

## **Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee**

**March 10 2026, 5:30 PM Remote Meeting**

Committee Attendance:

Anna Bullett, Chair (District 4), Sarah Michniewicz (District 1), (Wesley Pelletier (District 2).  
April Fournier (At-Large)

Councilor Attendance: Kate Sykes (District 5), Regina Phillips (District 3)

City Staff:

Adam Harr, Executive Assistant; Greg Jordan, Assistant City Manager; Mark Dubois, Police Chief; Maggie McLoughlin, Director of HHS; Dena Libner, Assistant City Manager; Chad Johnston, Fire Chief; Aaron Geyer, Social Services Director; Caity Hager, Emergency Management Coordinator.

### **1. Announcements**

- This meeting will end then the Committee will go into executive session.

### **2. Review and Approval of Minutes from February 10, 2026**

- Councilor Fournier moved to approve the minutes and seconded by Councilor Pelletier. The minutes were approved unanimously 4-0.

### **3. Winter Warming Shelter Update**

- Social Services Director Geyer gave an update:
  - Operated 39 nights to date.
  - 18 nights longest uninterrupted streak.
  - 3,661 OT hours.
  - 389 unduplicated guests.
    - Average of 39 people per night with the last 6 nights opened averaging in the 20s.
  - Spent \$166,271 of the grant so far.
  - Have added blizzard and ice storm warming to activation threshold.

### **4. FY27 Winter Warming Shelter Planning**

- Operations expectations for the Winter Warming Shelter next winter.
  - Constraints and how to overcome those constraints.
- How expectations were or were not met and how the
  - Include summer in this conversation.

Committee questions and concerns

- Councilor Fournier said the public is concerned when the temperature dips below 32 degrees. Based on our current experience, can we look at how many nights higher thresholds would entail and the associated costs? 20, 30 degrees or freezing)
  - Data available:

- 25 and below would be 77 nights.
  - 32 would be the bulk of the winter.
- Councilor Sykes said the wet and cold combination seems to be the most difficult to manage.
  - Would like to be open when people need to stay dry.
  - Would like to activate staff quicker than 48 hours.
- Chair Bullett is interested in looking at the OT and comms costs may be on par with full time a staff needed to move away from the threshold activation to be an emergency shelter open every night for this cohort.
  - Cares about the burnout of staff, including middle managers who stepped up.
- Councilor Michniewicz said that if the threshold were 40 degrees it would be open all winter and cost over \$1 million.
- The Committee is interested in looking at three scenarios:
  - 40 degrees
  - 32 degrees
  - A model that's open nightly (2 FTEs)
  - A non profit operator.
    - Input from community partners.
- The above threshold scenarios would all likely need to be funded for a nightly basis.
- There are lots of potential costs and the building itself affects cost and staffing structure.
  - Seasonal model (not threshold)
    - On peninsula
      - ~712,000
      - Could be extraordinarily higher.
      - 1 million for full window through April.
    - Off peninsula
      - Transportation adds to costs and logistic issue in storms.
    - It is unclear if Maine State Housing Authority funds will be available.
- Consensus on exploring a nightly basis for the winter season, staff will prepare a written summary on possible costs to see if the committee would seek to recommend funding through the FY27 operating budget.
  - If we are bringing on staff, there are benefit costs.
- Is this a potential for CDBG?
  - Likely eligible in the Social Services category but the deadline has passed.
  - Recommendations could be amended by HEDC or the Council.
- Councilor Pelletier asked if expenses would be eligible under opioid settlement funds.
  - It could be if it was part of a day space but a stand-alone warming shelter would require an amendment.
    - Councilor Sykes would approve an amendment.
  - Can add to the HHS&PS workplan.

## 5. Emergency Shelter

- City of Portland operated shelters together served 1,641 Unique shelter clients who collectively had 164,884 bed nights and made 522 shelter-to-housing placements.
  - 2 low-barrier shelters for single adults:
    - Homeless Services Center (HSC)

- 166 Riverside
  - Family Shelter
    - Apartment style
    - 146-bed capacity
    - Serves approximately 42 families
    - < 5% of guests report Portland as their last residency
- Wrap around services
- Temporary winter warming shelter

## **6. Public Safety Update: Fire Dept.**

- All hands is essentially a first alarm.
  - Everyone in the station is needed.
- 2 alarm brings in another company
- 3 alarm seeks aid from other communities.
- Is there a reason medcu 3 does so much transport?
  - Likely the aging population in the area.
- What is meant by “outside fire”?
  - Wide range such as trash fire on congress street, mulch fires from discarded smoking material.
  - Building fires include housefires (any structure)
- Shoutout to the companies and station serving Stevens Ave. (and the rest of the City).
- Rise in numbers: 50% increase in EMS calls since 2005.
  - Reasons? Is it related to populations that are not residents of Portland or unsheltered transient people? If so, is there regional funding available?
    - A large part of the workload serves our most vulnerable people.
    - The volume of work goes up with scope, not population.
      - May go to more community paramedicine in a person’s living room vs going to the emergency department.
    - Nationwide trend.
- Councilor Michniewicz asked if overall OD transports have declined like the OD deaths?
  - No, it has stayed consistent.

**Next meeting is April 14, 2026.**

Councilor Michniewicz moved to adjourn, and was seconded by Councilor Fournier. The motion passed unanimously 4-0 and the meeting adjourned at 6:24 PM.