



David J. Jackson
Fire Chief, Fire Department

Health & Human Services Committee

September 12th, 2017 5:30 PM / State of Maine Room City Hall, Meeting Minutes

Committee Attendance:

Belinda S. Ray, Chair (District 1), Brian Batson (District 3),

City Staff Attendance:

Mayor, Ethan Strimling; City Manager Jon Jennings, Director of Health & Human Services, Dawn Stiles; Fire Chief, David Jackson; Police Chief, Michael Sauschuck; Rob Parritt, Oxford Street Shelter

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

Meeting was called to order at approximately 5:34 PM

Chair Ray moved to accept minutes from the previous meeting. The motion was seconded with all in favor.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – New Emergency Shelter Design & Planning: presentation and public hearing

Chair Ray gave an overview to the group on what the Council & Committee goals are.

Currently, committee working on two different avenues for shelters 1) emergency shelter 2) smaller shelters spread throughout the city

The Oxford Street shelter has occupancy for 154 beds with a 75 overflow.

The shelter continues meeting the maximum number on a daily basis. The committee is looking to create a new facility meeting the needs of the emergency shelter.

In 2014, a study was conducted that adding five smaller shelters would cost additional \$5 million in operational costs. The committee started this process last year and found that if a new emergency shelter was to be built it would save \$500k in operational cost alone. The committee visited Boston last year to observe similar shelters and found to be less intimidating and offered a wide scale of services that were provided.

The committee continues to work with zoning to address smaller shelters along with adding a new shelter– allowing smaller shelters (different sizes) in various zones to meet the needs of women, men, or veterans or other needs that need to be addressed.

Presentation:

Opening remarks from Dawn Stiles, Director of Health & Human Services



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Dawn gave an overview of the “best practices module” she highlighted this is just a concept/draft and then introduced Rob Parritt from Oxford Street Shelter

Best practices included:

- Peer services
- Partnering with medical services
- Mental healthcare
- Substance use services
- Employment services
- Overdose prevention
- Street Outreach
- General Assistance (vouchers)
- Security (COP staff) cameras
- Transportation (within ½ mile from metro stop)
- Advocacy/Community Outreach
- Shelter services
- Storage (lockers)
- Laundry
- Food prep and service area
- Handicap accessible bathrooms
- Parking for 20 vehicles
- Foyer/ screening area to perform security searches

Steve Weatherhead gave an overview of the design layout:

The floor plan shows permanent sleeping for 126 men & 60 women with room for 25 beds for overflow for either women and/or men. The facility would have a health clinic, 136 person dining room, designated



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office space, outdoor courtyard, laundry room and full kitchen, this a single floor building, open 24 hours a day.

Ann Tucker & Dr. Renee are thankful to be a part of the design. They are happy to see that they will be able to have medical & mental services onsite with a door to access outside to provide privacy for their clients. Hours of operation they are not known yet

Website does have up to date information available <http://www.portlandmaine.gov/2098/Planning-for-aNew-Shelter>

The Chair opened the floor for Public Comment at this time.

Jim Devine, Homeless Voice for Justice (see handout) – the plan seems to have adequate needs, he highlighted that people need to be able to access service from Portland to So Portland to access DHHS, a new shelter cannot be located outside of town and that location is key, he does like the ideas of smaller shelters. Do need to get to the root of the problem addressing homelessness

Brian Townsend, Amistad- he supports the plan, has confidence in the parties involved, agrees to access DHHS, did express concern for consumer membership, location needs to have a real connection to the city, there are some advantages to having some healthy distances (not stumbling over needles)

Curt Sachs - volunteers at Preble street 5 hours a week, doesn't agree with winter cots use, believes not enough room between cots, this proposal does not address the needs and believes it's a joke what is being proposed (18 inches between cots) is not enough, kitchen with no walk-in coolers, looks like a residential kitchen, no serving line, administrative wing is bigger than sleeping area, not enough toilets or showers- looks like a school or a prison- not good.

Scott Monaghan - Review of state of art shelters? Can you tell us what day activities there will be? Difficult to see in a residential neighborhood, warehousing homeless- they will be cut off the rest of the city, need transportation close, Overall need to step back and do more research, need to keep occupants occupied throughout the day

Name not captured, woman from Chicago, Illinois- gave an overview of National Coalition of homelessness, need to address the needs of affordable housing, poverty, mental health issues, drug abuse, and disabilities, the model is poorly configured, and the location needs to be addressed, having smaller shelters everyone would benefit from.

Mike Studmeyer, Homeless Voices for Justice-Spoke to the fact of, Hopefully this building will have more windows, more hallways, dining room needs to be bigger, having circular tables is not efficient in a tight space, lack of public space, lack of multi-room space for hobbies, courtyard is a great idea, and bathroom does need to be bigger, angle walls



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Shawn Kerwin, Bayside- gave an overview of negative aspects of living in the Bayside area people preying on other people, this layout is easy in and out monitoring, people would be eating in one place rather than traveling from one place to another as they do now, need to carve areas for desks, shows safety outside

Dana Totman, Avesta Housing, his office is located just around the corner from the existing shelter, works with current staff and is visible to human tragedies just outside his window, moving the shelter to another location would be beneficial to the area for developing housing in the community, loves the zoning idea, this will effect on the neighborhood, development for chestnut (if shelter moves) Cumberland Ave housing is stalled until shelter moves, affordable housing will increase once shelter relocates.

Name not captured, Willow Lane, Ptld- community housing is design to set up for a short-term housing focus on small numbers, slowly things are changing but still face challenges such as alcoholic, we will get there if there is a focus on short-term stays such as 3-4 days, has to become a part of the community, supportive in the full ray of services that will be provided

Mark Swann, Preble Street- this warms the heart to know this moving forward, staff does a great work, one story thinking is helpful with efficiency in staffing-should consider having on two floors, half walls people working on sobriety need a little more space, operational budget seems too small going from overnight to 24 hour faculty you will require more staff, listing of components – is this realistic? In having providers visit -They may be a part of the beginning stages but what if funding runs out. For example, in 25 years we have had 16 agencies over time and their funding fell apart – should be realistic- you will want to be careful. This is a great process.

Carolyn S, Portland- Homeless Voice for Justice- she was homeless and lived at the Florence House, reviewed the plans, this needs to be safe while open during the day to access appointments, social services, it's hard being turned away day after day due to space, imagine being confined to a wheelchair and having to sleep on a mat. 200+ beds would be helpful, some clients will not be ready for housing right away, location needs to access, hoping transportation will be added, this will cost will be a huge chunk of money.

Sarah Michniewicz, Cedar Street, Ptld- excited on what the benefits entail, she has homeless neighbors, and she would like better for them, there is not a lot of dining space provided from this layout, location is important because the culture will not change, overwhelming, Huston Commons there is so much going on where individuals are trespassing coming from the shelters, How will you encourage engagement?

Laura Cannon, Bayside- thanked committee for the hard work, looking forward to next generation of the shelter, keys points she mentioned were - Safety factor, encouraged keeping operation costs down, Bayside is a community but it is NOT safe, people come in and drag these people down, do keep an open mind, she looks forward to the next step in this process



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Bob Fowler, Milestones- has been a part of raising money for smaller shelters, he has one located on India Street, the has sat on Task Force Shelter Committee a few years ago it didn't seem practical. He is in support of day services, does worry about isolation encourages community space to be part of the plan

Norman Mazes- Shalom House, Thanked Rob and team for providing safe housing/ shelter and has made great strides. Currently, mats do not meet safety needs. Cots are better they provide better response for emergency needs. Would like to address the recreation areas and community space, this shelter is NOT going to meet the needs of emergency response if needed.

Lewis Salvato, Franklin Towers- Stressed the importance of this, stressed the issue of affordable housing, continued to mention the concept is great, should consider a two-story and should have more windows

Deb Market, Lives at Oxford Shelter- has many concerns for many residents, having been a part of the older generation, and wasn't brought up in this, just has a chocolate addiction, doesn't do drugs, she listens, feels this type of design is ghetto, people who are homeless are diverse – all of these people need to be addressed, need to have plenty of activities, and prejudice the homeless

Public Comment closed at 7:06 p.m.

Chair to address the questions

Committee to answer questions that were asked during the public hearing-Rob Parrit answered

1. Review best practices, and examples are available in the packet that was provided and online
2. Space, Shared space will be multi-purpose, flexible space, and would like to see more
3. Windows-this is just a diagram, please note lots of windows will be added – still would like to maintain privacy- we are still in the process of taking peoples input. As well as we will continue collecting more dialogue with smaller groups and will include homeless population on their viewpoint. As well as this will be presenting to our staff (shelter staff)
6. Regarding Kitchen space – (Dawn Stiles responded) this is just a concept, the model can change
7. Engagement, How will you get clients engaged? -Rob Parrit responded it will be easy to get people to be engaged. Shelter will have the expectation laid out that clients will have to be engaged

Committee questions at this time:



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Councilor Batson – asked regarding the facility itself, safety measures, setting protocols & procedures regarding searches of person and/or property? Do we have an idea of how to search people?

Rob Parritt- responded with currently contracted by a security co and do every 3rd and then on another night take a 4th person on one night and switch it up on other nights. Going forward there will be a separate place (large foyer) to conduct searches and also to respect privacy, as well as cameras, will be installed

Councilor Batson - asked regarding beds, amounts of? As well as the distance between them? Rob

Parritt responded that single mats can be 6" high, and doubled matted, and have to be 18" apart

Councilor Batson - How did you reach the ratio between men vs women?

Rob - 2/3 men and 1/3 women based on clients servicing now

Chair Ray – asked regarding Queuing lines where they are long now - How do you anticipate the lines going in the 24-hour shelter?

Rob -anticipates the lines will be shorter where people can stagger in and out and "we" as shelter staff are familiar with frequent clients and can servicing the lines faster

Chair - can clients stay in the shelter during the day?

Rob- would like to set-up space to work on jobs, or people that work nights can sleep in, or if they have a headache we can have them lay down

Chair- Available space if there all day - if a bed is not available during the day would there be another space they can go to? And where would that be/ please follow upon that

Chair - asked about locker/storage space?

Rob- there will be some available – some people may or may not want to utilize a locker

Chair- is the Bangor facility a single story?

Rob- they decided on a single story based at looking at the research on how to serve clients in a more efficient way, easier to staff, and no elevators to deal with or stairways

Mayor- questioned on how the cost could drop if running a 24 hr - looking for a narrative on this

Rob- would be able to more proficient with staffing etc

Mayor- What if we aren't able to provide services? And he has a Concern with multi-level building

Chair- over the past years where there is such a need for a larger shelter - will this shelter have enough beds?



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Rob- we are starting to see a trend of numbers going down (ex: 250 in 2013 and 200 in 2017)

Also, please note HUD is looking to participate in utilizing more resources to find people housing and make them successful

Councilor Batson- referencing Mark Swann working the night shift - think it is a good idea to have smaller rooms for people that work night shift - great idea - important for people to get sleep during the day

Chair- other shelters have smaller rooms off the day room - and maybe still able to staff - a possibility to look at?

The chair thanked everyone for all their hard work.

Meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.