

Legislative Committee Meeting Minutes
July 27, 2021

The July 13, 2021 remote Committee meeting was called to order by Chair Pious Ali at 8:00 AM on Zoom

Councilor Pious Ali (Chair), Mayor Kate Snyder, Councilor April Fournier, Kathy Jones (City Clerk), Dena Libner (Chief of Staff), Alysia Melnick (Bernstein Shur), and Jessica Grondin (Communications Director) were present. Councilor Nick Mavodones was not in attendance.

Mayor Snyder made a motion to approve the minutes from July 13, seconded by Councilor Fournier, vote 3-0.

Alysia Melnick reported on the June 30 passage of the biennial budget covering essential state services. She highlighted raising municipal revenue sharing from 3.75% to 4.5% in 2022, raising to 5% in 2023, which may relate to \$2.3 million for the City of Portland. The Property Tax Fairness Credit program was expanded and reimbursements to municipalities for the homestead exemption program was increased to 100%. Significant funds were included for mental health and substance use treatment; Representative Brennan is planning to set up a briefing the state Health and Human Services Agency on funding for mental illness and substance use to provide information on where funds will be directed and how they can be used. He would like to invite the committee.

The biennial budget also included 55% funding to municipalities for Maine schools as well as free breakfast and lunch for all students in Maine. The Land for Maine's Future Program received \$40 million to address sea level rise, and LD 1733 was passed, which allocated nearly \$1 billion from the American Rescue Plan Act; Alysia Melnick highlighted the \$10 million set aside for dredging Portland harbors, \$10 million to address emergency homelessness and approximately \$2 million to fund housing navigators. Other funding was approved for permanent commission and community colleges and universities. Alysia Melnick offered to provide summaries of this information if needed.

Alysia Melnick also noted that some elections-related bills that were tabled also received funding, including online voter registration, continuing the absentee ballot program, ballot tracking and drop boxes. Councilor Ali asked for information about the automatic registration legislation that passed in the prior session, and if that information is posted on the City's website. Alysia Melnick said that the program will not be implemented until 2023, as an RFP had to be issued for new software to manage the change. Kathy Jones noted that information on that program will be posted on the website once the legislation is implemented.

Mayor Snyder provided feedback following her discussion with Jessica Grondin. Mayor Snyder thinks the boards and committees page has improved and appreciates the team's efforts to implement changes. She was concerned that the vacancies summary, the third bullet point's reference to a write up may be confusing to laypeople who would otherwise be interested in serving. Kathy Jones noted that vacancy notices include a write up with criteria. Councilor Ali agreed and asked that the eligibility language be removed entirely.

Mayor Snyder also noted that the Council websites were readily accessible, but that each committee has a different layout, and found the spreadsheet listing board terms confusing and asked that a more readable format be considered, i.e. indicating term completion dates on the spreadsheet so that potential applicants could plan their applications in advance of a board position opening up. Councilor Ali asked that committee pages be tailored to mirror the City Councilmember page, which lists when terms end. Jessica Grondin said this may require a conversation with staff regarding feasibility, as committee staff are responsible for updating the pages. Jessica Grondin is the primary point of contact for web updates as the city no longer has a designated webmaster on staff.

Councilor Ali followed up on request for Kathy Jones to provide information regarding Intern Reggie Pierson's write up on how to reach a broader spectrum of Portland residents for committee consideration. Kathy Jones said she would provide this information to the Committee.

Councilor Ali followed up on last meeting's request to hold a workshop with Corporation Counsel regarding their role and purview, specifically whether or not the committee can accept proposals from the public regarding legislation that is not under consideration in the City of Portland. Dena Libner was asked to extend an invitation to Corporation Counsel for the next meeting.

Mayor Snyder made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Councilor Fournier, vote 3-0 Meeting was adjourned at 8:28 AM.