

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Remote Meeting

Thursday, August 19, 2021

8:30 am – 10:00 am

Minutes

Name	Organization	Name	Organization
Adam Harr	City of Portland	Norm Maze	Shalom House
Cullen Ryan	CHOM	Ben Martineau	HVJ
Jim Devine	HVJ	Ben Strick	Spurwink
Bill Higgins	Ha4aLL	Meredith Pesce	Amistad
Jenny Stasio	Through These Doors	Deb Ibonwa	MEJP
Anna Brewer	Preble Street/HVJ	Aaron Geyer	City of Portland
Vickey Rand	CHOM	Lauren Bustard	MaineHousing
Sara Fleurant	City of Portland Oxford Street Shelter	Mary Cook	TOA
Terence Miller	Preble Street	Brian Townsend	Amistad
Kelly Walsh	City of Portland	Marybeth Twomey	TOA PATH
Amy Geren	Portland Downtown	Suzanne Randall	Ha4aLL
Joe McNally	Milestone Recovery		

Meeting Summary

Lauren Bustard, Senior Director of Programs at MaineHousing provided several updates including funding that will be available towards the end of October: \$10 million for existing shelters and \$1.5 million for a 2-year pilot for housing navigators around the state. While two hotels will depopulate, there is unconfirmed news that FEMA hotel funding is extended through December. ERA funding is available but can't be used on staffing and unspent RRH funding can be used until exhausted while new RRH funding is sought. We had discussion on the City Council deciding next Monday whether to add questions to the referendum question limiting shelters to 50 beds, asking if voters prefer the referendum question, their own question (s) which would limit beds to 300 within a one-mile area, or neither. The group moved for ESAC to send a message to the City Council in support of adding alternative referendum questions to the ballot.

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

- **July Meeting Minutes**
 - Anna moved to approve the minutes and Jim seconded. The motion passed with none opposed.
- **In-Person Meeting**
 - We talked about returning to in-person meetings for September at the last meeting but the Executive Committee reconsidered given the Delta variant.
 - In-person meetings are missed.
 - Agencies have conflicting policies on in-person meetings.
 - We will continue to suspend in-person meetings until CDC provides new guidance.
- **MaineHousing Guest: Lauren Bustard, Senior Director of Programs**
 - Recovery funds for state and local governments
 - Two pots of money
 - \$10 million for existing shelters:
 - Operations
 - Maintenance
 - Capital improvements
 - Could this be used for setting up telehealth equipment?
 - Probably, it is fairly open.
 - Cannot be used for new construction and is only for existing shelters.
 - Can administer these funds anywhere in the state.
 - Available towards the end of October.
 - \$1.5 million for a two-year pilot for housing navigators around the state. This came out of a Victoria Morales bill.
 - Redesigned Homeless Response System in the state.
 - 9 service hubs implemented over the next year and one housing navigator will be in each of the hubs.
 - Will create an RFP to determine which agency gets the navigator.
 - Money to be available towards the end of October.
 - In Portland, Cumberland County is the service hub but some service hubs are more than one county.
 - Service hubs were determined by the Statewide Homeless Council.
 - Community Solutions is helping getting groups together in the service hubs as part of their Built for Zero effort in reducing homelessness.
 - Emergency Rental Assistance Funding
 - Folks are in hotels around the state and we want to get them into housing.
 - We had RRH from Covid money and other incentives for landlords above other vouchers.

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

- We currently have contracts with hotels for room rates and service providers for staff; for ERA funding would only pay for hotel rooms and no staffing.
 - Need to work with hotel owners.
 - Clients will need to be eligible for the program: need happened during pandemic.
 - Someone experiencing homelessness before March of last year would not be eligible for ERA.
 - This is different than the contract for a slate of rooms that we currently have.
- As hotels depopulate, can ERA pay for those folks?
 - Some other cities after a certain date, aren't accepting new intakes.
 - The City of Portland doesn't turn people away.
 - We are pushing to get as many people housed from the Fairfield Inn and those folks will be shifted to a different hotel.
- Which are the agencies for casework?
 - MaineHousing doesn't fund services and works for DHHS on that piece. MaineHousing does work with housing navigators in the shelter; housing navigation is different from case management but does help connect clients to case management.
 - TOA has a two case management programs:
 - Behavioral Health Home, a section 92 MaineCare program, that has a long waitlist due to the difficulty hiring staff.
 - PATH program covers Cumberland County (three workers) and York County (one worker)
 - Unable to take people in hotels, only unsheltered.
 - Helps providers get mental health diagnoses.
 - 2/100 PATH clients are able to use ERA to stay in hotels.
 - Spurwink is also down several positions in their programs which also have waitlists.
- End of Rapid Rehousing funding
 - Preble Street, the City of Portland and Amistad administered RRH with Covid money and have been given no cost extensions to use the funds that remain until exhausted.
 - Provides a sign on bonus to landlords.
 - Looking for funding to continue the programs.
- Closure of FEMA shelters and loss of FEMA funds
 - FEMA funding will be extended through December.
 - We are waiting to confirm this from FEMA.
 - The hotel in Lewiston and the Fairfield in are depopulating to other shelters/hotels.
- Corporation for Supportive Housing Report

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

- MaineHousing emphasized that when the report talks about drastically reducing shelter beds, there would be years of other interventions working well before reducing beds.
 - Intervention and diversion program: a basic program has started but would need to ramp up.
 - We are now getting data from the diversion program in Bangor which indicate the need for new PSH units.
 - RRH would be needed.
 - Main takeaways
 - Need a more regionalized response including a holistic group of stakeholders including more than just homeless providers including emergency rooms, police, etc.
 - Coordinated Entry will be part of this and should be up and running next year.
 - We need a strong diversion program across the state.
 - We need more RRH.
 - We need to push for funding for more units.
 - Not focusing on the numbers so much as the main takeaways.
 - Noted: 32.1 % of our intakes are first time homeless and could be diverted them from homelessness.
- **July Statistics**
 - Adam Harr of the City of Portland Social Services Division presented the July statistics.
 - Adam will change how the proportion of first-time homelessness is labeled.
 - **Homeless Services Center**
 - Planning board workshop on Tuesday the 24th
 - Sent the management plan to MaineHousing and the Police department.
 - Held a second neighborhood meeting.
 - They City thanked the service providers and agencies that provided detail on how they would collaborate with the HSC which was added to the management plan.
 - **Shelter Referendum Discussion**
 - The City Council will provide a ballot question that competes with the referendum question that would emergency shelter beds to 50.
 - Should we discuss since we don't have the competing question verbiage?
 - City Council instructed the ballot will ask for choosing the 50-bed cap, their paraphrased referendum below, or neither.
 - Can't have more than 300 people in emergency shelters within a mile of each other.
 - The referendum question limiting shelters to 50 beds locks in the status quo at Oxford Street.
 - The City has worked hard to create a an internally facing homeless services center with 9 agencies on board to provide a one-stop shop.
 - The ballot initiative would sabotage this project.

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

- It won't be feasible for agencies to collaborate across the 5 shelters needed to replace OSS.
- o Want to weigh in on the referendum as it seeks to sabotage our work.
- o It was suggested to wait until after Monday and Tuesday's City Council and Planning Board meetings.
 - Page 513 of the City Council packet has the referendum information.
 - The City Council is voting on Monday if they will add their own question.
 - If we wait to weigh in it will be too late.
- o Ben stick moved that ESAC send a letter of support for the City Council saying that we support the addition of a second initiative question. Cullen suggested a friendly emended to make if questions plural and ben accepted the amendment; norm seconded the amendment.
 - Discussion:
 - Referendum is misleading and this will help.
 - Support is much more of a rejection of the first question; the harm of the referendum question is so acute that supporting an alternative question without seeing it is a better option.
 - ESAC send a letter to the City Council supporting the alternative referendum questions on the ballot. Roll call vote
 - Amistad - Yes
 - City of Portland - Abstain
 - Community Housing of Maine - Yes
 - Greater Portland Health – Absent
 - Homeless Advocacy for All - No
 - Homeless Voices for Justice – Yes
 - Maine Equal Justice - Yes
 - Milestone Recovery - Absent
 - People's Housing Coalition - Absent
 - Portland Downtown - Yes
 - Preble Street - Yes
 - Shalom House Inc. - Yes
 - Spurwink - Yes
 - The Opportunity Alliance/PATH - Yes
 - Through these Doors – Yes
 - United Way of Greater Portland – Absent
 - Motion passed as amended.
- **Announcements**
 - o HVJ is working on outreach on the Discrimination Against Homelessness Pilot Program being conducted by the Maine Human Rights Commission. Reach out to HVJ for more information on that.
 - o World Homeless Day is October 10th. Could there be a rally at Monument Square to communicate to the community about homelessness and what we do.