



**Health & Human Services Committee
March 8, 2016 / Room 209 – City Hall**

Meeting Minutes

Committee Attendance : Chair Suslovic, Councilor Brenerman and Councilor Ray.

City Staff Attendance: Dawn Stiles; HHS Department, Aaron Geyer; SSD/HHS Dept, Dave MacLean, SSD/HHS Department.

Agenda Item 1 – Meeting Called to Order and Minutes from Previous Meeting Reviewed:

Meeting was called to order at approximately 5:04 PM by Chair Suslovic. Minutes from the February meeting were reviewed and approved as written.

Agenda Item 2 –HHS Department Employment Discussion:

Dawn Stiles addressed the committee and gave an overview of the newly created H.I.R.E. Program which stands for Helping Individuals Regain Employment. Staff in the Social Services Division work directly with Sally Sutton and Beth Campbell at Portland Adult Education who help with credentialing. An employment specialist has been hired and staff has created a database to fill targeted jobs that are hard to fill but that many GA recipients would qualify for if they had the correct credentialing. Dawn stressed that Portland is not providing the jobs, we are referring and funneling to the right locations.

Dave MacLean from Social Services gave an overview and PowerPoint presentation of the program. He explained that 154 clients had been identified as being 'work ready'. Of those 52 are US citizens and 102 are non US citizens. He then explained the flow charts that are used to decide where a person could be placed for employment depending on their background, disabled or not disabled etc. Dave also explained that just 25 hours per week at Portland's minimum wage will enable a person to get off General Assistance.

Chair Suslovic inquired as to how as we move forward, we continue to grow and expand and do more of what is working. Some of these questions were discussed and Councilor Brenerman also inquired if this program was solely aimed at the Immigrant community and if Portland Adult Education was the only program that currently offers ESL classes. . Dave responded that

yes right now it is but they are hiring a new placement specialist for all populations. Learning Works currently offers ESL classes and conversational classes are also held at Whole Foods.

Chair Suslovic recognized Chris Hall from the Greater Portland Chamber of Commerce for chairing the 2013 CDBG Working Group.

He explained that Portland Job Alliance exceeded goals in just year 1. The textile industry is growing again in Maine and they are training folks who are qualified to work in this field.

Portland's job market is very tight right now at 2.4% unemployment. 4% is considered full employment.

Chris thanked the partners and asked what they could do to publicize this good work.

Christa Baade Program Developer at Coastal Enterprises and Liz Love, also Program Developer from CEI gave a PowerPoint presentation as well. Chair Suslovic questioned how does CEI integrate with General Assistance. A lot of GA recipients are overlapping – CEI is sorting out a lot of these issues.

Sally Sutton Program Coordinator of the New Mainer's Resource Center at Portland Adult Education. Sally gave an overview of the road blocks and the hard work this is done for individuals who are seeking employment. Foreign degrees and US degrees do not always match up. Portland Adult Education's goal is not just getting into survival jobs but into long term placement.

John Napolitano who is President of Maine State Building & Construction Trades Council discussed the need for an apprentice program in Maine for the trades industry. He gave a brief overview of the Building Pathways Apprentice Program in Boston and his desire to develop a similar program here in Maine. He referenced a program in Worcester Ma that set up a fund for developers to pay towards the apprentice program.

Chair Suslovic then opened this portion of the meeting to public comment.

Claude Rwaganje, Executive Director of Community Financial Literacy. Claude pointed out how we should be prioritizing new Mainer's and stressing they are not here taking away anything from other Mainer's. General Assistance is not enough to cover basic needs and cited the high cost of living in Portland. He sees the next steps as moving into higher paying liveable wage jobs.

Kim Moore, Greater Portland Workforce Initiative. Kim is glad that General Assistance has joined in connecting new Mainers to qualified jobs.

Leslie Oulette (?) who is currently a Public Health degree candidate stressed the need to look at Best Practices and questioned Public Health evaluation s and how is the worth being measured and is it possible we can collaborate with the Universities and Colleges in the area.

Public Comment portion of the meeting was closed.

Chair Suslovic stressed the customer service portion of this program in order to succeed. People need to know where to go and who to call etc. Portland Adult Education or General Assistance might not be the place people would think of for job seeking. He stressed that everyone needs to work collaboratively. He would like to see an overview of the Maine Department of Labor Programs to insure there is no duplication in effort.

Dave MacLean invited everyone to attend the meeting of the newly proposed Office of New Americans. The meeting will be held on March 22nd at 5 PM in Room 209 of City Hall.

Kim Moore of Greater Portland Workforce Initiative will be sending information on her program to all City Councilors.

Next Steps:

Christa has applied for funding through 2017. CDBG funding will cover ½ of the Program.

Sally indicated that housing is a major issue as well as transportation and child care needs. She also pointed out the barriers of someone who is homeless and that food and shelter is not available for those who work shift work.

Chair requested that Dawn coordinate together for a community message, identifying best practices and what are we doing to improve customer service.

Goal as a committee is to come back to this topic in 4th or 5th rotation meeting.

April HHS Committee meeting will be budgeting impacts on this Department.

With no further business to attend to the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:20 PM.