

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Remote Meeting

Thursday, August, 2020

9:00 am – 10:30 am

Minutes

Name	Organization
Adam Harr	City of Portland
Kathleen Babeu	City of South Portland
Katie Seelen	United Way
Aaron Geyer	City of Portland
Jim Devine	HVJ
Benjamin Strick	Spurwink
Bill Higgins	Ha4aLL
Treva deMaynadier	West end resident
Donna Yellen	Preble Street
Tom Natalie	Milestone Recovery
Anne Pringle	Friends of Deering Oaks
Cat Bates	Portland Resident
Kerrie Keller	United Way
Beka Burns	Portland resident
Jenny Stasio	Through These Doors
Amanda Methot	City of Portland

Name	Organization
Norm Maze	Shalom House
Ginny Dill	Shalom House
Vickey Rand	CHOM
Amy Geren	Portland Downtown
Eliza Burke	South Portland resident
Brian Townsend	Amistad
Catherine Buxton	Resident, East Bayside
Abby Chick	USM
Samuel Bush	West end resident
Jonathan Sahrbeck	District Attorney
Ken Capron	MicroRail
Bridgette Semler	Maine Statewide Youth Action Board
Jess Falero	Maine People's Housing Coalition
Dan Coyne	United Way
Deb Ibonwa	Maine Equal Justice
Sam Seda	

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Kate Bispham	Housed community member	Elizabeth Jackson	Greater Portland Health
Peter McLaughlin	Portland Resident	Olivia Orr	West Bayside resident
Aaron Porter	Unhoused community member	Quinn Farwell	East end resident
Kerry Anderson	Portland Resident	Jasmine Haines	West end resident

- **Introductions**

- Jenny moved to approve the meeting minutes from June, July and the unsheltered meeting August 13, 2020. Bill seconded and the minutes were approved unanimously.

- **ESAC Letter to HUD**

- On July 24th the administration published a proposed rule in the community development and housing program eligibility based on sex; it can affect transgender and non-binary people who are over represented in homeless, specially youth homelessness.
 - It instructs shelter staff to assign individuals gender at sex segregated dorms based on observation.
 - Comments are due by the 22nd.
 - This group has been opposed to any federal change that would exacerbate homelessness.
 - This rule would preclude some transgender and non-binary people from shelter.
 - Vickey asked if anyone would entertain a motion for ESAC to write/send a letter opposing this rule.
 - Norm moved to write a letter opposing the rule, donna and Aaron seconded. There was no discussion and the motion passed with none opposed.

- **HVJ Update**

- Anna Brewer is on vacation
- Preparing questionnaires for the upcoming election.
 - With the resource center shut down, their usual candidate forums are not able to happen.
 - Doing outreach to shelters for voter registration; this is made challenging due to the coronavirus.

- **July Shelter Statistics**

- Amend the placement slides for the Permanent housing column as the posted total permanent placements do not include the OSS women's placements.
- Florence House CTO: CTO was taken by someone staying at safe haven in an argument outside of Florence house and the police issued a CTO for one person and Florence House is attempting to fight it.

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- **LTS Update**
 - The group is continuing to meet and focusing on individuals who are highest need and may be outside the shelter and in the community.
 - Covid is making wrap around services difficult.
- **Unsheltered Homelessness**
 - Meeting Report Outs
 - Connecting to individuals in Deering Oaks and camping out to make sure people know their options
 - General Assistance hotels.
 - Reversing CTOs when possible
 - Outreach teams distributing
 - Masks
 - Hand Sanitizer
 - Naloxone; naloxone is available to anyone who needs it and training is available
 - Waste
 - Can City trash bags be provided to individuals at the city?
 - One issue with trash is seagulls tearing open collected trash.
 - Parks and Rec left rakes in the park and individuals staying there
 - What is the schedule for the porta potties?
 - Aaron to reach out
 - Is there a way to provide hand wash facilities?
 - There were hand sanitizer stations.
 - There is discussion of the City buying hand washing stations.
 - CTOs from Deering Oaks
 - Creating one number to call to divert from CTOS
 - Meetings have been collaborative.
 - Idea for PD to share a list of people who have been CTOd that service providers could create a space for revisiting CTOS
 - There is an existing process for appealing CTOs
 - PD encourages people to go through the appeal process
 - Are there advocates to help people go through the appeal process?
 - It is something that should be discussed.
 - HVJ and former police chief have done some CTO work in the past.
 - Is there a way to formally get appeals prices support on the agenda at the next meeting CTOs are addressed?
 - Meredith will bring it up at the next meeting.
 - The Amistad outreach team can help individuals communicate with PD anytime.
 - Is anyone aware of successful appeals?

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- o Spurwink will report back after they go through that process.
 - o Recent successes in that area. 3 CTOs were overturned and folks were able to stay.
- There is a difference between CTOs in public Spaces and CTOS in Private Spaces.
 - o The CTOs for public spaces went down to 6 months. The 6-month public CTO (down from 1 year) and appeals process were gained through the HVJ Outreach efforts to PD.
 - o PD is being very specific of where CTOs are for.
- Be, resident of Parkside neighborhood asked if it is possible to stop giving CTOs for public spaces?
 - She drove an individual to the shelter but were not able to access the shelter; General Assistance was closed at the time so they had to sleep out that night.
- CTOs in public spaces have come up and were discussed at the meeting earlier this week that came out with a 24-hour number for PD to call.
- What are the vouchers taking time to get into people's hands?
 - Reach out to Shalom House for Shelter Plus Care and BRAP
 - o The issue is having enough resources to find a place.
 - o There was a lack of housing before the pandemic.
 - o The process to apply is befuddling.
 - General Assistance
 - o Denial rates pre-COVID-19 were 12-14% on average and now are less than 5% with the greatest volume we've seen in the past decade.
 - o State statutes are strict for eligibility.
 - o GA has added office hours on Saturday and Sunday.
 - o There is an after-hours General Assistance line.
- People are being told that there are beds at OSS and Expo but are then being turned away. Can someone entering homelessness stay at the shelter?
 - There are beds at each shelter but individuals who have not stayed at the shelter are being issued hotel vouchers.
 - As capacity at the shelters increases, people move from the hotel into the shelter.
- Katherine Hewitt: The shelter and hotels are being used to shelter unsheltered individuals. What does this process look like and does is someone seeking shelter today able to get a hotel?
 - Why are there not City Councilors or Kristen Dow at this meeting.
 - o Vickey asked the Tri-Chairs to explain ESAC and what the goals of the meetings are.

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- Aaron Geyer explained that City Councilors historically don't attend ESAC and started by a group of providers with city involvement.
 - Advocacy from ESAC looks like letters of support.
 - It is an open public meeting with anyone able to add agenda items.
 - We are in the middle of the process of looking at governance of ESAC.
- Aaron Porter: Issues navigating the shelter system.
 - Despite his white privilege, he and his family have faced discrimination throughout the shelter systems and his family does not feel safe in shelters.
 - PD is trying to hide homelessness and telling folks to hide.
 - Peter witnessed PD telling an unhoused person to hide so that PD would not have to issue arrests or CTOs.
 - Infractions are so minor that judges are throwing the cases out.
 - Community is raising funds for bail money.
 - DA Sahrbeck said that City Leadership needs to be a part of this and that this is not new, but had been in Bayside for the last few years. CTOs are all case by case basis where some do not move forward as the arrest achieves the goal of a CTO.
 - Next ESAC meeting that speaks about CTOs, someone from the City that knows more about the appeals process should be present.
- Jess Falero: Was not given the tools during her time in the shelter and that people do not access shelter for reasons that should be explored in these meetings.
- Be: They are concerned giving someone criminal trespass orders will prevent someone from attaining stability because criminal charges are creating barriers to housing and work. Something needs to be done quickly.
 - Is not giving CTOs for public spaces something that this group can bring forward to the City Council?
- Ken Capron: 3 councilor seats are up to vote so where they are on this issue can be asked of candidates.
 - A new city shelter being looked at.
 - The Council is worried about politics.
- Encampments
 - Katherine asked is it possible to have an area that sanctions camping?
 - Riley agreed and witnessed PD slashing tents when encampments were cleared.

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- Peter McLaughlin agreed that there are city owned green spaces close enough to downtown that are not used that could be offered for people to use without violent threat of policing.
 - This type of policy change requires zero dollars and would give service providers central access to support people sleeping outside.
- Ken suggested yurts.
- Katherine said that people separated in their own tents would help with COVID.
- Kate said the City was involved directly with removing tents and that people were made to leave the steps of city hall; the city scooped up donated items with front loaders. People were not given the time to collect their belongings.
 - The City sprayed HDX cleaners on people and food.
- Riley said that this is not a lack of money from the City but a narrative that people deserve where they are at.
 - There are solutions and conversations with the City need to happen with the City without going around in circles.
- Aaron Porter took time from work and his family to make sure the encampment had a formal message and that it was running. He wanted every member of the unhoused community to be seen and heard.
- Brian Townend explained that ESAC is currently reviewing its governance and what it is doing well and not well.
 - We were lacking energy and community participation; this meeting's attendance is welcome.
 - It is a completely independent body separate from the City Council
 - City Council Attending the meeting has always been an issue.
 - Onboarding new members is being looked at.
 - This energy isn't wasted; ESAC is looking at how we can meaningfully impact.
- **Governance Sub Committee**
 - One combined vote to approve the governance committee's recommendation to continue the tri-chair configuration as it exists and stand up a new executive committee to come to conclusions on voting, clerical processes etc.
 - Tri-chairs
 - City of Portland
 - Homeless Voices for Justice
 - United Way
 - Executive Committee
 - Tri-chair organizations plus Preble Street and Amistad.
 - Maybe someone from the people's housing coalition be involved?
 - Donna agreed

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- Executive Committee would work out a process for groups with clear stakes to become a voting body.
- Norm moved to accept the recommendations as presented as Brian, Donna seconded.
 - Discussion: who are the voting members.
 - Ironically this is why we are voting because that question is fuzzy.
 - The motion passed unanimously.
- **Federal, State and Local Legislation**
 - Preserving Community and Neighborhood Choice Rule; it completely undoes a fair housing rule.
 - It's complicated; it more broadly defines fair housing and removes certifications furthering fair housing.
 - It could potentially restrict people of color, LGBTQ+ people, survivors of domestic violence from/create barriers to housing
 - It may remove some administrative burden for housing authorities but removes some ability to enforce fair housing.
 - CHOM sent a letter to Senator Collins.
 - The rule goes into effect on September 8th.
 - The window to advocate is small.
 - Bill moved ESAC sign onto a letter to our delegation.
 - Discussion: Riley said that their understanding that there are things in place to prevent discrimination based on race and sexual orientation and that those would be removed?
 - 1968 Fair Housing Act still remains protections based on protected class, however the rule that this repeal and replaces had additional protections for those protected classes (there are more protections at our State level than the federal level).
 - The rule removes the protections added by the rule being replaced.
 - HUD funded entities have to certify they are adhering to a rule that were not for those rules, some people would not have been reach.
 - George said that the original rule was weak and does not think it's appropriate to look at federal level issues that doesn't affect Portland. The
 - Vickey respectfully disagreed and that this group has taken action on this in the past. Having access to affordable housing, largely HUD funded, does impact housing vulnerable people in Portland.
 - Riley wants to look at issues that impact locally.
 - Anyone opposed to the motion?
 - None.

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- The motion was approved.
 - o Historically, this group would advocate on any issues that may negatively affect people experiencing homelessness.
- **Other Business**
 - o Bill shared that there is a Westbrook landlord looking to house 7 individuals in a group home format.
 - o Bill announced anyone can talk about something not on the agenda at City Council Meetings at 6:00 PM during those meetings.

Action Items

- Invite someone involved in CTO appeals process.

DRAFT