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INSPECTOR GENERAL'S REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL
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This investigation of issues relating to the Winter Warming Center ("Center") was opened at the request of Mayor James Langfelder. This Report has been somewhat delayed due to the COVID19 Pandemic and Stay-At-Home orders issued by Governor Pritzker.

The Winter Warming Shelter located at 1015 E. Madison Street in Springfield, Sangamon County, Illinois is operated in a building owned by the City of Springfield, but leased to the Salvation Army Heartland Division, an Illinois not-for-profit corporation pursuant to a Lease which was executed in October 2019 to run from November 1, 2019 through April 30, 2020. Attached to the Lease is a Certificate of Liability Insurance with an umbrella of \$3,500,000. The Center is run by the Salvation Army pursuant to a block grant and all personnel working at the Center are Salvation Army employees.

On February 28, 2020, I was given a tour of the building by Springfield Community Relations Director Juan Huerta, on short notice, while the building was unoccupied by clients. While the exterior of the building shows its years of prior commercial use, the interior of the building was in remarkably good condition. According to Huerta, the building is prepared each season by Springfield Public Works employees and in 2019, the building benefitted from donations from Lowe's of new laminate flooring for the intake and dining area, new carpeting throughout the building and paint for all of the interior walls. The premises appeared clean and bright due to the 2019 upgrades.

In addition to the flooring and interior wall upgrades, an additional emergency exit was installed for the 2019/2020 season which brought the total of emergency exits to two and the total number of ingress/egress points to five. There were fire alarms placed throughout the building with pull stations and with audio/visual warning devices located throughout. Emergency lighting was evident in all areas of the building as well as fire extinguishers in many locations with tags that read that they had been serviced and certified in 2019. All of the aforementioned equipment appeared to be in new or very new condition.

Throughout the building, there were postings by the Springfield Fire Marshall indicating occupancy limitations of a total of 60 clients plus 4 Salvation Army employees at any one time. This limitation was imposed due to the lack of a sprinkler system in this structure. Sprinkler

systems are expensive to install and according to Salvation Army Captain Eddy, this building is scheduled for demolition in 2023 due to the Springfield Railroad Relocation Project.

There were sleeping mats located throughout the designated sleeping areas of the building and a number of these mats had personal belongings of clients placed on them such as backpacks and small suitcases. The entire building had a clean smell with the exception of a few of the backpack items.

The building has old bathroom facilities which are serviceable and adequate.

In February 2020, surveillance cameras were installed.

LOW BARRIER SHELTER

The Center is described as a “low barrier shelter” which means, unlike other local shelters, potential clients are not turned away as a result of intoxication, being under the influence of drugs or exhibiting mental health issues. It goes without saying that this is the very most difficult and challenging type of homeless shelter to operate.

The Center is open from November 1 through March 31, though it has, in the past, been opened for a few weeks in April if the weather is particularly cold. In 2019, the Center actually opened on October 31 because of extreme cold weather conditions. The Center is open from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., Monday through Friday, and from 5:00 p.m. through 8:00 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday. The Center is in operation 7 days a week for at least 152 continuous days. In 2019, the Center was opened with very little preparation time due to the cancellation of a proposed multi-disciplinary homeless facility on 11th Street, which did not materialize. For the past 5 years, the Center has been operated by Helping Hands. For the period in excess of 5 years ago, the Salvation Army and Helping Hands alternated years operating the Center at its current location and at a different nearby location.

The Salvation Army Springfield Office reports to the Salvation Army Headquarters in Peoria, Illinois, which Headquarters has a history of operating low barrier shelters in Peoria and Bloomington. According to Captain Jeff Eddy, Head of Springfield Salvation Army Operations, the Salvation Army Peoria Headquarters has a team of people who know how to operate low barrier shelters. This team came to Springfield to assist with setting up the Center and conducted a week of interviews of potential employees for jobs that were advertised on INDEED. Following the week of interviews, a staff of 13 was hired with Captain Eddy having the final say on who was to be hired.

Prior to the Center opening, the Salvation Army Peoria Headquarters Team conducted training for all of the new hires using a program called “Safe From Harm” which teaches employees how to work with vulnerable adults in a volatile environment while keeping both clients and staff safe. Thereafter, before opening, the Springfield Police Department came to train new staff members in de-escalation techniques, proper search procedures, and anti-human trafficking watchfulness. The total of the Salvation Army and Springfield Police Department training was approximately 8 hours.

The Salvation Army has received a block grant through the City of Springfield of \$50,000 and has received a \$10,000 donation from HSHS Hospital System to provide the 150 plus days of the Center's operations with a staff of 4. In reviewing the number of hours needed to staff the operations 7 days a week for 5 months, it becomes obvious that the employees are paid minimum wage or slightly above. Captain Eddy observed that in addition to the low compensation, trained social workers don't want to take a 5 month job. Salvation Army social services employees trained in homeless outreach were often present from 5:00-8:00 p.m., however.

Despite concerns expressed in the community, Captain Eddy denied ever staffing the Center with temporary employees from Labor Ready or any similar staffing operation.

WHAT THE WARMING CENTER IS AND ISN'T

There has been significant discussion about the role which the Center plays in the care of the Springfield homeless community and many in the community have expressed their expectations of the level of services they expected.

The Center accepts persons who are under the influence of alcohol and suffer the effects of alcohol consumption but it is not an alcohol treatment center.

The Center accepts persons who are suffering from mental illness issues, some of whom exhibit symptoms ranging from being withdrawn to being easily agitated or physically threatening, but the Center is not a mental health treatment center and provides no services such as diagnosis, treatment or medications.

The Center accepts persons who are addicted to substances other than alcohol and who may have been consuming immediately prior to entering the Center, but the Center has no ability to treat substance abuse clients.

Captain Eddy summed it up as succinctly as possible when he told me that "Our job is to keep people warm, get them a hot meal while they are with us and to keep them alive." As he observed, there is no treatment service available for any of the clients, many of whom are turned away by traditional shelters because of their drug, alcohol and mental health issues.

REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

I began my investigation by listening to the broadcast of the February 18, 2020 City Council Meeting which, at the conclusion of an extremely lengthy budget process, turned to the issue of problems with the Center. Among those addressing the City Council that night were Rev. Susan Phillips, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church located at the corner of 7th and Capitol, Joe O'Neill who had attempted to investigate allegations of employee misconduct by spending a night at the Center, but which experience was shortened and of great concern to Mr. O'Neill, and Captain Jeff Eddy, who is in charge of the Salvation Army Springfield Office and, in turn, the operation of the Center.

In my later meetings with Rev. Phillips and Joe O'Neill, I gave each a number of my business cards with contact information and asked that they distribute these to homeless persons with whom they had contact. I did so because both expressed an observation that the homeless

community was reluctant to come forward or identify themselves because of fear of retribution by one Center Salvation Army employee in particular. I asked them to assure the homeless community that as Inspector General, I can offer anonymity to any person that I interview. Pastor Phillips even granted my request to conduct the interviews at her church rather than at the downtown law office where I normally conduct complainant and witness interviews. I felt that meeting at the church would be less intimidating for the homeless population which I wished to interview. Despite the efforts of Rev. Phillips and Joe O'Neill, I received absolutely no response from any homeless citizens.

CONCERNS REGARDING BEHAVIOR OF WINTER WARMING CENTER EMPLOYEE

I have reviewed the tape of the City Council's December 17, 2019 meeting during which Reggie Witherspoon addressed the Council regarding complaints that he had heard about the Center. Included among them was misconduct by the staff, disrespectful conduct by a staff member, and theft of items such as cellphones and medications. Mr. Witherspoon acknowledged that all of the issues he was relaying were hearsay from the members of the Springfield homeless community who are clients of the Center and confidants of Mr. Witherspoon.

Juan Huerta, Community Relations Director for the City of Springfield, was present at the meeting and addressed the Council telling them that he was there almost every evening and that all was going well. Many of Director Huerta's comments created the impression that he and the City were running the Center but at the conclusion of his remarks, he correctly stated that the Salvation Army is running the Center. It is a matter of concern, however, that Director Huerta seemed to first create the impression that the City was running the Center, which is directly contradicted by the Lease turning the building over to Salvation Army and the block grant that enables the Salvation Army to operate the Center. Director Huerta indicated that things were going well at the Center and that Alderman McMenamin and Alderman Gregory had served meals at the Center and had positive comments. Several other Aldermen indicated that they were hearing that there may be issues of improper treatment of the Center clients by its Manager.

In later discussions with Captain Eddy of the Salvation Army, he stated that a particular employee had emerged as a leader, hereafter referred to as Respondent, and was being paid slightly more than the other employees.

At the conclusion of the December 17, 2019 Council meeting, Mr. Witherspoon indicated that he had requested that the clients of the Center who had complained to him were asked to report their complaints to Rev. Phillips or to the City Council, but that all had refused to come forward.

A concern was raised that Respondent is a City employee. In fact, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, the Respondent is an employee of the City of Springfield working for the City Community Relations Department, under the supervision of Juan Huerta, as an investigator into housing and landlord tenant discrimination matters as well as employment discrimination matters. His City employment began 3 ½ years ago and there are no negative items in his City HR file.

The conduct of Respondent complained of occurred only in the context of the Center where he was an employee of the Salvation Army and not serving as an employee of the City of

Springfield. According to the City Human Resources Department, there is a signed secondary employment document signed off by the Department Director at Community Resources. I note that the current City of Springfield secondary employment form does not contain a line for the Human Resources Department to approve the document but HR has since added a signature line for their approval.

The issue of Respondent's conduct surfaced again at the February 18, 2020 meeting of the City Council. Rev. Phillips, Citizen Joe O'Neill, and Captain Eddy all addressed the City Council regarding issues of a disrespectful and vulgar treatment of Center clients. At that meeting, allegations were made by Joe O'Neill who attempted to spend the night at the Center and who was treated with great disrespect and foul language and who observed other Center clients being treated equally disrespectfully. Mr. O'Neill also observed that as part of the intake process, a Center employee was using a metal detection wand and displayed a lack of knowledge of the proper procedure by stopping the wand above the ankles where weapons could be concealed in a sock or shoe.

Rev. Phillips recounted an experience by members of her congregation who volunteer to provide meals at the Center. Specifically, on January 16, 2020, a church member was attempting to seek help from the clients to bring in food trays (which help was routinely given in the past) when she was confronted by Respondent and treated disrespectfully and yelled at. The food team member recounted that she had witnessed Respondent treating the clients roughly and was gruff with them. Thus, the concern is not only were the Center clients being treated disrespectfully, but community volunteers were subject to the same disrespectful conduct by the subject employee. Discussions were also had regarding reports that healthcare professionals who attempted to provide services were treated extremely disrespectfully. It should be noted that in a later private interview of Captain Eddy, he acknowledged to me that he had been made aware of the treatment of the medical professional in question.

Respondent's employment with the Salvation Army was terminated soon after the February 18, 2020 City Council meeting.

In the days immediately following the February 18, 2020 City Council meeting, I met with both Rev. Susan Phillips and Joe O'Neill in separate private meetings. Joe O'Neill shared with me a report that he prepared following his January 24, 2020 visit to the Center, which report had been forwarded to the Mayor on January 27, 2020. His written report summarized that the employee in question had "no business working at any WWC. His skillset lacked sensitivity, patience, empathy, people skills, and the most basic communication skills that are vital when working with vulnerable people. It's as though he enjoyed pouring fuel on the flames and handing out his intimidation factor to every homeless person he came I contact with. . . His abusive authority and foul mouth is appalling."

Several persons whom I interviewed recounted concern regarding a mentally ill woman being turned out of the shelter at 10:00 p.m. I inquired of Captain Eddy about this incident and he was familiar with it and stated that there is a cigarette break at 8:00 p.m. where clients who wish to smoke are escorted outside for a smoking period. The woman in question, in the crowded confines of the sleeping area, at approximately 10:00 p.m. started to light a cigarette and refused repeated requests to extinguish the cigarette lighter. As mentioned earlier in this report, there is great concern regarding fire risks at the Center and Center employees are trained to spot fire

hazards. Because of this woman's refusal to extinguish a fire hazard, she was removed from the facility and banned for a 3-day period. This is a particular problematic situation in which a Salvation Army employee had to weigh the fire danger to the entire population of the Center against the exposure to winter temperatures when the woman in question was removed. It is clear that removal was necessary, but a better procedure would have had alternate means available to protect the removed client from exposure to the elements such as taking her to the Sangamon County jail which allows the homeless to sleep overnight. It does appear that the woman's family was contacted.

An additional concern expressed first in the hearsay allegations made by Reggie Witherspoon in December 2019, but also raised by others was that a female employee was physically abusive to a client. In my interview of Captain Eddy, he indicated that he had heard no such allegation. None of the more than 20 witnesses that I interviewed could recall such an incident when directly asked.

Mr. O'Neill's report raised an observation regarding the check-in process wherein backpacks and other containers brought in by the clients during intake were searched and that food items and water bottles were discarded. I discussed this with Captain Eddy and he said that that was a longstanding procedure from prior years. Water bottles were confiscated because they were frequently used to sneak alcoholic beverages into the Center and food items were not allowed in the sleeping areas because they attracted insects and vermin. Captain Eddy reported, and I later observed, that there were cases of bottled water available from the time of intake that the clients could consume during their overnight stay and could take with them when they left in the morning. Captain Eddy also stated that there were always food items that were available to send with the clients when they departed in the morning.

RESPONDENT REPLIES

Pursuant to the Inspector General Ordinance, I forwarded Respondent the opportunity to speak with me. We, thereafter, had a lengthy telephone interview in which Respondent addressed many of the concerns that had been expressed by Mr. O'Neill, both in his report and in the media, as well as others' concerns that had been raised. Respondent did not take exception to Mr. O'Neill's characterization of him as a "drill sergeant" and agreed that he told clients of the Center to "sit down and shut up" on the night Mr. O'Neill visited. He did, however, vehemently deny the allegations that he had used vulgar language in addressing anyone either on the night of Mr. O'Neill's visit or at any other time. O'Neill references "cussing" and "foul mouth" in his report and in later media coverage. Respondent stated that Mr. O'Neill's observations regarding foul language "was not the truth".

Respondent stated that he "cares for the homeless people." He gave examples of helping clients of the Center find apartments, get I.D. cards, and that he bought food and drinks and clothing with his own funds (some of which was reimbursed). He states that many of the clients had wet or soiled themselves and that he provided clean clothing, pullups and helped them clean up.

Respondent stated that if he was not tough with some of the clients, “they would walk right over you”. He feels that the characterizations, however, were unfair and that he did not retaliate back at persons who threatened him.

Respondent concluded by saying that he felt wrongfully terminated and humiliated and that he “is not the kind of person that this man (O’Neill) is painting me to be”.

Thereafter, I reached out and interviewed ten of the other twelve original Center employees who had worked with Respondent. I interviewed each by telephone. I asked each specifically whether or not they had observed Respondent get physical with any client and all answered that they had never seen such behavior. On the issue of Respondent’s use of foul or vulgar language, the majority stated that they had never heard him address any clients with such language. One co-worker stated that everybody used foul language and another stated hearing Respondent only use foul language in response to foul language being directed toward him by a client.

Below is a list of statements made by co-workers in response to my questions regarding their experience in working with Respondent at the Center:

A great leader.

Very firm.

Clients tried trickery to get extras including coming in late and extra smoke breaks.

Respondent would purchase food and snacks out of pocket (there was reimbursement for some).

Acted professionally with clients, even though clients often were rude.

Was a good man to work with. I understand his frustrations having no help---his plate was full.

A good man who ran things in order.

Clients soiled themselves and Respondent brought them clothes.

Clients wanted to fight.

Very protective of women on staff.

Some clients didn’t like him because he made them follow rules.

Might have been times when he was frustrated.

He did a lot for people.

His response could be sharp/stern, but not disrespectful.

He would use aggressive tone to stop a fight.

He did right by the people who were there.

All was hectic. He kept both the client and staff in order.

He didn't have the background, but he did what he could with the situation.

Never had a bad experience. He did his job and did it well.

He has a really good heart.

He went the extra mile for clients. Purchased games, brought in movies, bought snacks with own money.

SECOND VISIT TO THE CENTER

On Thursday, March 12, 2020, I visited the Center for a second time to observe the employees and clients firsthand. I arrived shortly prior to the intake procedure and Captain Eddy admitted me through an alternate entrance so that my presence was not detected by Center employees while they were conducting intake. Clients were processed two at a time, being let into the building by staff. The staff requested their backpack or other belongings which were taken to a table in plain sight of the clients and were searched for food items, contraband and items that needed to be locked up overnight such as cellphones and medications. Next, the newly admitted client was processed with a metal detector wand from the shoulders to the feet. Finally, the clients' belongings, such as cellphones and medications, were placed into a ziploc bag with the client's name and then placed into a file cabinet drawer which had a locking mechanism.

Throughout the process, I was impressed by the staff's interaction with the clients. The staff of 4 greeted most of the incoming clients by name and often inquired about things such as job searches and housing arrangements. The process was very low-key and efficient.

After observing the intake process from a distance, I then met with a number of the clients who were waiting in the dining area. Many were watching a large TV which was broadcasting the PBS news about the Coronavirus.

Most of the clients were willing to speak to me and I asked a series of questions of each of them after introducing myself and getting to know a bit about each client. One had just been released from the Illinois Department of Corrections and was a Chicago native, one had recently been released from jail in Macon County and has his probation transferred to Sangamon County. Others did not provide the story of how they came to be homeless.

Each of the approximately 10 clients that I interviewed was asked if they had ever witnessed any physical abuse of anyone at the Center and all replied in the negative. Several recounted that highly intoxicated clients who tended to arrive later in the intake process had caused problems among themselves.

My next series of questions followed up on allegations made before the City Council that there had been thefts of personal property at the Center. Each of the clients denied having such an experience or being aware of such an experience, but several volunteered that other shelters in the City were known for thefts. It should also be noted that when I viewed the Center the first time when it was unoccupied, there were numerous personal items left next to sleeping mats such as backpacks, suitcases and clothing demonstrating a level of trust by the clients that their personal belongings could be safely left at the Center.

My next series of questions dealt with their knowledge of the Respondent. One client, in particular, was very familiar, having been a long term client and said that the Respondent in question had to be tough or the clients would walk all over him. He was complimentary of the Respondent's work at the Center. This client was the only one who responded to my questions about knowledge of the Respondent's conduct.

Prior to my role as Inspector General, I was a Judge in Sangamon County and had a one year assignment handling all of the mental health commitment cases in the County and, therefore, have some working knowledge of mental health issues. Several of the clients that I attempted to interview were exhibiting signs of either withdrawal or confusion. None were acting out at the time and one spoke with me at length, but few of her statements were cohesive.

While I was at the Center, members of the First Presbyterian Church brought in a meal. Their request for assistance from the clients to help carry food trays was eagerly met by the clients. The meal was bountiful and nutritious and certainly appreciated by the clients.

Several of the clients noted that they had a chore list which rotated on a daily basis and I observed the clients helping to set up the dinner tables and chairs for the food service and the intake process.

Overall, my impression of the Center is that the evening of my visit, staff acted professionally and interacted with the clients showing a genuine interest in their wellbeing. The intake process was efficient and the clients who were sitting at the dining tables waiting for meal service were very orderly, although several recounted incidents that when the more intoxicated clients would arrive, that there could be some disturbances. All of those clients who interacted with me indicated that they were grateful for the Center and the shelter and food that it provided them.

I realize that my visit was one slice in time of a Center season that covers 5 months, but, at least on the night in question, it was operating well.

POST SCRIPT

On March 22, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Illinois Governor Pritzger entered a Stay-At-Home Order applying to the citizens of Illinois. The Center at its Madison Street location was unable to accommodate social distancing as persons in the dining area sit side-by-side and the sleeping mats in the sleeping areas are also side-by-side. In response, the Center was moved to the Salvation Army's Clear Lake location where clients could be housed in the gymnasium area and social distancing protocols could be maintained. The current population is approximately 20 clients. Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, no new clients can be admitted and

while current clients are free to leave if they wish, they also cannot be readmitted. Clients are currently housed 24 hours a day seven days a week and are being provided with full meal service and have access to showers and restroom facilities. Clients are also given regularly scheduled smoking breaks outdoors.

The Salvation Army is to be commended for its swift response to the Governor's Stay-At-Home Order and for keeping the Center open well past its March 31 normal closing date.

CONCLUSION

This has been an investigation complicated by confusion as to who is running the Center, expectations that the Center be a full service facility and the inherent challenges in operating a low barrier shelter for five months, seven days a week, fourteen hours a day on a very limited budget. The investigation was also complicated by diametrically opposed observations by a homeless advocate and video statements made by a number of Center clients, observations by faith-based food providers and difficulties experienced by medical providers on the one hand, and statements from Respondent's co-workers and other members of the homeless community stating opposing views.

The two most concerning findings are that concerns regarding the behavior of the Salvation Army's Center Manager were first made public at a City Council meeting on December 19, 2019, but the Salvation Army's termination of the Respondent did not occur until after a second City Council discussion on February 18, 2020. Also, responsibility for dealing with the Center's management is confused by statements made by Community Relations Director Huerta at the December Council meeting, which created the impression that the City was in charge of the Winter Warming Center when, in fact, responsibility for running the Center had been legally delegated to the Salvation Army by way of a lease and a grant for operations to the Salvation Army.

That said, with the exception of the many complaints received about Respondent's conduct, the Salvation Army is to be commended for otherwise running the shelter and for keeping a vulnerable, volatile low barrier client population warm, fed and alive during the winter season and the challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The City, along with all of the other members of the community of providers for the homeless, are encouraged to work collaboratively on an all-inclusive homeless plan which would provide more than just a warm place and a meal, but could provide meaningful, coordinated assistance to the homeless community for substance abuse, medical, mental health, housing assistance, and shelter needs prior to the Winter Warming Center reopening for the November 2020 season.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Roger W. Holmes
Inspector General