasing numbers have put a burden on the church. Cooking, living space along with the increase in utility bills and daily needs of people new to our country has put a strain on the congregation and its resources. But they have kept their doors open.

No government agency had the ability to step up to help with finding more shelter or resources. That changed on October 6 after the Seattle Times did an extensive article on Riverton Park. As a result, the City of Tukwila issued an Emergency Declaration to expedite funding sources from Washington State and the Federal Government to address the "bigger picture" of the growing needs of housing asylum seekers.

Today, there's about 300 people living in tents and in every corner of the church building. We don't see that changing soon but the way people live within Riverton Park may. Discussions have already started with government agencies and within the Methodist leadership on the housing mission going forward and what resources may be available. Organizations within the Washington VOAD are supporting relief activities such as food and clothing donations. Inquiries for support have ramped up. The County and State government agencies are starting conversations on what the future could hold.

Ben Robinson – Medical Teams International – Shared about the work Medical Teams International is doing at Riverton. They are focused primarily on medical screenings, assessments, and dental work. Pastor Jan had reached out for help. They are coordinating with other agencies including public health. He talked about housing – recently eight pregnant women have been moved to Mary's Place and noted the County is trying to get up to 100 rooms at the Double Tree Inn in SeaTac.

Member Report Outs

Eric Williams – Second Harvest – Eric mentioned the importance of shelf stable food and recognized recent donations from LDR, WA Department of Agriculture and Feeding America. He also thanked WaVOAD for helping to facilitate a trailer donation to Second Harvest.

Randy Bode – World Renew – Randy noted that they assisted Whatcom County reconstruction from May through November completing. They had 123 volunteers, performing nearly 9,500 hours of service on 44 homes.

Carlene Anders – Disaster Leadership Team – Carlene noted they are currently involved in Eastern WA, Oklahoma (tornados) and Hawaii (wildfires). Also mentioned new Smokey the Bear license plate – need 3500 people to express interest in this through DNR website. If approved, proceeds would go to wildland recovery.

Larry Mays – Adventist Community Services – Specialty is handling Donations Operations. Have recently signed a new MOU with WA State to manage their Donations Operations. They were involved with Medical Lake/Spokane fires.

Jim Mahon – Church of Scientology – They have a special event tonight with the theme of “Do Something About It” to help increase participation in their work.

Ray Shjerven – LDR – There was a recent grant to St John Lutheran on Spokane to used to support Medical Teams International.

Next Meeting – Tuesday, February 6, 2024, 10am via zoom

Meeting adjourned by Marty Grisham at 11:10 am.

Respectfully submitted by Dave Zablony, WaVOAD secretary