



Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee Minutes

Tuesday, April 12, 2022, 5:30pm, Remote Meeting

Committee Attendance:

Tae Chong, Chair (District 3), Anna Trevorow (District 1), Victoria Pelletier (District 2), & Mark Dion (District 5).

Councilors in Attendance: April Fournier (At-Large)

Mayor Kate Snyder

City Staff:

Kristen Dow, 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; Aaron Geyer, Social Services Director.

Meeting called to order at 5:33 PM.

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Announcements

- Councilor Dion moved to approve minutes from March 8, 2022. Councilor Trevorow seconded and the minutes were approved unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – NIMS/ICS

- Fire Chief Gautreau gave an overview of the Incident Command System structure used to respond to incident of various severity.
- Guides local governments and private sector.
- 9/11 led to a multiagency approach.
- National Incident Management System (NIMS)
 - o Modular Organization
 - Led by the Incident Commander.
 - Organizational structure scales with the incident.
 - o Incident Action Planning (IAP)
 - What do we need to do?
 - Who is responsible for doing it?
 - What resources are needed?
 - How do we communicate?
 - o Chain of Command and Unity of Command

- Allows for delegation.
 - Reduces confusion.
 - Report to only one Incident Command System (ICS) supervisor.
- Standard operating guidelines for emergencies.
- Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
- Covid-19 IAP
 - 8:30 AM every day started with a 30 minute briefing.
 - Allowed each position to share comments during briefing.
 - Plan shows 24 hours and all staff working that day.
 - Opened a temporary shelter at the Expo for social distancing at the shelter.
 - Plan for PPE.
 - Took stock of PPE and described how to use.
 - Checks on personnel twice a day to make sure first responders weren't getting sick.
 - Added a decontamination unit that cleaned out the ambulance after infections were confirmed.
 - What apparatus are in and not in service.
 - Showed the fire and EMS and total calls.
 - Showed Covid calls for service.
 - Forms needed to fill out for FEMA reimbursement.
 - Modular organizational structure with reporting to one supervisor.
 - Descriptions of locations.

Committee questions and discussion

- Councilor Pelletier asked if the IAP is Portland and Maine specific. Is there a national plan for national incidents that would shape what happens in Portland?
 - National system that needs to be followed by everyone and followed but allows for tailoring to unique local situations such as using the guidelines to plan for the expo and jetport, for example.
 - There is a course for high level policy makers.
- Director Dow said FEMA and DHS opened an emergency operations center at the southern border with title 42 ending.
 - Reached out to FEMA to advocate to MEMA to open an EOC in Maine for the large influx of asylum seekers from the Southern Border.
 - We have a humanitarian crisis warranting an EOC.
- Councilor Dion asked what conditions would bring an EOC online?
 - Chief Gautreau thought the pandemic would and instead planned within the department following FEMA guidelines for reimbursement.
 - Command post for the national governors' association
 - A smaller scale one for the 4th of July fireworks.
 - A full EOC would be a massive event.
 - EOCs have come online for major blizzards before.
 - Incidents don't manage themselves.
- Councilor Dion would like councilors to tour the EOC.

- Councilor Chong asked if we had an EOC with the surge of asylum seekers staying in the Expo in 2019.
 - We did not open the EOC room but had a similar IAP.
 - Mike Murray was in charge of logistics.
 - Met on a daily basis.
 - Director Dow was the incident commander.
- The city of Portland does not have the resources to open an EOC for resettlement as it spans several counties and municipalities. State partners are needed to run it.
- What will it take to convince MEMA to open one?
 - Director Dow advocates for this on multiple calls; we asked the deputy director who said they would provide resources but could not run an EOC.
- We asked Cumberland County if we could use the civic center in the past; could we ask MEMA to create an EOC as a committee.
 - More advocacy won't hurt.
 - Document asking for help.
- We are sheltering people in 12 different hotels across 6 municipalities.
- Should the committee send a letter?
 - Councilor Pelletier: Yes but the full council should send a letter.
 - Councilor Dion: not yet because it is unclear what initiates opening one.
 - The city manager decided not to open one so there is some discussion.
 - Did MEMA say no because they don't have staff or
 - Is it a legal issue because the incident commander can direct resources be deployed?
 - Humanitarian crisis: how did they qualify it as eligible at the Southern border?
 - He would need to know why MEMA is saying no before sending a letter.
 - Can we send a letter and assess the budget?
 - Mayor Snyder MEMA cited human resources contracts on a call. Would the resolution of the FY 23 budget help us gauge the capacity at the state level? Should we wait for a week or so until after we have a sense of their capacity.
 - Rationally that makes sense and capacity is likely the reason they didn't open an EOC however every day that goes by without a system in place puts the people we serve in jeopardy.
 - Months ago, medical providers were begging for coordinated system.
 - Councilor Dion recognizes we are coming quickly to a back-stop. He doesn't know about MEMA's structure and if they can join. If it is a resource issue the governor could deploy resources like the National Guard.
 - We don't have enough people to meet the mission.
 - We have numbers greater than the expo when we had our own EOC.
 - This needs coordination at the state level.
 - Councilor Chong asked if our delegation knows about the situation and EOC request.
 - Yes.
 - We could learn something new in the next few days that could inform a draft.

- We can send a letter this week and another one next week.
 - The delegation did not advise on this.
 - We have been asking for help since October, 6 months.
 - Councilor Dion is said it's past the time for a workshop; it almost time to look for unused commercial space or sanctioning a tent city.
 - Councilors Trevorrow, Pelletier, and Chong are on board with writing a letter.
- We have done everything we can as a city for the past 6 months but need help from the State.
- Director Dow said it's not her nature to wait for others to act; we continue to look for resources and solutions as we advocate.
- Councilor Chong asked if it possible to write a draft EOC ourselves to propose?
 - Yes, a template for what is really needed.
- Councilor Rodriguez is a former national guardsmen and has been activated for emergencies. He would be happy to cosign the letter.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – Mobile Medical Outreach Clinic

- Bridget Rauscher presented.
- MMO created in 2016 in partnership between Fire and Public Health during the Overdose Prevention Taskforce.
 - Harm reduction for people with substance use disorder
 - People suffering from injection wounds and abscesses.
 - Emergency Response system was being tasked in new ways that was difficult for providers.
- Launched with Fire, (including medical director), Public Health, and the Oxford Street Shelter.
- Spring 2017 met to discuss how to provide care at OSS.
- Today connects paramedics to individuals experiencing homelessness, anywhere within the city limits.
 - During times of high call volume.
- Model is a new take on community paramedicine.
 - Instead of seeing someone in an emergency situation, EMS providers are involved in ongoing care.
 - Patients are able to self-initiate care.
- July, 2021 got official pilot status
 - It is the only model in the US. It is unique to the City. The designation allows us flexibility.
- Provide substance use disorder prevention and treatment.
 - Responding to the rapid increase in overdoses and saw the unmet needs when the MMO started.
- The first question is if the client has a primary care provider.
- Reduces non-emergency calls to 9-1-1.
- Safe and low barrier, increasing clients' ability to secure and succeed in housing.
- Paramedics have a valid for at least one year, took the MMO training and field experience.

- Paramedics have the most experience biggest scope.
- Well over 1,000 contacts in the past 5 years.
- Patients now seek the team for treatment.
- Shelter staff have a non-emergency health resource to refer to clients.
- The mobile aspect brings it to clients without having to wait.
- Built a bridge between the unsheltered community and first responders.
- Reduced patient and providers during 911 calls.
- Promoted cooperation between departments and increased morale.
- In December:
 - o 74 Interactions
 - o 18 Shifts
 - o 66% Female
 - o 85% White, non-Hispanic
 - o 20% at OSS
 - o 80% Mobile
 - o 12 Protocols Used
 - o Follow Up Advised: 24%
 - o 92% No Transport Required
 - o 46% No Primary Care
- Bill Burns, Law Enforcement Addiction Advocacy Program said how MMO is a great support to the entire community but especially to the bayside neighborhood.
- July Of 2021 got Maine EMS project approval and got an Ambulance.
 - o MMO Van acquired and in service March 2022
 - o Currently 3 days a week: 9am-2pm
 - o Outreach locations: Oxford Street Shelter, Florence House, Logan Place, Huston Commons, Motel 6, and other locations within the city upon request.
- Needs to secure funding and would like to it to be supported through the general fund.

Committee questions and discussion

- Councilor Pelletier asked how MMO meets the needs of people who speak other languages.
 - o Language Line is always available.
 - o It is not used often which is may be an education piece.
- What is the best way for the committee to support he program?
 - o Talk about the benefits of MMO.
 - o Looking for more services to utilize MMO.
- Councilor Chong asked why the project did not score high on CDBG.
 - o CDBG supports new programming.
 - o It is expensive program.
 - o The impact of the interventions are huge and not counted in CDBG, such as a preventing myoendocarditis.
 - o Councilor Ching thinks it should be funded.
- If we had a program like this able to dispatching South Portland, would it reduce calls for service at the hotels?
 - o We have to follow Maine EMS board protocols

- o Medical director had to get board approval for the pilot.
- o It is a regional problem but the focus is Portland for now.
- o We are limited to the City of Portland while in our 2 year pilot status.
- o Can we encourage Cumberland County have its own pilot project?
 - We did write the pilot project proposal with replication in mind.
 - Metro coalition wants to help people experiencing homeless short funding a shelter; is this an option? Is it possible to use ARPA funding?
 - Medicinal directors in other communities in Cumberland County are familiar with the program.
 - Nothing is off the table in terms of funding.
- The MMO a firefighters and paramedics on staff that get time and a half on their days off to staff the MMO.
 - o Could there be volunteers?
 - It is possible but there is a very small number of paramedics that do it: 10 or 11 so expanding that number would be good.
 - We can discuss.
- A retired firefighter donated money that was used to pay for the majority of the MMO Van.
- Councilor Chong to give SUDS funders network info.

AGENDA ITEM 4 Shelter Update

- Director Dow updated numbers:
 - o 499 at OSS, up from 482 the night before
 - o 318/1080 families.
 - o 1579 served last night.
- TOA and Preble Street have come to the meetings
 - o Need for assistance
 - o Location for the 280 singles displaced with the hotels closing.
 - o Support for families.
- Working with Greg Payne from the governor's office to look for locations.
 - o Need allocation for families as well.
- The centralized model is not working for families.
 - o There are other hotels identified for the OOB families moving out.
- Working with United Way to see how they could assist.
- Community partner meetings
 - o Plan for food and services.
 - o Staffing model for that many people.
 - o Working out logistics while looking for a location.
- National work
 - o Work authorization advocacy with the delegation
 - o Beyond the Border
 - Shelter networking system across the United States for asylum seekers.
 - There is not network nationally yet to find bed capacity for example.

- Speaking with communities across the country such as Buffalo and San Diego
- o Title 42 is ending May 23rd.
 - We don't think it will have a large impact on the families we are seeing as the country of origin of our families is not as affected by title 42.
- o At FEMA briefings, said it is important the federal government consider destination communities.
 - Feds said compassionate care for who is crossing the border is their focus.
 - That should not stop at the border; it should follow the families to make sure their needs are met.
- Mayor Snyder said every day we are seeing a steady increase of people coming continually which is unprecedented; it can't even be compared to the summer of 2019.
 - o We can't address an emergency situation and step back; this is the landscape that will continue into the future.
 - o We contemplated the States General Assistance law but never thought about current number of people coming to one small city in Maine.
 - o The situation was different in October when we first contacted the governor.
 - o Hoping we meet the needs in FY 23 and that support doesn't end July 1; we are just at the beginning off this.
 - o GPCOG meetings are video recorded; today's meeting had reps from King, Collins, and Pingree's office.
 - White paper on temporary housing recognizing the hotel system is expensive and not ideal. Discussed ARPA funds for temporary housing.
 - Discusses funding for GA obligation.
 - Work authorization bill.
 - o Our delegation has been extremely helpful.

Committee questions and discussion

- Councilor Dion is worried the City has taken the responsibility of becoming a refugee resettlement city; staff don't have the time and energy to meet their other responsibilities.
 - o Residents are frustrated at the cost.
 - o We need a department of refugee resettlement.
 - We would need to make a lot of other decisions to do this.
 - o He is worried and frustrated at the immediacy of the problem.
- Mayor Snyder said there is not a day that we are not planning for the hotel courses and the possibility of more hotels closing,
 - o The work developing partnerships for the long game is real but take time.
 - Work authorization will take time.
 - o She sees a State of Maine Office of Resettlement, Not a City office.
 - Due to resources it is likely part of the long game.
 - o She calls the delegation every week.
- Director Dow said we need any help we can get while we work on these issues.

- Councilor Fournier said she doesn't know what isn't motivating because we have been asking for months and months; it was shared that Augusta is frustrated with how much we are talking about this.
 - There aren't the same resources for families that were available months ago.
 - It would be helpful to get some sort of notification from the southern border of who/how many and when people are arriving.
 - This has not changed but is actively being advocated.
 - NGOs are buying bus tickets and we expressing it is in the best interest of the families to have a heads up.
 - Catholic Charities in San Antonio let us know they bought bus tickets for 30 families arriving in the next 48 hours.
 - We need a federal system.
 - These satellite are incredibly difficult to manage for transportation, getting groceries and medication, and staffing.
 - The provider calls showed 50 people going their small piece of the work and it is a lot for a municipality to manage.
- Mayor Snyder asked GPCOG send their recordings today to share with the committee. It is a crisis but the partners recognizing the long term need is optimistic.
- Councilor Chong said 1/65 people in the City are asylum seekers.
 - Can FEMA put a limit on what percentage of the population are asylum seekers or refugees?
 - The question can be asked but we assume no.
 - As warmer weather returns. The 50 more people in five days could increase.
 - We received 52 families for 190 people in the first 11 days in April which is more than the entire month of January.
 - Trying to make A GA taskforce.
 - As councilors we need to talk to everyone that we know.
 - Will discuss at economic development.
 - The staff is effectively doing a State level EOC.
 - We should get letter of support from the towns housing asylum seekers and teaching them in their schools.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:50 PM.