



Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee Minutes

Tuesday, February 8, 2022, 5:30pm, Remote Meeting

Committee Attendance:

Tae Chong, Chair (District 3), Victoria Pelletier (District 2), & Mark Dion (District 5).

Councilors in Attendance:

Mayor Kate Snyder

City Staff:

Kristen Dow, Director of HHS; Tina Pettingill, Deputy Director of HHS; Adam Harr, Executive Assistant for Social Services. Keith Gautreau, Fire Chief; Bridget Rauscher, Chronic Disease Prevention Program Manager; & Heath Gorham, Interim Police Chief.

Meeting called to order at 5:40 PM.

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Announcements

- Update from Mayor Snyder on resettlement communications.
 - Last September HHS Committee requested the Mayor communicate with the Governor on asylum seeker resettlement.
 - October, 2021 letter to the governor initiated regular dialogue with the Governor's staff.
 - Shelter numbers are increasing.
 - 208 families of 687 individuals are being sheltered by the City in addition to 509 individuals being sheltered, totaling nearly 1,200 people.
 - 10 hotels in addition for City shelters which can only shelter a couple hundred people, not 1,200.
 - Met with federal delegation staff of Senator King, Senator Collins, and Representative Pingree.
 - HHS Staff have narrowed requests to:
 - Continue funding for the 30% General Assistance obligation that is currently being reimbursed through FEMA.
 - Seeking it be funded through the State or federally, not from our general fund.
 - Statewide resettlement coordination.

- Work authorization requires a long wait time, 365 days; Representative Pingree is putting forth legislation to reduce the wait time to 30 days.
 - 700 families have no access to resources: no eligibility for benefits and are not allowed to work.
- A request to MEMA for EOC National Incident Management System (NIMS)/Incident Command System (ICS) triaging work in other communities to mirror what we did in 2019.
 - Meeting this week with Cumberland County EMA.
 - Does this come with staff?
 - This is an important question as it is a state problem, not just a Portland Problem; staffing will be a challenge. Chief Gautreau would command.
 - Could we deploy Guard personnel to carry out this mission?
 - Possibly; we need to find out which organizations have capacity.
 - Representative Talbot Ross is referring this as a humanitarian crisis which shifts this conversation.
 - Councilor Dion requested an executive summary on NIMS
 - We took 53 people to a training in an emergency operations center.
 - Developed an Incident Action Plan (IAP)
 - A sample of this will be sent to the committee.
 - This lines up forms for FEMA for reimbursement.
- Councilor Chong asked about McKinney Vento: if we house a family in Portland sheltered in Scarborough, we will be responsible for transportation to and from school.
 - Our staff work with school staff.
 - We intentionally placed families with non-school aged families in the temporary OOB placements and shelter in Freeport for this reason.
- Representative Brennen is on the education committee; there is a joint meeting with the legislative delegation next Tuesday which council members are welcome to join.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – January Updates

HHS Update

- There is no system for asylum seekers like there is for refugees. We are working to establish this, the Beyond the Border network: 6 different agencies across the country and seeking more parties to collaborate. We are seeking federal funding to support this effort.
- Councilor Pelletier will be joining a bi-weekly meeting with HHS stakeholders.
- Homelessness and Emergency Shelter December Update
 - 70% of shelter intakes come from outside of Portland with half of those coming from other Maine towns.

- We saw people coming from Lewiston and Bangor when their hotel shelters closed.
 - Our shelters have capacity to shelter Portland residents but not the entire state; we could get to the point where we can't take care of our own.
- 811 community needles collected; 720 wee from community sharps boxes, 88.8%.
 - This is a big increase since utilization that was as low as 33%. It could be seasonal and may be due to the 1:1 and communicating that improper disposal could lead to the loss of the program. We plan on doing a year over year comparison.

Committee questions and discussion

- Councilor Chong asked about the humanitarian crisis: can we break any kind of federal law like work authorization during a crisis?
 - We will ask corporation counsel.
- Councilor Chong asked what we can do as a committee to educate people about GA.
 - Can we breakdown people in shelter where people are coming from?
 - Yes, we can list the states, countries, and towns that people are coming from.
 - Can we calculate how the costs of people from other Maine towns?
 - We will work with staff to see if we can attach a monetary value to it.
- Are we putting in more sharps boxes?
 - Informal conversation about adding 1-2 more in front of OSS. There is talk about installing them in or near the new restrooms.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – 2022 Work Plan

Overdose Response and Prevention

- Overdose Maps
 - Fire and Police data align.
 - 30 ODs at 203 Oxford Street, the Oxford Street shelter with 12 nearby at 252 Oxford Street and 5 near Preble Street Resource Center.
 - Beat 4 is the Bayside neighborhood.
 - Beat 6 is Parkside.
 - Beat 5 is the West End.
 - Beat 8 is near Westgate.
 - Beat 3 is the Old Port.
 - Bell Buoy Park
 - The PD uses beats and Fire uses districts.

Committee questions and discussion.

- Councilor Chong asked:
 - How many sharps boxes are in each beat?
 - How much Narcan was deployed (administration) and how much was distributed in each beat?

- Most would be distributed on site at the exchange; we would not know where it is distributed through outreach.
- Councilor Dion asked about the time range of the maps.
 - This calendar year to date for Police and all of calendar 2021 for the Fire maps.
 - In terms of the overdoses, what portion of these events finds people outside versus inside a building?
 - We would need to analyze patient care reports to see if it being inside or outside was mentioned in a narrative.
 - The Good Samaritan law should cover people calling for medical assistance with the assumption people are using inside. Looking at beat 4, it looks like this could be outside.
- Councilor Chong would like to identify patterns through analysis from Fire and PD collaborating. Use these data to alter strategy based on seasonality?
 - Centralizing this data with Parks and Rec staff who started needle tracking.
 - Grad student could do this analysis as a Master's thesis.
 - OD Map's goal is to track trends from other communities to Maine.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – Next Meeting: March 8, 2022

- Councilor Dion will work with Chief Gautreau on a NIMS/ICS executive summary for members of the committee.
- Beyond the Border update.
- Attend the legislative committee.
- Advocate for McKinney Vento.
- General Assistance
 - How many Mainers are coming to Portland and how to fix so people stay in their communities?
- ESAC data.
- Better OD GIS map.
- State Resettlement Update.
- Ask the Mayor for increased communication from HHS at Council meetings.
- Explore the Humanitarian Crisis with Corporation Counsel.
 - Legal authority.
 - Financial support.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:50 PM.