



City of Portland Racial Equity Steering Committee Agenda

Thursday, December 3, 2020 at 5:00 PM

1. ZOOM INFORMATION:

- a. The Racial Equity Steering Committee will hold a meeting on Thursday, December 3, 2020 at 5:00 PM. This meeting will take place remotely using Zoom. Virtual meetings are allowed using emergency legislation approved by LD 2167; 1 M.R.S. §403-A, that authorizes cities and towns to conduct meetings online.

Allow your computer to install the free Zoom app to get the best meeting experience. If you are not able to attend live, a recording will be uploaded to portlandmaine.gov/livestream the next day.

For public comment, you will need to use the "raise your hand" feature. To raise your hand via the telephone, please hit *9. You will be un-muted by the host when it is time for public comment.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://zoom.us/j/95423661909?pwd=OEtuQnJ0djE5YVgyS0NDb25Bcm42dz09>

Passcode: 627970

Or iPhone one-tap :

US: +13017158592,,95423661909# or +13126266799,,95423661909#

Or Telephone:

Dial(for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):

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Webinar ID: 954 2366 1909

International numbers available: <https://zoom.us/u/aBNPERx8f>

2. Approval of Minutes & Agenda Review

- a. Minutes from November 19, 2020 Meeting

3. Return to proposal for Racial Equity Commission & Director of Racial Equity office

- a. Proposals Language

4. Discuss Proposals to Address Racial Disparities Amongst Homeless Population in Portland

5. Logistics (public comment)

6. Adjournment

Date: November 19 2020

Attending: Ali Abdul, Niki Amaris, Suheir Alaskari, Jerome Bennett, Deb Ibonwa, Kate Knox, Lado Ladoka, Merita McKenzie, Peter O'Donnell, Louis Pickens, Jonathan Sahrbeck, Pious Ali (Co Chair), Lelia DeAndrade (Co-Chair); Samaa Abdurraqib (Facilitator),

Absent:

Meeting began at 5:00

Review of Agenda and minutes from 11/5//2020 approved.

Meeting Goals:

1. Discuss the 3 proposals from previous meeting
2. Update on research with Dr. Medford
3. Clarify Public Safety

Proposal: Working definition of Public Safety

- Protecting the wellbeing of people, communities, and organizations
- Safeguarding people from crimes, disaster, and other potential dangers and threats.
- Ensuring that people get a fair and equal chance for well-being and have quality of life

DeAndrade did research and identified common themes to construct a working definition

Clarified that the original resolution referenced public health which is different than public safety

Vote: 6 yes; 5 maybe

Discussion:

- Recommend changing the definition to include equity instead of equality
- Should include social service programs or safety net organizations specifically
- Should include a list of challenges that the city should be addressing
- Add a statement that includes extra consideration for BIPOC, or marginalized people.

Edits:

- Protecting the wellbeing of people, *of all races and ethnicities*, communities, and organizations
- Safeguarding people from crimes, disaster, and other potential dangers and threats and reducing fear.
- Ensuring that people get a fair and equitable chance to lead their life that is not predicted by race

Revised definition

- Protecting the wellbeing of people of all races and ethnicities, communities, and organizations
- Safeguarding people from crimes, disaster, and other potential dangers and threats and reducing fear
- Ensuring that people get a fair and equitable chance for well-being and have quality of life

Vote: Unanimously approved

Proposal: Create and establish a permanent position within the City's Health and Human Services department or the City Manager's office to regularly and daily monitor available resources (beds, treatment options, etc.) to provide updates to service providers who are working within communities in need.

Discussion:

- This is focused on services for marginalized people. There programs that are run by the city.
- This is a question about resources – not just a position but a system of monitoring the resources and coordinating them- enabling us to track demand and the ability to meet the demand
- Recommendation that this is framed to focus on the provision of real time information instead of focusing on a position. Technology could be used to create a system in which service providers can provide real time updates on available services
- We need to know all the organizations that are working to provide these services and establish a department within city government to coordinate
- We have created a solution without identifying the problems. What problem would this coordinator actually address? Is there a problem in this area? The first proposal is just passing the buck on our work before we get starting.
- The proposal was meant to reinforce the need for permanent long-term attention, regardless of and in addition to the work that we do.
- The problem is that we have real racial disparities, systematic and cultural racism, and this is the work that is needed. We need a permanent position in the city to work with this commission- similar to the structure established 20 years ago for historic preservation
- These proposals address systematic racism in permanent way and take advantage of the energy and momentum that is happening now and ensure accountability.
- Abdurraqib asked what kind of information we need to have to be able to make recommendations.
- A committee member wants to know what kinds of things people experience on the ground every day in Portland. What does it look like? What are the challenges? Is it that people aren't properly trained? How is racism manifest here? Our recommendations should be specific enough to make changes – connected to what is going on in Portland.
- Abdurraqib asked if anecdotal and statistical data would be needed. She also noted that asking Black and Brown people to tell their story is problematic. She also clarified that the second resolve asks us to look at the organizations the city engages with and ask if there are problems with that.
- Proposal to establish a commissioner or director would create an important step. It creates a frame to develop solutions to the problem over the years.
- We can table the discussion about monitoring available resources for the future and at some point, add a racial equity lens to it.
- We can vote on big picture resolutions and then get into the details down the line.

Vote: Unanimous- in favor of proposal

Proposal: Establish a commission to investigate the ways in which the City interacts with area agencies, organizations, and non-profits in the name of public safety. This commission will make recommendations for how these partnerships can best work to enhance public safety in racially equitable ways.

Meeting ended 6:30

The meeting ended abruptly when Zoom account was taken over for another meeting. Via email, advisors asked to continue the discussion at the next meeting.

RESC Proposals for charge #2:

- I. Establish a commission to investigate the ways in which the City interacts with area agencies, organizations, and non-profits in the name of public safety. This commission will make recommendations for how these partnerships can best work to enhance public safety in racially equitable ways.
- II. Create and establish a Director or Commissioner of Racial Equity as a permanent position within the City Manager's office (see full proposal on page 4 of this document)
- III. Create and establish a permanent position within the City's Health and Human Services department or the City Manager's office to regularly and daily monitor available resources (beds, treatment options, etc) to provide updates to service providers who are working within communities in need.
- IV. Public safety is:
 - A. Protecting the wellbeing of people of all races & ethnicities, communities, and organizations.
 - B. Safeguarding people from crimes, disaster, and other potential dangers and threats, and reducing fear
 - C. Ensuring that all people get a fair and equitable chance to lead a high quality of life that is not predicted by race.

Proposals to Address Racial Disparities Amongst Homeless Population in Portland as well as Among Those that Are Able to Access Health and Human Services Programs

- I. Require GA office and all social service departments run by the city's Department of Health and Human Services to track racial demographics for applications, denials, and approvals, and make the data publicly accessible.**
- II. Supplement Portland DHHS funding.** These funds would comprise of both unspent funds from other Departments such as Public Safety and new funding to address racial disparities in access to social service programs. Funds should be utilized to:
 - i. Hire racial equity ombudsmen who would have an office at each division under Portland's Health and Human Services Department. People in these positions would inform and update the Racial Equity Task force that this committee will recommend that the City creates. The ombudsmen should, in part: take racial equity complaints, mediate racial equity conflicts, record and recommend systemic changes based on information gathered and keep and publish the data recommended above.
 - ii. Increase staff and hire temp social service professionals to work on a temporary basis. This would ensure consistent access to GA and 24/7 access to Emergency GA.
 - iii. Ensure adequate social service staffing for social service programs either through direct hire or contracting.
 - iv. Enable increased capacity to enter into contracts with providers to conduct outreach and assist communities of color.
 - v. Any budget item that is not spent, regardless of which Departments they come from, at the end of the year should be added to a Community Support Fund to support the above recommendations.
- I. Review All Current Outstanding Criminal Trespass Orders and the Policies Surrounding the Issuance of CTO's:** The city should review all criminal trespass orders from shelters, public places and private property for disparate impact on historically marginalized communities and those struggling with substance use or mental health diagnoses. Every effort should be made to withdraw CTO's and instead ensure these individuals get the services and shelter they need to be successful.
- II. Begin Implementation of the [Equity Based Decision Making Framework for Homeless Service Systems](#)** from the National Innovation Service and supported by the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the National Low Income Coalition among others. The framework covers the following elements:
 1. **Policy and Decisions and Strategy:** Addresses the need for accessibility, clarity, community engagement in decision making that is driven by data "specific to those overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness ... and other

historically-marginalized communities.” Decision making should include specific strategies that advance racial equity and are accountable to impacted folks.

2. **Business Operations:** Looks at the need for participatory budgeting to meet community defined needs, and RFP processes that ask grantees how operations will directly address structural racism and intersectional oppressions. Like policy decisions and strategies, this should also be informed by data and public accountability (including funding public communication spaces for impacted communities).
3. **Hiring Operations:** Ensure that “Hiring and related talent processes within homelessness service systems should also prioritize racial equity in order to ensure that the staff and providers within the systems are well-suited to support individuals experiencing homelessness. All processes, policies, and guidance should be in alignment with federal and state regulations and Equal Employment Opportunity Office (EEOO) requirements.”

- III. **The city can and should also start planning to implement [The Framework for an Equitable Covid-19 Homelessness Response](#).** This document include clear recommendations on how communities – both public officials and non-profit partners can and should strive to build back a better homeless service system that (1) addresses the immediate of emergency of Covid-19 and (2) builds a stronger system that meets peoples needs in an equitable and humane way. The framework covers the following areas:

- (A) Unsheltered People
- (B) Shelters
- (C) Housing
- (D) Diversion and Prevention; and
- (E) Strengthening the system for the future.

Proposal for Racial Equity Director position

The Director of the Office of Racial Equity for the City of Portland, Maine will work in the Office of The City Manager and will be responsible for advancing a framework that will improve internal policies, practices and systems to eradicate structural and or institutional racism that may exist in City government. The Director will achieve this goal by working with the Racial Equity Committee established by the City Council , and through community engagement, analysis of policy, data collection, and training and recommend more comprehensive accountability measures for City of Portland departments. The Director will oversee the development of department action plans to eradicate racial inequality, and wil also issue a biennial “Racial Equity Status Report: to the Racial Equity Committee and the City Council.

In addition to the above the office will also provide analysis for any proposed legislation as to whether the proposed ordinance would promote Racial Equity by helping to close opportunity gaps for communities of color, or impede Racial Equity by furthering Racial Disparities.

The Director shall have experience in the following areas:

- A experienced visionary and practitioner in dismantling institutional racism and experience in recreating systems of belonging.
- Proven ability in managing changes in complex organizations.
- Experience in developing, implementing, and leading inclusion programs with demonstrable outcomes.
- Identifying equity concerns related to public policies.
- Is trusted local leader and a bridge builder of racial equity

- Proven ability to foster a progressive and diverse workforce and promote a diverse workplace.
- Be a data driven decision maker and propose policies and administrative changes that positively impact equity in City government and in the delivery of services to the community.