

Minutes

Remote Housing and Economic Development Committee

March 1, 2022

NOTE: This meeting was held via Zoom and can be viewed at this link:

<https://www.portlandmaine.gov/129/Agendas-Minutes>

These Minutes provide a record of those in attendance, general discussion taking place, and motions made.

A remote meeting of the Housing and Economic Development Committee (HEDC) of the Portland City Council was held on Tuesday, March 1, 2022, at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom. Present from the Committee were Chair Pious Ali, and members Councilors Tae Chong, Roberto Rodriguez, and Councilor Andrew Zarro. Present from the City staff were Interim Housing and Economic Development Department Director Mary Davis, Corporation Counsel Michael Goldman, Principal Administrative Officer Lori Paulette, and Housing Program Manager Victoria Volent.

Item #1: Zoom Meeting Information – no Committee action required.

Item #2: Review and vote on February 15, 2022, draft meeting Minutes.

On motion made by Councilor Zarro, seconded by Councilor Rodriguez, the Committee voted unanimously (4-0) to accept the Minutes.

Item #3: Presentation of Age Friendly Portland and the Portland Ge Friendly

Business Program

Linda Weare, City of Portland Director of Elder Affairs, introduced this item with an overview of Age Friendly Communities. In 2015 Portland became the first community in Maine to join the AARP Network of Age Friendly Communities, now there are more than 100 Age Friendly Communities in Maine. This program helps cities prepare for rapid population aging by promoting

healthy and sustained economic growth that provides resources to enhance personal independence, allow residents to age in place, and foster their engagement in the community's civic, economic and social life. Age Friendly cities help sustain economic growth. AARP provided a process for Age Friendly Portland (AFP) to follow which started with a steering committee of community stakeholders that conducted a community needs assessment. From the data collected, AFP developed a five-year action plan with a focus on housing (aging in place), transportation (walkability), social inclusion, and communication and information. After five years, communities provide a progress reports to AARP to receive certification. Age Friendly Portland is certified and in the process of conducting a new needs assessment to determine goals for the next five years. The City's webpage contains more information regarding AFP as well as the AFP Resource Guide, and the volunteer program to help local business owners become more sensitive to the needs of older customers and receive recognition for efforts to make their business more "age-friendly" and accessible to all. Any business can apply through the on-line application.

Cary Tyson, Executive Director of Portland Downtown, spoke of the importance of the work conducted by AFP and the need to promote that work to the business, civic and nonprofit communities. AFP is applying for grants to assist Portland businesses with the costs of installing handrails, ramps and buzzers to improve accessibility.

Councilor Zarro thanked Linda and AFP, and highlighted the village initiative support system that has helped with both snow shoveling assistance and connecting older citizens with a pre-screened service provider. He looks forward to signing up and promoting other business to join AFP's Business Certification Program.

Councilor Rodriguez also thanked Linda and Cary for the update and presentation. As a physical therapist working with the geriatric population in Portland, he is personally interested in helping seniors age in place and age independently. It is important to keep the city accessible and

seniors active. He asked if there are programs to help decrease the risk of falls, and if there is a source that provides access to assistive devices for short-term needs. Linda Wear noted the Matter of Balance program offered through the Southern Maine Agency on Aging and mentioned the city's Office of Elder Affairs connects people with service providers based on the need requested. As for assistive devices, Ms. Weare indicated that the Barron Center occasionally has resources available.

The Committee continued their discussion on AFP including the suggestions to conduct age-friendly events, add more places to sit down, having chairs with armrests, installing grab bars and ramps, and having a downtown district event to raise awareness of AFP.

Item #4: Update, discussion, and Committee direction on use of TIF funds to invest in workforce training (including a possible collaboration between Portland Adult Ed and PATHS) – No action and no public hearing required.

Chair Councilor Ali noted this is one of his favorite programs utilizing TIF funds, and he asked Portland Adult Education (PAE) Director Anita St. Onge to introduce this.

Ms. St. Onge thanked the Council and staff for support of this program, which is making a big difference for PAE and its students. For FY2023, PAE is asking for \$200,000, double from FY2022 of \$100,000 as directed by this Committee to ask for more. She noted that a new program added for FY2023 is ESOL instruction for low-level English speakers. Basic literacy is a very important workforce issue so is being added. Ms. St. Onge also noted that recruiting students for the Intensive ESOL program is not easy as they have too much going on in their life so it is not a program to be TIF funded in FY2023 but will continue to be a program at PAE.

Ms. Love, also of PAE, thanked all for supporting PAE in these programs, and noted that PATHS Director was also present today, Kevin Stilphen. Ms. Love then highlighted the successes so far in the FY2022 TIF Funded programs, and summarized the proposed programs for the FY2023 school year with the associated ask of \$200,000 (see attached summary). She

noted that three programs are proposed to be returning for FY2023, those being the Education Academy, New Mainer Teller Training Program, and the Employment and English Preparation for new arrivals. PAE is also proposing three new programs, assisted with TIF funding, namely the Commercial Drivers License Program, the New Mainer Clean Energy Training Program with PATHS, and ESOL Instruction for Low-Level English Speakers with Certified ESOL Instructor. The goal is to have a total of 120 students enrolled for FY2023 in these TIF assisted programs.

Chair Councilor Ali asked Mr. Stilphen about the collaboration with PATHS and PAE.

Mr. Stilphen said that PATHS' day ends at 1:30 for the high school students with a lot of equipment that can be used. Regarding the New Mainer Clean Energy Training Program, with PATHS investment in state-of-the-art HVAC equipment to keep up with renewable and clean technology, this is an opportunity to partner with PAE for the language side of the program. This would be a good pathway for good, stable paying jobs. It is a shovel ready program; another foreseeable program in the future would be cyber security.

Councilor Chong agreed with the Chair that this is a great program for use of TIF funds. He would support it at \$200,000 as it is transformative for those in the program, and any type of language access is great as he believes there will be many more new Mainers in the future. PAE is doing great work for people of color to get training and jobs, and including trade jobs is a step in the right direction. Perhaps new programs in the future would be how to start their own business, as well as how to assist those in low-level paying jobs move up. As the programs expand, he noted that future funding requests from PAE would likewise increase and he would support those requests.

Councilor Rodriguez noted that he has always been impressed with PAE and PATHS, and these programs help move forward the Portland Promise program. He asked Mr. Stilphen

about the next obvious program area for possible partnership with PAE, and Mr. Stilphen noted that would be welding and fabricating.

Chair Councilor Ali noted that he and others from the City will be attending the National League of Cities Conference in DC, and this would be an opportunity to share this program for possible future Federal funding, noting the needs for the constituents and for teachers, particularly bilingual teachers for both PAE and PATHS.

Councilor Zarro asked about next steps, and Ms. Davis said that she shared the initial request with Finance Director Brendan O'Connell. Based on Committee feedback in full support of the \$200,000 TIF workforce funding request for FY2023, she will relay this to Mr. O'Connell for leadership's review and recommendation to the Finance Committee.

Item #5: Communication/Discussion

a. 2022 Work Plan and Schedule

b. Communication from Corporation Counsel re: Minimum Wage Ordinance; are amendments permitted after 2020 Referendum

Chair Councilor Ali noted that the Work Plan is a live document and invited Committee members to contact him and Ms. Davis for any additions/edits.

Regarding the minimum wage communication, Councilor Zarro asked if there could be a path forward to create an alternative for a citizen vote.

Mr. Goldman noted that pursuant to Chapter 9 of the Code of Ordinances, it cannot be repealed or amended except by a vote of the people. Regarding that process, he would need to discuss this with Interim Corporation Counsel Thompson.

Councilor Zarro noted that if it is not possible for the City Council to put an amendment out on the ballot for a vote by the people, then there will be no need for further discussion.

There was then discussion regarding additional TIF funding for Creative Portland, with Councilor Chong noting that last year it did not get done due to timing. With the budget process currently underway for FY2023, he asked about the status.

Ms. Davis noted that in her Department budget, she included an additional line for Creative Portland (CP) at \$155,000. This would be in addition to the two City employees in her Department budget for CP (Director and Program Assistant) at a total of approximately \$150,000 for salary and fringe benefits. If this budget should be approved, the Downtown TIF document will need to be amended and approved by both the Portland City Council and the ME Dept. of Economic and Community Development, as it currently has funding for CP up to \$100,000.

Seeing no further comments/discussion, on motion made by Councilor Rodriguez, seconded by Councilor Chong, the Committee voted 4-0 to adjourn at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully, Lori Paulette and Victoria Volent