



Navigation Center Launch
1950 Mission Street, San Francisco

Thursday, March 5, 2015

Remarks by Michael G. Pappas, Executive Director

25 years ago, a Mayor of San Francisco appealed to faith leaders to partner in addressing our City's growing homeless challenge. He asked those faith leaders if they would open their hearts, doors and kitchens to offer dignity, shelter and food to those who, because of a variety of circumstances, could no longer help themselves. With that response came the birth of the San Francisco Interfaith Council, whose core mission for a quarter of a century has been to host the City's Interfaith Winter Shelter...and more recently to support the critical and collective work of the faith based social service agencies that provide the social safety net for our City's most vulnerable residents.

25 years later, this Mayor, Mayor Edwin Lee, called upon our Council to again partner with the City; this time on a pioneering initiative that would engage the extraordinary generosity of a private sector donor and a highly choreographed collaboration of City Departments and nonprofits to provide immediate and direct services to those you and I encounter every day on our City streets.

At its core, the Navigation Center will benefit those who will receive needed kindness, respite, food, shelter and services; On a whole other level, it is creating a new and innovative culture that is fostering community and creating opportunities for those with resources, those who care deeply about the fragile and rich fabric of San Francisco, to work hand in hand with nonprofit agencies, many of whom have been providing this kind of care for over a century, as well as with the officially sanctioned City entities charged with insuring our collective public welfare and safety. This creative collaboration is nothing less than San Francisco Values at work!

Mayor Lee the San Francisco Interfaith Council thanks you for your trust and for inviting us to once again collaborate with the City to respond to a need that is so central to our mission.

We are grateful for the extraordinary donation to our organization that has made funding for this pilot possible, and for the sincere spiritual selflessness of the

donor, who preferred that attention be extended to this important work, rather than to himself. May his example of quiet generosity be one to be emulated by his peers.

We are grateful to the Mayor's staff and HOPE Director Bevan Dufty for their guidance in helping to navigate us through the machinations of government so that together, we could meet the project's many time sensitive deadlines.

And finally, I am personally indebted to the Chair, Executive Committee and all of the members of the San Francisco Interfaith Council's Board of Directors, many of whom have joined us here today, along with our Founder Human Services Agency Commissioner Rita Semel. When we received the call, they exhibited visionary leadership in embracing this collaboration and did all in their power to ensure that our organization met and exceeded its fiduciary responsibilities as a nonprofit so that our donor's intent was met.

Allow me to close with this thought... Prophetic voices of faith, throughout the ages, remind us that history will judge the greatness of a society on the degree to which it takes care of those in the greatest of need. No doubt, history will smile on the hope that will be given to the countless souls who will inhabit and be cared for on this site! Thank you.