

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Remote Meeting

Thursday, February 17, 2022

8:30 am – 10:00 am

Minutes

Name	Organization	Name	Organization
Adam Harr	City of Portland	Norm Maze	Shalom House
Jim Devine	HVJ	Ben Martineau	HVJ
Jenny Stasio	Through These Doors	Dan Coyne	United Way
Terence Miller	Preble Street	Brian Townsend	Amistad
Amy Geren	Portland Downtown	Hannah Brier	United Way
Aaron Geyer	City of Portland	Vickey Rand	CHOM
Bill Higgins	HA4All	Ben Strick	Spurwink
Johnathan Sarbeck	District Attorney	Mike Guthrie	CoP FS
Sarah Michniewicz	BNA	George Rheault	West Bayside Resident
Sara Fleurant	CoP OSS		

Meeting Summary

During the statistics discussion, shelter staff clarified that first time homelessness is based on self-reporting. 640 people are sheltered in hotels; the City is advocating for continued hotel funding as there is only capacity to absorb 30 of the individuals who will be displaced when hotel funding ends. Criterion to open warming centers narrowed to when the temperature drops to 5 degrees or below due to frostbite risk. The first day WC used had over 30 people with the second and third having over 70 people. The WC wasn't opened 2 days that met the criterion to open to lack of staff to do so. Wearing masks and isolating for 10 days if symptomatic recommendations have not changed for congregate settings. Bills at the State would update zoning making it easier to develop housing: LR 2299 and LD 1673.

January Meeting Minutes

- o Jenny moved to approve the minutes and Terrence seconded. The minutes were approved with none opposed.

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- **January Statistics**

- o Average Families stayed at 30 compared to last year but the size decreased shown by the average individuals decreasing from 73 to 68.
- o Families with school aged children entering hotels consistent but overall GA hotels appear to be trending down.
- o OSS intakes consistent with approximately 1/3 out of state, in state, and Portland.
 - 6 TX intakes are likely asylum seekers.
- o 1/3 of all intakes report experiencing homelessness for the first time.
- o When someone self-reports first time homelessness but staff know they are not experiencing homelessness, those people would be filtered out.
- o Current CTOs remain flat at 77.
- o The plurality of our housing placements were GA (7), Section 8/HCV (6), and without subsidy (5).
 - Some of these are Emergency Housing Vouchers.
- o Highest census: January 29 and 30 had 369 people in shelter.

- **Hotel Update and Discussion**

- o Social Services working closely with TOA to convert GA to ERA
- o Roughly 250 people in GA and contract hotels with 35-40 at Comfort Inn, 190 families for 640 individuals.
- o Planning to continue to use hotels through the end of March.
- o Caity Hagar is in contact with MEMA to prepare a letter to the Administration to convey the importance of this funding.
- o FEMA will give a 30 day notice when the funding is set to expire.
- o When they close, will we be changing capacity of shelters to avoid increase in unhoused?
 - This is a discussion to have as there is only capacity to increase by 30 people; it would help those thirty but not large number of people.
- o This is a universal challenge of the pandemic the country will have to face when funding ends.

- **Warming Center Update**

- o Working group started in November including Caity Hagar to determine a cut of temperature when it becomes unsafe.
 - 5 degrees due to frostbite risk.
- o For unsheltered who have nowhere else to go.
- o Have opened a total of three days at First Parish.
- o Multiple organizations distributing donated clothing, doing outreach, safety planning go for the end of the day,
- o 2 days not opened when criteria were met: many organizations had staff out due to the pandemic and the danger of staff driving in; instead focused on outreach.
- o First day at over 30 people; the second and third had over 70 people.
- o Challenges
 - Difficulty managing the unowned space across multiple organizations.
 - Needed three strained staff instead of volunteers for safety.

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- o This is challenging with Covid staffing shortages.
 - o Will need infrastructure with staff or rotation for long term stability of this annual need.
 - o Thank you Ben and Spurwink!
 - o Is it a pilot for what the community needs to understand as fundamental takeaways to plan in the summer and fall for next winter?
 - It has been so rapid fire that there hasn't been time to reflect between openings.
 - They will collectively reflect.
 - o First Parish has been a great partner and has prompted more of the faith community to get involved.
- **Legislative Update**
 - o **Federal**
 - Still in continuing resolution that expires tomorrow.
 - Proposed THUD budgets look good with capacity for HCV to help 250,000 households.
 - Rep. Pingree putting forth a bill to reduce the wait time for work authorization to 30 days.
 - o **State**
 - LD 1871 would extend the pilot from the Maine Human Rights commission to investigate discrimination due to housing status by two years.
 - LD 1822 An Act To Improve Access to Behavioral Health Services by Limiting Cost Sharing by Insurers
 - LD 1848 An Act To Increase the Availability of Assertive Community Treatment Services
 - LD 1860 An Act To Address Maine's Suicide and Opioid
 - Crises through the Construction of Affordable Recovery Facilities in Underserved Areas of the State
 - LD 1910 An Act To Improve Children's Mental Health by Requiring Insurance Coverage for Certain Mental Health Treatment
 - LD 1915 An Act To Improve Intensive Behavioral Health and Public Safety Case Management Services
 - LD 1961 An Act to Help Alleviate Maine's Housing Shortage and Change the Membership of the Maine State Housing Authority
 - LR 2299 An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions
 - Would implement specific recommendation that would make it far easier to develop housing, specifically affordable housing.
 - LD 1673 An Act To Create a Comprehensive Permit Process for the Construction of Affordable Housing

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- A zoning land use carry over bill that would create a Maine comprehensive permit process.
 - Supplemental budget announced for this year and the budget that starts July 1st.
 - Funding for childcare
 - Funding for direct support professionals to actualize the funding mechanism to 125% of the minimum wage to go into effect immediately when the budget passes retro to July 1st.
 - 27.6 million Increase to the Maine earned income tax.
 - Part U established a new program in economic and community development to increase affordable housing units in Maine.
 - Nearly \$2 million of funding for homeless youth.
 - \$12 million of unappropriated funding.
 - Bills on the table could be funded as part of the budget.
 - We can strongly advocate for bills on the week of the 28th.
 - Many bills got carried over.
- **Covid Update**
 - **Updated CDC guidelines**
 - “CDC updated four guidance documents for homeless service providers and health departments to be consistent with recent updates to the [quarantine and isolation](#) guidance and [up to date](#) vaccination recommendations. People experiencing sheltered homelessness should isolate for 10 days if they have COVID-19 and quarantine for 10 days after exposure to someone with COVID-19. People experiencing unsheltered homelessness should also stay away from crowded areas or congregate settings for at least 10 days if they have symptoms of COVID-19, have COVID-19, or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.”
 - Highlights the risk of Covid spreading in congregate setting but does not change operations.
 - On downslope but infections are still high.
 - Challenge is that CDC guidance lags.
 - Wearing masks and isolating for 10 days recommendations have not changed.
- **Other Business**
 - 40 Bed Preble Street Shelter
 - Construction delayed due to supply chain issues.
 - Set to open in June or July.
 - HVJ has met with the City manager, mayor and Councilors Chong and Pelletier.
 - Ricky’s Tavern across from the post office in Bayside had a lodging house of seven bedrooms on the floors above; the building was emptied out over the last year.

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- Ending this housing contributes to homelessness.
- Did the developer reach out to anyone at the City?
 - This was raised at the HVJ meeting. 94 Portland is being converted into 4 apartments. HVJ worked replacement of housing and will follow up.
- o The Cathedral of Immaculate Conception is interested in hosting WC M-F.