



HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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SOCIAL SERVICES • PUBLIC HEALTH • OFFICE OF ELDER AFFAIRS • BARRON CENTER

City of Portland, Maine Public Safety / Health & Human Services Department October 8, 2013

Meeting Minutes

Committee Attendance: Chair Suslovic, Councilor Leeman, Councilor Duson and Councilor Coyne.

City Staff Attendance: Doug Gardner; HHS, Julie Sullivan; Public Health/HHS, Kathi Fortin; Public Health/HHS, John Peverada; Parking, Trish McAllister; Corporation Counsel.

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Meeting Called to Order and Minutes from September Meeting Reviewed:

Meeting was called to order at approximately 6:00 PM by Chair Suslovic. Minutes were reviewed and all accepted 4-0.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – Healthcare for the Homeless: (Item taken out of order)

Kathi Fortin addressed the Committee and indicated she is looking for a recommendation for Approval.

Meeting was then open to public comment by Chair. Seeing no public comment it was closed.

A Motion for passage by Councilor Coyne, 2nd by Leeman. Passed 4-0.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – Public Health Division Quarterly Update: (Item taken out of order)

Julie Sullivan gave her quarterly update to the Committee outlining Affordable Care Act, Public Health Systems, Substance Abuse Prevention/Environmental Health as well as Flu Shots and Restaurant Inspections.

Meeting was open to public comment. Seeing no public comment, Chair thanked Julie for her continued good work.

AGENDA ITEM 4- Chapter 28; Traffic and Motor Vehicles, Section 84; Violations:

Trish McAllister addressed the Committee to explain the Parking Division has been seeing a lot of abuse in reference to the Disabled Parking Placards. Currently State Law dictates a police officer has to give a citation to the driver, we are proposing that this be added to the parking violation list currently on the envelopes.

John Peverada from Parking spoke in favor of this as they are seeing such an increase in abuse of the placards. They are proposing a \$200 fine.

Meeting was open to public comment, seeing none a Motion was made to recommend passage to full City Council. All in favor, passed 4-0.

This item will be on next Council Agenda.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – Proposed Amendment to City Code Chapter 17: Buffer Zone Establishment:

Trish gave history of the proposed Buffer Zone for the area surrounding the Planned Parenthood location on Congress Street. The buffer zone ordinance was introduced at the last meeting and the committee asked staff to make one minor change to the proposed ordinance (change “Portland METRO” to all public transit for the purpose of buffer zone exemption) and to verify the measurements around the various entrances on Congress Street.

Trish met with Bill Clark from Public Services and the measurements showed that the proposed 39 foot zone would protect the entire area without encroaching onto sidewalks across the street. For comparison a graphic of a more limited buffer zone was drawn as well (25 feet around the most used entrance).

The meeting was open to public comment. *Please note the comments are a summary

Speaker 1 – Maria Settler, Cumberland Avenue Resident:

Maria is a greeter at Planned Parenthood and has witnessed firsthand a hostile environment because of the protesting. The loud preaching and yelling can be heard inside. While she believes in free speech she also feels the confidentiality of the patients is being compromised and hopes this ordinance passes.

Speaker 2 – Jules Pernel, Sherman Street Resident:

Jules has witnessed intimidation and hostile environment feels it is unfair when trying to obtain health care.

Speaker 3 – Eric Covey, Grass Roots Organizer for Planned Parenthood:

Eric gave an overview of the patients who obtain services from Planned Parenthood explained that only 2% of the 6900 patients are seeking abortion services. 70% of their patients are feeling harassed and intimidated by the protesters. He strongly supports the 39' buffer zone.

Speaker 4 – Amy Gatos, State Street Resident:

Amy was a former patient at Planned Parenthood who decided to change practitioners after being filmed by the protesters while entering the clinic. She now has to drive a long way from Portland in order to access health care.

Speaker 5 – Deanna Mesler, South Portland Resident:

Deanna came to Portland for an abortion, the wait was 1-3 hours and heard protesters yelling outside on the streets. She feels this is bullying behavior and does not understand why it is acceptable behavior in adults. She encourages the Committee to support the 39 foot buffer zone.

Speaker 6 – Jill Barkley, Portland Resident:

Very happy that Planned Parenthood is located centrally in town allowing for more access. She encourages the Committee to support both free speech and patient's rights.

Speaker 7 – Bree Kidman, Volunteer at Planned Parenthood:

She hopes the Committee votes in favor of the 39' buffer zone and spoke of the harassment she has witnessed first-hand.

Speaker 8 – Gabrielle, A Resident of Riverton:

Gabrielle is a patient at Planned Parenthood and wants to see the Committee uphold a buffer zone.

Speaker 9 – Ellen Murphy, Park Street Resident:

Ellen witnessed an incident last winter in front of Planned Parenthood where a protester followed a patient into the Portland Public Library from the clinic. She encouraged the Committee to pass this buffer zone ordinance.

Speaker 10 – Kailyn Howard:

Kailyn cares about Freedom of Speech and as a patient of Planned Parenthood recommends passage of the 39' buffer zone.

Speaker 11 – Tom Slatterly, Pro-Bono Attorney for Planned Parenthood:

Tom outlined the buffer zone and how it will work and allow for patients and employees to access healthcare and enter their place of business. Planned Parenthood believes this should be a "No Advocacy Zone".

Speaker 12 – Mike Anthony, Activist:

Mike believes in the right to protest and feels the city is wrong in how they handle protesting however he supports the buffer zone.

Speaker 13 – Meredith Keily, Planned Parenthood Employee:

She has witnessed lines being crossed with threats to patients.

Speaker 14 – Owen Hill, State Street Resident:

Owen referenced the new "Life is Good Here" campaign in the City and stressed that Portland should not be supporting an environment of harassment.

Speaker 15 – Lauren Groused, Employee of Planned Parenthood:

Planned Parenthood is trying to create an environment of safety and it is being eroded by the protesters. Lauren gave many examples of the harassment and intimidation. She wants to see the buffer zone enacted.

Speaker 16 – Becca, Grant Street Resident and Planned Parenthood Resident:

She encouraged the Committee to please pass this ordinance and gave examples of being denied access to healthcare.

Speaker 17 – Mary Alice Walker, Resident of Gray and Employee at the Biddeford Planned Parenthood:

Mary Alice urges enactment of the safety zone and feels activities have been increasing and feels we should not have to risk safety in order to access reproductive healthcare.

Speaker 18 – Brad Freise, Manager of building where Planned Parenthood is located:

He pointed out that Planned Parenthood is only one of their tenants in the building – and that all employees are required to walk through this gauntlet each week. They are worried about losing tenants in the building and hope the Ordinance is passed.

Speaker 19 – Lynn, South Portland Resident and Volunteer at Planned Parenthood:

As a volunteer at the Clinic Lynn has observed intimidation of patients, partners, employees and tourists and is supporting the buffer zone.

Speaker 20 – Amanda, North Deering Resident and Employee at Planned Parenthood:

Amanda has experienced the harassment first hand. She is very proud of the work that Planned Parenthood does and supports the proposed buffer zone.

Speaker 21 – Beth, Resident of Portland:

Beth views the buffer zone as a path of compromise. She wants the intimidation to stop and asked the Committee to adopt the zone.

Speaker 22 – Evan McVeigh, Resident of Portland:

Evan believes you should treat your neighbors as you want to be treated yourself.

Speaker 23 - Leslie Brancato, Director of Portland Community Health Center:

She is in support of the 39' safety zone and spoke of the results of harassment and trauma from patients who have experienced it.

Speaker 24 – Amanda Clark, Resident of Congress Street:

She relayed her experience being harassed by protesters as a walker on Congress Street.

Speaker 25 – Tess, Park Street Resident:

Her job entails working with international students and encourages them to utilize Planned Parenthood for healthcare and supports the buffer zone.

Speaker 26 – Gail, Resident of Lafayette Street:

She is part of a group called “Grandmothers for Reproductive Health” and is encouraging the committee to vote in favor of the ordinance.

Speaker 27 – Resident of Mayo Street:

Speaker is a patient at Planned Parenthood and feels that confidentiality is being breached. She asked for support for the buffer zone.

Speaker 28 – Kate Brogan, Freeport Resident and Employee of Planned Parenthood:

She is in favor of the buffer zone and pointed out that 8 Planned Parenthood employees in the country have been murdered by individuals who were protesting abortions.

Speaker 29 – Lynn Schmidt, Resident of Norway, Maine:

Lynn is in favor of the buffer zone and is here to support it.

Speaker 30 – Mike Fink, Portland Resident:

Mike just recently closed his restaurant which is right next door to the Clinic and indicated the business next to him has altered his hours on days when protestors are present. He has witnessed the intimidation first hand and supports the buffer zone.

Speaker 31 – Diana, Chair Maine Women’s Lobby:

She attends frequent meetings at Planned Parenthood and has experienced the bullying first hand. She supports the buffer zone.

Speaker 32 – James, Former U.S. Marine & Portland Resident:

He supports the buffer zone and believes access to healthcare is important.

Speaker 33 – April Neuman, Planned Parenthood Employee:

April worries about the effects the protestors have on the patients as she has witnessed a lot of patients who are traumatized by them.

Speaker 34 – Eliot Cutler, Cape Elizabeth Resident and Gubernatorial Candidate:

Mr. Cutler indicated he feels this is a matter of state wide importance and is proud to be here and support the buffer zone. He feels the 1st Amendment right should not prevail in this instance.

Speaker 35 – Sandra, Portland Resident:

Sandra has an apartment near Planned Parenthood and supports the buffer zone.

Speaker 36 – Dr. Carol Ward:

Dr. Ward is in support of the buffer zone and urges the committee and Council to pass ASAP.

Speaker 37 – Rebecca Hunt, Ob/Gyn and West End Resident:

Supports the buffer zone

Speaker 38 – Jacqueline , Resident of Rosemont and Planned Parenthood Patient:

Jacqueline is in support of the buffer zone.

Public Comment was closed.

Chair Suslovic had questions for the building's landlord/management representative about the egresses and access to the building.

Councilor Leeman cited a recent article on the Massachusetts Supreme Court case and how there is no decision yet on that case. She feels the focus needs to remain on protecting the individual's rights and access to healthcare.

Councilor Duson hopes the buffer zone request passes and wants to make sure we have a defensible amendment. She also thanked the speakers and public who attended the meeting for being very respectful.

Committee debated the details of the proposed zone and thanked all who attended the meeting including staff.

Motion to move to City Council by Councilor Leeman, 2nd by Councilor Duson, Passed 4-0.

Public Comment and vote will occur at the November 18th City Council Meeting.

With no further business to attend to, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.