



City of Portland Racial Equity Steering Committee

December 10, 2020 at 5:00 PM

1. Zoom Information:

- a. The Racial Equity Steering Committee will hold a meeting on Thursday, December 10, 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/93801484142?pwd=dER1WjBTcGNHSEhlQndTbWxFe0o3QT09>

Passcode: 340262

Or iPhone one-tap :

US: +13126266799,,93801484142# or +16465588656,,93801484142#

Or Telephone:

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

US: +1 312 626 6799 or +1 646 558 8656 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 346 248 7799
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Webinar ID: 938 0148 4142

International numbers available: <https://zoom.us/u/aB9RY6jXy>

2. Approval of Minutes & Agenda Review

- a. December 3, 2020 Meeting Minutes

3. Discussion of Public Comment Sessions

- a. Publicity
b. Future Public Comment Dates
c. How will we describe this public comment session?

- Continued Discussion of "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"
4.
 - a. Proposal document
5. Adjournment

Date: December 3, 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 11/19//2020, minutes approved

Meeting Goals:

1. Review of the proposal of the racial equity commission and continue discussion
2. Review of proposal to create a permanent position
3. Discussion of opportunities for public comment

Discussion:

- Proposal to create a position to provide updated resources withdrawn

Discussion:

- Return to the proposal to establish a permanent commission to continue work to address racial equity
- Clarification that there is no city office that now serves the same role as the recommended permanent commission
- There may be existing offices may be addressing aspects of this issue
- If there is an existing office that shares *any* of those the responsibilities, its existence should be amplified for the public
- DeAndrade will provide a more in-depth proposal that provides a preface explaining the rational for this commission (recognizing the deep roots of racial equity, etc.), which will also include the committee's working definition of public safety

Recommendation- to merge the proposal for the establishment of a commission and a permanent position of director or commissioner (proposals from DeAndrade and O'Donnell).

- Concern that we need to be attentive to HR considerations and the proposed position is very detailed. We should simplify the description of the position to leave room for the city's HR office to be able to work with it.
- The recommendation is focused on making sure that the commission has permanent staff, similar to the historic preservation work in the city.
- We need to have a detail of our intent of who sits on the commission- ex. the role/expertise/profession of members of the committee
- We should propose the qualifications needed for the staff person
- Recommendation that we submit this proposal to the council in January as the first part of our work/report, to allow for it to be considered for budgeting in 2021.
 - Committee could offer interim recommendations (Abdurraqib suggests tabling discussion of this strategy for later)
- One position alone isn't enough- the commission is necessary to be sure that this is not an isolated person, who is not set up to succeed, and staff support for that position.
- It is very important to have staff for this position so that they are not a BIPOC person working in isolation.

- We are now working through individual proposals but at some point, we should look at all the proposals to discuss how they fit together.
- Ask the researcher what models other cities use for this kind of structure (office/commission on racial equity); identify the pitfalls they experienced
- Consider what kind of qualifications/expertise this staff person would need as it has implications for budgeting (lived experience, experience with gov and public safety, and knowledge of racial equity).

Clarification of Proposal:

Establishment of a permanent commission with lead and adequate support staff to be successful.

Vote postponed

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

Note about disparities

- 26% of Maine's homeless population are Black
- 1% of Maine's population is Black
- 2014 Maine had the highest rate of Black poverty in the nation
- These disparities are echoed in incarceration rates and COVID rates.
- Seeing the racial disparities in Maine make it clear that BIPOC have/should have disproportionate contact with city social services. This proposal is designed to address how the city interacts with other organizations – this relates to core tenants of public safety

Part 1.

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.

Discussion:

- Investigate if these data are being collected and make these data publicly accessible.
- We should ask the city/ researcher to confirm whether this is in fact happening already.

Part 2.

Create racial equity ombudsmen in every DHHS division that would create/inform a Racial Equity Task force. Increase staffing to address needs and increase capacity for providers to conduct outreach.

Discussion:

- Recommend this should include evaluating the process of finding these services and assessing how difficult it is to access them.
- The position should be hired or elected by the council and report to the council
- The interest and commitment of the city council to these issues may change, so that reporting structure may not be enduring.
- The state also has comparable models of ombudsman for other programs – like student loan ombudsman

- This proposal would be very expensive and difficult to implement
 - We should offer pragmatic proposals.
- Change the previous proposal to name the position to an ombudsman
- Review job description of CHOW's because it offers a model we might want to use
- There are core ideas in this that could be expanded across city departments- ex. collecting and reporting racial data should be mandatory across all departments.
- Committee agreed to table the discussion and continue it next week.
- We can consider other proposals

Proposal: Opening the meeting for public comment

- Offer monthly public comment
- How would this work? Ex. Open mic public comment, asking for feedback on a particular resolution, etc.
- Invite organizations that work in the fields we are addressing
- Provide an opportunity for open mic
- We could frame it around 3 points of the resolution
- People will share what they want to share.
- Open the meeting for 2 hours with aggressive facilitation limiting comments to 3 to 5 mins each
- Recommendation that chairs facilitate it.
- Need to consider how we will do outreach to make sure that people know that this is happening?

Committee agreed to move December meetings to Tuesday 12/22 and 12/29

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.