

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Remote Meeting

Thursday, September 17, 2020

9:00 am – 10:30 am

Minutes

Name	Organization
Adam Harr	City of Portland
Cullen Ryan	CHOM
Eleanor Ginder	
Aaron Geyer	City of Portland
Jim Devine	HVJ
Benjamin Strick	Spurwink
Bill Higgins	Ha4aLL
Jeff Tardif	City of Portland
Donna Yellen	Preble Street
Anna Brewer	Preble Street
Anne Pringle	Friends of Deering Oaks
Cat Bates	Portland Resident
Kerrie Keller	United Way
Beka Burns	Portland resident
Jenny Stasio	Through These Doors
Peter McLaughlin	Portland Resident

Name	Organization
Norm Maze	Shalom House
Ginny Dill	Shalom House
Vickey Rand	CHOM
Amy Geren	Portland Downtown
George Rheault	
Brian Townsend	Amistad
Rob Liscord	MEJP
Rich Bianculli	Neighborhood Prosecutor
Mason Norton	
Jonathan Sahrbeck	District Attorney
Sarah Michniewicz	BNA
Riley	Youth Without Barriers
Jess Falero	Maine People's Housing Coalition
Dan Coyne	United Way
Aaron Porter	Unhoused community member
Elizabeth Jackson	Greater Portland Health

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- **Introductions**
 - Aaron moved to approve the meeting minutes from August, Brian seconded and the minutes were approved unanimously.
 - Dan went over the new format of the agenda.
- **Meeting Norms**
 - Executive committee took the governance committee recommendations to balance the meetings so everyone has a voice in the meetings.
 - Assume best intent.
 - If you would like to speak please use the “raise hand” feature in Zoom.
 - Provide space for all voices.
 - Questions can be emailed or in the chat; the chat feature is not working.
- **Concerns not on the Agenda**
 - Concerns not on the agenda can be brought up now and will be addressed at the end of the meeting or at later date.
 - George asked if the Preble Street 40 bed shelter part of the agenda.
 - It can come up in the status of shelter or the Preble Street organizational update.
 - Cullen suggested discussing the green new deal in Portland as it will influence the availability of affordable housing.
 - Dan asked that people share suggestions on the meeting format to
- **Status of Shelter Accessibility for Adults**
 - August Shelter Statistics
 - GA hotels
 - Add an asterisk that GA hotels are supplanting bed nights.
 - Add GA hotel reporting.
 - HMIS Data on where people spent the last three months.
 - Donna asked if because people aren’t being going into OSS because they had not stayed at OSS in the past 6 months, some people who may be from Portland are staying elsewhere.
 - Danna asked for clarification between the warming center and the family shelter.
 - Pre-COVID, when the family shelter units are full, the shelter opens the bottom floor of 58 Chestnut street to shelter 35 families the City contrasted with the salvations army to provide emergency shelter to people when the family shelter space is full.
 - Currently, families counted in the warming center are staying in three hotels. The first hotel families stay at is for a 14-day quarantine before moving to the other hotels.
 - Expo
 - The City is looking for space to replace the EXPO as the initial plan was to be out by September 25th; this deadline was pushed back to October 25th due to the Red Claws season getting pushed back.

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- There was a vote on Monday by the County Commissioners to not use the Cross-Insurance Arena (noted: formerly the Civic Center).
- There is not much space that align with Covid related guidelines.
- More people are going into OSS.
- The City will allow the use of outside bathroom to the public.
- OSS working to overturn non-violent CTOs.
- o Family Shelter
 - Seen an uptick in the number of families.
 - 32 families for just over 100 individuals have come from one detention center in Phoenix, Arizona.
 - About a family per day.
- o Preble Street
 - Preble Street has been looking for shelter space since the ramp down of the Sullivan Wellness Shelter.
 - Preble Street has an application for a 40-bed wellness shelter.
 - The City, MaineHousing and Preble Street have been in talks about the Preble Street Shelter taking on the quarantine shelters, PUI and Respite, shelters, currently in the Family Shelter.
 - This is separate from
- o CTOs
 - The CTOs have gone down by about 100 since March
 - Do these include CTOs from Deering Oaks Park.
 - They do not; the CTOs in the current slides only reflect those reported by the shelters.
 - Explore how to add, maybe its own slide?
 - Jess asked about recourse for CTOs.
 - They asked about this at the last meeting.
 - Brian from Amistad mentioned last month we discussed Portland Police being invited in a general way and wondered if there should be a specific invitation to discuss this.
 - Aaron Porter agreed on going into CTOs and feel PD should have already been involved with these discussions.
 - o With rethinking what ESAC should be and which organizations should be here, we will have broader and more intentional representation and invitations.
 - Riley of Youth without barriers agreed with the above; they work with homeless youth many of whom are trans and people of color, including one who was recently barred from all of Preble Street's resources.
 - o What are the CTO policies at each shelter?
 - o What is the process with police?
 - Rich Bianculli, the neighborhood prosecutor for the police department gave an overview of the CT process:

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- Shelters can call PD to rescind CTOs.
- Dearing Oaks and Public Areas:
 - CTs can be rescinded if they contact Rich directly; he then would discuss it with the issuing officer and decide if they would rescind the CT.
 - Richb@portandmaine.gov
 - 756-8350
 - In addition to the hotels currently being used now, is there more capacity?
 - Preble Street has up to 40 rooms for quarantine in one shelter.
 - There is likely capacity at hotels, but it may come down to where these hotels are located.
 - There is not capacity in Portland for a huge increase.
 - Some hotels have refused to work with shelters.
 - Greater Portland hotels have capacity but it present logistical issues sheltering a number of individuals over ten miles away.
 - Community partners are supporting local hotels and guests and that may get strained further out.
 - How much does CARES Act money influence this?
- **Unsheltered Homelessness**
 - There are several group meetings.
 - Donna said Preble Street is still seeing about 100 unsheltered people accessing their services.
 - Donna invited Riley to discuss
 - PATH is active but no one from The Opportunity Alliance was on the call.
 - George suggested a group examine how well the PATH program and street outreach is working.
 - Access to detox.
 - Milestone detox is closed.
 - Portland has a robust sober house community; when someone has a temporary relapse, they are unable to stay at a sober house. This leads to unsheltered homelessness and may require detox to get back in but access is difficult.
 - Amistad staff is bringing people up to Lewiston to detox multiple times a day.
 - Pine Tree Detox has scholarship beds available.
 - Riley explained that 5% of their beds are scholarship beds. That is about 3 beds. The remaining are sliding scale.
 - They are extremely expensive.
 - Peter agreed and said Pine Tree doesn't take Maine Care.
 - Brian thanked Donna for bringing it up.
 - Milestone handing over these services to hospitals is a risk.
 - They are in a transition period and we should support them.

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- These should be agenda items for this meeting.
 - Cullen said that we need full, easy access for the full continuum of care: detox, sober living and a flexible system that works around relapse.
 - Need a continuum of care that is low barrier that doesn't keep people out.
 - Everyone needs pathways to housing.
 - Encampments don't help.
 - Bill Higgins asked if we have any measure on evictions or the affidavit needed to prevent evictions.
 - Rob Liscord of MEJP: Maine evictions court had a moratorium end in august and there is a federal moratorium for evictions for nonpayment with an affidavit saying they did not pay due to COVID-19.
 - No other reason for evictions; no because evictions are not covered.
 - Nationally, landlords are quickly trying to forget into eviction court before affidavits are submitted.
 - Reach out to pine tree as quickly as possible.
 - George noted that it is important to examine the COVID impacts on shelter capacity system-wide which ESAC has not done to date. For instance, in an email conversation with Bob Fowler (Milestone) in late June, George learned that the India Street wet shelter capacity went from 41 pre-COVID down to 34 to maintain proper distancing. The de-tox program formerly had 16 beds but their re-opening plan required reduced capacity to only 8. Not clear where things stand today at these facilities including status of Mary Dowd House (North Deering) which has 10 beds but may not have reopened yet at any capacity. Other shelter providers, including Through These Doors, may have seen similar pandemic-related reductions whether due to distancing or staffing/budget-related constraints. [Note: No one from Milestone was present on the September call to respond to this query about its current shelter bed capacity.]
 - Peter is attending as a community member but works with Maine Renters United trying to do eviction support and defense. A lot of people being given eviction notices are moving out because they do not know their rights or are undocumented and are afraid of going to court. Section 8 voucher holders and tenants in Avesta run facilities and large landlords are handing down evictions.
 - He asked DA Sahrbeck to speak to the situation and how judges are looking at the moratorium, if it is being used narrowly or broadly.
 - DA Sahrbeck had to leave for another meeting but his phone number is 871-8344.
- LTS

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- o Meeting as a smaller group as key line staff are pulled into meeting emergency shelter needs.
 - There were 4 LTS placements.
 - Rental subsidies are available.
 - Rental units are available but still difficult.
 - Focusing on people who have been on the list for the full 5.5 years.
- o LTS and placements into permanent housing from shelter: it would be valuable to track where people are being placed out of homelessness.
 - Is this possible because of affordable housing projects or tax credits here?
 - Is it only possible to live here with significant financial subsidy?
 - People are being placed all over and it has a combination to do with how flexible people are; housing is more available outside of Portland.
 - People with subsidies are mostly limited to tax credit housing but covid is seeing a small shift where landlords are accepting people with vouchers since rent is not contingent on employment.
 - Biggest challenge is the availability of people who were supplanted to respond to Covid emergency shelter.
 - City is hiring two housing counselors.
 - We need rental subsidies and affordable housing.
 - Ben said the LTS group focuses on people especially hard to house; there are no available placements; how to create new opportunities for these individuals?
- **Policy Update**
 - o **Federal**
 - Federal moratorium on evictions is an unfunded mandates; rent is piling up and will be due December 31st.
 - No Agreement to supplement the CARES Act.
 - House \$3 trillion was not considered in senate and the last two senate efforts did not go anywhere.,
 - HUD: house put out a THUD appropriations but not from senate; an omnibus bill or continuing resolution needed.
 - Trump Administration rules on preserving neighborhood choice takes away the affirmative fair housing rule from the last administration that makes it easier to discriminate in housing. This was put through without public comment.
 - ESAC comments will be sent out September 22nd.
 - Change access to SNAP and Medicaid are not active.
 - o **State**
 - State budget cuts due to revenue shortfalls that had some recent alcohol sale offset.
 - Legislature is not reconvening.
 - FUSE on hold.
 - Shelter funding on hold.

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- These bills will start from scratch and knowledgeable folks who are term limited are leaving.
 - MaineHousing rent relief program of \$3,000 for three months.
- Portland has ballot questions with well intentioned. 15 applicants for tax credits but only \$3 million available. Changes to the cost structure of development in Portland may push that money to other communities.
 - Local Green New Deal: Question C
 - Inclusionary zoning changes. Labor and prevailing wage pushing past cost caps. HUD sets what is affordable housing.
 - Rent Control: Question D
 - May have unintended consequences.
 - Owner Occupied Short Term Rentals Only: Question E
 - Can't have air bnb style short term rentals unless owner lives in building.
- **Governance Committee Recommendations**
 - Ran out of time before coming to this item.
- **General Organization Updates**
 - HVJ
 - Election is coming up. Outreach is difficult under COVID
 - Scheduling interviews with candidates.
 - Access to recovery services
 - Shelter access
 - Affordable housing.
 - Previously would hold at the soup kitchen so unhoused folks could ask their own questions.

Action Items

- Invite PD to discuss CTOs and how to appeal/reverse them.
 - Rich was here this meeting and is willing to come to future meetings.
- Invite PATH to the meeting and examine its efficacy.
- Agenda item on detox and an update from Milestone.
- Send out link on how to navigate moratorium.