



Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee Minutes

Tuesday, November 27, 2018, 5:30pm, Council Chambers, City Hall

Committee Attendance:

Belinda Ray, Chair (District 1), Brian Batson (District 3), Pious Ali (At-Large)

Councilors in Attendance: Mayor, Ethan Strimling; Jill Duson (At-large) Nick Mavodones (At-Large)

City Staff: City Manager, Jon Jennings; Assistant City Manager, Michael Sauschuck; Director of Health and Human Services, Dawn Stiles; Director of Social Services, David MacLean; Former Director of the Oxford Street Shelter, Rob Parritt; Executive Assistant, Adam Harr

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Announcements

After a partner agency presentation, Chair Ray announced that people in attendance can voice their opinions during public comment and to refrain from applauding or booing what is said during presentations or public testimony.

Public Comments should be limited to the topic at hand.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – Approval of Minutes

Chair Ray entertained a motion to approve the minutes from the November 13, 2018 meeting; Councilor Ali seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – Homeless Services Center

City manager Jon Jennings thanked the City staff, community members and partners, the Committee and Councilor Batson for representing his district while working collaboratively.

During this meeting:

- Possible vote on shelter model
 - For that reason, a public hearing is planned.
- Two Community Partners programs
 - Avesta
 - The Opportunity Alliance



- If the model proposed tonight is adopted, City staff's recommendation for the best location is no longer the Baron Center Campus.
 - The decision is still the committee's and full Council's

Homeless Services Model

Future of Homeless Services in Portland

- Assistant City Manager Michael Sauschuck
 - This process is not complete, including if there is a vote
 - 821 unduplicated clients in one year
 - 286 are 55 or older
 - 160 males and 40 female shelter guests per night
 - Model suggestion is 150 beds plus specialty beds/Partner locations
 - Avesta
 - 15 bed assessment center
 - 36 Unit Assisted Living Facility
 - 30 Unit Housing First Development
 - Next steps could be assisted living, Baron Center,
 - Opportunity Alliance
 - 15 treatment beds for homeless adults living with a major mental illness and who may also have a substance use disorder
 - Has partnered with the police dept. on mental health issues
 - Trauma informed treatment and support
 - TOA and Avesta will work with the City to establish a direct referral process into these programs and services.
 - Integrated with collaborations such as the Long-Term Stayer Initiative
 - Housing First is working in the community
 - Logan Place
 - Huston Commons
 - Looking to maximize space and resources
 - Financial Model
 - Clarified the Barron Center is not a proposed location in this cost estimate;
 - Barron Center will expand its food operations to supply food to the shelters as the shelters themselves will not have kitchens
 - Additional Partner Documentation from
 - Avesta
 - TOA
 - Preble Street
 - Policy Guidance
 - Waiting for final guidance from Corporation Council (informed by HUD and MaineHousing policies)



- Donna Yellen, Acting Executive Director of Preble Street: Specialized Women's Shelter Proposal (Draft Document)
 - Low barrier shelter for women
 - Specializing in services for women experiencing substance use, domestic violence and behavioral health issues.
 - Accommodate women currently staying at OSS and an expanded local continuum of Care.
 - Up to 80 beds, based on need.
 - Partnership aid need
 - City to provide free land
 - Financial support
 - Exploring federal and state funding streams
 - Still a draft proposal as yet approved by the Preble Street Board.
- Mayor Strimling asked what the timeline would be for construction to be completed:
 - Firm timelines are difficult but after approval all processes would likely start concurrently but each will have their own logistical timelines.
 - Mike Tarpinian, president and CEO of The Opportunity Alliance: TOA's Bridge would likely take 12-18 month range.
 - Dana Totman, President and CEO of Avesta: Avesta would take about a year due to permitting.
 - Preble Street project would be about two years.
 - The City's timeline will depend on location and existing construction, but a new construction would likely mean a 12-18 month timeline
- At approximately 6:06 PM Chair Ray opened the floor for a public hearing, reminding those in attendance:
 - Public comments should stick to the Shelter model
 - Are limited to 3 minutes
 - Chair Ray will stand when the speaker has 30 seconds left
 - Audience remains silent
 - Questions will be noted and answered at the end of the comment period
- Jake Niles – Portland: Thinks we are heading in the right directions, current city policy guidelines to geographic origin and hard caps. There are no statutes prohibiting restrictions. The 3-model budget last meeting was for 3 city run shelters. Poverello center in Montana: it makes more sense for one city run shelter. 150 beds would be the largest per capita city-run shelter in New England.
- William Higgins - High Street resident. A rush to judgement on one center versus three will have one center to not be fair to one district. Having a center on the peninsula would help people seeking employment. There is an opportunity with the new administration to seek legislation to fund shelter beds.



- Cullen Ryan, CHOM – Most people are circumstantially homeless. Housing those staying longest to shortest is the right approach. It is better to plan for the worst with adequate capacity. One center is better than multiple shelters. One shelter done right, made bigger than needed will help make more efficient housing operation and shelter. An overcapacity shelter slows down the housing operation. It is wise to build a shelter to insure it will meet the need.
- Bob Fowler, Executive Directive of Milestone Foundation, shelter and program for people experience homelessness and substance use. Milestone supports the efforts to better serve this population.
- Jordan, Cook at Bull Feeney's grew up in Portland and cannot afford to live in the City anymore. Many people at the shelter should be in a healthcare facility. He has experienced struggle and has been priced out of the neighborhood he grew up in. The bathroom is one at a time, causing a homeless veteran to soil himself while waiting for the urinal.
- Cecelia Smith – Is excited for the TOA and Avesta proposed projects as well as the Preble street project. She is concerned a single shelter being opened that has over 100 beds is a mega shelter, citing NYC limits shelters to 100 beds. She would like the council to explore creative ideas to address the lack of affordable housing, such as fees from air bnb units or tiny houses. She would also like engagement from the religious community.
- Sarah Michniewicz – Speaking for herself, not the bayside neighborhood association. She supports the single site center as that is what the service providers serving the population support as the best model and is what the full council would support. Any other model is an attempt to delay. The Oxford Street Shelter is not adequate and cannot be upgraded to meet those needs. The City staff have proposed smart single site models, now adding community partner projects to maximize city resources. She encouraged the committee to choose partners carefully and to hold them to a high standard. There will be opportunity to correct the course but only if you continue to keep moving forward.
- Mike Best – Thanked the Council to look into all these options; taking the Baron center off the table makes him happy but not at the expense of another neighborhood getting a 150-bed mega shelter. Wishes the nonresidential areas would be considered.
- Adalarge Fleetwood – If you don't want a 150-bed shelter, stop offering services and shelter to individuals from other states. He has been in the state for 5 months to be with his kids. There are not enough resources for people experiencing homelessness, leading to the suicide death of a woman. He is homeless and works hard. Regardless of the size of a shelter, if there are not adequate resources, people will remain in homelessness.
- DeeJay Beers is new to Portland from Daytona Beach, Florida. He has a section 8 voucher that he can't use because of the housing shortage. No shelter would accept him or his cat. He has been on the street and has been sleeping in a tent, leading state troopers to hack at his tent with him inside it, giving him a concussion. He liked the suggested programs but the numbers are too low and wants more shelters, not a single mega shelter. He moves into his apartment in December.



- Michael Stockmeyer – 19 Portland Street– He has an apartment that is too expensive but it is better than being homeless. He stayed in the Oxford street shelter and had a good experience. He does not support a one stop shop mega shelter, citing the NYC 100 bed limit ordinance. He thinks there should be two fair sized shelters with access to businesses.
- George Rhault, Bayside Resident – He is against a single large shelter. Preble Street in 2014 proposed an honest 300 bed single site solution. The BNA and City did not support it as it concentrated problems. He recalled that people accessing peer support at Amistad do not like going to the Preble Street Resource Center large day room. Service Providers such as CHOM, Avesta have developers financially benefitting from such moves.
- Sherril Harkins, HVJ and SHC – Homelessness is rising despite the increase of vouchers including families and people with substance use and mental health disorders, and disabilities. People are othered and shunned, unable to relieve themselves; people with medical issues sleep in parking garages because the shelter is not accessible. People in neighboring towns and cities that don't have shelters have to send them to the closest shelter. That is in Portland. We must end the "not in my back yard" mentality HVJ is open to collaborating, please include us.
- Steven Williams – Has not heard in the plans the acknowledgment that many people are from away and that this is a state and national problem and should not just be the responsibility of Portland tax payers. He is relieved the Barron Center proposed location. He reiterated this must be done with the cities sending people to our community.
- Jane Drew – HVJ: The shelter at OSS isn't working and HVJ fears that another single large shelter will not serve the different populations well. She is not pro-segregation but thinks with will be more efficient to have smaller shelters with specializations. New shelters must be completely accessible including easy access to public transportation. It is more important to have access to equal justice: who will be eligible to stay and receive services at the new location? Each representative has stated that anyone who needs shelter will receive it, HVJ is worried that this will change, leading to people being turned away and dying from exposure. People experiencing homelessness are who will be affected, and should be involved. People experiencing homeless are telling the committee and council that they want to be heard; don't hide us, include us.
- Sean Murphy Several small- versus one shelter. In 2012 the ending homelessness taskforce suggested smaller housing units for various demographics and a referral center. Several Smaller units could be added or taken out over time. The city has been working on a single-site model and it's not working. He does not want to choose a model but to move forward with a new option.
- Jenny Stasio – Through These Doors. TTD supports this process.
- Brian Townsend ED of Amistad – He is thankful that this has remained a priority issue. He noted confusion on the comments made about the Amistad board of directors. He has received consistent feedback on the single site model: safety, support/assistance, and effective links to housing. No feedback has indicated that the size of the shelter hasn't



made them feel more or less safe, the services more or less effective or that it would reduce housing. Amistad would be stretched thin working with one shelter and would not be able to serve multiple shelters.

- Carolyn Silvius – HVJ would like Collaborative planning, eligibility, and accessibility. Collaborative planning, not all members of the committee were available on a planned September 10th meeting date and no new meeting were planned since then. Eligibility: The City position has always committed to providing shelter to those who need it. HVJ fears that the City will walk away and cause the deaths of people who are not long time Portland residents. Accessibility: the time waiting for large bus commutes can be barriers to making appointments. Shelters are where people are temporarily residing and should be in residential areas. People should not be hidden and subjected to
- Channing Cambuchino – supports smaller shelters and integrating all people. She asks that if the smaller shelter model is accepted that the committee consider how many services already exist in an area and to please consider balance.
- Maya Lena President of Nason's Corner – Nason's Corner residents were not consulted during the planning and have unanswered questions: what would the overflow capacity be, how would it work in a residential neighborhood, these questions apply to any shelter in a residential setting. Shelter planning taskforce in 2015 looked at smaller shelters, not the proposed large model. What location in the city would best serve people experiencing homelessness?
- Shawn Erwin Supports a single shelter; it is efficient. There is already a multi shelter model across the city. The intake needs with the city are best served by a single site. The Current system is in crisis, more research isn't needed, rather the political will to move forward with the consensus model that's been reached. He thanked the councilors for working to solve these problems.
- Todd Henry or Pinecrest Rd.– No political appetite to change intake process. Encourages council to analyze shelter eligibility.
- Dennis Parante is in favor of single shelter model for financial reasons and to achieve balance with the multiple shelters already in the city. He cited the 150-bed crossroads shelter in Portsmouth that appears to be successful.
- Debra Morvit – is from away. She is in her 80s and has a sharp mind and perspective to share including stays at two shelters in Portland. Homeless Services in Portland have not asked the guests and community. She is an artist and advocate with HVJ. She engages with all types of people including the children and adults in shelter. She recalled pearl harbor and the turning point in history, recognizing the turning point we find ourselves in today. Every time she is seeming to get ahead, a setback pops up; theft, age discrimination, etc. It is not an equation of how many and how much, but what do individuals need as people. Wants a security CCTV system to prevent theft.
- Lynn Denight – She has lived in Portland for 8 years and is now homeless due to political evictions/gentrification. She has a housing choice voucher but is priced out of the community. The rental prices are too high to work with her voucher. One was called a



luxury apartment at \$1,400 a month for rent. She is literally homeless, not knowing where she will sleep tonight. Landlords increase rents up the maximums possible, evicting and pricing people out and into the shelter or to sleep outside.

- Frank D'Alessandro PTLA – Rental Housing issues, 1,400 cases in Portland. The number of beds will be inefficient without addressing the lack of affordable housing in the city. People with housing vouchers remaining homeless. Please explore the possibility of restoring state funding. The talks of residency for cost savings; there is no evidence to support that people are coming to Maine to take advantage of our generosity. A hard cap in the number of beds to serve homeless people does not mean that people will be ineligible for General Assistance, meaning the alternative required of the city may be more expensive than the shelter. Residency requirements are unconstitutional. He implores the council to instead invest in creating more affordable housing.
- Brett Gabor of Frederick Street – thinks the council is moving in the right direction with the partner model but is worried about the larger shelter model. Is afraid that the larger shelter will be harder to manage vs smaller shelters. He wants to see more programs like Logan Place.
- Norman Maze, Deputy Director of Shalom House – Understanding the concerns, they do not support smaller specialty city-run shelters They support the added residential treatment beds and assisted living projects. The city already has five specialty shelters. Residential treatment allows people to exercise their freedom. Any Homeless Services Center would demonstrate that the City does not hide its homeless neighbors but provides a safe place to stay temporarily as they get back on their feet.
- Laura Cannon of Paris Street - She thanked the councilors, committee and full council and city staff working on this initiative. 2012 taskforce centralized location process with collocated services, six years later community partners still support this. She encourages a vote tonight to enable such possibilities rather than prescribing them. Building a new facility is a step addressing the complicated problems of homelessness the city of Portland is obligated to residents in ways that private entities are not. She hoped that the committee will move forward with a vote on a single facility.
- Bod Shiabul of Birchvale Drive - He became a resident of Portland in July. In late September during the committee meeting he heard the committee consider evidence a different city owned model may be better. His friends told him it was politics. He said he has only heard anecdotes not evidence. He asked to see evidence-based arguments.
- Gloria Sklar wants to hear from the right people, HVJ members feel like they haven't been engaged and want rigorous evidence from consumers. She reiterated that emergency homeless shelters cannot be talked about without looking at the root causes. Preventative measures would look at affordable housing and the opioid crisis. Why does HVJ feel unheard and will the committee look at root causes of homelessness?
- Dick Farnsworth of Old Mast Road and State Representative of House District 37 – Thanked the committee for hearing the issues of this complex problem. It is important to understand the diversity of the population talked about. It is difficult to have a single



solution and it is important to have an open mind. This is not a Portland problem, it is a statewide and national problem. The Portland delegation recognizes this. They would like to work with the Council and other communities to provide the resources needed for opioid treatment, mental health treatment to meet consumer needs and to develop housing, not just emergency shelter. He wished the committee good luck.

Public comment closed at approximately 7:35 PM

Questions asked of the committee:

- Overflow capacity in 150 bed model: there would be a flexible space in the shelter that would be used to keep people inside. Referrals to milestone and the hospital would continue.
 - Building to our need is unique.
- Housing: OSS is a referral-based housing program that houses several hundred people out of the shelter each year.
 - Lack of affordable housing in this and surrounding communities is a major component of the problem.
 - OSS follows all laws permitting service and companion animals; pets are not allowed.
 - Accessibility: people are not turned away and many guests with disabilities are staying in the shelter.
- A law prohibiting shelters above 100 beds in NYC does not exist; a 200-bed shelter was opened recently.
- HVJ has been invited to the meetings but have chosen to only attend two meetings.
 - Assistant City Manager Sauschuck will continue to invite and reach out to them.
 - Councilor Ali will continue outreach.
- Councilor Batson was disheartened with the comment equating instilling eligibility restrictions to killing people.

Committee Questions

- Counselors Ali asked about the numbers given from Preble Street; they are looking to open an 80-bed shelter.
- Councilor Batson: City Guidance on the correct number of beds and will be ongoing with input.
- Chair Ray wants to make sure there is adequate capacity as it is much easier to repurpose and scale down than to scale up.
 - Very interested in Preble Street opening a women's shelter
 - The City shelter should not consider gender due to not being able to stay with opposite sex partners leading to them sleeping out.
 - Prospects of partner projects makes 150 more comfortable
- How comfortable are each organization using their current funding situation to create these proposals and their thoughts on longevity?



- o TOA: Bridge has existed for a long time and is expected to be paid by MaineCare and the hope is that the single adults without children who used to be eligible for MaineCare will regain access under the new administration.
- o Avesta: Avesta's oldest assisted living development was created in 1854 with other projects created in the 90s and 2000s. They have survived through changing finances and were created with loans that are only given if they have the money to sustain their projects for 30 years. They are optimistic that this model looks similar to successful ones.
- o Preble Street is a private non-profit organization. Most financially secure with a 50% private, 50% publically funded model. Public funding from federal, state, and county streams combined with private sources with an active board looking to not initiate projects without being able to sustain it.
 - Councilor Batson asked for information on the curtailing of services
 - Single adults do not have much funding unless they also are part of a special demographic: victims of trafficking, veterans, etc.
 - It would be the least harmful cut to reduce day shelter hours because Oxford Street serves single adults and expanded its operations into day shelter for its guests.
- o There is not an additional tax burden to the resident of the city of Portland
- Mayor Strimling asked Dana Totman if about turnover at Avesta's assisted living project. There is turnover due to the frailty of residents, some pass on. Residents must demonstrate deficits in daily living activities to qualify, if progressed residents will move on to nursing facilities.
 - o More likely the blend of funding sources may change.
- Mayor Strimling asked about TOA's bed cap
 - o 15 because 16 or over initiates prohibitive regulations.
 - o Immediate assessment and transition plan
 - o Directly linked to shelter, first offered to qualifying OSS guests.
 - o What would prevent TOA from having 17 bridge programs?
 - Neighborhood resistance makes it not an easy solution
 - Medicaid pays for 85% of the cost;
 - The remaining 15% is about \$180,000
 - Who will pay for the room and board
 - The recent environment in the state discouraged new buildings/programs.
 - Narrowly focused programs can be very effective leading to efficient turn around.
 - o How many people could benefit/does OSS expect to keep them filled?
 - How many 15 bed projects could be filled
 - Hard to answer precisely as statistics are based on self-reporting.
 - o TOA Bridge is not just 15 beds, 12 already exist and that may increase to 15.



- The people remaining on the LTS list would immensely benefit from individualized programs.
- With the understanding OSS would get direct referrals if Portland partnered in their creation, does TOA partner with other municipalities?
 - There are other projects with other target medical and behavioral health condition, but the bridge is unique in its focus on people experiencing homelessness and substance use disorders.
 - This would be a model to share responsibility with other municipalities.
 - OSS would have first right of refusal to the 15 bridge beds
- Some affordable senior housing serves people older than a certain age OR who have a disability; the Avesta project would only be for people 55 and older.
- There is some uncertainty in Preble street model as their board has not voted on it
 - Councilor Dusen asked Rob if the City recommended model would be successful independent of the partnerships.
 - They are not designed to diminish the number of beds at the shelter.
- Is the cuts to services causative to the increase shelter populations?
 - Rob believes so and is looking to see what impact the new administration will have.
- Is there a plan for some of the projects to be co-located with community partners?
 - If that would work best it would be considered.
 - If a parcel could accommodate co-locations, it would be a consideration.
- Councilor Batson thanked Donna for presenting and asked Dana about similar PNMI facilities, is there a close point of reference?
 - 37 bed assisted living program in graham have 20 beds which are supported by PNMI (Private Non-medical Institute, a form of Medicaid funded level 4 assisted living program; not all level 4 facilities are Medicaid eligible)
 - This would be the first PNMI assisted living facility focusing on people experiencing homelessness; the same medical and daily living eligibility of existing PNMI's will apply
 - PNMI requires 1 care-giver per 12 residents.

Chair Ray asked the committee to give thoughts on the wording of a motion to give City staff official direction.

- Councilor Batson is comfortable supporting a single City-built shelter having seen the proposed partner projects and thanked each agency.
 - Move to direct the City move forward pursuing a single City-operated facility of yet to be determined beds, up to 150 beds in conjunction with Avesta and the Opportunity Alliance.



- o Is there a way to word it to include projects that are more concrete with leadership directing the projects?
- o Councilor Ali asked how long it would take for the Preble Street Board to sign off on the project and flesh out a partner project.
 - The board sanctioned the draft, and wants to be here, but a needs assessment and planning with City staff.
 - Donna asked what the committee needs to feel comfortable.
 - Councilor Ali asked how comfortable Preble Street is in the planning process.
 - Chair Ray clarified that she does not want to make the City's plan contingent on the success of partner projects.
- o Councilor Batson would be amenable to adding 'potential' partnerships to assuage the contingency concern and open up the planning to include other partners/projects.
- Mayor Strimling: Staff to pursue multiple site model with up to 150 beds coordinating with partner projects.
 - o City to pursue a single city-owned site.

Councilor Batson moved that this committee adopt a resolution stating that committee supports the City building a single low-barrier shelter, beds to be determined, in conjunction with supporting the potential public-private partnerships with organizations: Avesta, Preble Street, the Opportunity Alliance, as well as any other organizations that may come to the table. Councilor Ali seconded. Discussion:

- Mayor Strimling is concerned about defining moving forward based on partner projects.
- Councilor Ali thinks that the language Councilors Batson provided will allow the project to move forward if proposed projects do not.
- Councilor Dusen would like to add language to show that staff can work out what support the City would offer such as land or other supports, and supports the Mayor's suggestion of adding the explicit referral agreements outlined by the agencies that presented.
- City Manager Jennings is pleased with the guidance as it gives City-staff clear guidance.
 - o The committee is asking staff to
 - Look for a location for a homeless services center (likely up to 150 beds);
 - Work with partnering service providers on the mutual supports, including land or colocation considerations leading to draft MOUs.
- Mayor Strimling is pleased with how far things have come that builds out the City shelter and multiple smaller projects that stakeholders have been looking for. He still supports the smaller multi-site model and is pleased with how much progress this committee has made.
- Chair Ray made clear that the challenges faced at the Oxford Street Shelter is not caused by staff, but the physical facility that was never designed to be an emergency shelter. It is



an outwardly facing design, where people have to line-up outside, on display. A new facility would do these processes inside with a physical space designed to honor the dignity of the people staying in shelter.

Committee vote: the motion passed unanimously.

Next Steps

- First meeting in January
 - Public hearing on Paid Sick leave with possible vote
- The second January meeting
 - Homeless Services Center

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM.