



Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee Minutes

Tuesday, April 28, 2020, 5:30pm, Remote Meeting

Committee Attendance:

Belinda Ray, Chair (District 1), Tae Chong (District 3), Pious Ali (At-Large)

Councilors in Attendance:

City Staff:

Kristen Dow, Director of Health and Human Services; Adam Harr, Executive Assistant for Social Services; Keith Gautreau, Frank Chief; Chief Clark, Police Chief; Caity Hager, Emergency Management Coordinator.

Meeting called to order at 5:35 PM.

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Announcements

- Chair Ray explained the committee last met in February.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – Approval of Minutes

- Councilor Chong moved to approve the minutes, Councilor Ali seconded and the minutes were approved unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – COVID-19 Update

Caity Hager, Emergency Management Coordinator

- Worldwide:
 - o Approximately 2,804,796 (+84,900) cases and 193,710 (+6,006).
- United States:
 - o Now over 1 million confirmed cases per John's Hopkins University site.
 - o In the US there are approximately 978,091 (+23,597) cases which was a +2.3% change in cases than yesterday and 55,142 (+1,346) deaths which was a +2.5% change in deaths.
- Maine:
 - o 1,040 cases (+35)
 - o 585 Recovered (+36)
 - o 163 hospitalizations (+2)
 - o 51 deaths (+1)

- o Averaging about 20 new cases a day.

Point in time data from 4/28/20 11:45am:

- Total hospitalized 33
- Critical care 17 (158 available)
- Ventilator 7 (298 available)
 - o Rate of positivity
 - Maine goal is to get under 2% of tests done in Maine testing positive.
 - Current rate is 5 to 6%
- Movement of PPE from Federal Level to States
 - o Stockpile stock sent to the State with the State distributing.
 - o City is working with the Cumberland county emergency management to work with State
- FEMA PA Funding
 - o City staff are working on a n application.
- Other Funding
 - o Firefighters
 - o Justice
- Discussion looking at Influenza-like and Covid-like illness looked at with COVID you
- Food security
 - o Monitoring

Committee Questions

- Councilor Chong said Maine is succeeding in flattening the curve; if we had the national rate of infection, we would have 5,000 cases.
- Councilor Ali thanked staff as they work through a constantly changing situation
- Chair Ray thanked all front-line workers and asked what the possible funding level would be covered by the FEMA grant.
 - o No upper cap.
 - o Cost Share where FEMA covers 75%, the State covers 15%, with the City responsible for 10% of eligible costs.
- Councilor Chong asked about food insecurity and what outreach is being targeted to the elderly.
 - o The office of elder affairs is working to address this need.
 - Coordinating volunteers to shop and deliver for seniors.
 - 70 volunteers are registered and vetted.
 - 20 elders have used this volunteer service.
- Councilor Chong asked about faith group involvement.
 - o Kristen will confirm with Linda Weare, Director of Office of Elder Services is which groups specifically they are working with.
- Councilor Ray asked if the Civic Center/Cross Insurance Arena looks like it will be used as an alternate care site?
 - o Plans are in place to use the site if necessary, working with Maine Medical Center and Cumberland Count to have contracts in place if it becomes necessary.

Fire Chief Gautreau

- Chief Gautreau thanked the Councilors and Caity for her work coordinating with partners across all levels of government.
- Fire is planning for a spike.
- Fire observed the earlier hot spots on the West coast to look at what to expect and reached out to partners in Boston and Georgia to form emergency response plans.
- Guidance changes constantly, sometimes by the hour.
- 2 primary objectives:
 - o Staffing levels
 - o PPE
 - o These are inter-related.
- Only 1 COVID-positive firefighter whose infection was not work-related.
- Timeline:
 - o March 12: 911 operators coded difficulty breathing calls and sick persons in terms of U21 (U21 = COVID-19)
 - U21 positive
 - U21 inconclusive
 - U21 negative
 - o March 13: Medical Mobile Outreach program at the shelter suspended.
 - o March 17: all employees screened twice a day, recording temperature and symptoms.
 - o March 18: all calls were coded for U21
 - o March 19: to March 8% calls coded positive, the next week 17% were coded positive.
 - o March 27: 8 firefighters were put on leave for quarantine. Changed operation to require full PPE interacting with patients regardless of U21 status. A diabetic call later turned out to be U21 positive
 - o April 1: Bramhall started daily briefings.
 - o April 7: activated regional hazmat team and put Decon 1 (a rescue 2 truck) into service.
 - Hire 2 people to clean all the ambulances every day.
 - o April 14: final person on self-quarantine came back to work.
 - o April 19-26: 34% of all EMS calls coded as U21 positive.
- Call volume for the department
 - o Average Daily call from March 11 to April 16:
 - EMS calls down a little
 - Fire calls up slightly
 - o At first, folks wanted to go to the hospital and get checked, but now EMS calls are dropping to avoid going to the hospital. Fire is anticipating sicker people on their calls due to people waiting to call in to avoid hospitals.
 - Total YTD calls have not dropped much: only down 3%.

Committee Questions

- Councilor Chong thanked the Chief and asked what the public can do to support the Fire Department and the Police department in terms of PPE?

- There has been large public support already and had to put out a press release to send support to other entities in the city. There were food donations that cannot be accepted due to safety protocol.
 - There is a blood drive scheduled for June 30th at Merrill Auditorium.
 - What can the public do to keep first responders safe when the call?
 - If possible, meet first responders outside the homes instead of going inside.
 - Give the most detailed information possible greatly helps first responders, including police.
 - Councilor Chong would like to put that information on the communications page. Chief Gautreau agreed that helping keep EMS safe helps keep everyone safe, including during the three major fires they have responded to since the start of the pandemic.
 - Councilor Ali asked for clarification on donations; FIRE will accept PPS, not food donations.
 - Fire will evaluate PPE donations to see where and how it can be used.
- Fire has multiple ties for PPE and have only received 30% of what was requested.
 - There has been a lack of communication from the State on why the rest of the PPE isn't being given.
 - Started the emergency situation with 1,100 masks.
 - Guidance has changed, allowing for 5 uses of each N95 mask.
 - Only has 500 N95 Masks
 - Chief Gautreau asked for the Committee's help in securing more PPE.
- Councilor Asked aside from masks, what other personal protective equipment (PPE) is needed?
 - Need full Tyvek suits, goggles, and n95 masks.
 - Covid positive call responders working with patients use an insert for their masks, with a last resort using the heavy air tanks.
 - Firefighters have created masks out of HEPA vacuum bags that have passed the fit test but would only use these in the event they needed to use the heavy air tanks.
 - Councilor Ali asked about face shields and if they would make use of any donations.
 - Fire has enough face shields.
 - Councilor Chong asked where Tyvek suits are procured.
 - First order with a vendor before the emergency was declared: 1,200 suits
 - Suits are also being procured from the state and they have enough.

Chief Clark, Police Chief

- Police Department concerns were also staffing levels and PPS
- Posture: normal focus is on community policing
- Staffing:
 - 2 officers have tested positive with one already back to work.
 - 12 hour shifts with emergency staffing to have the same coverage with less staff.
 - 19 civilian remote staff.
 - 3 in the station doing different work.

- o 2 officers on military deployments in medical fields.
- Messaging to officers that people react to the situation in different ways.
 - o Staff mostly concerned with infecting their families.
- Internal website created with staff resources.
 - o Dispatch information.
 - o Suspended shoulder to shoulder roll calls.
 - o Closed the station but kept lobby access.
 - o More calls diverted to desk officers.
- Capacity to respond to emergency situations have not changed.
- Issuing more summonses versus physical arrests.
- Reparatory protection program
 - o 200 N95 masks from Fire.
- Instituted pre-shift health screenings related to COVID-19 and their temperature is taken.
- Shift commanders have authority to ensure calls are handled with the highest level of safety for the officers.
- 7 cadets from the police academy are working while the academy is closed and have been certified with the State to be pre-service officers. They will do some online training for credit hours.
- Operating outside the curfew hours.
 - o Vast majority of the public have been helpful and needed education on the hours.
- Protocol with CDC to be able to restrict a positive individual's movement who is non-compliant to insure their and the public's safety.
- March 15-April 26:
 - o PD calls for service down 19%
 - o Total reports down 24%
 - o Online reporting up 89%.
 - o Arrests and summonses down 17%.
 - o 66% decrease in traffic crashes.
 - o Crime down 34%.

Committee Questions

- Councilor Chong is happy that staff are being taken care of, noting the internal information and EAP services. He asked what the public can do to support the PD. He also asked about domestic violence and what people can do to support victims when there is less possibility for bystander intervention and reporting.
 - o Biggest need is N95 masks.
 - o Domestic violence, child abuse, substance use disorders and mental health are all areas of concern during the emergency.
 - o For domestic violence specifically, try to maintain outside relationships and that there are services available for outreach, including the police for wellness checks.
 - o School resource officers will do more regular outreach to the student population.
 - o Councilor Ali asked if it is possible for school resource officers or social workers to be at the meal pickups at schools.
 - This is an example of the type of conversations occurring within PD.
 - o Councilor Ali asked if PD would accept shelled masks.
 - They would accept them and evaluate how they would use them.

- Councilor Ali explained there are daily conversations in the school system on student engagement and suggested talking to the principals to connect the school resource officers (SRO) into those efforts.
- Councilor Ray asked how well enforcement of the orders has gone.
 - Guidance has helped define the orders for staff.
- Councilor Ray asked about the protocol for individuals expected to be positive who are not willing to isolate.
 - Protocol is for confirmed Covid-19 positive folks.
 - Maine CDC communicates statuses,
 - Shelter staff notify PD someone has left quarantine
 - PD speaks with CDC which has the authority to restrict movement and confirms if an individual needs to be detained and PD can pick them up. A hotel is contracted with the state so safely shelter individuals in need of quarantine.
- Crime is down 34% since the emergency was declared.
- Councilor Ray asked about hot spots in the community.
 - Bay side and the peninsula have the most calls and dedicated resources.
- Councilor Ray asked about t
- Councilor Chong asked if community policing will be doing biking patrols, specifically around back bay.
 - They have been patrolling the peninsula.

Kristen Dow, HHS Director

- Kristen thanked Chief Clark and Chief Gautreau for being great partners during the emergency.
- Kristen explained HHS has four divisions and the department started planning and implementation in January.

Public Health

- Screening guidelines at the public health clinic to identify COVID-19 infection.
- Posted and translated informational materials on the Website
- Closed the India Street Health clinic on March 18th due to a positive staff case.
 - Staff self-isolated.
 - March 24, resumed needle exchange services.
 - Implemented safety measures and training for volunteers.
- India Street Health Clinic
 - STI Clinic
 - Now appointment only.
 - Screening before each appointment
 - Staggered staffing:
 - Different staff each day in case there is another exposure; staff can isolate without having to shut down the clinic.
- Funding: creative thinking of how to engage the public and school when schools are closed.
- Community Health program is translating COVID-19 materials.
- Maternal Child Health Program.

- o Nurses are doing mostly phone screenings with new moms.
 - o Limited home visits mostly outside the home while wearing PPE.
- Public Health Staff are consulting on best practices on COVID-19.
 - o Suspension of reusable bag fee.
 - o Social Distancing while outside.
- Public Health Director Search
 - o Second round of interviews are on hold until City Hall reopens to the Public,
 - o Alex and Bridget have stepped up as co-directors in the interim.

Barron Center

- Plan in place by March 9th.
- Closed for visitors on March 13th
- Started screening all staff and outside workers (contractors, and other services)
- All staff have PPE
- Emptied out two units in preparation for if they find a positive case and created a staffing plan in the event there is a positive case.
- Communicating with families and the Center for Medicaid/Medicare (CMS) guidelines.
 - o Will become weekly

Office of Elder Affairs.

- April 13: stopped adult day care program.
 - o Regular check in- with participants.
- Food shopping and delivery program previously discussed.

Social Services

- Running multiple shelters: Oxford Street Shelter, Expo (no longer confirmed contact, but for social distancing), and confirmed contact and positive shelters inside the family shelter.
- Caity helped create protocols that were implemented immediately (March 9th).
 - o Sleeping head to toe; this later became a CDC best practice.
 - o Temperature checks.
- Spoke to Boston shelters.
- Opening the different shelters quickly to separate clients.
- Mercy Hospital and Northern Light Healthcare are supplying on-site care to the respite shelter, expo and OSS. Treatment for all needs, not just COVID-19.
 - o Gave been able to screen and clear shelter guests.
- Daily calls with other shelter services providers which share data and coordinate efforts.
- To date there have been 7 positive cases in the shelter system:
 - o 5 at Oxford Street
 - o 2 at Sullivan Gym.
- CDC did universal testing at the Sullivan Gym and Oxford Street Shelter and there were no positive cases.
 - o Nationally, universal testing at emergency shelters results in a third of all tests coming back positive.
- Individuals and families coming from out of state must isolate for 14 days.
- New individuals are referred to General Assistance.

- General Assistance (GA) is closed to the public but has an outdoor window for people to walk up to.
- GA denial rates are down.
- 68 individuals have been placed in hotels some of which will be paid through General Assistance and other FEMA money.
- GA has opened up to 7 days a week, adding staff on Saturday and Sunday.

Councilor Ray thanked Kristen and noted that there were zero positive cases at the shelters after universal testing.

- Chair Ray asked how many families are in hotels.
 - Kristen will get the number and estimates around 20.
- Councilor Ray clarified that EXPO and OSS are wellness shelters and are not suspected of being positive, Family shelter has a PUI shelter for people suspected of being positive and separate units in the family shelter are for confirmed positive cases.
- Councilor Ali thanked Kristen and the GA staff for working on Saturday and Sunday and asked about the staffing at the shelter.
 - Staffing is good and everyone is coming into work.
 - Splitting the number of guests between two shelters has helped.
 - Staff in Public Health who used to work at the shelter volunteered to work at the EXPO.
 - A former staff member offered to return to work at the shelter.
- The Barron Center will accept any type of PPE offered.
- Councilor Ali asked how many people were tested.
- Councilor Ali asked if we are giving shelter staff hazard pay.
 - Frontline workers were approved a hazard stipend and definitely include shelter staff.
- Councilor Chong believes our social services is a safety net for greater Portland and doesn't think the public understands the extent of what is done.
 - He would like to see more resources to Social Services as it impacts the health and safety of the greater Portland area.
 - Is there a grant writer available to find more support to safety net services?
 - GA clients that need to take public transit now need to wear masks but no resources to supply them.
 - He wants the public to understand how outstanding the test results are and the many different.
- Homelessness
 - 600 people can be referred to 4 different sites (OSS, Expo, Sullivan. FS units)
 - Others are referred to GA with extended hours on Saturday and Sunday, reduced the denial rate to 3.4% and placed 86 individuals in hotels.
 - What happens to the 3.4%
 - These are not necessarily just housing. Denials can be due to income and other circumstances.
 - If individuals qualify for GA, staff will work with clients to find emergency shelter in hotels. After COVID-19 public health concerns subside, people will again go to the oxford street shelter and not hotels.

- Councilor Ali asked about people not on the list for the shelters and present for shelter after GA is closed, what happens?
 - o Kristen said staff will work with anyone who presents, and there is an after-hours GA number.
 - o Councilor Chong followed up that no one is turned away and hotels can be used in the middle of the night.
- Councilor Chong asked if there as been an increase in overdoses.
 - o Yes, there has been an increase in overdoses.
 - o Needle exchange has started doing curbside exchanges and outreach more outreach hours.
 - o Councilor Chong highlighted the service this provides for the safety of the region and how important funding is for these programs.
- Councilor Chong asked Chief Clark about rural areas where postal workers do elderly checks. Are we working with postal workers as they go to each house and could be resource in terms of reporting domestic violence?
 - o There is not a formal program but will be included in the messaging going forward.
- Councilor Ray said that people want to help and there are volunteer opportunities in HHS. Is there a place on the website that lists volunteer opportunities?
 - o There is a website called Maine Ready that lists volunteer opportunities.
- Councilor Ray said that in January the committee decided April may be a good time to check in on COVID-19.

Councilor Ali moved to adjourn, Councilor Chong seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:45 PM.