



Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee Minutes

Tuesday, October 8, 2019, 5:30pm, Room 209, City Hall

Committee Attendance:

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

Councilors in Attendance:

Kim Cook (District 5)

City Staff:

Kristen Dow, Director of Health and Human Services; Aaron Geyer, Director of Social Services; Sara Fleurant, Director of Oxford Street Shelter; Bridget Rauscher, Chronic Disease Prevention Program Manager; Adam Harr, Executive Assistant

Meeting called to order at 5:30 PM.

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Announcements

- At the September 10th meeting it was decided to not have a public comment on September 24th and instead to have public comment after the committee received staff recommendation to have public comment; staff recommendations and a public hearing will occur at this meeting.
- Corporation Council cannot be here tonight but is planning on meeting to understand what committee questions

AGENDA ITEM 2 – Approval of Minutes

- Chair Ray moved to approve the minutes; Councilor Batson seconded and the minutes were approved unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – Shelter Policy

Document links:

- HHS&PS October 8th, 2019 Shelter Policy Staff Memo
<https://portlandme.civicclerk.com/Web/GenFile.aspx?ad=3414>
- Attachments for October 8, 2019 HHS&PS Shelter Policy Memo
<https://portlandme.civicclerk.com/Web/GenFile.aspx?ad=3424>
- November 13, 2018 Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee Minutes
<https://portlandme.civicclerk.com/Web/GenFile.aspx?ad=3436>

- November 27, 2018 Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee Minutes
<https://portlandme.civicclerk.com/Web/GenFile.aspx?ad=3437>

Kristen Dow, Director of Health and Human Services explained the research and outreach staff took to answer committee questions. She thanked Aaron Geyer and Sara Fleurant specifically who met with fifteen providers since the last meeting. Some questions from the last meeting are not answered in the staff memo and will be addressed in a future meeting.

Sara Fleurant, Oxford Street Shelter Director overviewed the staff answers to committee questions. She thanked the following providers who provided insight on shelter policy:

Amistad, Portland Police Department, Preble Street & Homeless Voices for Justice, Milestone, Maine Housing, PCHC Hope House, Greater Portland Health, Pine Street Inn, Crossroads House, Father Bills, Through These Doors, The Opportunity Alliance, Greater Portland Metro, Wayside, United States Interagency Council on Homelessness.

Residency Requirement

- MaineHousing Confirmed no shelter in the state have a residency requirement
- Research out of state demonstrated it is difficult to implement
- Having such a requirement would result in losing low barrier status

Cap

- Shelters in the state view OSS as community overflow
- Staff recommend a 150 bed capacity shelter
- Shelter providers implement emergency overflow in inclement weather
 - o Staff recommend 25 emergency overflow bed.

Intake

- Recommend a formalized diversion program
 - o Modeled after Pine Street Inn's Front Door Triage Program which has diverted 20% of people who present and rehouse 12% of people who present at their shelter.

Low Barrier Shelter

- National Best Practice
- Staff recommend the low barrier shelter model using a housing first approach.
 - o All providers recommended low barrier model.

Access

- Many providers recommended only people staying at the shelter have access to on-site services except for the clinic and community policing.
 - o Clinic and police would have separate access points
 - Clinic as a federally qualified health center cannot turn people away
 - o Providers recommended access restricted to shelter guests

Committee questions and discussion

- Councilor Batson asked in reference to the hard cap of 150, what was the high bed count of the last year?
 - o Staff will answer

- In the past two months, Oxford Street Shelter has not opened the overflow at the Preble Street Resource Center.
- Looking at the Diversion Program model, how would the shelter handle a night where 200 people seek shelter?
- Chair Ray asked if Councilors have more questions on the cap.
 - There were several months that the shelter was above 229 and is concerned that the shelter will be built too small as it is possible to scale down but not to scale up.
- Councilor Ali asked about the ability to add 25 overflow beds.
 - During site design, staff recommend a flexible space that would allow the additional beds.
 - Staff was informed by the Councilors preferences and the diversion statistics from the Pine Street Inn.
- Councilor Cook asked where the HHS&PS committee recommended 150 beds.
 - Director Geyer looked at the past meetings linked to above where 150 beds were repeatedly referenced.
 - Councilor Cook is concerned of the certainty and that the motion that the bed count was to be determined.
 - Chair Ray and Councilor Batson do not want to rehash the question of beds Councilors support as it is the general consensus.
 - Councilor Cook clarified she is concerned with the characterization of the certainty of 150 beds.
- Councilor Batson requested detailed action plans on what the City would do in the event of a large group over capacity presented for shelter.
- Chair Ray requested shelter counts going back for one year.
- Councilor Ali asked when the last time OSS did not open overflow and if it is a trend.
 - Staff will need to return with the stats and an analysis of why it may be trending down.
- Councilor Batson asked about how the funding formula works with having low barrier status.
 - Low barrier status multiplies funding by 125%.
 - Councilor Cook asked for clarified:
 - We would get 25% less funding with a residency requirement
 - About 28% of OSS intakes are from Portland residents.
- Councilor Cook asked about what currently practice refers to in low barrier:
 - The memo referred to the providers spoken to in the memo which were all low barrier.

Residency Questions

- Chair Ray asked about why providers oppose a residency requirement.
 - Generally opposed by local providers.
 - Difficult to enforce due to self-reporting and lack of identification,
- Crossroads cannot turn in state people away
 - Do they turn away out of state people?
 - Unknown but they do have a wait list
- If you can't have a residency requirement, can you prioritize by residency.
- Councilor Batson asked if we have turn away statistics from Crosswords.

- o We do not have turn away policies from out of state and Maine Housing Does not have track the number of people turned away for the Maine shelters who anonymously submitted their turn away polices for the last meeting.
 - o Crossroads received referrals from Coordinated entry.
- Does having a Catchment Area or a Cap influence the referrals to that shelter?
 - o Coordinated Entry: why does crossroads not have many in-person intakes versus the many in person intakes that OSS has?
 - Crossroads has a cap which likely influxes the referrals.
- What if there was a policy for a limited stay for individuals outside a catchment area?
 - o Can Corporation Council confirm we can do this?
 - o Would that jeopardize low barrier status.
 - o Could residents of a catchment area be prioritized first.

Diversion

- The Committee would like more information on the Front Door diversion program.
 - o Which elements of diversion listed in the attachments are part of that program?
- Councilor Cook asked about intake hour policies
 - o Housing First Standards Assessment Tool:
 - Projects not having specific hours for intakes that identify need is a best practice.
 - Crossroads is an exception as it operates a wait list of people who largely do not present in person.

Access

- Councilor Ali asked if denying services or food to people for not staying at the shelter crosses any legal restrictions?
 - o Corporation Council will confirm.
- Chair Ray asked for the list of food/community meal resources
- Councilor Cook asked about the existing FQHC in Riverton Park and GPH. GPH said there is a need for patients in that area.
 - o Councilors Batson noted that there are clinics near the Oxford Street Shelter that are busy.

Transportation

- Councilor Cook asked about the recommendation for the purchase of and operation of a shuttle.
 - o What is the cost?
 - o Requested staff provide cost estimates of the policy recommendations.
- Will there be a regular route or people be driven to appointments?
 - o A route of services centers would be planned.
 - o Currently OSS used two vehicles and taxi vouchers.
- Certain reliably timed access points are important.
- Should subsidized transit/metro passes be planned?
- What are the taxi voucher costs now and how do staff anticipate that changing?
- Have staff completed the housing first assessment tool?
 - o We have not but shall do so for the next meeting.

Chair Ray overviewed the rules for public comment and opened the public hearing at 6:40 PM

- Jim Divine of Congress Street, Homeless Voices for Justice and Co-Chair of the Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee – HVJ is unhappy with the location of the Riverside location, feeling it will marginalize people and be difficult to access. A number of people in the shelter are disabled and makes access difficult and the location feels like an effort to hide the homeless. Don't Hide Us, Include Us members were distressed the HHS&PS committee members did not attend their forum.
- William Higgins Homeless Advocacy for All – Looking at the 150 limit, you can go inline to the ESAC statistics to see five years of daily shelter static
- Michael Stockmeyer and member of HVJ – He sent an email about building a structure on Angelo's Acres, a 5 over 2 podium of seven floors with a two-floor parking garage. That proposal received one Councilor's response. There should be no Cap restricting shelter. If people need help, they should be able to receive it. Riverside is too far away, six miles away. A shuttle won't work, a bus or new metro line would be needed to get to where people need to go. The surrounding community will be harassed and businesses will be stolen from.
- Stephanie Newts advocates for a small riverside group of people to sit with the HHS committee to suggest how everyone can be good neighbors. She would like a cost analysis comparing the Riverton location and the current shelter location. The Riverside location is off the map. If the economy goes bad or services are lost for some other reason it would be a nightmare. She wants collaboration with riverside residents
- Adam Rice Maine veterans – There should not be a residency requirement. The number of people living outside need to be included. If the Bayside building is sold, there will be many more homeless people that the current plan would not be able to accommodate. More should be done to address the root causes of homelessness instead of how to shuttle people to services. More people affected by homeless should be consulted.
- Dr. Courtney Ladson and National Healthcare Homeless Council – Unsheltered increase in the area and does not want a cap. She is concerned about a sharp increase in the number of restrictions at the shelter. She runs an addiction treatment program 67% of which are restriction from the shelter. There is no inclement weather plan; chemical burns from hand warmers and frost bite injuries happen now and would get worse under a cap. Nationally, the Point in Time holds up Maine as having low unsheltered counts and those gains could be undone. There is an increase of tent cities and homeless plans. GPH is two blocks from the shelter now and currently some people who cannot ambulate need rides; co-locating with the clinic is important.
- Jesse Falero who resides at Florence house first became homeless at 18. She came to Maine and was assaulted and then sent to the teen shelter. She has been human trafficked which is a common story in the community. She sees a lack of information from the people with lived experience. She wants people who have experienced and currently affected by homelessness to be included in the policy making process and to slow it down. There will be in an increase in tent cities.
- Rebecca Hobbs of Through These Doors thanked the Committee for being included and focusing on this important work. Domestic Violence is not often talked about and did note that the report specifically mention domestic violence and safety concerns. Gender based violence is integrated with homelessness issues.
- Cheryl Harkins of HVJ and board member of the statewide homeless council – the 150 bed cap with 25 overflow beds is ludicrous. During the Winter there are 230 to 240

people who needed shelter; the cap will see 60 people outside. She has experienced sleeping in cars. HVJ has not been consulted. People need to understand the obstacles. It is a dehumanizing choice to place the elderly and disabled 5 miles from the city center. If someone is hit by a snowplow, there is a chance no one would see them to call for help. She asked the committee to consider involving them more.

- James Malanson of Riverside Street. The people in his community are concerned. Some met with City Councilors and expressed them: the distance from downtown, leeches in the area, the contaminants on the property. They feel they should be integrated in the process to help make the shelter a success. They prefer smaller shelters and are concerned with the distance from downtown, that it is an attempt to hide the homeless. He feels there is genuine interest in integrating the people staying in shelter as members of their community. They have not felt heard. Most people are concerned about the people in shelter being warehoused and abandoned. He experienced homelessness in his 20s. He is concerned about the declining resources.
- Ryan Schmidt Portland resident and Law Fellow – State of Maine stats of 2017: stats. OSS 2018 report, % substance use and mental illness self-reporting stats have continually increased. A cap will likely result in death, for that reasons he opposes a cap.
- Hall Bayside Homeowner – Policy needs a Community Relations Policy. This became a two sided conversation in a November meeting. Neighbors outreach, crime, substance use, refuse, catch all services area. He sees an improvement and sees the new model will mitigate about half of those problems. He doesn't see the shelter moving to fix the problems in Bayside; the staff who patrol and mitigate issues leaving may make things worse. He would like to see staff consider unintended consequences. Is there a more systematic approach to community relations people can take.
- Donna Yellen of Preble Street – On a recent morning two Preble street staff walked the two blocks sleeping around the resource center and OSS. They counted 45 people. The resource center overflow is closed. In February there 254 people who were sheltered at OSS, March at 258, and X. The shift is due to housing and long term stayer efforts but they alone don't explain this train. Police data show there were 125 CTOs at OSS in 2019. Staff spoke to 31 of the people sleeping out. 25 were CTOd or there partners were. Only 4 of those were also CTOd from Preble Street. 85% self-report having mental health disorders. Please consider a community process before changing the policy.
- Osgood of Portland Outright – 40% of Portland Youth population identify as LGBTQ and will be distortionally affected by whatever outcome there is. A cap sounds dangerous to them and where someone is from and where someone feels safe to be should not be a barrier. We should not rush this process and a cap will have real danger. It has been hard to know when there will be public comment or vote. There is frustration at a lack of data and engagement.
- Frank D'Allesandro of Maine Equal Justice – Most effective way to deal with homelessness is to prevent it in the first place. The Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program has been successful and should be funded. Section 17 services has been successful in keeping people housed. The shelter needs to embrace a housing first model: services be coordinated, accessible readily available, and low barrier. Even if a person cannot come into shelter due to a cap, they will be eligible for General Assistance. Anyone denied shelter will most likely be eligible for general assistance which does not

have an eligibility requirement or a cap; the assistance that would be granted through GA would likely cost more than in a shelter.

- Riverton – This is not addressing the issue of reducing homelessness. Personally, this shelter will be in his backyard and does not want to see 500 people there with an open-door policy. He wants people to be helped but held accountable. A lot of people need help. He does not support a low barrier shelter, no cap or the location of the shelter. The river will be a danger to people in and around the shelter.
- Cullen Ryan of CHOM – He thanked for the inclusivity of the input on the shelter. It is important that the shelter is not capped. It is important to me the current needs of the people in the City. If there is a cap, it becomes very difficult to connect with them and get them housed. Low barrier is important as it is very hard to engage people outside. Please continue including people in the process. The City is on the right track with housing, both creating housing and engaging people to secure housing.
- Linda Knight lives on the streets of Portland – She is on the streets due to shelter policies and due to landlords. The needs for homeless services starts with landlords. There is not sufficient planning. Portland can learn from other cities that build neighborhoods for people to move into. She has been homeless for a year; she is a senior citizen with complex health problems and needs housing. She has been the victim of theft, phones and lifesaving medications.
- Sarah Michnewitz Bayside resident – thanks the committee and shelter staff. She supports the homeless services center model as it won't be a drop-in center. It will be for people engaging services. Would Access to the Federally Qualified Clinic be drop in or by appointment? She supports 150 beds but wants adequate capacity as it can always be scaled down. She wants the City to look at policies for clients and their engagement with services at the center and the current shelter. The neighborhood management plan needs to be fleshed out. There is confusion of who to call; there should be a single point of contact to triage. There should be a presence at community meetings. She is optimistic.
- Katie Finch of Portland – She has been a caseworker in Portland and now supervises caseworkers who help 400 people experiencing homelessness, about a quarter of which are unsheltered. Diversion works best when you can reliably contact them. It takes days to a month to find individuals. There will be mileage costs for caseworkers. Addressing the shuttle: her clients on foot from the current shelter are able to see their children and go to a variety of service providers and their jobs and other aspects of the community. In the new model it will have to be done by the shuttle or by a caseworker.
- Norman Maze of Shalom House – He thanked City staff for including them in the process. Regardless of the site plan, there will be people who won't go off the peninsula to Riverside and there should be a plan for those people.
- Ashish is a street outreach worker speaking for himself – OSS staff work very well within their system but there are many people outside of that system. There are 172 people CTOd from the shelter and that number does not capture everyone sleeping outside. Some are no longer CTOd but are sleeping outside so that won't get CTOd before winter. There is different consequence for women, men and trans people for CTOs including sexual assault. The City shelter has a 1-year CTO and some shelters have 6-month CTOs that could be adopted. He asked that the committee consider not have a cap.
- George Rhault of West Bayside – Summer had ups and downs with more police presence. He lives a number of streets over from the shelter that do not have the same

community resources and support as those adjacent to the shelter. If you get that support, your voice gets more inclusion in the process. All summer there were meetings without public comment in contrast with other meetings. There is nothing to comment on and thinks the process is a joke.

Public comment closed at 7:48 PM

- The Committee would like information on CTOs and restrictions.
 - o Staff will provide them.
 - o Reasons for restrictions, new restrictions, and any trends.
- Would a FQHC that is currently in the neighborhood continue to operate?
- Will the shelter FQHC be operated as a drop-in or by appointment and would there be a separate entrance?
- There is in ordinance that a community relations plan be established
 - o It is already in ordinance and may not be something that needs to be worked out in this recommendation.
 - o Regular community meetings be part of the plan and a single point of contact.
- Policy specifically for the homeless services center
 - o How might we address people sleeping outside and who will stay on the peninsula?
- How will the City address issue in Bayside that will remain after the shelter moves?
- Two ways the committee can influence policy:
 - o Recommendations moved d via resolution
 - o Ordinance changes.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – Next Meeting

- October 22, 2019 may result in a vote.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:56 PM.