



Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee Minutes

Tuesday, September 10, 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), Spencer Thibodeaux (District 2)

City Staff:

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 5:30 PM.

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Announcements

- Committee discussed GPCOG's opiate misuse workshop offer. Chair Ray would like to propose a resolution on the Council but there is a limited time frame; Chair Ray will announce the funding availability with an October deadline on Monday night's full Council meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – Approval of Minutes

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

AGENDA ITEM 3 – Shelter Policy

Document links:

- Staff Memo Answering HHS and PS Committee Questions from 7.30.19
<https://portlandme.civicclerk.com/Web/GenFile.aspx?ad=3111>
- Maine Shelter and Bed Inventory 2008 – 2019
<https://portlandme.civicclerk.com/Web/GenFile.aspx?ad=3110>
- Shelter Policies and Residency requirements
<https://portlandme.civicclerk.com/Web/GenFile.aspx?ad=3112>

Sara Fleurant, Oxford Street Shelter Director overviewed the staff answers to committee questions.

- Individuals get to shelter (OSS) individually and through the Coordinated Entry System (CES). It is compulsory for shelters that receive Continuum of Care (CoC) funding.
 - Staff will look at which shelters do and do not receive CoC funding to determine which are required to participate. It is noted that many would accept referrals even if they are not required to participate in CES.
- No evidence of out of state hospital referrals to OSS.
- HUD best practices call for a centralized intake model.
- Bangor's Therapeutic Day Program is not a treatment program, but rather a program that allows guests to stay at the shelter during daytime hours. It requires sobriety and work if individuals are able to do so.
 - Diversion is outside the shelter when possible or in the shelter at intake.
 - No specified hours: intakes occur when individuals present.
 - Staff will confirm.
- Social Services Director Aaron Geyer, Shelter Management visited Crossroads in Portsmouth, NH:
 - Uses Coordinated Entry
 - Accepts people statewide, capacity permitting.
 - No specific time for intakes; they maintain a waitlist and call individuals when spaces open and intakes occur when those individuals come in for shelter.
 - Programs:
 - Individuals
 - Family Shelter
 - Transitional housing
 - Catchment Area Funding:
York County contributes a small amount of funding.
 - The dollar amount did not exceed \$1,000 and follows the United Way catchment area where greater Portsmouth includes towns in Southern Maine.
 - Winter overflow: they continue to operate a waitlist but do make bunk beds for winter overflow.
 - They operate overcapacity for 63% of the time (assumed to be during cold months.)
 - Reported that bunked beds are not ideal for accessibility reasons.
 - Due to receiving State funding, Crossroads is required to accept people statewide; is that true for OSS?
 - Staff will confirm if it is required.
 - Referring to Corporation Council Memo:
 - Residency requirement?
 - Capping without overflow?
 - State funding compliance requirements?
 - Federal funding compliance requirements?
 - Some, but not a significant number, people are coming from Crossroads to Oxford Street.
 - How is the catchment area determined?

- Based on the United Way catchment area and is statewide based on their funding.
 - How is the number cap determined?
 - Fire code.
 - OSS and all its overflows are confirmed by fire dept. to meet code.
- Is the shelter allowed to give people bus tickets away?
 - There is a program at the shelter through General Assistance with requirements:
 - GA Eligibility
 - No criminal history
 - Staff confirm a person has a place to go; staff do not send people away to be homeless somewhere else.
 - The shelter has an agreement with Greyhound to accept GA for tickets.
 - A staff person also calls and performs follow up with these placements.
 - It is a one-time program; accepting the ticket through GA places individuals on a one-year denial to GA.
 - The staff time is paid through the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)
 - The bus ticket is reimbursed at 70% through GA.
 - Staff are not aware of other municipalities are engaging in such a program.
 - Are other towns doing this?
 - Sometimes there are people who relocate to Portland believing they had opportunity that did not come to fruition and use the bus ticket program to return to their former community (with the same verification requirements).
 - Furnishings are not transported.
 - The one year loss of GA eligibility is a City policy.
- Residency Memo:
 - Councilor Batson asked if it is staff's recommendation if they would prefer a lottery type policy?
 - Corporation Council will need to confirm.
 - Staff will look for out of state examples.
 - It is Corporation Council's interpretation that people would need to be temporarily housed in hotels or motels including non-residents
 - What would this cost number be?
 - Why is it so much different because OSS is a City-run shelter.
 - Councilor Cook asked if there is a way to move past a technicality possibly partnering with a non-profit to fund a shelter?
- Overflow best practices would have shelters increase capacity during Winter months.
- Capacity of Shelters throughout the State:
 - The third column on page 8.
 - Chair Ray would rather see actual counts of the number of people in shelters each night so that we can see how often shelters operate over their stated capacity; the bed night method used in the chart does not accurately reflect daily/nightly usage and gives a false representation of what shelters are operating above their stated capacities.
 - The table shows shelters not warming centers.
 - Family shelters are difficult to reach 100% due to family composition needing to match up with room capacity.

- o OSS night by night is a pilot program for data capture and that is why OSS counts look off.
- o Staff will attempt to find how many shelters offer an overflow and how often do they use that overflow.
- o Overflow vs. overcapacity:
 - Overflow is answered
 - Overcapacity (mats then chairs) is not answered.
- o Staff will attribute this data to MaineHousing.
 - Staff will digest this data.
- o Preble Street used to operate the women's shelter when Oxford Street was the Oxford Street Shelter for Men.
- o Was a second overflow included in the MaineHousing numbers?
 - Likely not; most likely the overflow reported on the HIC.
 - Potential demarcate as 229* with an asterisk noting that more overflow can be opened.
- Shelters' policies for when they are at capacity and when people present while intoxicated.
 - o Shelters make referrals to shelters without the barrier to entry there.
 - Low barrier or shelters with capacity.
 - o Chair Ray has the sense that many are sending people to OSS.
 - Staff believe that is a fair assessment.
 - o Only Bangor and Portland are low-barrier shelters that accept both men and women.
 - o Shelter 18: when all options are exhausted they are provided instructions and supplies for surviving the night including contacting police to look out for them and perform safety checks.

Committee Questions and Discussion

- Charts recap:
 - o Councilor Cook noted that 2019 appears to be trending differently with Portland residents seeking shelter at OSS.
 - Request: a side by side chart of guests from Portland compared with everyone else (out of town, state and country combined).
 - o Smaller portion of the population in the shelter but a larger portion of the bed nights.
 - Staff will check.
 - Chronically homeless?
- Maine Shelter Inventory
 - o Excel Format
 - Column totals don't add up (2017)
 - Formula Broken or other issue?
 - Separate Family, DV and Youth from Single Adult
 - Low-barrier shelters as first column and their bed inventories over time going across each row.
 - o Send it out in an excel spreadsheet
- Bangor's day services do not have TV.

- Councilor Cook noted that seemed intentional and asked if it is best practices.
 - Director Fleurant noted historically the number of services offered during the day at OSS is limited by space where rooms need to be cleared and cleaned throughout the day.
 - Chair Ray noted that the policy discussion must remain at the Council level and such programming would be a staff decision.
- Does Pine Street Inn have policies for when they reach capacity; is there separate overflow?
- Does father Bill's Catchment area fund shelter?
 - Some but not all
 - Staff will reach out again on the determination and of and funding from municipalities in catchment areas.
- Are there loitering policies at OSS?
 - There is a good neighbor policy.
 - People in the general area are encouraging people to be good neighbors regardless if they are staying with us or not.
 - Legally, when people step off City property staff does not have enforcement outside of calling law enforcement.
- Community policing standards
 - Have PD at future meetings to discuss how this would be handled.
- Crossroads determining their catchment area based on United Way:
 - Do they have a specific relationship with United Way and that is why they use that geographic area?
 - Staff will ask.
- Chair Ray's Policy List
 - When should Public Comment be taken?
 - Next September meeting or for after staff comes back with answers?
 - Councilors Ali and Batson would like staff answers before a public hearing.
 - Chair would like a proposal from staff.
 - Are there other restrictions that would increase safety of clients or staff?
 - Community partners will be consulted as part of staff recommendations.
 - Identified areas:
 - Residency Requirement
 - Ability to have one is not known.
 - What is possible?
 - Sobriety (or other) Entry Requirement
 - Cap on # Served
 - Councilor Cook sees Residency and Cap Served as intertwined; is it possible to have a residency preference for Portland residents and then have a cap or overflow for individuals presenting after that; she personally would like a cap at this shelter.
 - Is that type of preference possible?
 - Serve Portland community then catchment area?
 - Is there away to involve other municipalities to fund construction and/or operation of the new facility?

- How would overflow be handled under a cap?
- Intake
- Accessing Services
 - What happens for people who do not stay in the shelter?
 - Meals: what if Preble Street closes?
 - Is it possible to have community meal providers join a meeting or provide input to staff?
 - At what point in policy crafting process will they be brought to the table.
 - Open to shelter guests only or drop in?
 - Staff: services for guests similar to what was offered at the expo; health services and meals in a safe contained environment.
 - Committee: Councilor Batson has not determined an opinion yet; the cap or number served would inform his opinion. Councilor Ali does not have an opinion yet. Chair Ray envisions that the new facility would mirror what is currently offered where services are offered to those who are staying and have had an intake, continuing that drop in would compromise safety.
 - Councilor Cook has a strong preference that services be for those staying at the shelter.
 - Councilor Batson asked how many places in the city people can go for community meals.
 - Staff has a list, but not the number off-hand.
 - General operations and services of a shelter are for shelter guests.
- Transportation Policy
 - How do people get to the shelter from downtown?
 - Metro passes?
 - First mile, last mile: .3 of a mile to inbound.
 - Anything staff would consider for intake or warming center on the peninsula for the shuttle?
 - Physical structure?
 - Shuttle stop?
 - Councilor Cook asked that high school students be given a transportation shelter if shelter guests are given one.
- Community members and agencies are encouraged to communicate with the Health and Human Services Department staff as they craft their recommendations.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – Next Meeting

- September 24th agenda TBD.
- October meeting staff to come back with answers and then hold a Public Hearing.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:50 PM.