



Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee Minutes

Tuesday, July 30, 2019, 5:30pm, Council Chambers, City Hall

Committee Attendance:

Belinda Ray, Chair (District 1), Brian Batson (District 3), Pious Ali (At-Large)

Councilors in Attendance: Councilor Kim Cook (District 5) Spencer Thibodeaux (District 2), Jill Duson (At-Large)

City Staff: Heather Brown, Assistant City Manager; Kristen Dow, Director of Health and Human Services; Aaron Geyer, Director of Social Services; Sara Fleurant, Director of Oxford Street Shelter; Adam Harr, Executive Assistant.

Meeting called to order at 5:35 PM.

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Announcements

HHS & PS and EDC will meet together next week to discuss Marijuana policy in room 209 at 5:30 PM on Tuesday, August 8th, 2019.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – Approval of Minutes

- Councilor Batson moved to approve the minutes; Councilor Ali seconded and the minutes were approved as amended:
 - Page 4 Senator Chipman's Bill
 - City Manager or [MWDA]; correct the acronym as it should be the Maine Municipal Association (MMA) not the Maine Welfare Director's Association (MWDA).
- Change "Next Steps" to other considerations.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – Shelter Policy

Chair Ray explained she does not expect policy decisions to be made tonight and that there will likely be more questions at the end of the meeting. She asked that councilors please think of what policies they would like to change.

Staff Presentation

Sara Fleurant, Shelter Director

- Staff Response HHS & PS Committee Questions from June 25, 2019 Meeting:
<https://portlandme.civicclerk.com/Web/GenFile.aspx?ad=2848>

- o Since July of 2016, OSS has made 682 housing placements representing 171,089 bed nights.
- o About 70% of guests presenting for shelter have a form of identification at intake.
- o Individuals staying at the Oxford Street Shelter have incomes far below the incomes levels needed to be able to afford housing, impacting housing placements.
- o Caseloads are maintained with clients actively staying at the shelter and working with a housing counselor and inactive. Inactive guests are those who have not stayed for 30 days. After 60 days, guests returning would need to do a re-intake.
- o While OSS is low barrier, guests' behavior that jeopardizes the safety of guests and staff will cause for restriction from shelter.
- o Budget: the budget posted does not reflect construction cost.

Committee Questions

- Councilor Thibodeaux asked if Increases in capacity of the shelter were voted on by the council.
 - o They were not voted on by the Council; the increases were in response to other shelters capacity.
 - o Councilor Thibodeaux does not want to repeat the scenario of a creating a shelter with 150 beds that then ends up into the overcrowded situation currently faced without council action.
 - Councilor Duseon clarified that Council action did occur with leasing approvals and other related actions.
 - Councilors also involved in the Taskforce to End Homelessness
 - Chair Ray clarified a prescribed number isn't going to be in ordinance and that would be a policy decision.
 - o Councilor Thibodeaux is concerned we will build a facility for X number of people and end up with 2X number of people staying.
 - o Councilor Cook wondered if the expansions were made during a time the State payed more operations.
 - Bed reimbursement, but still payed more.
 - o Councilor Cook looked at the timeline and the population has not been below 61,500 (1980) and not above 66,500 (2018).
 - During this time, the shelter has moved from 20 beds to 229 beds with overflow.
 - o Councilor Duseon clarified staff is not looking to expand services, rather with community input, the beds increased to meet needs in the context of the dismantling of mental health services, and the opioid crisis seeing people seek services in the area.
 - o Councilor Ali asked about the history of OSS beds increasing due to the closure of other shelters in the City and if there is a record of how many beds were displaced from each shelter that closed.
 - o Councilor Batson asked how clients with ID informs which municipality is listed as their last residence or if their word is being taken.
 - Clients that have ID can use them.

- Guest self-report their last residency followed by in depth questions that will may also establish a last residency.
- o Councilor Batson asked how many of the 57 out of country intakes are individuals seeking asylum?
 - How many people would have been left out of residency requirements.
- o The committee would like the Portland clients and bed nights.
- o Councilor Duson asked about the clients and bed nights from out of town.
 - How will this data be used to project budget needs for next year?
 - The statistics were not collected for that purpose.
- o Councilor Cook would like to know from the State and City perspectives, have shelter beds increased in step with OSS.
 - There is an annual shelter list with each shelters with their bed counts.
 - Portland's beds has increased but other shelter's bed counts are typically more stable.
- o Councilor Cook asked about the percentage of last residencies so far in 2019.
 - Councilor Cook's Calculation; she would like to see if there is a trend.
 - Sara will come back with data.
 - Chair Ray found that also in 2018 42% of intakes were from other Maine towns.
- o Councilor Cook asked about billing other municipalities for the GA shelter bed nights of their residents. Has there been any success and will that increase in the new legislation?
 - There has not and greater success is not expected.
- o The types of IDs include passports, licenses, etc.
- o Councilor cook asked about the ID sample was taken.
 - The sample is large and from recent intakes that had not yet been filed.
- o Where do people criminally trespassed go?
 - Staff work with other shelters and outside agencies to try and connect to shelter and housing.
 - Criminal Trespasses are based on property lines; CTOs can only be enforced just beyond the sidewalk.
 - Councilors Batson said that many go to the emergency room.
 - CTO reasons are not tracked formally to be able to see a trend.
- o Councilor Cook asked if there is any reflection in the shelter numbers during the summer, as there is a common notion that people migrate here during the summer.
 - The winter is actually when we see an increase
 - Councilor cook asked for the month by month residential break down [collected in the Social Services Division Dashboard.]
- o Councilor Duson asked about the seasonality of homelessness demand; are more folks sleeping out during the summer and then coming in when it gets cold?
 - Yes, and staff will reach out to partners for data.
- o LD4:49
 - It defines homelessness as an emergency and presumes eligibility
 - Aaron Geyer, Acting Social Services Director
 - Municipalities have leeway in interpretation of the emergency clause.

- Not everyone is interpreting the emergency clause uniformly but that may be cleared up by a work group that Councilor Cook clarified will finish and report out January 2, 2020. (the work will be happening soon)
 - The presumptive eligibility section shows that if a municipality determines eligibility presumptively, the municipality of responsibility cannot be billed for 30 days.
 - Councilor Cook would be disappointed if this is not helpful as the Council put a lot of effort into it.
 - Council Ali clarified that the legislative committee supported the original writing but that other language may have been added that other municipalities supported.
 - Councilor Duson knew there was a continued concern that the language Senator Chipman desired remained in the final version and thanked Aaron for following it and going to the statehouse.
 - There is the context that other municipalities
 - She hopes that Portland would be invited to work with the group and at the very least present accurate Portland data.
 - Councilor Batson asked in the intake process, at which stage is eligibility presumed.
 - At the first night people enter shelter then are checked in DHHS systems before sending in for reimbursement at 30 days.
- Councilor Duson asked if shelter staff divert back to municipalities and if that would be made easier under the new legislation.
 - Yes
- Chair Ray asked about the Milestone provided exchange data.
 - The data is a 3 person monthly average of guests referred to milestone who they billed for.
 - Chair Ray would like to know about referrals
 - Every night.
- Shelter Intake
 - Councilor Batson asked what would happen if people refuse the explanatory meeting
 - They would not get their shelter ID.
 - Councilor Ali asked what the benefits of the Shelter ID is
 - It speeds up check in and can be used for ID at the library, and other services, in the past even for travel with greyhound.
 - Coordinated Entry Initial Triage and Diversion is a required HUD process that helps people avoid homelessness.
 - People have to agree to add their personal data to use HMIS (Homeless Management Information System)
 - If refused, 211
 - Many people call 211 and in this process will be referred to OSS.
 - DV Shelters do not enter into HMIS
 - Very few people refuse entering their information; it is very rare.

- o Chair Ray noted that there are many questions that extract residency information.
 - The Self Declaration of Homelessness status helps find out a person's situation.
- o Councilor Duson asked about the question that requires a person answer a question on ethnicity and race.
 - A funder requires it, unknown or client refused are accepted as answers.
 - Councilor Duson noted it is one of the only places where it says the question must be answered.
 - It will be changed.
 - Staff is trained to be sensitive to the needs of guests who refuse or are uncomfortable with disclosing their race or ethnicity.
 - o What is stopping from interpreting the language that the question must be answered from accepting a client not answering?
 - Councilor Cook was surprised and concerned at the question and asked that it be reviewed by corporation council.
 - o The requirement language will be removed and then reviewed again by corporation council; every form is reviewed by corporation council before use.
- o The questions asked will inform what housing and services individuals may be eligible for.
- o Counselor Duson is uncomfortable with the question on disability and that it be made explicit that information would be used for eligibility and being clear disclosure is not required.
- o Councilor Cook clarified that VA and Medicaid are healthcare and not insurance
- o The form is not filled out by a client, it is to help staff enter in information into databases.
- o Councilors Batson and Ali agree with the suggested change; Councilor Ali asked that the explanation of race go further with interpretation to help explain the social context and make it clear that it does not need to be answered. Chair Ray supports the changes and thanked Councilor Duson.
- o Chair Ray asked how long it typically takes to complete an intake form.
 - It varies but can be as fast as half an hour to over an hour.
 - New intakes typically are not much more than 2-5 a night.
 - Intakes start at 7:00 PM.
- o Councilor Duson asked if the information would be used for intake at other programs.
 - The HSC will be a primary intake for the Avesta project.
 - Other programs will may have less paperwork than some programs.
 - Is the information used for referral for specialized shelters?
- o Councilor Cook asked about the models of intake: on site or off site then referred to OSS.
- o Councilor Duson asked how staff are trained on standard operating procedures.
 - Throughout each section of the intake, the information, questions, and expectations are explained.

- o Chair Ray hopes that at the end of the process the committee will have the policy decisions the council should take and that the council is not looking to micromanage individual portions of the process, rather to be informed when making policy decisions.
- o Councilor Duson appreciates the HMIS information release form describes how and how the information will be used.
- o Councilor Duson asked whom someone would appeal if they were denied a Maine Care service
 - DHHS (OSS does not deny services)
- o . The Housing Stability Plan is a Maine Housing form that is updated regularly for referral to resources.
- o The VISPDAT is widely used by shelters as a vulnerability index to prioritize guest need for services and eligibility.

Capacity

<https://portlandme.civicclerk.com/Web/GenFile.aspx?ad=2840>

- Chair Ray asked if someone presents when the shelter is at capacity are they turned away or operate over capacity?
 - o Councilor Batson reads that people are genuinely prioritized within a hard cap with attempts at referrals and diversion options.
 - o Councilor Duson clarified that in the memo the above is done before people are turned away from shelter.
- Councilor Cook asked what the relationship between the City of Bangor and PCHC that the City determined their capped bed count.
- Councilor Cook asked why there is only one shelter's information in Maine:
 - o 4 low barrier shelters: OSS, Hope House, Florence House and Milestone
 - o 2 all gender: OSS and Hope House
 - o 1 Low barrier all gender shelter with overflow: OSS
- The committee requested
 - o How many shelters operate above capacity?
 - o What do dry shelters do when intoxicated people present.
 - o If there was a way to collect the answers blindly, better data on what shelter policies and procedures and may be able to share that more freely if they remain anonymous.
 - o Councilor Duson suggested MaineHousing may know how many people are turned away from shelter
 - o The clarification from HUD and MaineHousing that a residency requirement would not jeopardize funding.
- The remaining documents in the packet are on
 - o Father Bill's Place catchment areas,
 - o a memo from Corporation Council on the residency requirements and GA eligibility.
 - o Documents pertaining to the site plan process (design standards and requirements in ordinance for shelter and conditional use)
- Councilor Cook is concerned about site control in relation to access to the river and forest.

Remaining Questions

- Councilor Cook asked about one of the shelters that requires GA eligibility York County Shelter.
 - What other towns refer or accept to specific places based on GA eligibility.
 - How do people get to those shelters?
- Councilor Ali asked what the best practices are regarding to shelter policy and procedure when they reach capacity.
- Councilor Batson asked what the costs are incurred when capacity is met: over flow costs, or bus tickets to other shelters.
- Do we still get referrals from Crossroads? In February, 2018
 - Sober houses using the shelter as a punishment for relapse
 - Hospitals from around the country referring to OSS
 - Florida
- Do communities in a catchment area collaborate in some way with shelters?
- What do referrals and intakes look like from catchment areas to shelters.
- Father Bill's has limited time period for intake during the day; what are best practices and are there more New England examples.
 - What times are most common?
 - What would staff recommend in that situation.
- Are there policies staff would like to see changed?

Policies the Committee May Consider

- Residency Requirement
 - Portland Specific?
 - Catchment Area?
 - Which communities
 - Requirements?
- Low Barrier Approach
 - Sobriety?
 - Work?
 - What is the compulsory Hope House Therapeutic Day Program?
 - Other requirements for entry or staying
- A Cap on the Number Served
 - What happens when hitting cap?
 - Overflow?
- Intake
 - On site or different location(s)?
- Who will access services at the shelter?
 - Those who have completed intakes?
 - Guests of emergency shelter?
 - Drop in for anyone at risk or experiencing homelessness?
- Councilor Batson would like detailed information on Crossroads catchment area policy and procedures.
- Transportation policy

- When looking at the budget: are there other infrastructure improvements needed such as sidewalks on both sides.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – Next Meeting

- August 6th with the Economic Development Committee.
- Shelter Policy will return September 10th.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:14 PM.