

Minutes

Remote Housing and Economic Development Committee

May 12, 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 Monday, May 12, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Present from the HEDC were Chair Pious Ali, and members, Sarah Michniewicz, Regina Phillips and Kate Sykes. Also present from the City Council was Anna Bullett and Wesley Pelletier. 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 May 6, 2025

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

Item #2: Consideration of two Responses (one from Community Housing of Maine, and one from Developers Collaborative & Prosperity Maine) to the RFP for the Lease/Development of up to two site located at 1125 Brighton Avenue, and vote on a recommendation to the City Council that an option to lease is pursued with the successful respondent.

- a. Public comment on this item was accepted during the Committee's May 6, 2025 meeting and is not required to be taken at this meeting.

Bree LaCasse and Cullen Ryan of Community Housing of Maine (CHOM) were invited by Councilor Ali to provide an overview of their proposal. CHOM highlighted their successful history of developing affordable housing that also responds to the homeless crisis in Portland (as was emphasized in the RFP issued by Portland for the lease and development of affordable housing (that responds to the homeless crisis) on city-owned land at 1125 Brighton Avenue), as well as engaging with the surrounding neighborhood.

CHOM would provide 30% of the units for shelter guests referred from Portland's social services offices and provide tailored wrap-around services. Currently, 62 individuals referred from Portland shelters are living in CHOM properties. Data shows that within Cumberland County, the vast majority of persons experiencing homelessness are single adults (more than 2,000 people) rather than households with children (approximately 134 households). The City Homeless Service Center tends to serve older adults with more complex backgrounds needing more tailored support services. Currently there are forty-one people that would qualify for the proposed housing. These shelter guests use beds night after night, and frequently interact with local emergency service providers. This cycle would stop when permanent, supportive housing is provided.

CHOM would begin initial neighborhood visualizing sessions to discuss both proposed sites during listening sessions. Harriman Architects would attend these sessions and provide services in multiple languages.

Cullen Ryan discussed the service plan for residents that need supportive services. CHOM is both the largest supportive housing provider and homeless services provider in the

state of Maine providing a full, broad array of services based on varied needs. CHOM has been collaborating with Portland for over a quarter of a century. CHOM holds weekly and monthly team meetings with all stakeholders involved in providing supportive services. CHOM partners with Spurwink, Mercy Hospital, Quality Housing Coalition, In Her Presence, Common Space, Milestone, Shalom House, Through These Doors, ICMS, Preble Street Rapid Rehousing, and Veterans Housing Services. As seasoned service providers, CHOM is experienced with working with neighbors before and after a project is created, and would continue to be inclusive, inviting and responsive.

Councilor Ali open the meeting to questions from Committee members.

The Committee held a discussion regarding the proposal.

Councilor Ali invited Developers Collaborative and Prosperity Maine to present their proposal.

Claude Rwaganje, founder and Executive Director of Prosperity Maine, provided an overview of Prosperity Maine. Created in 2008, its original focus was on financial education to empower members of the refugee and immigrant communities. Today they provide a wide range of services including housing development, and benefit from the knowledge and experience provided by Robby Perkins-High, Dana Totman, and the Developers Collaborative team. Kevin Bunker, of Developers Collaborative (DC), noted they are developers that believe they have a responsibility to the community, to prioritize listening to neighbors and using creative solutions to apply community-based approaches. DC anticipated what the push back would be from the neighborhood and designed their project for what neighbors would like. DC provided a side-by-side comparison of their proposal and CHOM's 55+ housing proposal for site one (DC excluded site two- CHOM's family housing proposal in their comparison). Developers

Collaborative's site one proposal would have an earlier start date (by one year), would provide less units but would serve a greater number of people as they would provide two, three and four bedroom units for seniors and families from Portland shelters. DC's waitlist for residential housing is 158 households for 57 family-units, and 88 households for 202 55+ units.

Robbie Perkins-High presented the trend of completed LIHTC projects in Cumberland County to underscore the trend of developers moving away from the construction of family housing towards senior housing. There are 43 families at the Family Shelter. Twenty percent of the units on-site would be one-bedroom units, which would allow for senior-housing.

Laura Reading provided a graph detailing the proposed bedroom count and AMI levels. Thirty percent of the units would be one-bedroom, fifty percent would be two-bedroom, sixteen percent would be three-bedroom, and four percent of the 100 overall units would be four-bedroom. The area median income levels would range from 30% to 80%. DC is proposing 100 affordable rental units across two buildings (approximately 50 units per building). DC would provide property management services and ProsperityME would provide economic mobility services.

Councilor Ali open the meeting to questions from Committee members.

The Committee held a discussion regarding the proposal.

Councilor Ali asked for a vote to enter into executive session.

On a motion made by Councilor Sykes, seconded by Councilor Michniewicz, the Committee voted (4-0) to enter into executive session.

Councilor Ali opened the meeting to comment from the public regarding the Committee entering into executive session. Seeing no one, the comment period was closed.

The Committee entered into executive session at 7:39.

The Committee exited from executive session at 8:40.

On a motion by Councilor Phillips, seconded by Councilor Michniewicz, the Committee voted 3-1 (Sykes) to recommend to the City Council to enter into a lease/development agreement with Developers Collaborative and Prosperity Maine.

On motion made by Councilor Phillips, seconded by Councilor Sykes, the Committee voted 4-0 to adjourn the meeting at approximately 8:51 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for May 20, 2025.

Respectively submitted, Victoria Volent