

## **Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee**

**June 10, 2025, 5:30 PM Remote Meeting**

Committee Attendance:

Anna Bullett, Chair (District 4), Sarah Michniewicz (District 1), Wesley Pelletier (District 2).

Councilor Attendance:

Mayor Mark Dion

City Staff:

Adam Harr, Executive Assistant; Dena Libner, Assistant City Manager; Greg Jordan, Assistant City Manager; Maggie McLoughlin, Director of Health and Human Services; Chad Johnston, Fire Chief; Aaron Geyer, Director of Social Services; Mike Murray, Director of Public Works; Troy Moon, Sustainability Director; Jason Grant, Fire Marshall.

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 May 13, 2025**

- Councilor Michniewicz Moved to approve the minutes and seconded by Councilor Pelletier. The minutes were approved unanimously 3-0.

### **3. Discussion Re: Investment in Maintenance and Installation of Street Lights (Mike Murray, Director of Public Works)**

- In 2017, The City bought the lights infrastructure that had until then been rented and maintained from Central Maine Power Company (CMP) for \$590,000.
- Followed by a retrofit with energy conserving lighting.
  - 6,500 street lights at \$4 million which was bonded to finance.
- Maintenance of street lights were formerly tasked to the traffic division as part of their traffic signal, cross walk painting, and street/regulatory sign maintenance duties; there were staff with electrical backgrounds.
- Two types of lights:
  - ~4,000 Cobra style lights on many utility poles are higher near power lines.
  - ~2,500 Decorative lights on a standalone pole with no visible wires, as well as a town and country lights on wooden posts.
- Maintenance of outages

- Cobra head lights are near high voltage wires and require someone with an electrical line license such as a CMP worker; no one in the City has this license so an individual is contracted maintain Cobra head lights.
- Staff that have master electrician, journeymen, and helper's licenses are able to help on the decorative lights with one FTE devoted to these lights with another staff who splits time between traffic lights and the decorative lights, when time permits.
- Dashboard from a third party vendor shows outages but must be verified.
- Citizens through see click fix can report them
- Decorative lights may work but have an electrical issue supply power that CMP must fix.
- Point in time survey in the fall taking an inventory by canvassing the city after dark.
  - The last PIT found 471 lights were not working (7.2% of all lights)
  - 274 were decorative.
  - Some poles have multiple lights but if a single light on a pole was out, it was counted as an outage.
- Looking to decrease the time lights are out and that outages are equitable with no one area experiencing more outages than another.
- Started replacing streetlight equipment in 2017, reducing street light energy consumption by 70%.
  - Replaced 6400 lamps.
  - \$4 million project
  - Some decorative lights had issues under warranty.
  - Underground electrical is an issue that is CMP's responsibility.
- There are opportunities to look at new technologies.
  - New tech to communicate with lights exist; currently it is a wireless mesh network that were chosen because cellular communication was not adequate at the time but has improved significantly at present.
- We have reduced costs by \$1 million per year by owning our lights.
  - Ownership makes repair our responsibility.

#### Committee questions and discussion

- Mayor Dion had to address outages in his tenure on the Council and understanding who is responsible for repair and that there was a lack of licensed staff at both the City and CMP.
- There are very dark areas that are criminogenic and pose a risk to public safety.
  - A bright place is a safe place; is there capacity to identify dark areas and direct resources to illuminate them.?
    - We can look at a variety of ways to increase lighting such as adding additional fixtures.
  - Can dark corridors be indexed? There are places that are too dark and unsafe; is there a way to identify these.
    - Audit these areas.
- Councilor Michniewicz agreed that there appears to be a disparity of some areas and would request an analysis of these dark corridors cross referenced with calls for service to measure how many calls for service (for crime or falls on walking paths) are increased due to outages.
- Councilor Michniewicz asked if it would help to have a licensed electrician to replace contracting CMP help and what would be needed?
  - The contract relationship is our best option.

- Vision Zero: DPW's reporting on the operability of the system to fix outages as quickly as possible. Are there areas of the just not lit enough for safety and residents will need to mitigate nuisance light to prioritize the safety of the community.
- Councilor Bullett would like to see what a big investment to get street lights off the grid would look like and thanked staff for keeping up with emerging technologies.
- Fire department staff are knowledgeable about our city streets and related safety issues and are excited about Vision Zero.

#### 4. HHS Annual Report (Maggie McLoughlin, HHS Director)

- HHS Annual Report: <https://portlandme.portal.civicclerk.com/event/8032/files/attachment/26641>
- Housing & Homelessness
  - HSC
    - More than 100 people were housed from the HSC.
    - 67% living with a disability.
  - Family Shelter
    - 281 people comprising 86 families were sheltered at the family shelter.
    - 266 individuals comprising 77 families housed.
  - 166 Riverside
    - Sheltered 439 clients
    - 167 individuals housed
  - Resettlement
    - Short term case management to 279 families representing 916 individuals.
  - GA
    - Adults 18-50
    - 33 years old on average
    - 78% of applicants were eligible for assistance.
    - 67% of clients need support for 3 months with another drop off at six months.
    - GA is the last safety net, assisting with housing (rent), food, and medications.
  - Rep Payee
    - 160 clients
    - Managed \$2.25 million of clients' Social Security funds.
- Harm Reduction and Overdose to Action:
  - 30% of people accessing needle exchange are stably housed.
  - Average age of 39.
  - Connected people to services and try to keep people who use substances healthy.
  - Needle exchange helps prevent HIV outbreaks in this and the wider community.
  - People who use the exchange are three times more likely to access recovery options.
  - 235 overdoses were reversed in the community thanks to Narcan training and distribution.
  - Our exchange return ratio is now above 90%
- Disease & Prevention
  - Healthy Eating, Active Learning (HEAL)
    - 2,799 participants over 114 healthy cooking/budgeting classes.
  - Lead Poisoning & Prevention
    - Education to 455 parents and 58 property owners.
  - Tobacco & Substance Use Prevention
    - 95 classes facilitated in Cumberland County school districts.
    - Required annual training to 41 Cannabis establishments.

- Immunization
  - Provided 3,000 vaccines to the community.
- Screening, Prioritization & Urgent Referral (SPUR)
  - 715 unique patients.
- STD Clinic
  - 642 patients
  - 1,380 patient visits
    - 612 Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) specific visits.
- Community Free Clinic
  - 156 unique patients
  - 511 volunteer hours from 37 healthcare professionals.
- Maternal & Child Health
  - 2,140 Nursing visits
- Health Equity
  - 1,189 clients supported.
- Aging, Older Adults & Disability
  - Barron Center
    - 100% of population is living with a disability
    - 81.8% are on Medicaid.
    - 165 unique residents.
    - 5 star CMS rating
  - Elder Affairs
    - Senior Outreach Nursing Program
      - 500+ served in blood pressure clinics
      - 36 patients had home visits.
    - Adult Day Programs
      - 63 clients
      - 20,000+ hours of daytime care.
- Invested in a Communications position.
- Data Learning Collaborative working to update our data tracking and analysis.

#### Committee questions and discussion

- Councilor Michniewicz asked what data do we want that we do not have and which programs have the highest return on investment?
  - Demographics that we can cross layer on other City data points; investment in technology will help this and support collaboration with other City programs.
  - Return on investment isn't applicable between program serve critical needs to their target populations/issues.
- Mayor Dion is concerned about syringe litter by continuous reports of needle waste from constituents.
  - He would like an interim report on the buyback program.
  - Some people are experiencing large litter and efforts to curtail are not working in these localized areas people report.
    - Where is collection happening and can it be expanded to these reported problem areas.

- Data from our assessments and from our community partners on syringe litter to have a baseline to compare against for evaluating the impact of our efforts such as the buyback program.
  - If the Committee wills it, we can give another SSP Redemption pilot project which currently has a 92% recovery rate.
- Councilor Pelletier appreciates the responsiveness of adding community sharps boxes.
- Councilor Michniewicz asked about the increased number of syringes as the health outcomes preventing HIV and hepatitis outbreaks,
  - We have a new agreement with the Maine CDC on disease surveillance to try and get sense of impact, however finding causality between these two datasets is difficult.
- Councilor Bullett mentioned LD 1738 is in appropriations which would set up a CDC fund supporting municipal syringe recovery efforts and commended the elder services work, and the accomplishments of getting buy-in from business for age friendly Portland.
- Maine Health is tracking social determinants of health.
- Mayor Dion would like to see coordination between Maine Health and northern light; people are getting discharged from health homes who need support but does not rise to the level Medicaid would pay for.
  - Outreach nursing is supporting the life support side, but the community and isolation needs of our elders.

#### **5. Housing Options for People in Encampments (HOPE) Program Update (Aaron Geyer, Director of Social Services)**

- In the Fall of 2023, service providers identified the need to bring services to a subset of the unhoused community who are averse to staying at the shelter.
- 85 enrollments
- 12 shelter placements
- 45 housing placements during a voucher freeze.
- 142 days is the average time it takes program participants to obtain housing.
- Gathering documentation and filling to applications takes time
- HOPE navigators meet weekly for collaboration and find solutions targeted to the individual people the program serves. Each person is engaged with a plan specific and nuanced to each person and their unique circumstances.
- HOPE has housed 5 of the original 2023 by name list created in the ECRT.

The HSC was just inspected and is in full compliance with its management plan.

#### **6. Sprinkler Requirement for Single Family Homes (Chad Johnston, Fire Chief)**

- Used to average 1 -2 residential fire deaths outside of a single outlier: the 2014 Noyes Street fire
- There is a huge delta on the costs to install, ranging 1 to 7 dollars per square foot, makes estimating costs difficult.
- There are two levels of licenses for 1 and two family homes; it is fairly easy to achieve through one to two hours of instruction to get certified with the State. Plumbers are able to attain this without much difficulty.
- Trying to hide piping in existing buildings versus new construction is part of the wide price range.

- It is advised to get multiple quotes.
- Fire spread beyond the room of origin is reduced by 94% in a sprinkled building.
- Fire Deaths in sprinkled residential units are only 1% of fire deaths in residences.

#### Committee questions and discussion

- Are there any incentives to help with the costs of sprinkling residences such as low interest loans?
  - Some insurance companies offer discounts to sprinkled buildings.
- Councilor Michniewicz asked what the cost is to sprinkle: how much is development being suppressed due to cost and how many renovations triggered the 50% rule and how many were ADU related?
- How many units could be created if we aligned with the states more flexible code.
- Councilor Michniewicz discussed hard wired alarms as a requirement that could ease the percentage requirement on sprinkling?
  - Hard wired smoke detectors have been required for ten years.
  - These can be and still are tampered with and add to preventable deaths.

#### **7. Next Meeting: July 8, 2025**

Councilor Pelletier moved to adjourn, Councilor Michniewicz seconded; the motion passed 3-0 and the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:33 PM.