

Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee

May 13, 2025, 5:30 PM Remote Meeting

Committee Attendance:

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

Councilor Attendance: Pious Ali, (At-large)

Mayor Mark Dion

City Staff:

Adam Harr, Executive Assistant; Mark Dubois, Police Chief; Dena Libner, Assistant City Manager; Maggie McLoughlin, Director of Health and Human Services; Chad Johnston, Fire Chief. Aaron Geyer, Director of Social Services;

Invited Panelists:

Amy Holland, Statewide Homeless Response System Coordinator; Nakesha Warren, Homeless Response Hub 2 Coordinator.

1. Announcements

- None.

2. Review and Approval of Minutes from April 10, 2025

- Councilor Pelletier Moved to approve the minutes and seconded by Councilor Michniewicz. The minutes were approved unanimously 4-0.

3. Built for Zero Panel Discussion (Councilor Sarah Michniewicz)

- Councilor Sarah Michniewicz explained how Portland takes an outsized role in the state's homelessness response. A statewide effort saw Maine divided into 9 homeless response service hubs, adopting the Community Solutions Built for Zero model to get to functionally zero homelessness. Tonight, will look at how Portland fits into this systems-level data driven approach.
- Amy Holland, The Statewide Homeless Response System Coordinator of the Maine State Housing Authority explained that the 9 hubs launched three years ago out of collaboration between the Statewide Homeless Council, The Maine Continuum of Care, and MaineHousing, with help from Community Solutions.
 - Each hub has a coordinator with a neutral employer of record so they work for the community, not just one provider in the hub.
 - Municipalities, General Assistance, Police, Health Providers
 - It is a theorized strategy proven to solve homelessness
 - A by name list for each person experiencing homelessness in each up, including their preferred housing solution,
 - A point in time counts once a year is not accurate or real time.

- At any point we can see how many people are experiencing homelessness in the hub and statewide.
 - Identifying barriers and advocating for resources to fill gaps.
 - Maine is one of five statewide BFZ initiatives.
 - We were the first state to implement the hub model.
 - Functional Zero is defined by a having more housing resources (Outflow) than enter homelessness (inflow).
 - 15 communities have achieved this.
 - Efficiently targets resources on the by-name list. With at least 90% on the list, we can understand full nuanced picture and solutions.
- Nakesha Warren, Homeless Response Hub 2 Coordinator.
 - The work the City has done in Hub 2 has been essential.
 - The HSC
 - Prevention and Diversion
 - Street Outreach
 - HOPE
 - Have been able to connect people to resources without having stability or any connections around them.
 - Public Health
 - 2,024 people are experiencing homelessness in Cumberland County.
 - The City of Portland's teams have assessed over 1,200 people.
 - Data informs increases in vouchers and resources.
 - The ECRT informed hub resources and added people to the hub by name list.
 - Collaborating on the people who are the hardest to house and finding the appropriate housing for an individual to be successful, not just the first one available to be able to have a housing placement.
 - Outreach collaboration where all hub 2 outreach providers in Portland came together to discuss capacity.
 - There is a new Maine Homeless Planning website: <https://www.mainehomelessplanning.org/hubs/>
 - Employment initiative
 - Looking to help people at every area
 - Our inflow numbers double our outflow numbers.

Committee questions and discussion

- Councilor Fournier asked about the analysis of the data collected: who is analyzing the data and what actions are the data informing? March had 12 people return to homelessness and the trend line of total active going up. What is the context hub 2 and statewide?
 - It may not be that the number of people is increasing, but the number of providers adding quality data increased; we like to see the number going up at this point because we are getting closer to confidence that our data is complete. We will likely see it rise until we see our quality data milestone and then want to see it stay the same then decrease.
 - We are able to see basic trends.
 - Hub 2 case conferencing looks at people by name and can see the returns and collaborate on people case by case for people who have timed out of resources.
 - Are we matching people to the right resource vs any resource to get people housed? the data informs how to proceed to find successful placements.

- Mayor Dion asked if other municipalities in the county are contributing Data? What municipalities are participating in hub 1/York County?
 - Hub 2: South Portland is the other municipality participating coordinated entry.
 - Hub 1: Biddeford, Sanford, Saco, and Kittery.
- Councilor Pelletier asked what the by name list looks like on the ground?
 - A by name list is as it sounds: a list by name of everyone experiencing homelessness in the hub. It contains HMIS data, including their demographics and sub population (veteran, DV, etc.) and the Coordinated Entry Assessment prioritizations core.
 - Once 90% of people experiencing homelessness are on the BNL and have been assessed, we will have quality data.
- Councilor Bullett asked about data entry and what support is coming from the state level to support his.
 - Data sharing agreements with entities that have larger capacity for data entry can enter data on behalf of smaller agencies that lack capacity via a data sharing agreement. This is happening in hub 1.
 - Pursuing funding through Community Solutions to have a statewide data specialist position to support the hubs.
 - Renewed support from the Statewide Homeless Council and Maine CoC.
- Councilor Michniewicz asked if we are approaching quality data?
 - Hub 5 is close, likely within the next couple of months.
 - Each hub will be different.
 - Hub 2 is close too; September is the goal.
 - From there, the trends will be tracked with trust it is meaningful and can start advocating for targeted resources.

4. Public Safety Update (Mark Dubois, Police Chief)

- YTD Citywide:
 - 8% increase for calls for service
 - 778 arrests compared to 764 last year.
 - Total calls for service: 23,013
 - 17,000 911 calls
 - 6,013 officer initiated calls, a 63% increase compared to last year.
 - Attributed to targeted enforcement and behavioral health calls such as the Monument Square response.
- 71 overdoses last month (5 were fatal.)
 - Is that high?
 - Consistent with last year.
 - We sent an advisory when there were multiple overdoses in a short span of time
- Shots were fired on Grant Street on Sunday and arrests have been made.
- Last remaining person from last year's Forest Ave shooting was apprehended.
- Bayside
 - Calles for services decreased by 4% compared to last year.
 - Arrests increased 8% compared to last year.
 - Warrants
 - Violations of release
 - Possession of drugs
 - Trespass

- Bayside calls for service: 4279 calls for service
 - 1,652 officer initiated calls
 - 2,627 911 calls.
- There was a shooting in a DV situation (non-fatal)
- Standoff with negotiators.
 - Chemical munitions were used.

Committee questions and discussion

- Councilor Pelletier asked for clearance rates from a former presentation.

5. Childcare Concept Proposal (Dena Libner, Assistant City Manager)

- Seeking feedback before bringing to the Housing & Economic Development Committee.
- At the same time the committee was looking at childcare, the City was looking for childcare solutions for staff as part of recruitment and retention, internally.
- Internal analysis showed over 50% of respondents had considered leaving their position due to childcare.
- Staff looked at solutions for affordable childcare and for retention.
 - Looked at Barron Center 2, three quarters of the building has been unused since before the pandemic. The other quarter is the Office of Elder Affairs.
 - We are getting close to seeing what is possible at that location and would need an RFP to prong childcare licensing expertise to us.
 - Will seek feedback from the state and fire marshal's office to make the RFP stronger and successful when issued.
 - Proposal would prioritize Portland residents and have a set aside for City of Portland employees (who live in or outside the city)
 - If it somehow did not fill up, would could a third option be?
 - Looking for a private provider in the Barron Center 2 space, not build a program in-house.
 - No fiscal impact at this concept stage, but there may be some revenue loss by moving some of the unused licensed beds; staff are researching this fiscal impact.
 - An operator would take on capital improvements needed at the site.

Committee questions and discussion

- Councilor Ali asked if this would go on to the DSC budget in this current budget cycle?
 - No, it should not impact the fy26 budget.
 - Depending on how much work is needed on the building the program likely wouldn't start until fy27.
- Councilor Pelletier asked what the percentage has been floated?
 - Hasn't been discussed yet and is up in the air; it would be the decision of the HEDC to decide.
- Mayor Dion thanked staff for their work and encourages moving this forward.
- Councilor Michniewicz asked how much, if any, coordination will be needed between this and the housing planned for the Barron Center campus via the recent RFP?
 - None that we can foresee as the existing building is already well suited to this use.
- Councilor Fournier thinks it's an innovative way to use our resources to support our community and staff. What conditions can we put in re: % dedicated to staff and the hours of operation for the varied shift positions people staff at the City with before and after work hours.

- The need for flexibility for shift employees is salient and we are identifying the specific barriers, such as opening hour(s) before normal hours or have flexible drop off/pick up.
 - Cognizant of these for providers to be able to ramp up to and not be too restrictive that the program doesn't get off the ground.
 - Make it clear these are the intents of year 2 of operation.
 - Some orgs have this figured out (prime time evening care model)
- Councilor Bullett requested mandatory Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) program participation for free meals to families that cannot pack lunch. Does the Barron center have a kitchen?
 - Yes.
 - There is possible reality where we get the CACFP money.

6. Next Meeting: May 13, 2025

- HHS Annual Report

Councilor Michniewicz moved to adjourn and Councilor Pelletier Seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4 -0 and the committee adjourned at 6:41 PM.