

Minutes

Remote Housing and Economic Development Committee

January 21, 2025

NOTE: This meeting was held via Zoom and can be viewed at this link:

<http://www.portlandmaine.gov/1695/Economic-Development-Committee> These Minutes provide a record of those in attendance, general discussion taking place, and motions made.

A remote meeting of the Housing and Economic Development Committee (HEDC) of the Portland City Council was held on Tuesday, January 21, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom. Present from the HEDC were Chair Pious Ali, and members Councilors Sarah Michniewicz, Regina Phillips, and Kate Sykes. Present from the City staff were Housing and Economic Development Department Director Greg Watson, Housing and Community Development Division Director Mary Davis, Corporation Counsel Michael Goldman, Assistant City Manager Dena Libner, Principal Administrative Officer Lori Paulette, and Housing Program Manager Victoria Volent.

Item #1: Review and accept Minutes of previous meeting held on November 21, 2024

On motion made by Councilor Sykes, seconded by Councilor Michniewicz, the Committee voted 4-0 to accept the Minutes.

Item #2: Calendar Year 2025 Work Plan- Discussion of topics and priorities

Greg Watson introduced this item by noting many of the initiatives for the 2025 Work Plan came from items that were either rolled over from the 2024 Work Plan, were referred to the Committee but not taken up due to time constraints, or are a priority policy initiative for 2025. The Work Plan is a draft meant to begin the discussion for the 2025 HEDC calendar.

Councilor Ali asked Committee members for their questions and comments.

Councilor Sykes would like to move-up the discussion around the minimum wage ballot question, discuss the Inclusionary Zoning Green New Deal in conjunction with the Hotel IZ meeting, and have quarterly rent control enforcement report updates from Permitting placed into the Work Plan.

Councilor Phillips would like clarification on the Maine State Pier item to ensure there is no duplication of efforts between departments and committees. Greg noted the Brownfield funding as the reason for HEDC and Economic Development Department involvement, and would send regular updates to the Sustainability Department and the Sustainability and Transportation Committee, and place those updates on the Work Plan calendar.

Councilor Phillips noted the need to address the first goal of the City Council and requested Committee and Housing Department input regarding efforts to expand DEI practices and improving involvement in decision making processes. Mary Davis mentioned her Division is applying an equity lens on initiatives to expand the accessibility of affordable housing funding by incorporating efforts to support emerging developers. She will follow-up on those efforts with the Committee.

Councilor Ali would like to see if Incremental Development would assist staff with crafting a policy to address the questions being raised, and ensure there is support in place to assist new developers with applying for City funding.

There was a discussion on the efforts around providing opportunities for low-income and minority owned business.

Councilor Michniewicz would like to develop a housing-to-employment model that would address a critical gap in the current homelessness response by providing individuals with temporary supportive housing, recovery resources, job training and employment opportunities towards economic independence.

Councilor Phillips would like to focus on DEI initiatives during the Committee's scheduled meeting in July, and suggested each department within the City should adopt an equity statement. The Committee discussed the latter suggestion and agreed to continue the discussion.

Item #3: Communication Item- Amendments to the Affordable Housing Development and Tax Increment Financing Application

Mary introduced this item with an account of the historical and current workflow process as it relates to the *Affordable Housing Development and Tax Increment Financing* application process. Most noticeably, time and costs issues have been encountered over the past several years. To address these issues, and to support "shovel ready" projects, staff has presented preliminary amendments to the Application for Committee consideration. Committee feedback will be requested at the next HEDC meeting along with feedback on funding priorities.

On motion made by Councilor Phillips, seconded by Councilor Sykes, the Committee voted 4-0 to adjourn the meeting at approximately 6:26 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for February 25, 2025

Respectively submitted, Victoria Volent