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Concord Coalition to End Homelessness Purchases First Congregational Church of Concord

CCEH's short and long term vision for the historic property

CONCORD, NH: Concord Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) has just purchased the First Congregational Church of Concord property at 177 N. Main Street. CCEH plans to temporarily move its Emergency Winter Shelter and Resource Center to this location for the winter. The larger space will allow CCEH to meet the CDC guidelines for social distancing and help prevent the spread of COVID-19, yet still maintain the 40-bed shelter capacity, and continue to serve approximately 50 people at the daytime Resource Center.

“We have been looking for a larger space for our Emergency Winter Shelter since this spring, anticipating that COVID would still be a danger this Winter,” said CCEH Executive Director, Ellen Groh. “The idea of First Church came up late this summer and we have been in discussions throughout the fall. We are so grateful that we are able to move our operations and continue to serve as many guests as we have in the past, given the increased space that First Church provides. We are also deeply grateful that First Church was willing to proceed with their planned sale of the building, but on a much faster timeline that they might have otherwise preferred.”

CCEH applied for CARES Act funds to purchase the church through a Shelter Modification Grant that is being administered by New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority. The request was granted as the purchase allows CCEH to modify its Emergency Winter Shelter to safely continue to serve up to 40 people per night. The capacity at CCEH's existing Shelter building has been reduced by 50%, to just 20 people per night, when beds were spaced according to CDC COVID-19 guidelines for homeless shelters.

Rev. Emilia Halstead, Pastor of First Congregational Church, Concord said, “As a congregation which has a 20+ year history of working with the Concord community to care for and help house those who experience housing insecurity, we are deeply moved to be selling our current building to the Concord Coalition to End Homelessness. We are grateful to God for providing the gift of shared mission in the sale of our building, which offers a beautiful legacy for the 5th building of the First Congregational Church, Concord.”

Depending on the state of the COVID-19 pandemic, CCEH is prepared to operate its Emergency Winter Shelter at this new location for the 2021/22 winter season if necessary. In the meantime, CCEH is examining the feasibility of renovating the historic First Church building into apartments once program operations can safely move back to the Emergency Winter Shelter and Resource Center at 238 N. Main Street in Concord.

“First Church came to CCEH as a true blessing,” said Groh. “First Church will not only serve as a temporary location for the day-to-day services that we provide to individuals experiencing homelessness, but it might allow CCEH an opportunity to address Concord’s severe shortage of housing. Our community needs more affordable housing, and more permanent supportive housing options,” said Groh. “CCEH is grateful to have both private and municipal partners that believe in the vision of everyone in Concord having a safe, stable, affordable and decent place to live. It is because of this tremendous support that CCEH was able to step forward with the purchase of First Church. We are committed to ending homelessness in Concord, but for that to happen, our vision needs the support of many more members of our community.”

CCEH’s ongoing *Safe Spaces II: The Next Step* fundraising campaign includes raising funds for the next opportunity to develop affordable housing. In fact, the campaign recently received an incredible donation of a \$100,000 Challenge Match – an anonymous generous donor promised to match up to \$100,000 in new donations. What’s more, when it became clear that the \$100,000 would be met, the donor upped their commitment to \$120,000. With this \$240,000 in donations, CCEH is over halfway to its \$1,000,000 fundraising goal for the Safe Spaces II campaign. Not only will it provide seed money for the “Next Step”, this campaign funds three years of CCEH’s programs’ operations, and contributed to the new Green Street Apartments that were recently completed.

Working with community partners, CCEH’s mission is to eliminate chronic homelessness; support and quickly re-house people who have recently become homeless; and, build a system that effectively responds to the diverse needs of people experiencing homelessness. CCEH operates the daytime Resource Center at the Tom Fredenburg House and the Emergency Winter Shelter, both located at 238 N. Main St. in Concord. Through the Housing First and Green Street Apartments programs, CCEH also provides people exiting long-term homelessness with permanent housing coupled with on-going supportive services.