



Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee Minutes

Tuesday, September 28, 2021, 5:30pm, Remote Meeting

Committee Attendance:

Tae Chong, Chair (District 3), Mark Dion (District 5).

City Staff:

Kristen Dow, Director of HHS; Anne Torregrossa, Associate Corporation Counsel; Aaron Geyer, Director of Social Services; Adam Harr, Executive Assistant for Social Services. Keith Gautreau, Fire Chief.

Meeting called to order at 5:40 PM.

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Announcements

- July 13, 2021 draft workshop minutes.
 - Councilor Dion moved to accept the minutes; Councilor Chong seconded and the minutes were accepted 2-0 (Ray absent).

AGENDA ITEM 2 – August Updates

- 39 Forest Avenue Update
 - Moves for the various locations have been scheduled for the following dates:
 - City Hall HHS staff- Today, September 28th
 - Lancaster St staff & GA operations- October 18th
 - India Street staff, clinic & exchange operations- October 28th
 - Held a community update/ Q&A on September 21st from 4-5pm via zoom.
- General Assistance Program
 - Total Applications: 1,232
 - Number of denials: 85
 - Denial rate: 7%
- Oxford Street Shelter and contract hotel:
 - OSS average nightly census: 57
 - Contract hotel average nightly census: 125
 - Funding extended through December 31, 2021.
- Overview of the Family Shelter:
 - Number of on-site at the family shelter: 32 families/ 97 individuals
 - Number of families at local hotels for shelter overflow: 91 families/ 293 individuals
- August totals for the Needle Exchange Program (NEP) are as follows:
 - Total number of exchanges: 769 (261 onsite, 508 outreach)
 - Total number of needles collected: 28,149
 - Total number of needles distributed: 43,237
 - Total number of Narcan doses distributed: 247 kits (494 doses)

- Community needles collected: 1,629
 - Collected from community sharps containers: 978 (60% of total)
- Executive order allowing more than a 1:1 exchange ended on August 31st; all syringe services programs must go back to a 1:1 exchange. This affects all programs across the state.
- Clinic Numbers:
 - STD Clinic: Patients seen: 106, new patients: 34
 - PCFC: Patients seen: 46, new patients: 7

Committee questions and discussion

- Councilor Chong requested an executive forecast of what asylum seeker resettlement need looks like in the coming weeks and months.
- The August total needles distributed: 43,237 is high.
 - The shift in increase in numbers appears to be from going from 1:1 to 1:10, then up to 1:50; at that increase to 1:50 is when we saw the numbers distributed jump.
 - There is speculation that people stocked up before the executive order ended but the September numbers will show if the demand goes back down.
- Did we see more calls for services for overdoses during this time?
 - We have not seen a significant jump in overdose.
 - We are 4-5% above in total EMS calls compared to last year.
- Chief Gautreau will start giving regular Fire Department updates starting at the next meeting.
- HHS reports weekly numbers on the website.
 - The week ending September 18th distributed: 8,650 syringes were collected and 7,949 syringes were distributed
- When are people coming for exchanges?
 - Parks and Rec have software tracking locations where syringe litter is collected.
 - Overdose deaths are tracked.
- Councilor Dion received complaints of people living in vehicles in Morrill's Corner and thanked HHS Staff for their quick outreach response.
 - He is concerned people in the colder months may face danger attempting to get warm.
 - Outreach positions have been posted to respond to this need.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – Shelter Licensing

- Associate Corporation Counsel Anne Torregrossa made requested change:
 - Added “solely” to DV shelters.
- Overview:
 - Chapter 15 changes set up a yearly fee of 250 dollars (1-40 beds) and \$500 (41+ beds)
 - Licensing fees are based on the cost of enforcement and review.

- Actual cost is slightly larger than the fees to make it more affordable to shelters.
- o Definitions
 - Defines Emergency Shelter: A facility providing temporary overnight shelter to individuals experiencing homelessness in a dormitory-style or per-bed arrangement.
 - For overnight dormitory-style emergency shelter and does impact apartment style shelters.
- o Licensing Requirements
 - Must have a license and must meet the standards of the license ordinance to keep the license.
- o Licensing Authority
 - The council can issue licenses with additions or limitations to provide for health and welfare.
- o Review Procedures
 - All new licenses would be reviewed by the City Council for the initial license.
 - Renewals for the City Council would also go before the City Council.
 - Renewals for all other shelters would go through business licensing.
 - The exception is if a councilor, the Mayor, or the City Manager received complaints and requested it come back before the Council for review.
 - City Departments will give feedback to the council on the applications.
- o Application Submission Requirements
 - The applications must include information on the people involved and must have the name and contact information of a community relations liaison who is responsive to the public and for an emergency contact.
 - There are performance standards.
 - On-site supervision.
 - Did not prescribe proximity to METRO but shelters must strategize access.
 - Day space is required for new shelters.
 - Cap of 300 beds in a one-mile radius.
 - Shelters cannot be within 1,000 feet from each other.
- o Performance Standards
 - Shelter management holds a monthly meeting with neighbors and the Police Chief to respond to concerns.
 - Domestic Violence shelters are exempted from certain reporting requirements to not avoid revealing their location. This is done by waiver.
- o Enforcement and Penalties
 - Monitoring Reports sent to HHS with input from PD.
 - The City Shelter's monitoring reports will be sent to the HHS&PS Committee.
 - A lot of the information is already reported to Maine Housing.
 - Neighborhood concerns and Criminal Trespass Order information collected.

- A notice of violation will be issued before enforcement action unless it is a repeat violation or immediate risk to health and safety.
- Enforcement consistent with city ordinances.
 - Penalties and court action are rare.
- o Appeals
 - There is an Appeals process.
- o Pre-existing Shelters
 - We don't want these new provisions to shut down existing shelters.
 - "pre-existing emergency shelter" shall mean (i) an emergency shelter that, as of January 31, 2021, is lawfully operating with all required permits and approvals; (ii) an emergency shelter that, as of January 31, 2021, has received conditional use approval that has not expired, or (iii) the consolidation of the operations of the Joe Kreisler Teen Shelter at 38 Preble Street and the Preble Street Teen Center at 343 Cumberland into one 24/7 emergency shelter facility for teens at 343 Cumberland Avenue provided that there is no expansion of the number of individuals served or beds currently provided between the two existing locations.
 - Pre-existing shelters are exempt from the 300-bed density requirement and 1,000-foot buffer.
- o Severability
 - It is possible to make reasonable accommodations to these requirements.
- Councilor Chong overviewed the process, including two public comments and provider input over nine months.
- Councilor Dion moved to recommend the shelter licensing to the full City Council, Councilor Chong Seconded and the motion was approved unanimously 2 – 0 (Ray absent).

AGENDA ITEM 5 – Next Meeting, October 12, 2021

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:30 PM