



Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee Minutes

Tuesday, July 14, 2020, 5:30pm, Remote Meeting

Committee Attendance:

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

Councilors in Attendance:

Jill Duson (At-Large)

Mayor Kate Snyder

City Staff:

Kristen Dow, Director of Health and Human Services; Christine Grimando, Director of Planning and Urban Development; Adam Harr, Executive Assistant for Social Services

Meeting called to order at 5:35 PM.

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Announcements

- Kristen Dow
 - o Public Health is doing universal testing events at Portland Housing Authority Locations.
 - Tomorrow from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM at Sagamore Village
 - Materials are translated.
 - Mercy Hospital conducting testing and community health outreach workers will offer services in multiple languages.
 - Referrals to primary care physicians.
 - Releases with Maine CDC to work to provide updates to people who test positive to provide wrap-around services.
 - Testing is planned at all Portland Housing Authority sites eventually.
 - o Councilor Chong asked if people with housing 8 vouchers will be tested or just PHA locations?
 - Kristen will follow up.
 - Councilor Duson thanked Kristen for the outreach and collaboration.
 - PHA knows who their voucher holders are and PHA could invite people to the next rounds of testing.
 - o Hope is to create a comprehensive model for community testing.
- Chair Ray announced that at the last meeting, HHS&PS started the conversation at this meeting.
 - o The minutes are available: <https://www.portlandmaine.gov/129/Agendas-Minutes>.
 - o There are answers from this committee and the full council; she sent a request for a place for all the information to be accessible.

- o This information will be made available in the next agenda.
- o Councilor Ali agreed on then need for a racial equity page linked from the homepage.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – Approval of Minutes

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

AGENDA ITEM 3 – Shelter Zoning

Christine Grimando – Director of Planning and Urban Development

<https://portlandme.civicclerk.com/Web/GenFile.aspx?ad=5992>

- January through April, 2017
 - o Review of best practices and shelter requirements
 - o Analysis considering zoning districts, transit access, conditional use criteria and how they relate to shelter zoning.
 - o Chair Ray added that the reason the committee looked at every single district was for the size of the shelter in mind, there would be a lack of adequate space.
 - How to find larger sites in the City?
 - o Planning Board holds one workshop and a public hearing in April 2017, recommends changes to City Council
- City Council Adopts Zoning Amendments June 5, 2017
 - o Consistent with what had been discussed up until that time.
- Prior to June 2017, emergency shelters were permitted in the B-3 zone as conditional uses. 2017 permitted emergency shelters in additional Business and Industrial Zones.
- Emergency shelters allowed as conditional uses in:
 - o B-3, B-3b, B-3c
 - o B-4
 - o B-5, B-5b
 - o I-L, I-Lb
 - o I-M, I-Mb
 - o I-H, I-Hb
- Expanded Conditional Use Standards
 - o Adequate space for conducting security searches

- o Centralized shelter operations office on each floor
- o Management Plan
- o Access to METRO, within ¼ mile of a line, or within ½ mile w/adequate indoor space for guests during day and strategies to help guests utilize transit.
- o On-site services Laundry, kitchen, pantry, bicycle storage, secure storage facilities
- o Outdoor space
- This conditional use always trigger planning board review, site plan review and a higher level site plan review that goes to the planning board.
- Intended to go into smaller shelter zoning.
- Smaller Shelter Zoning:
 - o Then Mayor Strimling requested HHS&PS look at smaller shelter zoning, for expansion citywide with size tiers.
 - HHS&PS made a recommendation to go to planning board.
 - o Planning board was not ready to take action at the time.
 - Licensing may have be influenced
 - Public outreach concerns
 - Compatibility of lot size concerns.
 - No recommendation either way; they did not feel that they had enough information to make a recommendation and postponed indefinitely to be reviewed to move forward a t similar time licensing is considered.
 - It has not been looked at since then.
- Chair Ray suggested adding the following documents to those included:
 - o Minutes from October 10, 2017 HHS&PS meeting.
 - Meeting discussed the use of buffer zones with the intent for zoning to go through planning board while licensing takes up buffers.
 - Small shelter zoning has remained on the work plan.
 - The committee at the time was Brian Batson, Nick Mavodones and Belinda Ray.

Committee Questions and Discussion

- Councilor Chong asked what defines a shelter; would milestone of a domestic violence shelter be included?
 - o It is a simple definition modulated by the conditional use standards.
 - Emergency Shelter: a facility providing temporary overnight shelter to homeless individuals in a dormitory style or per bed arrangement.
 - o Can a recovery home open and not call itself a shelter?
 - There is a shelter care group home definition that specific to sober houses.
 - Other definitions exist for specified needs such a s a handicapped living unit.

- Primary service is shelter and may provide services for substance use or others, but the primary intent is emergency shelter.
 - There is one domestic violence shelter in the city which is a shelter.
 - There is a program under development with a program that is not a shelter but serves people experiencing domestic violence and their children.
 - Sober group homes are programs that serve people who may have permanent housing elsewhere.
 - Shelter care group homes have a maximum occupancy of 12 people and many sober homes are operating as single-family homes that can have a capacity of 16 people.
 - Some have come in under other uses.
- Definitions will be discussed.
- There is not tracking or licensing requirements for the other uses.
- Within the continuum of care, there is blurring at the edges.
- Shelters' dedicated use is for homelessness.
- Councilor Chong asked about a hypothetical situation where people with COVID-19 need to be quarantined.
 - Where would a facility for placing people in quarantine, not for homelessness, fall?
 - Kristen said the State has contracted with a hotel for people without space to quarantine at their homes to quarantine away from people.
 - The PUI and Respite shelter the City is running is only for people experiencing homelessness.
 - Planning perspective: it is a temporary, emergency situation but if after a length of time a hotel changes how it is operating, that would start a conversation.
 - Hotels acting in this emergency capacity are still hotels until that conversation needs to happen.
- Councilor Ali asked if there is a way to see all the different definitions of shelter or related spectrum.
 - What does and does not require a license?
 - Something similar will be discussed this Fall around various types of lodging houses in addition to existing materials that can be provided to the committee.
- Mayor Snyder asked about what triggered shelter zoning being on the agenda this evening?
 - It is on the work plan. And was identified as a priority this council year for June.
 - Sober houses fell away in from originally being scheduled for April then the pandemic hit.
- Chair Ray asked if the committee would like to proceed down the track?

- o The original track of the HHS&PS committee was shelters to be possible throughout the city for equitable share of the shelter responsibility.
 - Is it worth continuing down this path?
 - If so, are the bed numbers and zones still appropriate?
 - How to handle buffers through licensing still needs to be addressed.
- o Councilor Chong is interested in moving forward and would like to see equitable distribution throughout the city.
 - This could educate the public and show the distribution of group homes throughout the city.
- o Councilor Ali agreed that there is a benefit to having smaller shelters throughout the City.
- o Chair Ray referred to the plan to end homelessness where the City-run shelter acts as a centralized intake facility and emergency shelter where the stays would be short and more specialized referrals are made.
 - Zoning change would address location of more niche shelters and that we could refer to.
- Buffer Zones
 - o Councilor Chong asked should we establish buffer zones during a pandemic?
 - Buffer for permanent shelters but not emergency temporary shelters.
 - o Councilor Chong said there is room for General Assistance reform discussion so people aren't leaving their communities to come to Portland during a pandemic.
 - o Mayor Snider is interested in the buffer zone discussion and asked Christine if there is a map that shows all of the facilities with similar uses being discussed mapped out.
 - Christian Roadman mapped out social services with special analysis
 - What can be mapped?
 - Some are not tracked or licensed for legal reasons.
 - Shelters can be mapped.
 - Christine clarified emergency shelter in definition is a permanent shelter and can be mapped but temporary shelters are not so easily mapped.
 - o The Riverton neighborhood may get some assurance if buffers would be applied universally to emergency shelters small and large to not create a new social services hub. Language in buffers:
 - By facility?
 - By bed numbers?
 - Can Christine look at different ways to create limitations that create equity and distribution?
 - Can this be ready for August or September?
 - Could this be bundled into the discussion taking place in early fall?

- A map could be ready for August.
 - In addition to mapping, looking at number of beds in recovery and lodging homes.
 - Do 20 and 40 beds still make sense under the recode process?
 - Planning Board is voting to make recommendations on Recode Phase 1 on July 28th. It does not look at zone boundaries but address if the zones are working and reaching policy goals.
- Next Steps
 - o Definitions of non-permanent housing that do and do not require licenses.
 - Shelters do not currently require a license.
 - o Thoughts on a buffer zone.
 - o Public Hearing.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – Emergency Shelter COVID-19 Update

- Sullivan Gym Wellness Shelter
 - o 50 beds
 - o 40 individuals came from the Sullivan and placed to the EXPO and OSS
 - 17 went to Expo.
 - 23 went to OSS.
 - 3 went to Florence House.
 - 7 went to Milestone.
- No one should be at the gym tonight.
- The EXPO
 - o Able to stay through mid-September and news is forthcoming.
 - o Expo as contractual obligation in October; will be moved out by mid-September.
 - o Last night: 30 people staying at the EXPO and 47 stayed at OSS.
 - o New individuals are not entering shelter.
 - o 25 individuals have been housed since the end of March.
- Councilor Chong asked if Maine Housing money is following Sullivan Gym guests.
 - o Kristen is working with MaineHousing and will have more updates soon.
- Councilor Chong requested a proclamation to thank partners,
- Mayor Snider asked how long hotels will be funded for people to quarantine.
 - o Kristen said that is something she will discuss with MaineHousing as two family shelter facilities are empty to be available for PUI and Respite.
 - o If the Expo can be extended, will that discussion come back to this committee or the full Council
 - Kristen will discuss with the City Manager to discuss and share next steps.
- Councilor Ray asked about vacant family shelter buildings and if people are still being assisted.
 - o 17 families are staying in hotels and are continuing to be housed.
 - o 2 out of 4 Family Shelter buildings are being used for People Under Investigation (symptomatic and awaiting testing results) and respite is for people who tested positive and are recovering.
- Councilor Ray asked how many single adults are staying in hotels
 - o About 160 are staying in hotels using GA.

- Councilor Ali asked if the individuals staying at hotels are receiving services.
 - GA vouchers (noted: food, non-food, Rx)
 - Housing services
- Chair Ray asked what the budgetary impacts are. There are still rent and utilities but what is the difference between normal operations?
 - It is something being looked at as it impacts bed nights which we bill for so it affects revenue.
 - 70% GA reimbursement for hotels and the remaining 30% is being covered through other COVID-19 related funding. To date, 100% of GA hotels are covered for the time being (FEMA, State and CARES Act).
- Chair Ray asked how services are being provided.
 - Outreach through Amistad and MaineHousing.
 - Food delivery by Preble street.
 - There are regular provider calls.
- Chair Ray asked how we will sustain partnerships care as the temporary emergency funding wanes? (sustain benefits that are not just financial)
- Councilor Chong asked if we have operated GA for seven days a week before and if staff time is being reimbursed?
 - To Kristen's knowledge, it is the first time and is one of the only municipalities open seven days a week; there is a 24/7 GA hotline that is always available.
 - She is not able to speak to staffing cost reimbursement.
- Councilor Chong said he would like to see how much GA funding Portland gets and to ask if it is a State program or Portland one when looking at clients and costs. Portland should have a bigger say.
 - Councilor Ali said it is possible to discuss this with our delegation.
- Councilor Chong asked if there are racial disparities in our shelters.
 - Family Shelter had bigger positive rates than any universal testing sites which prompted testing in more communal settings.
 - Are Ethnic Community Based organizations (ECBOs) reaching out to us?
 - Councilor Ali with Councilor Dusen met with Kristen and the City Manager and expects more will reach out as testing is announced.
 - Kristen said she wants to work with different organizations and will be taking notes on what they learn from testing tomorrow.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – Next Steps

- The next meeting is August 11th.
 - Sprinklers and Public Health Note.
 - Public Health Note and possible intersection with Racial Equity Note or adding racial equity to the public health note as Councilor Ali's advocacy led the full Council to identify racism as a public health crisis.
 - Background: Victoria Morales (D): South Portland attempted to get Public Health Notes required similar to Fiscal Notes.
 - The definition is broad: what categories of public health would be included?
 - Chair Ray said Kristen would help define the scope and feasibility of adding a public health analysis to Council agenda items.

- Councilor Chong is concerned about CARES Act aid expiring supplanting the agenda.
- Councilor Ali said both are important and is open to both being on the agenda.
- Chair Ray listed work plan items; Councilor Chong said mental health is towards the top for him, citing the uptake in overdoses and other behaviors mental health impacts such as suicide.
- Kristen announced that the new Public Health Director has been selected: Bob Fowler, coming from his role as Executive Director of the Milestone Recovery.
- Councilor Ali told Kristen about the Government Alliance on Race and Equity has a racial equity impact template.
 - The American Public Health Association has Public Health Note Templates.
- Small shelter zoning comes back in September.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:25 PM.