

Mayoral Ad Hoc Shelter Committee

Minutes of June 22, 2022

MEMBERS PRESENT: Craig Saddlemire, Amy Smith, Scott Harriman, Elise Johansen, Chris Bicknell, Dave Bilodeau, Elizabeth Keene, Fowsia Musse, Erin Reed, Dave Hediger, Klara Tammany, Dave St. Pierre, and Melissa Hue.

PUBLIC PRESENT: Jessica Chow, Hub Coordinator

STAFF: Dottie Perham-Whittier

MINUTES: Motion was made by Amy Smith; seconded by Dave Bilodeau to approve the June 8, 2022, meeting minutes. Unanimous vote.

Craig talked about the draft outline report that will be “live” for access, plugging in of info, and editing. Input can be bullets, facts, and ideas, & sources need to be referenced. Amy is using a titling system, and Google Docs will have reference materials.

The City Administrator sent questions to the Mayor/City Council about ordinances and licensing, and Craig has seen three responses so far. The Shelter Committee can react to the input that it receives. The draft report will be on the July 19, 2022, City Council agenda with more work done in August and then a final presentation in September. The City Administrator will be writing a proposed ordinance, and we want to be sure the committee has thoughtfully reflected upon input received re: ordinance/license recommendations.

The City Council wants to address this prior to the end of the moratorium. Elise asked if the City Administrator was directed to write a proposed ordinance; Craig said no, but she was asked to. Things to be considered are what kind of license, structure for license, etc. Chris said it can be very problematic if the ordinance is written incorrectly. Ordinances referred to were Portland’s (although not passed), Brunswick, Bangor, and Waterville, as well as one relating to methadone clinics. The goal will be constructive discussion and constructive changes.

License renewal was discussed, with one – two years being common, although Brunswick is five years. Dave H. noted most are on a yearly basis, and staff is usually able to renew. Sometimes a license is renewed by elected officials. Elise wanted to know what goes into the renewal process and said it might be less burdensome every two years. Criteria, renewal fees, time, and costs are all things to be considered. Dave H. said they are revisiting lodging houses, as the state doesn’t do anything with them.

Dave B. inquired about both a license review and a possible five-year inspection. Dave H. said they are usually most concerned about life safety, egress, capacity, and added that a license fee would not cover the true cost of an inspection.

Elise said that lodging houses, motels, inns are fee for service unlike shelters. Scott said their purpose is to make money unlike a shelter.

Jessica Chow, Hub Coordinator, spoke about how a fee shouldn’t be burdensome, contrasting \$117 for hotels, motels, and inns.

Craig said it needs to be decided whether the license will apply to only new shelters or to all. Brunswick has a wholesale exemption. Tedford Housing is in Brunswick; there are two pre-existing, perhaps a third.

A discussion occurred regarding physical access and accommodations; will accommodations be required for just new or all shelters? It was thought that the City attorney should weigh in.

In connecting with existing shelters, they would like as little regulation as possible. Can we raise standards but not to the point of closure – alternative options?

Scott suggested standards apply to new shelters with pre-existing having a five-year grace period. Options are exemptions for pre-existing or fully apply.

Elise said it's hard to discuss this without actually knowing the standards. Things to be considered include whether there is 24/7 staff; good, reasonable practices; location of building.

Dave B. said it's not fair to people downstream. A building might have three flights of stairs and been at a certain location for years. They can't be expected within five years to have a brand new building. Perhaps the building itself could be grandfathered. Chris noted that HUD requires ADA compliance.

Jessica Chow talked about the Good Neighbor Agreement. She also pointed out the license can be interpreted that the city is starting a new "program;" that would impact the provision of ADA access.

Dave H. said it doesn't have to be so complicated, but simply two standards, to include the existing being grandfathered.

Chris B. spoke about ADA, first-floor elevators, capacity, pre-existing perhaps a lower threshold, and changes that might render compliance.

Elise said that policies, procedures, requests, and processes need to be reasonable, and Amy inquired about plans and programs. Would a city license be interpreted as a city program?

Would expansions trigger new licensing requirements? Would adding beds trigger that? Chris B. said that any significant renovation—like all new bedrooms—would necessitate ADA access. Another example would be a physical site upgrade. Scott mentioned building codes.

Maine State Housing has to fund a place to monitor it. Dave asked if we could monitor "as to MSH regulations." Chris B. said that is moot, as MSH funding would be needed.

Elise said some places wouldn't be in compliance with new standards, and Chris B. said things need to be equitable to all.

Dave H. said that MSH participates with HMIS data standards. Safe Voices handles a bit differently but does relay their info. Youth shelters also have to track certain data. Some HMIS data is tough to access.

Coordinated entry, access to data, data subsets, # people served, private funding, and point in time count were discussed (although the latter is under-reported). Chris B. noted that 9.6% of youth experience homelessness. Sectors such as LBGTQ and those suffering from SUD are often not reported correctly, with the error being on the higher side.

Craig said it's important that reasonable processes need to exist to enable good work to happen.

Scott mentioned the importance of best practices and # manageable at the Ramada. Background checks were also mentioned – none for Safe Voices. Other considerations: families, sexual offenders.

In regards to shelters, zones, distance from other shelters, and footage need to be considered and proximity to churches, schools, daycares.

Going forward, we need to consider short-term, long-term sheltering and determine what types of shelters will meet needs, as well as data regarding calls for service, working with law enforcement, and building community trust.

Upcoming Schedule:

June 30th – Finish all data collections and research

July 13th – Finish report; submit to City Administrator

July 19th – Present findings to City Council for feedback

August – Workshop details

September – Final report and recommendations to City Council

Respectfully summarized,

Dottie Perham-Whittier

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Community Relations Coordinator