

**Legislative/Nominating
Committee Agenda
September 20, 2022**



MEMBERS
Councilor April Fournier, Chair
Mayor Kate Snyder
Councilor Pious Ali

REMOTE ACCESS INFORMATION:

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<https://portlandmaine-gov.zoom.us/j/87377216395>

I. Call to Order

II. Approval of Meeting minutes

- a. September 13, 2022 Meeting Minutes (DRAFT)

III. Discussion: Legislative Priorities

- a. Staff Priorities (City Staff)
- b. Committee Priorities

IV. Adjournment

**Legislative & Nominating
Committee Minutes**
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I. Call to Order

Mayor Kate Snyder called the meeting to order at 8:04 AM.

Acting Chair Kate Snyder (Mayor), Councilor Pious Ali, Dena Libner (Chief of Staff), Ashley Rand (City Clerk), Sheba Brown (Executive Office Manager), Kate Knox (Bernstein Shur), Alysia Melnick (Bernstein Shur) and Chris Feeney (Bernstein Shur) were present. Councilor April Fournier (Chair) joined the meeting at 8:10 AM.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

a. Minutes from the July 19, 2022 Meeting

Mayor Kate Snyder made a motion to Approve the minutes of the July 19, 2022 meeting, seconded by Councilor Pious Ali, vote (3-0)

III. Legislative Update (Bernstein Shur)

Kate Knox provided an update on the State Legislature, noting that due to upcoming elections, most work taking place at this time involves task forces and confirmations. Bernstein Shur is working with the Delegation on determining their legislative priorities.

IV. Legislative Priorities

a. Staff Priorities (Dena Libner, Chief of Staff)

Dena Libner discussed staff's progress in developing a list of legislative priorities, specifically an interest in developing specific, actionable goals to propose to state legislators.

b. Committee Priorities

Chair Fournier voiced her interest in preparing for the legislative session September-November 2022 in order to better prepare for the legislative session in concert with the State Delegation, and asked the Committee members to express their legislative priorities for the upcoming session.

Mayor Snyder expressed an interest in pursuing changes to General Assistance, specifically highlighting following up on the development of a GA task force. Mayor Snyder also expressed an interest in looking to the State for assistance with match funding for affordable housing developments, as opposed to relying on municipal funds. She noted that the City has access to the Jill Dusen Housing Trust Fund, but many other municipalities do not have access to that kind of revenue. Mayor Snyder also expressed an interest in discussing a local option tax.

Councilor Ali expressed an interest housing-related legislation.

Chair Fournier expressed an interest in discussing housing development and alternate funding sources, potentially reopening discussion on 90% reimbursement for General Assistance, and echoed interest in a local option tax. Chair Fournier also noted an interest in expressing opposition/support on bills that may impact marginalized communities.

V. Nominating Update

Chair Fournier explained that the Committee met the previous evening to interview candidates for boards and committees, and also noted that while many nominations were made, there are still a few committee positions that remain unfilled. Ashley Rand informed the committee of the plan to fill the remaining open committees by engaging current and former members, as well as prior applicants. Unfilled positions will be advertised in the coming weeks.

VI. Meeting Schedule

The Committee discussed their preferred schedule for the coming months, and decided that they would plan to meet every Tuesday in September, every 2 weeks in October, and twice in November, taking account of elections and holidays.

VII. Adjournment

Councilor Pious Ali made a motion to Adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mayor Kate Snyder, vote (3-0)

City of Portland | Executive Department
Danielle West, *Interim City Manager*



To: Legislative/Nominating Committee
From: Dena Libner, Chief of Staff
Date: September 19, 2022
Re: 2022 Staff Legislative Priorities

As requested, staff have developed the following list related to policy solutions they recommend be pursued at the state level, in order to address specific operational challenges. As always, staff intend to provide regular feedback on proposed legislation during the session, once it is released by the Office of the Revisor of Statutes.

- **Local Option Sales Tax**

Approximately 38 states allow for the collection of local sales taxes. Arguments in favor of this – other than creating alternative sources of revenue to support a growing demand for municipal services and oversight – include the relative transparency of retail sales taxes to members of the public.

In 2019, the Legislature considered LD 1110, which sought to allow “a municipality to impose a local option sales tax if approved by referendum of the voters in that municipality.” This proposal died in the Committee on Taxation.

- **General Assistance**

- **Amending General Assistance Statute to Clarify Municipality of Responsibility**

There is staff interest in addressing the requirements surrounding “municipality of responsibility.” We recommend a thorough review of the statute in order to better balance responsibility among municipalities and make support more regional in nature.

- **Establish Department of Refugee / Asylum-Seeker Services**

We recommend that this Department be charged with strategically connecting this population to services and housing, as well as the administration of any programs that serve the purpose of GA for this specific population. We also believe this Department would be a natural home for a centralized GA application process (see below).

The creation of a centralized administrator is key to moving forward on these issues. The services required by this population are unique, and cannot be accomplished effectively within the current shelter system.

- **Establish Centralized GA Application Intake Process**

The current process contributes to a dysfunctional system that leaves individuals underserved, and some municipalities overburdened. Centralizing the GA application intake and review process may help ensure the program is administered more fairly across the state.

- **Increasing the General Assistance Reimbursement Rate**

Staff recognize legislators' hard work in pursuing increases to the reimbursement rate for general assistance costs. In 2021/2022, Rep. Brennan sponsored LD 910, which originally sought a 90% reimbursement rate for municipal GA costs; the chaptered law included a one-time expenditure of \$10 million toward unanticipated fiscal and operational costs, distributed proportionally to municipalities.

Staff strongly support the reconsideration of the original language of LD 910.

- **Amendment to the Earned Paid Leave Law**

The implementation of Earned Paid Leave has been challenging for employers who already offer generous paid time off benefits. This has forced the City of Portland to create a fifth category of leave time (in addition to vacation, sick, personal, and compensatory time) that the City now has to track and that employees now have to remember how and when to use. All of the unions that we negotiated EPL with were very hesitant about adding the fifth category of leave, and all requested that we not add the additional time. An exception either for public employees or for employees already covered by a collective bargaining agreement would make administration easier.

- **Funding for the Portland Harbor Dredge Project**

Rep. Michael Brennan has been a committed advocate for this project, and we are grateful for his leadership in securing \$10 million toward its completion. Given the economic importance of this project to the City, region, and State, staff feel it is important to continue to advocate for the additional funding needed to undertake this project. (Currently, there is an \$8 million gap in funding.)