

ESAC Remote Meeting Notes

February 4, 2021

Attendee	Organization	Attendee	Organization
Arron Geyer	Portland Social Services	Donna Yellen	Preble Street
Jim Devine	Homeless Voices for Justice	Elizabeth Jackson	Greater Portland Health
Anna Brewer	Preble Street	Jenny Stasio	Through These Doors
Ben Martineau	Homeless Voices for Justice	Mary Beth Twomey	Opportunity Alliance
Ben Strick	Spurwink	Norm Maze	Shalom House
Brain Townsend	Amistad	Oliver Bradeen	Milestone
Cullen Ryan	CHOM	Bill Higgins	Homeless Advocacy for All
Rob Liscord	Maine Equal Justice	Vickey Rand	CHOM
Amy Geren	Portland Downtown	Rebecca Hobbs	Through These Doors
Mary Cook	PATH/TOA	Sydney Avitia-Jacques	People's Housing Coalition
Janelle	People's Housing Coalition	Dan Coyne	United Way of Greater Portland

Guiding Principles:

From Governance Committee:

1. Assume best intent (from each other and our organizations)
2. Build a foundation of trust with each other
3. Respect confidentiality
4. Stay grounded in our purpose and what is within our purview

Group ideas:

5. Acknowledge differences in power in the room
6. Keep agenda grounded in action and current issues

ESAC History:

- Established in 1987 in response to the Lincoln Park "Tent City", which was a protest in response to the closing of the Cumberland County Jail shelter
 - The Lincoln Park protest got the city to recommit to providing shelter beds, and coincided with the founding of ESAC
- When ESAC was formed it was a City of Portland & United Way of Greater Portland co-chair collaboration, in the next few years a consumer group was added as a tri-chair, Homeless Voices for Justice
- Historically comprised of providers, funders & consumer groups

- 1987 was also the start of the Continuum of Care (COC) and McKinney-Vento funding and ESAC served as a modality of the COC for the City of Portland. That has since merged with the other COCs in the state, such that there is one COC for the state of Maine today.
- ESAC is *not* a city meeting
 - The Governance Committee went through a long process in determining that, which included city legal staff
 - This allows us to have private meetings, like the meeting today, and attendees can be decided by the ESAC collaborative
 - Because the city has housed the meeting invite and minutes on its website it has seemed like it is a city meeting, when it actually is not

Purpose of ESAC:

- Collaborative group of providers of social services, funders & advocates
- Important that people with lived experience of homelessness be represented at this table
- Assess shelter in Portland and take action steps to address homelessness
- Come together to address *system* level issues

Group input on the purpose of ESAC:

- ESAC needs to look at equity and equitable distribution of funds, especially when it comes to disproportionate rates of homelessness among Black, indigenous, and people of color
 - Suggestion: the data that we are reporting and reviewing every month should include assessing system equity

Strengths of ESAC:

- Collaborative of leaders from agencies, funders, and people with lived experience
- ESAC really was, and is, the forum in which providers could come together to build relationship and coordinate responses, and that has historically been very important
- ESAC has always served the purpose of determining where the weak links in the Portland shelter system and what we need to do to address them
- The collection of the shelter statistics and the ability for us to review them
- Legislative advocacy, both at the city and state level

Governance Issues:

Voting:

- The Governance Committee believes that the goal of ESAC decision making should be to strive for consensus, however if there is lack of consensus, there needs to be a system to ensure that the preference for consensus does not stand in the way of making a decision or taking action
- Therefore, the Governance Committee suggests a supermajority: 80% of members must vote in favor for a motion to move forward
 - Each organization will have 1 vote
 - Only organizational members of ESAC would be able to vote (ex. if there were guests at meetings, guests would not be able to vote)

*** Attendees agreed to the above proposal*

Membership:

From the Governance Committee:

- Members: Organizations with a **deep and defining** commitment to ending homelessness
 - Today's meeting attendees are the group of organizations have been attending ESAC that the Governance Committee identified as organizations that have that deep and defining commitment to ending homelessness
 - There are, of course, other groups that aren't here today, and their inclusion is something this ESAC working group can discuss moving forward
 - If an organization (not an individual person) wants to join ESAC, there will be a process to review their request

Discussion:

- What constitutes an "organization?" As long as there is a defined entity, in the sense of coherent groups, not an individual, that can constitute and organization
- Thinking about accessibility for folks who are actually experiencing homelessness and not having organizations be gatekeepers for them
- Thinking about building a structure that allows for the ability to have working-groups/subcommittees since we are only meeting once/month and there are different, specific issues that need to be addressed between meetings

Open/public meetings

Governance Committee recommendation:

- Open meetings once per quarter

Discussion:

- Meetings that are open should have time on the agenda that is specifically about the public's concerns, rather than just having them join an ESAC meeting
- Open meetings may also need to be longer to accommodate for the length of public statements (2 hours?)
- Share data (statistics) more often than once/quarter so that the data can be available publicly

Next steps:

- *Motion:* Everyone invited to today's meeting is a member organization of ESAC
 - *Motion passes*
- *Action:* Creating a duty for Governance Committee to think about ESAC member organizations → Governance Committee monitoring what groups are addressing homelessness in greater Portland and inviting them to join as appropriate
- Have city take off open invite to ESAC meetings from their website, but still be the home of the statistics

- *Motion*: Organizations in attendance today will move forward with continued governance conversations. This group, potentially augmented by other organizations, will constitute ESAC and will meet monthly. Public/open meetings will be held on a quarterly basis.
 - *Motion passes*

Meeting format moving forward:

- Agendas will be meaningful and action oriented
- Next ESAC meeting is scheduled for the 3rd Thursday of this month (February 19) for this group
 - At the February meeting we will determine when the 1st quarter open meeting will be
- Meeting timing: next meeting 8:30-10am
 - We want to take the appropriate amount of time to discuss the things we need to discuss without conflicting with the Long Term Stayers meeting at 10am
- Things to discuss moving forward:
 - Potential for subcommittees/work-groups

Monthly Statistics:

- Moving forward having shelter directors present the shelter statistics on a rotating basis, rather than the same person every month
- Notes from Decembers statistics:
 - Numbers in the shelters have gone down from last year, BUT we know that there are not less people experiencing homelessness, they are just more spread out due to COVID
 - 1st time homeless statistics: less this year than last, is that because people are getting GA? We know that there probably isn't less homelessness
- Thinking about statistics as a way to advocate for policy solutions – like a bill to address access to GA
- Something to think about from this group: what statistics do we want, what statistics are useful to us, etc.

Shelter Updates:

- Preble Street has opened up a new shelter in the Greater Portland area and transferred the Quarantine Shelter to that new hotel. The other part of that hotel shelter is for folks who are/were in GA hotels. Still working on transitioning GA hotel folks due to high number of Quarantine Shelter clients. Idea behind this is that services can be coordinated and at one site, since service delivery to the many hotels has been a challenge over the last few months.
- Oxford Street and Milestone are currently at “outbreak status” with number of COVID19 cases
 - City has been putting folks up in hotels due to this
 - Also put folks in hotels during the storm last week
- Greater Portland Health has been onsite doing rapid testing at Oxford Street and the city contracted hotels and this has been very helpful
- Preble has also been using rapid tests with staff, which has been working great
 - If other folks want more information on that, outreach Donna
- Started to see an uptick in the number of families that are arriving as asylees, *that is something we can discuss at our next meeting*

Advocacy:

- LD 211 (LD 1909 last year) is an act to allocate \$3M to shelters (outside of MaineHousing regular funding formula)
 - ESAC supported this last year, and it's the same bill as last year
 - "Low-barrier" was originally in the wording of the bill, however Maine Equal Justice & Preble Street are working on making sure this funding can be allocated to every shelter that receives ESHAP
- *Motion*: ESAC submit testimony in support of LD211
 - *Motion passes*