



Portland Police Department

**City of Portland, Maine
Public Safety / Health & Human Services Committee
December 9, 2014**

Meeting Minutes

Committee Attendance: Chair Suslovic, Councilor Brenerman, Councilor Costa, Councilor Duson

City Staff Attendance: Sheila Hill-Christian, Interim City Manager; Julianne Sullivan, Acting Chief of Staff; Chief Sauschuck, PPD; Bob Duranleau, Social Services; Dawn Stiles, Director of Social Services; Toho Soma, Public Health; Keith Gautreau, Fire Dept; Chief LaMoria, Fire Dept.

Meeting Called to Order and Minutes from October Accepted

Chair Suslovic called the meeting to order at 5:34pm. A motion was made to accept the minutes from October's meeting. All in favor and so moved.

AGENDA ITEM # 2 – Brief Update on Inspections Task Force

Julie Sullivan provided a brief update on the Fire and Inspections task force. The task force was established following the fatal Noyes Street fire. The group includes representatives from the fire department and the city's inspection department. The task force will provide an update at the February 10th meeting of the Public Safety Health and Human Services committee. The task force currently meets on a weekly basis and has developed a mission statement. External members will join in January.

Councilor Brenerman asked if they anticipated any public input at the task force meetings. He has a friend who is an electrician and may have some suggestions. Julie responded there is no public input at this time but there will be public input at the February 10 meeting before the Public Safety Health and Human Services committee. Julie offered to make it public that concerns may be sent to her regarding the task force. The chair suggested that the task force make a draft recommendation available to the public and create an opportunity for public input before the February 10th meeting.

Councilor Costa said that if the task force has financial implications that the group should be cognizant of the cost. Councilor Suslovic attended the Metro Greater Portland Council of Governments coalition meeting and said that Portland is not the only city with these issues with housing stock. Interim City Manager Sheila Hill-Christian was asked to work with other communities to develop the top 10 landlord list to share with other communities to add pressure and keep buildings safe.

Councilor Suslovic said the task force is doing a good job and said that he would rather have quality output so he is flexible on the timing of the presentation before the full committee. Councilor Brenerman asked if the task force needed the report on the cause of the fire before moving forward. Julie Sullivan said this is not a debrief on the Noyes Street fire; this is a discussion about what we are dealing with here in Portland and how to move forward. The chair specified the timing of the report is not in our control.

Fire Chief LaMoria said that we are doing what we can. The chair asked staff who determines if we can demolish the building. Sheila Hill-Christian and Richard Bianculli, the neighborhood prosecutor, confirmed that the courts and insurance companies are keeping the city from demolishing the building. Julie was

asked to add the Public Safety Health and Human Services members to the distribution list for task force materials.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – General Assistance Monthly Update

Dawn Stiles introduced Bob Duranleau and Tammy Morris from Social Services to assist in providing an update because Dawn just began in her position. Bob said the data breakdown for the first quarter has people staying on general assistance longer over a year and many of those people are going through the asylum process. Sheila Hill-Christian asked Bob to explain why the city receives two bills for the new councilors on the committee. Bob responded that the change in general assistance per the Governor's office is regarding the I-94 form and the two bills are for the "documented" and "undocumented" individuals requesting assistance.

Councilor Costa asked when the City began receiving two bills. Bob responded that the city has been receiving two bills per person since June 17, 2014 and 90% reimbursement is more difficult to reach because undocumented individuals don't count toward that reimbursement. To date the city has received no reimbursements compared to in the past when they would've seen reimbursements within 30 days. There is a 5 to 10% increase in cases as well. Chair Suslovic asked if the Lewiston individuals on general assistance have been coming to Portland. Bob said not to his knowledge. Councilor Brenerman asked why clients need subsidies outside of Portland and Bob responded regarding eligibility. The chair would like to note housing subsidy is not general assistance and that the seven point plan intends to transition individuals off general assistance.

Councilor Brenerman asked if those with subsidies have to stay in Portland. Bob responded that it depends on the subsidy and said that asylum-seekers with general assistance are not eligible for housing subsidies. Councilor Costa asked if we have a way of quantifying how much time we have spent on this since June of 2014. Bob responded that this has doubled administrative time. Councilor Costa questioned the 90% reimbursement process and Bob answered that the city is usually at the threshold earlier in the year but this year will be later because the undocumented caseload doesn't count for the spring. Social Services will clarify these threats of submitting documented and undocumented that may create a loss for general assistance funding altogether. Bob said Lewiston and has been submitting forms as a placeholder for now if the legal case is won and they are not currently looking for reimbursement at this time.

At 6:15 PM Councilor Duson arrived. Councilor Costa asked if there were no regulations requiring the state to pay municipalities Bob was unaware of existing state laws related to that.

Councilor Brenerman asked to clarify the term documented and undocumented and asked if we have illegals in Portland. Bob Duranleau specified that those individuals are either seeking asylum or are undocumented. Councilor Brenerman asked if other municipalities have these issues. Bob replied that these issues maybe specific to Portland because of the general assistance program. The Chair would like to clarify employment opportunities are available for asylum-seekers.

Councilor Duson said that after receiving work authorization permit are the individuals still considered undocumented and asked staff to clarify the term undocumented. The chair clarified State Law requires municipalities to give general assistance. Councilor Duson asked if any other state provides general assistance to asylum seekers. Bob Duranleau said he could not find other states that provided general assistance to asylum seekers.

AGENDA ITEM # 4 – Review and set work-plan for 2015

Councilor Suslovic said the full council has been attempting priorities to guide staff and their efforts in hopes the committee's work better reflects those goals. The full council meeting takes place in January and that may impact the Public Safety Health and Human Services committee work plan. Sheila will be gathering as much data on Portland as she can to assist in this process. The Chair thanks the social

services department for their strong work in this field.

The committee talked through the style of updates they would like to see moving forward for 2015. Councilor Duson would like to see more of a dashboard/vital signs approach where Councilor Suslovic would like to see regularly scheduled updates on areas under the committee's purview – even if there are not that many items to update so they can get on a regular schedule. Councilor Brenerman pointed out that the updates are half of the list in front of them and Councilor Costa requested a briefing on the issues before the committee in general. It was also requested that the Committee receive regular monthly emails or quarterly to update them on ongoing work. Sheila agreed this could happen. The Chair of the committee asked for staff recommendations on what topics the committee did need to consider for 2015.

A discussion was had regarding the seven point plan and the Chair said this should include a facilities review. Sheila noted that funding needs to be a part of the conversation because those dollars are tied to the State and that funding source remains very unclear at this time. Councilor Duson expressed a long term concern with this noting that the 7 point plan's purpose is to minimize the amount of funding the City puts into these programs. Councilor Brenerman asked if committee chairs talk to each other regarding items the individual committees are discussing and potentially acting on because he thinks the HCDC committee has a competing interest. Sheila agreed to communicate with the chair of the HCDC committee to let them know of competing interests.

Councilor Brenerman asked if the city provides work opportunity for seniors as part of the elder affairs program. The chair said that fits into Sheila's needs assessment and what the Baron center's role in that is. Dawn Stiles said AARP has a partnership starting up to learn where needs are for Elder affairs. That kicks off January 1. Councilor Brenerman went to Israel and seniors and to a center where they made crafts all day and lunch was provided and he thought it was a great way for seniors to spend time and he didn't know if that was something the city offered or maybe it was the agency on aging.

Sheila asked what Portland looks like now and would like to get a better idea of the services the City offers and compare those services to where the city is spending their money in order to move forward. The chair asked what the action should be on the 2015 work plan.

Councilor Duson would like to narrow down the list and highlight what they're doing to connect with the full council and figure out what format we pass this information on to the council. The group agrees action should be data driven in 2015. Councilor Duson did ask about charging additional fees for inspections to help pay for the program.

It was agreed the Fire/Code Inspections task force would do a presentation on their recommendations to the PSHHS committee at the February 10th meeting. It was agreed January would be an update on Public Health, Social Services and the Mayor's Sub-Committee on Substance Abuse and include work on the 2015 work plan.

Councilor Brenerman asked if the buffer zone was before the committee and the chair said the legislative committee talked about the buffer zone and is not aware of any staff recommendations. It was clarified the issue is currently in court as well as the median strip issue.

An Elder Affairs discussion was agreed to be held after the full council's January meeting on goals. April was discussed as a good month for the Neighborhood Accountability Board. Councilor Duson asked if this idea meshes with the Fire/Code task force. It was agreed that the neighborhood accountability board would be more of a "quality of life" discussion vs. the fire/code task force being established to protect property and life itself.

The Chair noted the next meeting of the safety Health and Human Services committee meeting is January 13th at 5:30 PM. The February meeting will take place in council chambers to accommodate all the comment on the fire and inspection code task force recommendations to the committee. The Chair

confirmed a 5:30 PM start on the second Tuesday of each month for 2015 moving forward. Councilor Duson asked about new binders for 2015. The committee adjourned with no further business at 7:40 PM.