

Tuesday, January 14, 2025, 5:30pm, Remote Meeting

Committee Attendance:

Anna Bullett, Chair (District 4), April Fournier (At-large), Sarah Michniewicz (District 1), Wesley Pelletier (District 2)

Councilor Attendance:

Mark Dion; Mayor.

City Staff:

Adam Harr, Executive Assistant for Health and Human Services; Chad Johnston, Fire Chief; Mark Dubois, Police Chief; Dena Libner, Assistant City Manager; Caity Hager, Emergency Management Coordinator; Jason Grant, Fire Marshal; Maggie McLaughlin, Director of Health and Human Services;

Guest Speaker: Gordon Smith, Director of Opioid Response, Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future

Announcements

Review and Approval of Minutes from November 12, 2024

- Minutes moved by first Councilor Michniewicz and seconded by Councilor Fournier. The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

Department Introductions

- Health & Human Services: Maggie McLaughlin, Director
 - 465 staff across 4 divisions
 - Barron Center: Mary Beth Daigneault, Director
 - Skilled nursing facility to more than 100 residents.
 - 85% are on MaineCare
 - Most have dementia.
 - Office of Elder Affairs: Linda Weare, Director
 - Adult day care
 - Age friendly Portland Policy initiatives.
 - Public Health: Bridget Rauscher
 - 4 free clinics: immunization, Portland Community Free Clinic, SPUR clinic (screening for asylum seekers), and the STI clinic that offers free screening and PrEP to prevent HIV infections and links to CDC for infection management.
 - Links to resources.
 - Prevention and Community health needs

- Tobacco prevention
 - Lead program
 - Harm reduction services for people with active substance use
 - Safe injection kits
 - Wound care
 - Link to health care and treatment
 - Mobile Medical Outreach partnership with Fire.
- Social Services: Aaron Geyer
 - General Assistance for basic needs.
 - Representative payee to help individuals manage social security benefits
 - Resettlement Program helps asylum seekers entering the community.
 - The three largest shelters in state for:
 - Single adults at the Homeless Services Center
 - Single asylum seeking adults at 166 Riverside
- Administration including HR and Finance
- Data
 - Epidemiologist
 - Accredited public health institution
- Funded by many grants.
- Overdose to Action Grant for OD data in Cumberland County.
 - Tier 1 distributor of Narcan in Cumberland County.

Police

- 158 sworn officers and 60 civilians, including dispatch.
- \$20 million budget
- 3 divisions
 - Operations
 - Patrolled uniformed operations
 - Community services
 - Behavioral health
 - Administrative services
 - Communications/Dispatch
 - Training
 - Professional Standards
 - Crime analyst
 - Investigations
 - Detectives
 - Federal task force officers

Fire

- 230 people
 - 10 civilians & 220 sworn

- 4 divisions
 - Admin
 - Chief, assistant chief, PFO, PAO, exec. assist
 - Code enforcement
 - 3 full time: Jason Grant, Captain in Fire Prevention and an electrician/fire alarm system specialist.
 - Mental Health expert on exchange street.
 - Training
 - Rescue
 - Jetport: 14 people, 3 people around the clock at the crash station.
 - Field ops
 - 10 stations
 - 7 neighborhood stations
 - 4 engines of 3 people each
 - 4 ladders of 3 people
 - Heavy rescue of 3 people
 - 5 ambulances (sometimes 6th ambulance under EMS grant: M-F 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM)
 - Fire boats on peaks
 - \$22 million budget with \$4-5million in revenue from ambulance billing and fire prevention/code enforcement.
 - Staffed at the moment.

Presentation re: the Harm Prevention Center Working Group

Resolve, to Study Methods of Preventing Opioid Overdose Deaths by Authorizing

- Committee previously was interested in overdose prevention centers. The State studied harm prevention centers with a report due to the legislative committee next month.
- Gordon Smith, Director of Opioid Response, Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future presented:
- 94% of people who overdose survive due to the immense harm reduction and outreach efforts.
- Safe consumption sites are where people who obtain illicit drugs are able to use them under medical supervision.
 - There are two operating in New York with more on deck to open in RI and VT.
- Graysol Lookner bill passed the house to allow municipalities to operate such a center but lost in the senate by two votes; had it passed, the Governor planned to veto it.
- Report is due February 15, 2025 with a budget of 15,000.
- Have had four meetings with presentations from New York and Vermont.
- Looking at mobile sites model from Canada.

- Harm Reduction Health Center defined as a facility that provides health screening disease prevention and recovery services and allows persons to consume previously obtained controlled substances on the premises.
- We are unlikely to make a unanimous recommendation.
 - Funding common ground on what the legislature should know were they to choose to implement.
- We thought Providence, RI would have been open by now to share data; Providence is only having a soft opening this week.

Committee Questions and Discussion

- Mayor Dion and the committee thanked Director Smith.
- Councilor Bullett asked Director Smith what the Governor's veto reasoning may be.
 - She is a former Attorney General and the public safety community are largely against, potentially favoring treatment.
 - There is a chance to fund a solution unique to Maine that could be consistent with federal law and for our rural state; a mobile solution makes sense for Maine versus one bricks and mortar site.
 - Stigma needs to be addressed
 - Substance use is caused by trauma and adverse childhood events which can be prevented.
- Contemporary drugs are so dangerous, that continued use makes dangerous situations/overdose inevitable.
- Councilor Fournier said that treatment needs an entry point and safe consumption sites, with the relationship building the model entails can be that entry point to treatment such as methadone or other medically assisted treatment.
- A concern is that they are only open a few hours a day.
 - It is extremely rare for anyone to fatally overdose while onsite; what happens when the site is not open?

2025 Work Plan

- Year is outlined through the end of the summer.
- Panel presentation on childcare next month.
- Spring
 - Childcare
 - Syringe Services
 - Opioid settlement funds & RFP
 - Built for Zero (homelessness) and asset mapping around the region.
- Summer
 - Safety of streets

- Emergency preparedness for elders.
- Should there be standard updates?
 - Rotate them between Fire, PD, and HHS.
 - Patrol updates form Police.
- We should have no pedestrian deaths; should we have a joint meeting with S&T on vision zero?
 - Check S&T's schedule to make sure it is addressed promptly.
- Warming Shelter stability coordination.
 - May include finance committee.

Proposal to move the Regulation of Explosives, Chapter 11, to Fire Prevention Rules and Regulations.

- Fire Marshall Grant recapped the update that changed some fines and moved between sections of city code to under the board of appeals; there were no real substantive changes outside of the fees for violations bumping up an offense from \$500 to \$1,000 for initial and then 2,000 for subsequent to be in line with
 - A technical manual from planning was pulled into fire prevention rules and regulations as well as they go hand in hand.
- **Public Comment**
 - Opened at 6:45 and closed at 6:46 PM.
- **Committee Vote**
 - Councilor Fournier moved to approved the ordinance change with Councilor Pelletier seconding; the motion passed unanimously 4-0.

Warming Shelter Update

- Commonsplace provided a [memo](#) with an updated on the Warming shelter in First Parish Church.
- Opened 13 nights; all December nights were in the Commonsplace building at 103 India Street.
- Guest low: 50
- Guest high:107
- Average guests:80
- Served 5 families
- Maintain low barrier access while maintaining safety guidelines.
- Partnership with Portland PD has been vital, especially on weekday mornings when high school students use the shared alley as guests leave.
- Bathrooms and bathroom safety has been an issue
 - Not enough bathrooms
 - Not designed for the needs of this population.

Committee questions and discussion

- There is an impact on other First Parish users and Freshman alley.
- Where does the committee see a lack of preparedness (as the Commonsplace partnership was initiated in October of last year)?
 - Councillor Pelletier clarified that 15 degrees feels like a very low threshold and people could die with temperatures above that, looking for dedicated effort that is visible throughout the year.
- Councilor Michniewicz asked how the threshold temperature was chosen?
 - Determined by funding; it was established by common space with coordination with the emergency management coordinator; it is a higher threshold than last year. Commonsplace considered how often the threshold would open the space with anticipated cold nights and the availability of funding to maximize the resource.
 - There is an assumption by the public that it is based on science, not available funding.
- Councilor Fournier agrees it is a year-round conversation.
 - Last year talked about warming shelters and cooling centers in summer.
 - It is important to consider that we put out an rfp for day space and got no responses; the community does not have the staff, money, or space and must be a larger conversation with the County and State for a longer term solution versus the months of planning that has a perception of being last minute each Winter.
 - Could GPCOG help?
 - Not just any volunteer has the skillset to safely serve this population.
- Mayor Dion supports the committees observations and is a member of GPCOG and will present this to the executive committee.
 - The public has an ingrained sense that the City runs the warming shelter.

Next Meeting: February 11, 2025

Meeting adjourned approximately at 7:08 PM.