

Minutes

Remote Housing and Economic Development Committee

October 21, 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 Tuesday, October 21, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom. Present from the HEDC were Chair Councilor Pious Ali, and members Councilors Regina Phillips, Sarah Michniewicz, and Kate Sykes. Also present from the City Council was Councilor Wesley Pelletier. City staff present were Housing and Community Development Division Director Mary Davis, Corporation Counsel Michael Goldman, Assistant City Manager Dena Libner, Principal Administrative Officer Lori Paulette, and Housing and Economic Development Department Director Greg Watson.

Item #1: Review and accept Minutes of previous meetings held on September 23, 2025, October 7, 2025 and October 15, 2025.

On a motion made by Councilor Sykes and seconded by Councilor Phillips, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the September 23rd, October 7th and October 15th meetings.

Item #2: Discussion regarding proposed entertainment license.

Councilor Michniewicz noted that she and Councilor Grant are proposing this ordinance to create a license for venues with 2,000 seats and over. The proposed ordinance would apply to Live Nation/Portland Music Holding, Thompson's Point, and Cross Arena. This is proposed to provide a tiered approach through an ordinance process and would provide funding for Metro, for increased multi-modal transportation due to influx of people from events, and an entertainment fund to support the City's entertainment and local arts sector.

There was discussion among the Committee and clarifying questions were raised, including whether this proposal would apply to events at Payson Park. It was determined that it would not apply to a festival as it is not a standing entertainment venue. There was also a suggestion to have a discussion with the County of Cumberland about any contributions to Metro due to increased traffic trips from entertainment venues. There was additional clarification that this proposal would not include Merrill Auditorium or any other venue owned and operated by the City. There were questions regarding when Cross Arena hosts half-house seating and whether the ordinance takes that into consideration; this would need to be fleshed out regardless of how many are actually seated. Also, there was discussion as to whether percentages for imposed fees stop at 3,000 seats at 2%. For venues that have more seats, should percentages increase in proportion to the number of additional seats. How would the City evaluate venues that may want to build a 2,000 seat venue but decide on 1,999 seats to avoid compliance. Corporation Counsel would need to be consulted and provide further review and input.

There was discussion of passing fees onto consumers and if that could be avoided, which would need further thought and consideration; however, it was noted that the norm in the industry is to pass fees onto the consumer.

There seemed to be some consensus to look into higher percentages included within a tiered approach based on seating.

Chair Councilor Ali thanked all and looked forward to having this further refined for Committee review, to ultimately vote on a recommendation to the City Council.

Item #3: Discussion regarding Performance Hall Moratorium.

Chair Councilor Ali noted that he requested Committee members to bring forward any requested recommendations and to date he has not received anything.

The Committee discussed possible ways of determining the potential economic impact of the Live Nation performance venue for both for-profit and non-profit partners in music promotion, including both positive impacts on area businesses and also how it may disrupt the eco system for the smaller venues.

Mr. Watson said that there is a fiscal economic impact report for the venue that was prepared for the applicant by a third party.

There was discussion for an economic impact report being done with attention given to the economic impact on independent venues, with Ms. Libner noting that budgeting additional funds would need to be considered as a consultant would likely need to be hired for such a report. Discussion continued on issues such as parking, proximity to other venues, engaging with other communities that host large venues, hosting a panel discussion of what it is like to build a large entertainment block in your economic center, perhaps two different economic analyses – how much benefit to the City from Live Nation, versus what do people want to see and are interested in, as well as information from the labor unions on employment impacts.

Mr. Goldman noted for the Committee to look at the Moratorium Order for the scope this Committee is tasked at looking at, i.e., reviewing City Code chapters 4, 6, 14, and 15 and

develop amendments for consideration by the Planning Board and City Council to address the concerns in the Moratorium. To get an extension for more than 6 months, the Committee would need to show reasonable progress has been made.

The Committee discussed that it may need to have extra meetings for this issue, particularly with the holidays coming up.

Chair Councilor Ali agreed and requested that Committee members provide their feedback to staff to prepare for upcoming Committee meetings on this subject.

Item #4: Discussion regarding Rent Control Ordinance Policy.

Chair Councilor Ali introduced the item and opened it up for discussion. Councilor Sykes introduced her memo written in response to a staff memo. It is her opinion that any changes should wait until the City is able to report out on recent changes to enforcement efforts.

Councilor Pelletier expressed his frustration with how the ordinance is being enforced and discussed the work and responsibility of the Rent Control Board. He suggested that a standard operating procedure on enforcement investigations would be helpful.

Ms. Libner explained that staff proposed amendments were presented to address enforcement issues and explained that the implementation of the ordinance is an operational decision and the Committee does not have the authority to direct staff to create a standard operating procedure. Councilors should direct those requests to the City Manager. Mr. Goldman also outlined that the City Manager has control over Department operational issues.

Councilor Michniewicz inquired about the role of the new enforcement position and what is the expectation of the impact of this role. Ms. Libner responded that the new position will add capacity to the office and should enable staff to more quickly process license applications and therefore move investigations through the process more expeditiously.

Additional Committee discussion occurred around the process, a request to add the staff memo to the public process, and included the suggestion that the Rent Board be asked to speak in a public Committee workshop.

Chair Councilor Ali suggested that the Committee make a suggestion for the 2026 Committee Workplan to include this topic as one of their top 3 or 4 items.

Item #5: Executive Session: Pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. 405(6)(C) and 5 M.R.S.A. 13119-A, the Committee will go into executive session to provide staff direction regarding possible negotiation for sale of City-owned property at Portland Technology Park.

Chair Councilor Ali opened the item for public discussion. Seeing none, on a motion made by Councilor Phillips and seconded by Councilor Sykes, the Committee voted unanimously to enter executive session at 7:06 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm on a motion made by Councilor Michniewicz seconded by Councilor Sykes and approved unanimously.

Respectfully, Mary Davis and Lori Paulette