

Minutes of the Meeting of December 10, 2015 at Summerlea United Church

Attending :

Summerlea United: Sinclair Harris, John Osborne, Richard Legault
Merging Waters United: Susan Hawker (Union), Rosalie Armstrong (Beaurepaire)
Lakeshore Unitarian Universalist Congregation (LUUC): Gary Spiller, Dori Abbott, Sari Kelen, Paul Sullivan, Sheila Laursen
Cedar Park United: Andrea Nugent, Pat Mayberry, Ernie Bauer, Betsy Starr
Eric Lasota (Saint Veronica's Parish), Jim Newman (Resurrection of Our Lord)
Inga Lawson (Wyman Memorial United Church) ,
Nancy Doray (Montreal Lakeshore University Women's Club),
Christina Duvander (Unitarian Church of Montreal)

I have tried to organize the very wide ranging discussion roughly into the meeting agenda headings. Not all items were directly addressed in this first meeting and/or in the stated agenda order and many comments, suggestions, relevant resources, etcetera have not been 'minuted'.
Mea Culpa.

1. Welcome

Meeting commenced shortly after 13:30 and all were welcomed by Sheila who chaired. Several people listed her attended to observe, question, comment and generally join in the discussion.

2. Round table introductions and motivations of those attending.

Everyone gave a brief introduction describing their hopes for this meeting. This included information giving & seeking, the desire to learn more and to report on different efforts being undertaken locally to deal with the burgeoning (specifically Syrian) refugee crisis. Sheila gave a summary of the researches done in this area as to procedure and different sponsoring mechanisms with particular reference to the Quebec non-profit group Action Réfugiés Montréal (ARM)¹. Sheila described how her own (very small) congregation was already raising considerable funds in response to the crisis and their hope of joining with others to sponsor a family although their size will not allow LUUC to act alone as a sponsoring congregation.

Sinclair described Summerlea's willingness to be the signatory to a sponsorship commitment.

Cedar Park United reported on being "almost ready" to commit to a sponsorship. Wyman Memorial United is exploring the possibility of working with a group in order to make a commitment. Montreal Lakeshore University Women's Club wants to help and is exploring the possibilities. Resurrection in Lachine and St. Veronica's in Dorval are hoping to know by mid January whether they can together become a sponsor. Merging Waters expressed their desire to be a part of a sponsoring group.

¹ www.actionr.org

3. Report of Summerlea United's vision and commitment. Role of participating partners.

Sinclair read the minutes of the recent Summerlea congregational meeting to discuss, vote and accept the Summerlea Board Proposal of November 17 which authorized the relevant changes to the Summerlea Mission Statement and the agreement to be the signatory as a sponsoring congregation² on the assumption that partner congregations would be enlisted in the sponsoring effort. Summerlea was seeking partners to help finance and organize this daunting task. Sinclair reported that on the acceptance of the proposal the Summerlea Board immediately authorized the freeing of \$10,000 from their investments to be used in the initiation of the sponsorship process once a working group is formed.

4. Round table updates of support offers (pledges of funds and funds raised to date, offers of other support, access to resources).

There were many diverse resources and abilities mentioned here that are impossible to list and included 'men with trucks,' Arabic speaking contacts (including two midwives) and many & varied community resources. The Summerlea Board has approved the release of \$10,000 to initiate the application process when the time comes and LUUC has reported an already very active fundraising effort representing roughly \$9,000.

5. Refugee Settlement Committee - mandate & members. Memorandum of Understanding between Summerlea and partner church congregations.

It was concluded that numbers present at the meeting constitute two groups. The first will be a sponsoring group and this will be represent three congregations: Summerlea United Church (who will be the signatory congregation), Lakeshore Unitarian Universalist Congregation and Merging Waters (Union Church in Ste Anne de Bellevue and Beaurepaire United Church in Beaconsfield). Representatives from these three congregations will form a Refugee Settlement Committee (with the provisional title "**Summerlea Refugee Sponsorship Coalition**"³ or SRSC) and, at least at this point in time, consist of Sinclair Harris, Richard Legault, Nancy Mark and John Osborne from Summerlea; Sheila Laursen and two others to be named from LUUC; Susan Hawker, Rosalie Armstrong and Wendy Buchanan from Merging Waters. At their first meeting in January this committee will address the first issues of mandate and begin the formulation of a 'Memorandum of Understanding' for the group.

A second, larger group will be more fluid and consist of those present (and this may enlarge to other interested parties) at the meeting and will operate as a kind of network of resources and be provisionally called the "West Island Refugee Network" or WIRN some of whom will, no doubt, form their own settlement committees alone or in partnerships to be determined. Email lists are to be formed for each respective group and used to disseminate information and continue the relevant dialogue.

² The relevant documents to be forwarded to the concerned parties.

³ **Update:** The SRSC was soon after renamed as the Summerlea Refugee **Support** Coalition.

7. Profile of our sponsorship application request - family size? special needs or characteristics? private sponsorship? government-sponsored family?

After consideration of the potential funds and resources that can be made available it was speculated that the SRSC could consider up to a (possibly extended) family of six and that Action Réfugiés Montréal (ARM) will be the most likely source of the eventual family configuration. The feeling seemed to be that we would not consider any specific cultural or religious criteria in selecting an appropriate 'configuration.'

11. Next meeting date, time and place.

SRSC will meet the week of Dec 14 - 18 - determined by doodle poll.
WIRN will meet January 21, 2016 at 13:30.

Respectfully submitted by John Osborne, 2015-12-14.