



**Legislative Committee Meeting Minutes
March 23, 2021**

The March 23, 2021, remote Committee meeting was called to order by Chair Pious Ali at 8:04 AM on Zoom.

Councilor Pious Ali (Chair), Councilor April Fournier, Mayor Kate Snyder, Councilor Nick Mavodones, Jon Jennings (City Manager), Dena Libner (Chief of Staff), Kathy Jones (City Clerk), Roberto Rodriguez (School Board), Kate Knox (Bernstein Shur) and Alysia Melnick (Bernstein Shur) were present.

Councilor Fournier made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from March 16, 2021, seconded by Mayor Snyder, no amendments, vote 4-0.

Committee members discussed memos provided by staff related to **LD 991** (Resolve, Directing the Department of Transportation To Complete a Feasibility Analysis To Initiate a Commuter and Passenger Train Service between Portland and the Lewiston and Auburn Area) and **LD 994** (An Act To Promote Public Health by Eliminating Criminal Penalties for Possession of Hypodermic Apparatuses).

Jon Jennings described staff concerns regarding LD 991, specifically the impact that using Ocean Gateway as a rail hub would have on the waterfront. He indicated that congestion was a concern, and that staff believed there were better, alternative sites in the City to expand and enhance transportation options.

Sen. Ben Chipman, sponsor of LD 991, shared information related to that bill and emphasized that MaineDOT's scope would not be limited to identifying Ocean Gateway as a Portland hub.

Anthony Donovan, Director of the Maine Rail Transit Coalition, also spoke in support of the bill and advised that this transportation effort would reduce traffic congestion.

Committee members agreed unanimously to testify in support of LD 991 but to ensure that staff concerns are included in the testimony.

After reviewing staff feedback regarding LD 994, Committee members agreed unanimously to testify in support of the bill.

Committee members discussed **LD 553** (An Act To End At-will Employment) and **LD 555** (An Act To Expand the Rights of Public Sector Employees). Kate Knox provided background on both bills, including insight on the intent of their sponsor (Rep. Sylvester). Dena Libner described staff opposition to the bills, specifically that the vast majority of City staff can only be removed from their positions “for cause” and allowing certain public employees to strike could put vulnerable populations at risk.

The Committee voted on whether or not to provide testimony in support of LD 553 and LD 555, with Councilors Ali and Fournier voting in support and Councilor Mavodones and Mayor Snyder voting against. As a result of the tie, no action would be taken.

Lastly, the Committee asked staff to submit testimony in support of LD 609 (*Resolve, to Establish a Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions*) before the Committee on Labor and Housing’s work session.

Councilor Mavodones made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Councilor Fournier, vote 4-0. The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 AM.