



**City of Portland, Maine
Public Safety / Health & Human Services Committee
July 7, 2015**

Meeting Minutes

Committee Attendance:

Chair Councilor Suslovic, Councilor Costa, Councilor Brenerman;
Councilor Duson

City Staff Attendance:

Michael Sauschuck, Acting City Manager; Anita LaChance,
Acting Deputy City Manager; Vernon Malloch, Acting Police
Chief; Adam Lee, Associate Corporation Counsel; Julie Sullivan,
Acting Chief of Staff; Dawn Stiles, Director of Health and Human
Services; Dave MacLean, Director of Social Services; Jerry
LaMoria, Fire Chief; Mike Bobinsky, Director of Public Services;
Kevin Austin, Fleet Manager of Public Services,

AGENDA ITEM 1 - Meeting Called to Order at 5:32pm

Chair Suslovic moved to accept minutes from the June 9, 2015 meeting. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Agenda Item #2: Quality of Life Update

Acting Police Chief Vern Malloch provided an update regarding the City's quality of life status:

1. Cadet program: the Portland Police Department maintains a partnership with the Portland Downtown District who funds the cadet program. The expansion of the program has been very successful. Cadets have been asked to issue warnings to first time offenders instead of a summons and the department expects an increase in citations for repeat offenders later in the summer season.
2. Motorcycle Noise: the Police Department asks for voluntary compliance as a first measure of enforcement. AC Malloch explained the difficulty with enforcement related to timing of complaints and an officer's ability to distinguish an illegal vs. legal exhaust while either the officer or the motorcyclist is in transit. Recent laws now require state inspection stickers to be visible on the windshield of a motorcycle – this helps officers to know the motorcycle at least had a legal exhaust at the time of inspection and assists with enforcement.
3. Public Nuisance Calls: AC Malloch outlined that this designation of a call for service is initiated by residents. The numbers are low and AC Malloch noted that panhandling is much lower. Cadets and the footbeat officers are credited creating a presence in areas where panhandling complaints have been higher in the past. AC Malloch responded to councilor questions related to drinking in public. It has been noted that public nuisance calls for drinking in public are higher in the Bayside

area and in the Old Port. Chair Suslovic asked if an increase in the number of sworn officers would assist with these issues. AC Malloch said yes and Acting City Manager Sauschuck clarified that the underlying issue with these calls for service is a specific population that struggles with addiction to alcohol and illegal substances so while additional officers may help in specific areas, the population still suffers with addiction. Another short conversation was had about what constitutes a call for suspicious activity.

4. Graffiti: AC Malloch said the number of complaints regarding graffiti are up this year and noted that small groups or individuals with signature tags drive the change in numbers. Mike Bobinsky provided an update on what public works is doing to clean up graffiti in the summer months. 657 work orders had been received for some level of graffiti clean-up. See-click-fix has 40 open items to date related to graffiti. Public works continues its partnership with learning works to keep up with the summertime demand. The Acting City Manager complimented public works for doing so well to keep up with this demand.
5. Part 1 Crime: AC Malloch outlined that robberies are trending higher due to a recent spike on the West End and noted that increased patrols in the area seem to be effective. Councilor Brenerman asked if heroin addictions are responsible for increases in crime and the general response was yes. Councilor Suslovic brought up the media's question of whether or not Portland is safe. Acting City Manager Sauschuck said Portland is a safe place to live and work despite a recent spike in part 1 crime.
6. Street Artists: AC Malloch indicated there were no complaints about specific artists but that the PD's neighborhood prosecutor is working with Corporation Counsel on the licensing of tour guides. Adam Lee expanded on the issue and said staff is still looking into options.

Chair Suslovic mentioned backyard fire pits and asked Chief LaMoria about an ongoing civil complaint. The Chief followed up to say the fire department has responded to complaints and found the party involved in open burning to be in compliance at the time of inspection. Adam Lee expanded on the issue briefly.

Chair Suslovic followed up on noise issues and brought up the current decibel level that was changed in ordinance approximately 7 years ago and asked staff for an analysis of the current level in Portland vs. other comparable cities. Acting City Manager Sauschuck gave an overview of the history of noise issues and mediation and described the action of full Council that re-established the Sound Oversight Committee in February of this year to mediate conflict between parties should the level of complaints rise to the criteria (listed online) for the Sound Oversight Committee to meet. A short conversation was had regarding noise issues off the peninsula. Councilor Duson noted she is in support of mediation as a solution to noise issues.

Chair Suslovic asked staff if there were any recommendations to change ordinances at this time as they may relate to the quality of life in Portland. Staff had no recommendations at this time.

Agenda Item #4: Update on the Shelter Planning Task Force

Julie Sullivan provided an update (see back-up material) and reminded the committee that this task force is scheduled to provide an update at the September meeting and the task force would like to ask for another month or two to ensure they're thorough and accurate in their work. A short discussion was had about timing and the Chair said the committee preferred an October but November is OK if needed.

Councilor Duson asked how much of the \$2 million of state funds are coming to Portland. A clarification was made that money is going to the Milestone Foundation. She also questioned how being in compliance with the State's audit could effect shelter eligibility, the number of people in the shelter, and new GA eligibility. Acting City Manager Sauschuck said this information is going before the Council with regard to the details of the community support fund.

Councilor Costa wanted the task force to know the sale of the Hanover Street property was being discussed tomorrow at the HCDC meeting. It was brought up that the Chamber would be holding a meeting tomorrow evening as well to discuss private funding opportunities to provide services following July 30th and that the Mayor was involved in organizing this group. The Committee hadn't heard of this development and realized there may be two competing fundraising campaigns to provide services following July 30th of this year. Councilor Brenerman asked if the Shelter Planning Task Force is looking at whether or not the City should provide shelters and Julie replied that yes, we should talk about that. Councilor Brenerman also asked if we're making the most out of our funds from the Maine State Housing Authority. Julie responded that yes, MSHA has been instrumental in ensuring the City is making the most of opportunities available in this situation. A short discussion was had about the thought of using the Housing First model as a first hand resource vs. shelter services. The task force supported that idea.

Chair Suslovic discussed the deadline – preferring October but approving November if necessary and outlined three requests:

1. To learn how many beds per capita there are in comparable communities such as Worcester, Springfield, Bangor and Burlington
2. To learn how this meshes with recommendations from the last task force to end homelessness
3. To address concerns of the transition of ownership and operation to another agency noting the potential loss of transparency and accountability. Councilor Duson expressed a strong interest in seeing an RFP.

Agenda Item #3: Update on Implementation of Portland Community Support Fund

Acting City Manager Sauschuck gave a brief overview of the chain of events leading toward Portland's budget gap with regard to general assistance. The City has held several meetings to determine efforts moving forward. Challenges at this point in the update include culling data and determining the definition of "asylum seeker". The current plan aims to provide support for asylum seekers in the system as of June 30th. City Staff are working to develop a complete plan to present to the full council on July 20th. A short discussion was had to clarify that asylum seekers who were not enrolled to receive general assistance before June 30th would not be eligible for assistance through this Portland specific community support fund.

The committee was concerned that the Mayor may be organizing a competing fund. ACM Sauschuck's primary concern was implementing the program and the Council's vote. The group of City staff working on this endeavor has identified issues and is working on gathering data in order to move forward.

Discussion was had on how to donate to this fund – staff responded there is a link online where people can donate. Other ideas included a monthly spreadsheet to see who's donated if they would like that information made public. Councilor Costa thanked staff for their development of this program and intent to create a flexible system with latitude to maximize support. He hopes staff is confident of data and has a good idea of the number of the population this community support fund would serve.

Councilor Duson was concerned that staff have generously interpreted the amendment the council passed and thinks some of the language corporation counsel wrote is clear regarding eligibility. Staff clarified this program is not for new applicants that apply after June 30th and is extended for one year only.

The next regularly scheduled meeting takes place on August 11th at 5:30pm. With no further business to attend to the committee adjourned at 8:11pm