

Tuesday, June 11, 2024, 5:30pm, Remote Meeting

Committee Attendance:

April Fournier, Chair (At-large), Anna Trevorarrow (District 1), Roberto Rodriguez (At-Large), Victoria Pelletier (District 2), Mark Dion; Mayor.

City Staff:

Jessie Lemieux, Executive Assistant for Fire Department; Sean Donaghue, Fire Division Chief; Mark Dubois, Police Chief; Dena Libner, Assistant City Manager/Interim Director of HHS; Greg Jordan, Assistant City Manager. Alfredo Vergara; Director of Public Health, Caity Hager; Emergency Management Coordinator.

Announcements

Review and Approval of Minutes from May 14, 2024

Moved by Councilor Rodriguez, seconded by Councilor Trevorarrow. Approved x3

Public Hearing: Repeal of Section 17.5 of City Code (re: Cruising).

Public Comment: Each given 2 minutes

George Rheault - Against removal of ordinance from city code. It is a tool for police when used to help the quality of life in neighborhoods, especially Bayside.

Sarah Michniewicz - Agrees with George. If there is any utility of it to prevent harm to women, or the trans population, then this should be explored before removing.

Jim Hall - If this is not being used to combat trafficking of humans and drugs, it should be. If an adjustment needs to be made to clarify that this is not to prosecute on and to protect professions, classes of people, or demographics, that's fine.

Councilor Rodriguez- How did this come up?

Mayor Dion- Approached by a constituent who was concerned that this ordinance may have/ had been applied in a manner that suggested that it was used to target certain individuals in a community, the presumption that they might be gay, transexual or otherwise. Requested the city to reconsider the ordinance.

This is a civil infraction. It is not a crime. This is a bad ordinance that had the right intentions, but agree that it sends a particular message that wasn't helpful in creating a respectful community. At the time of this written ordinance, it was considered good police work, validated by the community and courts. But could have been written better.

Councilor Trevorarrow- recommending a repeal of this code to the council.

Councilor Fournier - In favor of moving this forward.

Motion on taking this appeal - Moved by Councilor Trevorarrow -Seconded by Councilor Pelletier

Councilor Rodrigues - no

Councilor Pelletier - yes

Councilor Trevorarrow - yes

Councilor Fournier - yes

3-1 so this will move forward to the full council.

Cooling Shelter Update (Caity Hager, Emergency Management Coordinator)

Locations, activation triggers and process for opening shelters

Portland Public library is open Mon - Sat 10am-6pm

City facilities are emergency options, Troubh Ice Arena, Community Centers at Riverton and East End Elementary and Ocean Gateway (based on availability and specialty credentialed staff).

Activation Triggers used - National Weather Service issues a heat advisory (heat index of approx 95 degrees Fahrenheit or higher) that lasts 2 hours or longer. Also an excessive heat warning (when heat index is expected to reach 105 or higher degrees Fahrenheit) lasting 2 hours or more and/or when there is a heat wave where nighttime temps do not dip below 75 degrees Fahrenheit.

Process for opening cooling centers if criteria is met, will contact Fire Chief Gautreau (Emergency Management Director). Make notifications to the shelters. Notify the Director of Communications (sends email, texts, and social media platform announcements), Cumberland County Emergency Management, Maine Emergency Management, and 211.

Heat index is a combination of temperature and relative humidity.

The National Weather Service provides data and states if extreme or not (Real Feel).

Bayside Update (Chief Mark Dubois, Police Department)

There are detailed assignments in targeted areas with 2 officers per day.

Calls for service specific to Bayside have increased 46% from May of 23 to May of 24.

Officers assigned on footbeat have increased self initiated calls by 50%.

Arrests increased 29% year to date and 53% in the month of May alone.

Example of data - warrants, violation of bail, drugs, and disorderly/nuisance crimes.

Officer initiated calls for 2024 was 2031 vs 2023 it was 1577.

911 calls for this location have also increased.

The Crime Reduction Unit has increased presence to assist with reevaluating and deterring criminal behavior.

Discussion: Syringe Service Program (Councilor April Fournier, Chair)

Mayor Dion - One issue put before me is discharged syringes. Has a public health resource become a public safety hazard? Nationally, syringe exchange programs have become a level of dogma.

Is there any data that the program has reduced the frequency of blood borne disease?

Can those diseases be addressed with antiviral medications instead of needle intervention?

How many referrals have originated from the exchange transaction itself?

Can this committee seek out a path where we might modify existing state rule on the issue of distribution ratio? (1:100)

We have staff trained to retrieve needles, but the public has to deal with it themselves on their own property.

Dena Libner - Memo gives overview of Cities SSP Funded by Maine CDC.

Rules and regulations are set by Maine CDC and have changed since the pandemic in response to public concerns at state and local level. The number of needles someone can receive increased and the criteria that they needed to surrender needles was removed. We went back to the 1:1, but currently we are at 1:100 at state level and Portland implemented it locally too. City cannot track each syringe it

distributes, and that is a problem as we cannot predict where the needles end up. We also don't have data on how many needles come in from outside city boundaries or leave.

Councilor Rodriguez- Would the council be able to change total allowance without jeopardizing the funding?

Dena Libner - Council can make changes.

Mayor Dion - 2024 has 75k needles that are unaccounted for. We should consider the amount of needles in the exchange.

Alfredo Vergara - Lots of data nationally that needle exchanges do reflect a reduction in HIV and other transmissions.

Needles in the city come from pharmacies, other entities, and ourselves.

When we collect needles, we consistently collect up to 97% of the needles, only 3% are out in the public.

There are collection boxes in other cities, South Portland, Westbrook to which we don't have data for.

Referrals - made over 533 referrals, and saw about 400 unique clients.

Ben Strick - It's hard to measure something that doesn't happen.
HIV cluster in Bangor that seems to be associated with needle exchange.

Opioid Abatement Strategies Landscape: Panel Discussion (Councilor April Fournier, Chair)

Brian Townsend - Common Space - operate the other needle exchange and recovery center housing. Formally Amistad.

Lack of a day space - need to consolidate and create a place with intention

Ben Strick - Spurwink - have Living Room shelter, and Comprehensive Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC), ongoing extension of care, and provide a range of services to homeless communities.

Early childhood intervention - positive youth development would be the biggest bang for your buck.

This has grown from just opioids to opioids and other factors.

Methadone on the peninsula and combined with a day space.

Contingency management - Using incentives to mark the target behavior. Incentive for testing negative.

Tom Doherty - Milestone - substance abuse treatment facility serving people through Home Team who can transport.

Accelerating admissions velocity in the past few weeks.

Need options for people.

Need ultra low barrier opportunities to do outreach.

Partners, pets, and psychiatry needs.

Housing is the largest obstacle.

Joe Everett - Opportunity Alliance - community action agency.

Youth Development- power of early intervention, safe space.

All 10 families work together - funded by Flex Funds to cover rent, food, clothing.

Need more peer recovery coaches.

273 licensed Psychiatrists in the State of Maine.

Dr Kristen Silvia - Maine Medical - Maine behavioral health care serving 200 patients.
Not having a methadone clinic on the peninsula creates a barrier
Transportation to facilities would be helpful
Uber Health, bus passes, will make a difference
People who don't think they have a problem have a higher percentage of death - need to build relationships/trust. Only 10% want help.
Don't currently have a lot of residential treatment programs close to us. Higher levels of care closer.
60% to 70% of suboxone first time treatments are successful. Without proper support it's 20%.

Councilor Fournier - Lightning Round of investments made: (if you had one choice)
Townsend - a thoughtful, intentional dayspace
Strick - methadone on peninsula and contingency management
Doherty - dayspace to cluster people and get service to them
Everett - strategic partnership, positive youth development
Silvia - funding outreach workers in the interim of the dayspace

Meeting adjourned at 7:35

Next Meeting: July 9, 2024