

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

Special Meeting with Kristen Dow on Shelter Licensing

Thursday, April 29, 2021

8:30 am – 9:30 am

Minutes

Name	Organization
Adam Harr	City of Portland
Cullen Ryan	CHOM
Jim Devine	HVJ
Bill Higgins	Ha4aLL
Jenny Stasio	Through These Doors
Andrew Bove	Preble Street
Anna Brewer	Preble Street/HVJ
Mary Cook	PATH/TOA
Vickey Rand	CHOM
Oriana Farnham	MEJP

Name	Organization
Norm Maze	Shalom House
Ben Martineau	HVJ
Brian Townsend	Amistad
Rob Liscord	MEJP
Peter McLaughlin	People's Housing Coalition
Joe MCnally	Milestone Recovery
Dan Coyne	United Way
Elizabeth Jackson	GPH
Kristen Dow	City of Portland
Amanda Corneau	People's Housing Coalition

Bed Density & Buffer Between Shelters

- At the last meeting decided to meet with HHS Director Kristen Dow to provide feedback on shelter bed density and distance requirements between shelters in the proposed shelter zoning.
- Current draft language on bed density and shelter proximity:
 - “Maximum Density of Beds. The total bed capacity for individual residents within emergency shelters in the City shall not exceed 250 beds within a 1-mile radius. Distance shall be measured between property lines of the homeless shelters.”

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

- “Proximity to Other Facilities. There shall be a 2,500ft buffer between emergency shelters. Distance shall be measured from the nearest property line of each shelter in a straight line.”

Presentation from Kristen Dow, Director of Health and Human Services with the City of Portland:

- Background: City staff were asked by the HHS&PS committee last year to research shelter licensing around the country and then were asked to draft language this year. The draft language is based on Brunswick’s with additions from Corporation Council.
 - Originally 2,500 feet of distance.
- Committee requested feedback on bed density and shelter proximity.
- Got feedback from neighbors and meeting with the Bayside Neighborhood Association to solicit recommendations.
- There is an anticipated a legacy clause to exempt current shelters from bed density requirements as Bayside would already exceed bed density.
- Director Dow asked for feedback: if the numbers seem too high or low, what are the concerns or benefits and requested recommendations.

ESAC questions and discussion

- Regulations and rules are used but advocates for as few restrictions as possible to access to services by people who need them.
- Bed density nor the buffer zone are helpful.
 - Have spoken to Tedford, the only shelter under a licensing scheme in Maine.
 - They can’t expand or add beds or services.
 - Restricted to one part of town.
 - Their process is easier than the one proposed in Portland.
 - They strongly appose limits on bed density and
- The three nonprofit shelters have met on this and disagree with the licensing package.
- There is no language on how this will improve services.
- It appears to be about monitoring, which will impede people from getting into shelter and accessing the services they need.
- The regulations are redundant.
- Shelter should be a human right. There are already only so many places shelters can exist this will lead to more people on the street.
- Anything that puts restriction on location further stigmatizes people experiencing homelessness.
- We all want to have a system that helps people get out of homelessness.
 - The biggest threat if we get this wrong is encampments. When that starts, it does not end. It is a trap for people in encampments and the policy makers. ESAC started because of encampments and is a committee to prevent and end unsheltered homelessness.
 - Artificial size limitations on shelter do not work.

Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee

- General disagreement with adding artificial barriers. There is unprecedented funding coming to the county in the recent American Rescue Plan Act. It feels like a good use of our time as a community to focus on how to use those resources and shelter licensing could be put off until the funding is worked out.
 - NOTED:
 - The federal March American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. It included specific funds for homelessness and rental assistance. But, it also included unrestricted state, county and local funding as well. Cumberland county is getting \$57 million and Portland getting \$48 million.
 - Here is a BDN article about the funds coming to Maine. Housing should be a great use! <https://bangordailynews.com/2021/03/13/news/a-guide-to-the-6b-coming-to-maine-in-the-massive-stimulus-bill/>
- Encampments happen when you have no place to go. The people waiting at shelters are waiting for vouchers. When we can't get an apartment, those people start backing up. They have been looking for an apartment for over a year with 2 vouchers. The lack of apartments is driving up need.
- Licensing could or will lead to more homelessness.
- What is the timelines for licensing?
 - Staff to bring back recommendations to the May 11th HHS&PS meeting.
 - Community partner and member feedback Memo posted next Friday.
 - The next steps are determined by the committee.
 - Shelter moratorium and small shelter zoning will be on the agenda.
- If shelter licensing went forward as drafted and not much is done with small shelter zoning, this would be an existential situation for shelter providers and the people who need them.
 - Small shelter zoning is being worked on by Planning with HHS staff working with Corporation Council on shelter licensing and the moratorium.
 - The staff recommendation hasn't been decided on but staff understand the three components work together in a comprehensive approach.
- Director Dow recognizes it is hard to make recommendations when you are fundamentally opposed.
- The committee members thanked Director Dow. Move to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 9:09 AM.

HHS Move to 39 Forest Avenue

- Timeline:
 - Lease extension for the Lancaster Street: lease verbally agreed to extend the lease through the end of August with an amendment in the works.
 - India Street lease up at the end of October.
 - Looking to stagger programs moving in.