



HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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City of Portland, Maine Public Safety/Health & Human Services Committee

**April 9, 2013 Meeting Minutes
6:00 PM
Room 24/City Hall**

Committee Attendance: Chair Suslovic, Co-Chair Leeman, Councilor Coyne
Councilor Duson – Absent

City Staff Attendance: Doug Gardner; HHS Department, Trish McAllister; Counsel/Public
Safety, Mary Davis; Housing, Julie Sullivan; Public Health/HHS

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

Meeting was called to order at approximately 6:00 PM by Chair Suslovic and Minutes from the February meeting were reviewed. Motion to approve, 2nd all in Favor. Passed.

Chair Suslovic clarified that no public comment would be given at tonight's meeting in regards to agenda items 5-7 re: Street Artist Proposal.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – Public Health Quarterly Update:

Public Health Director Julie Sullivan addressed the Committee with a quarterly Public Health update. Julie gave an overview of the handout which highlighted the grants each Public Health Program administers.

Chair Suslovic thanked Julie for her continued work and suggested he would like to see how the Public Health Division and recommendations from the Homeless Task Force could become Interwoven. Doug indicated the work that Homeless Health does along with other Programs within Public Health.

AGENDA ITEM 3 - Proposed Change of Farmer's Market Hours in Deering Oaks Park :

Trish gave a brief overview of what the Farmer's Market Association is requesting and that is a 1 hour extension to the end time on Saturdays each week . The hours are currently 7:00 AM-Noon, they would like to extend to 1:00 PM.

Meeting was open to Public Comment.

Speaker 1 – Mary Ellen Chad, Green Spark Farm and representing the Farmer's Market:

Mary Ellen indicated that 30 members of the Farmer's Market Association voted in favor of the later closure and urged the Committee to approve this item.

Speaker 2 – Abbeth Russell, Portland Resident and Street Artist:

Abbeth wanted clarification of the Committee not allowing public comment for the 5th Agenda Item pertaining to Street Artists and respectfully requested it be allowed.

Public Comment was closed.

Trish McAllister read a memo from the Public Services Division indicating their approval of this and indicated they hope for a continued positive working relationship with the Market in the event of festivals etc at the Park.

Motion to recommend the change in time to extend to 1:00 PM on Saturdays. 2nd and Passed.

This item will be forwarded to full Council at the April 22nd Council meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – Homeless Task Force – Staff Recommendations:

Chair Suslovic gave an overview of the Task Force and Task Force members that were present at the meeting introduced themselves. They were as follows:

Suzanne McCormick – United Way of Greater Portland and Task Force Tri-Chair

Tom Ptacek – Homeless Voices for Justice

Dana Tottman – Avesta Housing

Mark Swann – Preble Street Resource Center

Tom Blackburn – Bayside Resident

Doug Gardner – City of Portland/HHS

Josh O'Brien – Oxford Street Shelter/SSD/HHS

Rob Parritt – Oxford Street Shelter/SSD/HHS

Bob Duranleau – Social Service Division/HHS

Doug reviewed the back- up material and briefly updated the Committee on each of the 4 recommended actions: 1.) Retooling the Emergency Shelter System 2.)Rapid Rehousing 3.) Increased Case Management 4.) Report Monitoring.

Josh O'Brien explained that since implementing the new Client Support & Services Plan Policy at the Shelter in January, the number of housing placements has increased in the month of March to 52.

Councilor Leeman questioned where the clients are being placed. Josh explained that some are receiving housing vouchers, GA, SRO's YMCA, open market and some with families. Chair Suslovic wants to make sure we're looking at a regional approach to housing placements, not just within Portland.

Mark Swann clarified that this will be a regional approach and that there are no regional boundaries when it comes to looking at these issues. Mark also addressed the outreach piece and indicated the HOME Team is the most cost effective of all the outreach efforts and has taken a 15% cut this year. The Task Force is asking for restoration of that funding.

Councilor Leeman also questioned who will be the lead agency for outreach so that this is a seamless system for consumers. She would also like to see an all-inclusive map of Housing that shows subsidized housing, special needs facilities as well as group homes. Doug will work with Jeff Levine in Planning for this information. She questioned if there is a need for an economic/financial analysis as she is interested in an overview of what the impact would be to the City.

Doug spoke of the lack of homeless medical respite beds and indicated we currently only have 2 beds which are located at the Barron Center. The high demand for a medical respite program/facility was discussed. A group of key stakeholders have been identified to evaluate the need for this type of program, possible funding sources and United Way of Greater Portland was identified as the lead agency.

Special population housing was further discussed with Dana Tottman explaining that in terms of funding sources, raising the money is less of an issue, then finding a site and continued funding for staff and overhead.

Chair Suslovic thanked the Committee for their Recommendations and continued focus on these vital issues. He then requested comments/feedback from the Task Force Committee members who were present at the meeting.

Suzanne McCormick from United Way of Greater Portland responded to the request for an outside overview and is asking the Committee to name a leadership group to work with the city.

Dana Tottman from Avesta Housing responded that the City staff has been incredibly focused on these issues and sees a fundamental change in demographics in recent years and he continues to see many homeless individuals who are very ill. The main reason these consumers move out of facilities such as Florence House or Logan Place is either death or moving to a nursing home. Dana also understands the importance of a regional collaboration.

Dana also explained that Maine has one of the oldest housing stocks in the country and we find ourselves with an abundance of 2-3 bedroom apartments that don't necessarily fit the needs of the community any longer. The trend is towards constructing smaller 1- bedroom and efficiency apartments.

Mark Swann from Preble Street Resource Center pointed out all the positives associated with the HOME Team and agrees he is seeing a lot of collaborative efforts. He is worried regionally about some of the community facilities and what he has been experiencing lately such as how difficult it has been to get someone admitted to a psych facility.

Mark also indicated he does not believe our current overflow plan is working and we need to take a hard look at our shelter system.

Tom Blackburn a Task Force Committee member and a Bayside resident agrees with the idea of an independent assessment overview. He feels we need to look at outcomes to ensure we're spending our money wisely. He also questioned when public comment will be allowed on this topic as there are many

individuals who would like to speak about it. He also questioned if the increase in demand for services is being addressed and how this will be handled if there are additional budget cuts.

Tom Ptacek Homeless Voices for Justice pointed out that in all of the discussions he has not heard the term "human being" mentioned once. He stresses there needs to be a system that works for the individual and feels no one is trying to uniquely engage the individual in this manner. As an example Tom shared the key to successfully overcoming homelessness was a dietician. This isn't always the case with others and each case needs to be looked at differently.

Chair Suslovic proposed a 7th point of the recommendations and that would be the creation of a leadership team as well as an independent review. He also requested quarterly updates from the Task Force as well as graphs with notes attached to it.

Co-Chair Leeman would like to see which items in this recommendation are going to be separated and given to what departments. She sees this as a work in progress and commended the Task Force for a phenomenal piece of work they have accomplished and stressed to them not to get overwhelmed by the process.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – Street Artists Ordinance Amendments – Communication Only:

Chair Suslovic reiterated the schedule of the Agenda with a change to item 7, as no public comment will be allowed on this topic at this time.

A Motion was made for the Committee to go into Executive Session and Trish McCallister read the City Charter that pertains to Executive Session. Motion was not 2nd as both Co-chair Leeman and Councilor Coyne were not comfortable in doing so out of the public. Cheryl has concerns about policy and believes the public should be allowed to discuss the issue. She was under the assumption that the item would be discussed tonight but come back to the Committee at a later time in it's final form.

Trish explained the reason for the Executive Session is for the Committee to be briefed on the issue in wake of possible litigation.

**Motion to adjourn public section of the meeting and enter into Executive Session,
Chair Suslovic made a Motion at approximately 8:15 pm to go into executive session pursuant to 1
M.R.S.A. section 405(6)(E) to discuss its legal rights and duties and contemplated litigation
regarding the street artist matter. This Motion was seconded by Councilor Leeman. All in favor.
Public Meeting Adjourned at approximately 8:15 pm.**

**Executive Session adjourned and Public Meeting called to order and adjourned at approximately
8:25 PM. 2nd and all in favor.**