

Remote HHS and Public Safety Meeting Agenda

January 9, 2024 at 5:30 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom



MEMBERS

Councilor April Fournier, At-Large, Chair
Councilor Roberto Rodriguez, At-Large
Councilor Anna Trevorrow, District 1
Councilor Victoria Pelletier, District 2

To submit written public comment on an agenda item, email HHSPS@portlandmaine.gov. Submissions must be received by 12:00 pm the day before the Health & Human Services and Public Safety meeting to guarantee their inclusion in the agenda packet. All submissions must include the commenters name and legal address. To help ensure your comment is submitted for the correct item, please include the name of the agenda item (see below).

The Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee will conduct this meeting remotely via Zoom pursuant to the Remote Meeting Policy adopted by the Portland City Council. Allow your computer to install the free Zoom app to get the best meeting experience. If you are not able to attend live either in person or via Zoom, a recording will be available in the [Agenda Center](#) following the meeting.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

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1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Meeting Norms
3. Review and Approval of Minutes from November 14, 2023
 - a. Draft November 14, 2023 Minutes
4. Committee Agreements & Work Plan Discussion
 - a. Submitted Public Comment
5. Staff Updates (If Any)
6. Next Meeting: February 13, 2024



Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee Minutes

Tuesday, November 14, 2023, 5:30pm, Remote Meeting

Committee Attendance: April Fournier, Chair (At-large), Victoria Pelletier (District 2).

City Staff:

Kristen Dow, Director of Health & Human Services; Adam Harr, Executive Assistant for Social Services; Counsel; Keith Gautreau, Fire Chief; Dubois, Police Chief; Ethan Hipple, Director of Parks & Recreation; Shaza Stephenson, Deputy Director of HHS.

Announcements

- Review and approval of minutes.
 - Counselor Pelletier moved to approve the minutes and seconded by councilor Fournier.
 - The minutes were approved unanimously with Councilor Trevorrow absent 2 – 0.
- Shaza Stephenson is the new Deputy Director of HHS.

Warming Center

- Locations are listed in the document updated from the last meeting.

Committee questions and discussion.

- Can the emergency departments have access to this document and be part of this notification so they are not used for emergency shelter?
 - Yes, as well as making flyers for local businesses.

- In an emergency, people should dial 911 which could see people end up at the ED which would then be able to divert to warming centers if medical intervention is not needed.

Encampments

- Tents counted citywide: 214; started tracking last year because we did not have large encampments and encampments that were unhidden prior to last year.
- Prior to last year, camps would be identified, connected to social services and given 48 hours to vacate before the camp was cleaned by Parks. There were 34 tents this time last year.
- Tents counted at Harborview Park: 120 tents with updated counts every 2 weeks.
- Encampment Crisis Response Team (ECRT) web page has an imbedded heatmap of tents found in the city: <https://www.portlandmaine.gov/1417/Encampment-Crisis-Response-Team?contentId=aa5f734e-7b63-439a-9d70-7662206e6c79>
- Many tents have multiple people living in them.
- Usually the start of the process has a start and a resolution date with intensive outreach before cleaning the camp.
 - Started indirectly with no defined resolution date.
- Thank you Bernard and Felix who clean the protopodites twice daily.
- Portopotty pumping contract has expired and running on an extension and none of the providers want to do the work with a previous rfp going out to bid with no submissions. \
 - Looking to buy our own pump truck.
 - A significant expense to the City but we are confident we are able to deliver services.
- Rats are living in the encampments.
- Dumpster is on Commercial Street.
- Food is delivered by Preble Street as a means to perform outreach.
- Mobile Medical Outreach is going out weekly providing services like wound care.
- Morning is the best time to do outreach as beds open at the HSC.
 - Communicating better among the City and service agencies.
 - Homeless Services Center staff communicate beds that open daily in the morning.
- 14 beds were made available when the Marginal Way encampment was resolved.
- Concerns
 - Fire as people use portable heaters to stay war,
 - Tents are not meant to have flames inside and are extremely flammable.
 - 2 tents burned in a fire this past weekend and caused a small brush fire in the Eastern Prom.
 - Winter
 - Snow and ice dropping over the guardrails when DOT plows the bridge above the camp.

- Will make off limits area to avoid falling debris.
 - Sidewalk tractors need to be able to blow on one side or the other, leading to the path being unplowed and making outreach and going to and from tents hazardous.
- Bed availability since resolving marginal way November 2, 2023.
 - 23 HSC beds were made available to the encampment.
 - 7 have accepted form Harborview which is better than past offers.
- Police Department
 - Similar issues to other encampments.
 - Many trespass calls to Circle k.
- Fire Department
 - Extinguished the Fire on the east end which ended up burning three tents and propane tents were exploding during response.
 - There was a fire at Harborview and smoke was blocking the view of cars.
 - Just responded to grilling inside a tent.

Committee Questions and Discussion

- An individual census is challenging; approximately how many people sleeping outside have Criminal Trespass Orders (CTOs) at the HSC?
 - 3 CTOs for all of the HSC.
- How many couples?
- How many people with pets?
 - There is an option who is open to volunteer and foster should someone with a companion animal need someone to care for their non service animal while they come into shelter; certified service animals are always allowed.
- How many people with vouchers that are priced out of the area?
- Are the private shelters sharing open beds?
- Jason Chan and other shelter staff outreach and explain the HSC to get folks into shelter.
- There are specialty shelters.
- The Committee may look different next year.
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The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:30 PM.



Adam Harr <ash@portlandmaine.gov>

2024 HHS/PS Work Plan

1 message

Anne Pringle <anne.pringle.me@gmail.com>

Mon, Jan 8, 2024 at 2:16 PM

To: "Fournier, April" <afournier@portlandmaine.gov>, "Trevorrow, Anna" <atrevorrow@portlandmaine.gov>, "Pelletier, Victoria" <VPelletier@portlandmaine.gov>, Roberto Rodriguez <rrodriguez@portlandmaine.gov>

Cc: hhsps@portlandmaine.gov, "Dion, Mark" <mdion@portlandmaine.gov>, "West, Danielle" <dwest@portlandmaine.gov>

I notice that you have a Committee Meeting tomorrow and that there will be a discussion of your 2024 Work Plan.

Please consider this email a public comment of the Work Plan you will be developing.

In light of recent discussions, I assume that the Committee plans to give priority to homelessness.

Over the last year or more I have researched some of the latest ideas (sanctioned encampments, "little houses", "safe villages", etc.), many of which, from what I have read, have not proved as effective as hoped.

One effective approach, brought to my attention by someone familiar with it, is a community-wide effort in Cincinnati that has actually **reduced** the number of homeless over the last few years, in the face of the increasing trend nationally and elsewhere.

Go to this link to read about the program: strategiestoendhomelessness.org

Scroll down to look at their Mission and Values, their diverse Board of Directors, their Annual Impact Report, and their data-driven approach (which can be found under "What we do: Data"). This initiative is so successful that Cincinnati one of only 14 communities nationally that has been approved as a "Unified Funding Agency" by HUD. I believe Houston is another.

Portland can learn from these successful cities that have changed people's lives, rather than pursuing costly approaches that have not worked.

Now that many who have been unhoused are in the HSC and, hopefully, starting to benefit from the wrap-around services available on-site, I am hopeful that better data can be collected and outcome-measures established.

Let's move on from contention to real problem-solving!

Anne Pringle
West End

