

South Portland City Council

Annual Goal-Setting Workshop

February 2023

Summary

The South Portland City Council met on February 14, 2023 for more than three hours to develop annual goals for its work in 2023. Six of the seven councilors were present¹, along with City Manager Scott Morelli and City Clerk Emily Scully.

Participants reviewed their progress against 2022 goals, identified priority areas to invest the Council's time in 2023, then crafted goals related to those areas. Below is a summary of these 2023 goals.

1. Increase Housing
 - a. Enact changes that allow South Portland to expand moderate and affordable housing, addressing the need identified in the Housing Needs Assessment and Strategy Report.
 - b. Tools include supporting new development, adjusting zoning (including rezoning business/office parks to mixed-use), considering new zoning approaches such as inclusionary zoning, and pursuing grants to remediate properties. Efforts must be achieved in balance with other city priorities such as protecting open space.
2. Improve Social Services and Social Justice
 - a. Maintain a particular focus on services that can reduce burden on city employees, while embracing a partnership approach with community support and outreach organizations.
 - b. Seek opportunities for efficiencies through regionalization of services at the county and state level.
 - c. Continue to work toward Social Justice and improve Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, Accessibility and Justice (DEIAJ) initiatives in all areas of the city.
3. Be Fiscally Responsible
 - a. Seek innovative ways to fund actions, including grant funds from state and federal government.
 - b. Take steps to grow the tax base; maintain or lower residential taxes.
 - c. Achieve clearer deliverables around economic development efforts, and a better understanding of today's barriers to entry for businesses.

¹ Attending were Mayor Kate Lewis and Councilors Jocelyn Leighton, Misha Pride, Linda Cohen, Richard Matthews, and Natalie West. David Plumb of the Consensus Building Institute facilitated the session.

4. Advocate for City Priorities
 - a. Strongly advocate for a range of city issues at the regional, state and national levels.
 - b. Specific issues include regional approaches to General Assistance, air quality issues, and federal action on work permits for asylum seekers.
5. Complete Existing Initiatives
 - a. Invest Council and staff time in completing existing initiatives and plans, before launching new efforts.
 - b. Specific emphasis on the Comprehensive Plan Update, the City facilities plan and the transit-oriented concept plan for the Maine Mall area.
6. Prioritize and Strengthen Workshops
 - a. Update process for setting topics, with staff submitting workshop requests for Council review, so that topics align with Council priorities.
 - b. Review methodology for workshops to promote high-value outcomes and efficient use of time, while ensuring the public feels welcome and able to participate. Demonstrate a model for good public discourse.
7. Improve Communication with Residents
 - a. Support City staff in communicating through multiple channels and engaging residents, with a goal of strengthening public trust. Maintain a fluid relationship between the Council and the City's communications director.
 - b. Develop norms for Councilors to address constituent issues, to streamline a pathway for results.
 - c. Encourage underrepresented people to participate in government, run for office.
8. Support City Staff
 - a. Recognize, and be mindful of, the impact on staff from Council decisions.
 - b. Take actions to increase employee satisfaction and retention.
9. Support Committees
 - a. Complete a survey to gauge satisfaction; create an opportunity to recognize effort.
 - b. Clarify a structure for committees to connect with the Council.
 - c. Consider setting an annual appointment date for all boards and committees, to reduce the administrative burden on the City Clerk.
 - d. Create no new committees, fill existing vacancies, and consider opportunities to merge committees.
10. Focus on the Protection of the Environment
 - a. Continue our efforts to address climate change and promote sustainability, including implementing the goals of the One Climate Future Plan.