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—Contributor.....Randolph T. Holhut
—Contributor email.....randy@commonsnews.org
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Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 New emergency overnight winter shelter planned for
2 Brattleboro

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

3 Organizers outline their plans for a shelter, set to open
4 Dec. 1, at Beloved Community Church

####END SUBHED####

5 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

6 Plans are moving forward to set up an emergency
7 overnight shelter this winter to fill what organizers say is the need
8 “to offer a warm and welcoming overnight space for adults
9 during the coldest months of the year.”
10 More than 50 people gathered at the Beloved
11 Community Church — the congregation formed by the

12 collaboration of the First United Methodist and First Baptist
13 churches — on Town Crier Drive for a meeting that outlined
14 plans for the overnight shelter, which would be housed at the
15 church between Dec. 1 and March 31.

16 “It’s wonderful to see human decency in action,” said
17 Ralph Howe, pastor of First United Methodist Church.

18 Initial setup costs for the Beloved Winter Shelter are
19 being funded by a grant from the state of Vermont’s Extreme Cold
20 Weather Shelter Program (ECWSP). According to its [website](#), the
21 program “is designed to support community-based emergency
22 shelter operations during periods of extreme cold for individuals
23 experiencing homelessness who have no other safe housing
24 option.”

25 The ECWSP grant will cover staffing and operating costs
26 for 20 of the coldest nights this winter — kicking in when
27 temperatures plummet beyond –10 degrees F — but organizers
28 say they intend to have the new shelter open for the other 100
29 nights and are in the process of fundraising to cover those costs,
30 estimated at \$222,000. So far, about \$77,000 has been raised.

31 The shelter would run in a similar way to the Winter
32 Overflow Shelter that existed for about a decade in the former
33 sanctuary of the First Baptist Church on Main Street until 2017.

34 The new shelter would be open every night from 8 p.m.
35 to 8 a.m., with capacity for eight people most nights, with up to
36 15 cots allowed on the 20 coldest nights. Organizers say they are
37 trying to get an exemption from state regulators to have 15 cots
38 available for all 120 nights.

39 The cots, which will be set up in the church’s fellowship
40 hall, would be available each night on a first-come, first-served
41 basis. There would be no overnight storage of belongings, and
42 guests must take everything with them when they leave.

43 Organizers say it will be run as a “low-barrier” shelter for
44 guests over the age of 18. Alcohol, drugs, or weapons will not be
45 allowed, and anyone who leaves during the night cannot check
46 back in.

47 “We’re trying to get as many people in here as we can,”
48 said Eileen Glover, a member of the shelter’s steering committee.
49 “We’re not going have lots of strict guidelines. It’s for the people
50 with the most need on the coldest nights.”

51 Unlike the former First Baptist shelter, no meals will be
52 served. Snacks and beverages would be provided. Another
53 difference is that there will be a mix of paid staff and volunteers
54 running the shelter each night.

55 Training would be provided for everyone involved with
56 the shelter, with an emphasis what organizers described as “de-
57 escalation, first aid, and mental-health awareness.”

58 **Filling the need**

59 Last winter, the state’s hotel shelter program was winding
60 down, and the shelter spaces run by Groundworks Collaborative
61 at maximum capacity. In the absence of an emergency shelter set
62 up by the town, Cristina Shayonye and other Brattleboro
63 community members raised and spent \$3,000 on motel rooms to
64 get people off the streets during the coldest nights.

65 While this effort was able to help out some people,
66 Shayonye said it was “hectic and unsustainable,” and a more
67 permanent solution is needed.

68 At the same time that a shelter site was being sought,
69 69A, a community center on 69A Elliot Street, opened in the
70 spring to serve as a daytime downtown gathering place.

71 Started by Katie Bachler and Scott Berzofsky, 69A is open
72 Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and offers free coffee,
73 tea, water, Wi-Fi access, and various gear and supplies (including
74 tents, sleeping bags, flashlights, and clothing). It was designed as
75 a place to relax and regroup, with “restrooms, music, and people
76 to talk to,” according to a 69A flyer.

77 Several of the people involved with 69A, including
78 Shayonye, are part of the Beloved Shelter steering committee.
79 They see the Beloved Shelter as an extension of the resources
80 they’ve been providing on Elliot Street.

81 “We were looking for a place to open its doors to us, and
82 we couldn’t find one last year,” said Shayonye. “And this church,
83 the Beloved Community Church, opened its doors to us this year,
84 and this [ECWSP] grant came along. With an actual location and
85 the grant money, we won’t have to put people in motel rooms
86 this winter.”

87 Glover said the Beloved Shelter organizers have been
88 working with organizations in other local communities.

89 “They’ve gratefully shared their documents with us so we
90 weren’t building everything from scratch,” she said. “We are
91 figuring out what the structure is going to look like, how we are
92 operating, what the safety and procedures are while we are here.”

93 Training will be provided for shelter volunteers,
94 including spending time at 69A to learn more about the people
95 whom the shelter will be serving.

96 **Thinking creatively**

97 Organizers stressed that the Beloved Shelter is not
98 specifically connected to Groundworks.

99 “We are collaborating and are in constant
100 communication with the other organizations in town that provide
101 services, but this is its own entity with its own fiscal sponsor,”
102 said steering committee member Elizabeth Moriarty.

103 “We are educators, clergy, activists, parents, psychiatric
104 nurses, and neighbors — people who are connected to this
105 community and deeply care about it who are wanting to connect
106 with our other neighbors,” she continued. “We work in deep
107 partnership with other agencies, elected officials, and other
108 people of goodwill, but we are an ad hoc collective.”

109 Groundworks Executive Director Libby Bennett said at
110 the meeting that the nonprofit’s overnight shelter is often full and
111 presents more barriers than what the Beloved Shelter is planning.

112 She noted that the state program to offer shelter in motels
113 “have pared way down, so that is basically for families,” she said.

114 “We’re down to just one motel in town that can take single
115 people. So that’s where this shelter comes in.”

116 This program is far from adequate to meet the problem at
117 hand, the organizers said.

118 The Beloved Shelter will be “one option that didn’t exist
119 last winter,” said ShayOyne. “There needs to be more than this.”

120 “The problem is systemic and vast, and we need different
121 pieces and creative solutions that defy categories,” Moriarty
122 added.

123 Skyberry House (skyberryhouse.org) — a Brattleboro
124 nonprofit that has been operating what it calls “a house of
125 hospitality” modeled on the Catholic Worker houses started in
126 the 1930s by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin — is the nonprofit
127 fiscal agent for the new shelter, Moriarty said. She said donations
128 will be handled through Skyberry with complete openness and
129 accountability about budgeting and spending.

130 “We want to do this because it’s needed,” Moriarty said,
131 “and we want you to be a part of it because we can’t do it by
132 ourselves.”

133 “This is an awesome community that cares about
134 people,” said Shayoyne. “The state isn’t going to come in and
135 save us.”

136 She said it’s about “neighbors helping neighbors, and
137 when you have more than you need and you someone who
138 doesn’t have enough at all, then you pitch in and share.”

139 “That’s what kind of shelter it is,” Shayoyne said.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

140 Those interested in serving as paid overnight hosts or
141 shelter staff, or serving as volunteer to help set up the shelter at
142 the beginning of the evening and cleaning up in the morning, can
143 contact the steering committee at
144 belovedwintershelter@gmail.com.

145 Donations for the shelter can be mailed to Beloved
146 Winter Shelter, in care of Skyberry House, P.O. Box 360,
147 Brattleboro, VT 05302. Be sure to make checks payable to
148 Skyberry House, with “Beloved Winter Shelter” written in the
149 memo line.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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