

**CITY OF PORTLAND
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 13, 2018 MEETING MINUTES**

The December 13, 2018 Meeting was called to order by Chair Pious Ali at 9:07 a.m. in Room 209, Portland City Hall, Portland, Maine

A. Attendance/Introductions:

Councilor Pious Ali, Chair, Councilor Jill Duson, Mayor Ethan Strimling, Portland Board of Education Chair Roberto Rodriguez, Portland Board of Education Member Laurie Davis; Kate Knox, Esq., Bernstein Shur team/lobbyist; Alysia Melnick, Esq., Bernstein Shur team/lobbyist; Rep. Richard Farnsworth, Rep. Ben Collings; Sen. Heather Sanborn, Rep. Michael Brennan, Rep. Rachel Tabot-Ross; Rep. Matt Moonen; Rep. Erik Jorgensen; Sen. Ben Chipman; Rep. Michael Sylvester; Alicia Gardiner, Executive Director of Budget and Finance; PPS, City Manager Jon Jennings; Corporation Counsel Danielle West-Chuhta; Mike Murray (Staff); David MacLean (Administrator, Social Services Division, DHHS); Jeff Levine (Director of Planning and Urban Development); Casey Gilbert, Executive Director, Portland Downtown.

B. Approval of Minutes:

1. Motion to approve the November 19, 2018 minutes made by Councilor Duson; second by Councilor Ali; minutes approve 2-0 (Strimling abstain).
2. Motion to approve the November 26, 2018 minutes made by Councilor Duson; second by Councilor Ali; minutes approve 2-0 (Strimling abstain).

C. New Items for Committee Consideration:

1. Presentation made by Casey Gilbert, Executive Director of Portland Downtown to support legislation to amend current statute to extend Development Districts longer than 30 years. Mayor Strimling moved to support legislation; seconded by Councilor Duson; Committee approved 3-0. Committee asked that Portland Downtown's lobbyist work with the City of Portland Lobbyist to move this legislation through to passage.
2. Presentation by City Manager Jon Jennings to allow airports of a certain passenger volume the ability to provide oversight to Transportation Network Companies (TNC). Mayor Strimling moved to support legislation; seconded by Councilor Duson; Committee approved 3-0.

D. Bill Titles

Rep. Brennan will introduce several bills related to the City's priorities:

1. Increase School debt limit service to \$2 Million on new construction and on renovations
2. Add after-school programs to Essential Programs (EPS) and Services formula
3. Require State Funding for school teacher retirement cost

4. Rework Special Education and English Language Learner definitions and augmented EPS percentage from 1.2 to 2.0
5. Enrollment cap on Virtual Charter Schools
6. School Virtual Platform, available to all schools in Maine

Councilor Dusen: The Committee voted at the last meeting on the bills and bill subjects it would be supporting, which can be listed in the minutes with bill titles and LD numbers as they are submitted. Those include bills supporting increased school funding.

Alysia Melnick, lobbyist, will add school funding bills to tracking list.

Rep. Chipman: Time should be devoted to School Bills at every LC meeting. Councilor Ali agreed.

City Manager Jon Jennings requested bills that assist with the opioid crisis; needle exchanges; benefits for lawfully present immigrants; firearms regulations; housing for the homeless; excise tax matters; property tax relief; county jail funding; Fire Dept. facilities; and share of adult use marijuana tax for city.

In response, Rep. Talbot-Ross said she was sponsoring a bill on the opioid crisis; Alysia Melnick said there was always a needle exchange bill; Sen. Chipman has a bill to change the definition of homelessness to an emergency under most or more circumstances.

Rep. Mike Sylvester discussed the broad support for a local option sales tax, including from the Mayor's Coalition and Maine Municipal Association, or which 15% would be used directly for opioid crisis response.

Councilor Dusen said groups would be supporting a bill raising the retail sales and/or meals & lodging tax by 1% with that 1% to go to municipalities where the tax was collected.

Bills that regulate firearms in school parking lots and on school property will be introduced.

Housing for the homeless will be supported by, 1. The Senior Housing Bond release, previously delayed, 2. Housing First bill from Rep. Brennan; 3. Revival of a Housing Assistance Program to help present homelessness, also from Rep. Brennan; and 4. by the problem of housing becoming a formal focus of one legislative committee for Labor and Housing issues.

Rep. Talbot-Ross has a bill to restore the Circuit Breaker program to an earlier, higher level. Rep. Talbot-Ross will propose a bill to allow the use of MaineCare for inmates of the County Jail.

Rep. Brennan will support \$250,000 for yearly substance abuse programs at the Cumberland County Jail, specifically, and also a bill to close Long Creek Youth Development Center over a period of several years.

Rep. Brennan will support a bond for Fire Stations and for Sustainability improvements.

Sen. Farnsworth will sponsor a bill to regulate Uber and other Transportation Network Company drivers from picking up passengers at the Jetport.

Portland Downtown, concerned that its development district term is coming toward the end of its statutory lifespan, may be assisted by a bill from Rep. Shneck of Bangor, which also has a development district

During the final 45 minutes of the meeting, the participants discussed school funding, beginning with an explanation of the state school funding program from Portland School Finance Director Alicia Gardiner. Rep. Sylvester asked if the school funding formula was fair. Others agreed that the basis of the formula in the valuation of property was not in fact fair, and that basing the formula on the level of local income would be at least more fair.

Changes to the definition of disadvantaged students have reduced the number of students in that category in Portland. Each of those students is funded by the state at a higher rate than others in the school system. Rep. Brennan will sponsor a bill to increase that rate further, which would benefit the City's school budget. Even more, moving the cost of retirement benefits for teachers back to state funding would decrease the City's direct expenses. Increasing the general funding of school EPS to 55% as approved twice in state referenda, would also support the School budget and could reduce the mill rate substantially.

Rep. Sanborn summarized school legislative priorities as 1. 55% EPS funding; 2. Increased funding for disadvantages students; and 3. state funding of teacher retirement benefits.

Rep. Jorgensen said the State will run out of money before all the proposals are approved.

Councilor Duson made a Motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Ali, and the meeting adjourned at 11:32 a.m.

E. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the Legislative Committee with the Delegation will be scheduled for January 14, 2019 from 9-11 AM in Room 209, Portland City Hall, with 30 minutes for school issues to be set on the agenda

F. Adjournment

Councilor Duson made a Motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Ali, and the meeting adjourned at 11:32 a.m.