

Notes from Meeting Six

Thursday, January 7, 2021, 5pm–7pm, Online

Attendance

Working Group Members Present

- Aaron Amede, Resident
- Kathleen Babeu, Social Services Director
- Dana Baldwin, Behavior Health Liaison
- April Caricchio, Councilor
- Craig Freshley, Facilitator
- Greg L'Heureux, Finance Director
- Margarita Salguero-Macklin, Resident
- Timothy Sheehan, Police Chief
- Pedro Vazquez, Resident
- James Wilson, Fire Chief

Working Group Members Absent

- None

Objectives

- Shared initial understanding of what our recommendation might start to look like.
- A plan for the next 2-3 meetings that will result in achieving our charge.

Agenda

5:00

Opening

- Facilitator Craig Freshley will welcome everyone and explain the Zoom format and Meeting Agenda.
- Craig will also remind us of some of our guidelines and where we are in the process of fulfilling our charge.
- We will also quickly review the draft Problem Statement that we have been working on.

5:10

Beginning to Craft Our Recommendation

- First, Craig will share with us an outline of what he thinks needs to be decided in order for the group to write its recommendation. (For a preview of the outline, see page 4 of companion document: Craig's slides.)

- Craig will then ask the group questions, interview us, and in this way we will talk through some key questions.

6:15

What Should Our Recommendation Look Like?

- Let's take stock of the amount of time we have to prepare and also let's consider what will happen to our recommendation after it goes to Council. Answering these questions will help us define the nature of our recommendation.
- Should it be a high level policy statement? A list of detailed actions? With cost estimates for each? A list of principles? A simple call for a single action? A need for more research first?

6:35

What Next?

- Let's map out the last stretch of meetings and the work to be done in between them.
- We'll sketch agenda ideas for the next meeting.

6:55

Closing Comments

- Each member of the Working Group is encouraged to make a brief last comment such as a reflection and/or a hope for the future.

7:00

Adjourn

Opening Remarks

Facilitator Craig Freshley made the following remarks.

- Welcome everyone to the Sixth meeting of the South Portland Police Services Review Working Group, January 7, 2021.
 - My name is Craig Freshley, the Working Group Facilitator
- First some important announcements about how this meeting will work.
 - Please note that this meeting is being recorded and that the recording will be publicly available. Chat comments will also be saved and will be publicly available. However, please don't expect me to pay attention to chat comments during the meeting.
 - If you are using a nickname or an alias we really appreciate it if you can "rename" yourself so everyone can easily see the actual names of everyone who has joined us today.
 - This meeting has closed captioning available
 - I have posted the Agenda in the Chat and have also posted a link where you can find the full version of the Agenda and several other documents related to this effort.

- Although the general public is invited to watch, this is a meeting of Working Group members and public comments will not be allowed IN this meeting.
 - In the Chat I have posted and email address that anyone can send any comment to.
- To ground us, let's take a look at our charge and where we are in this process.

Purpose

Our purpose is to present the South Portland City Council with recommendations as to whether there should be changes to how certain calls for service are responded to by the City of South Portland.

Duties

As part of its duties, the Working Group shall:

- First answer the following question before embarking on other duties: “There is a perception that some calls for service are escalated into a worse situation due to the response of a uniformed, armed police officer, and that these scenarios could be handled more appropriately by different personnel, such as a social worker. Is there evidence in South Portland that these types of calls result in an escalated response and that the individual(s) in need of assistance do not receive such assistance?” (The Working Group should reach consensus as to what defines an “escalated response”.) Statistics and examples should be used to help answer this question. The response to this question, along with other considerations (i.e. cost savings, relief on stress to police officers, and resident health and welfare) shall serve as the basis for undertaking the following duties:
 - Research other models of providing a response to certain calls for service that either may not require the presence of a police officer or involve both a police officer and other professional, such as a social worker.
 - Evaluate whether these other models would be beneficial and/or necessary in South Portland.
 - If so, provide a recommendation to the City Council. This recommendation should include a review of all options studied; the problem identified in South Portland that is intended to be addressed; the selected option and how it will address the problem identified as existing in South Portland; and an estimate of the associated costs to implement such a program. The recommendation should also provide a measurable outcome(s) for the City to track so that it can evaluate the effectiveness of this new program in addressing the stated problem.
 - If not, provide a review of all options studied and explain why the Working Group believes a problem does not exist or is not likely to exist in South Portland that would necessitate the implementation of such a model.

Guidelines Reminder

- Guidelines are in the Meeting Minutes of November 17, 2020
- All notes are at: <https://bit.ly/3f95eFO>
- Craig called special attention to the following; this week's spotlight:
 - 4. Facilitator in charge The facilitator will run the meetings including calling on people and calling for consensus and for votes.
 - 5. Room for all views The facilitator will deliberately seek comments from the less talkative.

Schedule

Meeting	Date	Tasks
ONE	October 21, 2020	Select facilitator.
TWO	November 17, 2020	Guidelines. Define Escalation.
THREE	December 3, 2020	Look at data and stories for evidence.
FOUR	December 10, 2020	More data and stories to define the problem.
FIVE	December 17, 2020	Beginning to explore solutions.
SIX	January 7, 2021	Begin to craft our recommendation.
SEVEN	January 14, 2021	Consider other models
EIGHT	January 21, 2021 (if needed)	Consider resident health and welfare
NINE	January 27, 2021	Consider cost savings
COUNCIL	February 16, 2020	Consider relief on stress to police officers

Develop recommendations

Prepare our report

Problem Statement

Craig showed the latest version of the Problem Statement, below, yet it was decided to put off discussion of the statement to the future.

- Intended or not, there are **rare** instances of escalation when South Portland uniformed officers respond to calls.
 - Sometimes the escalation is due to the prior experiences and/or the emotional state of the resident.
 - Sometimes the escalation is due to ~~inappropriate~~ **mismatched** deployment due to lack of resources.
 - Sometimes the escalation is due to police response.
 - We have seen no evidence that South Portland police officers deliberately escalate situations and no evidence of inappropriate shows of force.
- It's not reasonable to expect the Police Officers to respond to every social service call. There might not be so much escalation if professionals other than uniformed police didn't respond to every call.
- Needs for crisis response are likely to increase in the face of decreasing support for social services and lack of financial resources among residents.

Comments about the Mob at the Capital

Given the timeliness and energy around this topic, Craig allowed some free-flowing sharing of comments and discussion.

- It can't go unsaid about the mob at the national capital.
- Fortunately, there has been no negative fallout here in South Portland.
- Yesterday's events were unacceptable – lots of confusion about police response.
- Not what we would accept in South Portland.
- Let's not get distracted by this.
- Let's not let anything like that happen here.
- Pedro told the comparison of when he and his son were at the capital and how they were treated by police compared to the response to the capital mob yesterday.
- It's clear that we have a systemic issue that values some folks over others.

- Those people should be arrested and thrown in jail. Let's stay focused on our work.
- This demonstrates that implicit bias exists as does systemic racism.
- Let's bake into our recommendations, systemic opportunity for conversations about race.

Discussion of Key Issues

Craig explained that in order for him to start developing recommendations, he needs to hear our opinions and input on a few key issues. He presented an outline of "Things to be Decided" and ask the Working Group questions about a number of topics.

Here are some highlights:

- Potential Funding Sources
 - Shift from other departments
 - From Police Department?
 - The police serve four districts and there has to be officer in each district at all times, and a minimal level of supervision.
 - We shouldn't count on savings from police force reductions.
 - At least not right from the start.
 - Look for results first.
 - Asked the Police Chief if he could do a pilot project for \$40k
 - No. We are struggling with the budget he have and are already taking cuts.
 - The Chief has to present a budget with 5% cuts
 - From other departments?
 - Not likely
 - Increase taxes
 - We are in a significant situation right now in terms of the City's finances, combined with the re-assessment.
 - We are in a more difficult financial situation than we have been in for 25 years
 - We are a Council that is very invested in human services and human dignity
 - And our population has been extremely supportive of that
 - However there are other ways that the Council might choose to bolster social services.
 - Raising taxes for this is probably not the Council's first choice

- Whenever taxes are raised, Kathleen experiences increases in calls for social services
 - Also, more likelihood of liens and then people apply for house abatements
 - Also, due to COVID many people are on the edge of financial solvency
 - Hospitals and other private entities
 - Not likely
 - Recent experience of hospitals seeing community paramedics as a threat to their income
 - Yes possible
 - Hospitals have an obligation to serve
 - They stand to benefit – we could save them money
 - Northern Light and MaineHealth are the two we should engage
 - The hospitals and the for-profit health care industry has profited from, essentially, drug dealing. They are responsible for much of the problem that we have. They should contribute.
 - The Libra Foundation might be a possibility
 - Community Donations
 - We have a community that is very engaged
 - Perhaps we should consider turning to the community for funding support
 - Community donations could be a source of funding
 - Insurance companies
 - There are some savings in transportation that insurance companies might be interested in, but we aren't a big enough market to interest them
- The Need
 - What the city needs most
 - We need to serve the homeless population and people with substance use and mental health issues
 - The homeless challenge has ramped up due to COVID and also because how Portland is treating homeless people; bringing them over here.
 - We need more beds – it's a huge shortage right now
 - Story of someone who was recently turned away from two hospitals and then committed suicide
 - To where along the pipeline (from crisis call to safety to functioning) should the funding go?

- Information Needs and Leads
 - City Survey results
 - Reduction in police services?
 - Ask Scott when we will get results
 - The Police Department is building a database that we will be able to analyze in the future
 - What types of services are requested, how responded to, etc.

- Home Team-Type Service Model
 - Contract The HOME Team and/or other nonprofits?
 - Perhaps in cooperation with Portland
 - It will be very difficult to forecast the need for Home Team type calls
 - The Home Team might not need to hire staff
 - It would be good to get cost estimates from The Home Team and Amistad
 - Dana will reach out to Amistad for a cost estimate

- Triage/Dispatch
 - If we had an alternative on hand such as The Home Team, how and where would it get decided what calls receive a police response and what calls receive a Home Team response?
 - Begin at dispatch – this is what I have learned from other models
 - The dispatchers get special training
 - They need to know what is offered by the alternative responders
 - There needs to be policies in place and training for making those decisions
 - This is how it works in Portland – the dispatchers decide when to call The Home Team

- Other Comments
 - If we want to go big people, this is the opportunity to do it
 - Childhood trauma and poverty are the drivers of having to provide these services
 - We can't just throw money at this – we need a bigger solution
 - There's so much pressure to associate policing with social services
 - Police Chief: The root cause is never what we get called for
 - There are always underlying causes of every crisis
 - Public safety (fire and police) are “already out there”
 - We often stumble on things that we weren't called for
 - The public safety people we have are doing an outstanding job
 - The officers take opportunities to help people

- A lot of people don't know that help is out there
- Strong belief that we have a strong community infrastructure
 - Fully explore un-tapped resources here in our home community
 - Lots of trust in peer-to-peer support workers
- Let's lobby the legislature for changes
- Bring in Matt Page-Shelton IF we want to build on what we are already doing at the Police Department
 - Matt can help the Department change the culture of the Department so people aren't afraid of the police
- We could maybe get grants for Matt to work with our department
- Perhaps we should continue to fund the paramedic program
 - Keeps people out of the emergency rooms and medical services
 - It was paid for by the Keep Me Healthy program
 - It was a short-term solution – let's see if there's another round of funding
 - Greg will look into availability of funds for this
 - Greg will also look into CBDG “additional COVID funding”

Closing Comments

- Tremendous work by Adam Rice and his mutual aid work
- Pedro will ask the mutual aid community what they need to keep doing what they are doing
- South Portland with Kindness is also a mutual aid group
 - We help a lot of people with help from South Portland Food Pantry
- April will learn from some advocacy groups where we could look for money
- Survey went out to the community – was initiated by the City – went to randomly selected participants – Craig will learn more.

Adjourned at 7:03

Chat

Here is the record of Chat from the meeting:

17:05:04 From Craig Freshley to Everyone : -

Today's Agenda

5:00 Opening

5:10 Beginning to craft our recommendation

6:15 What should our recommendation look like?

6:35 What next?

6:55 Closing comments

7:00 Adjourn

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All documents here: <https://bit.ly/3f95eFO>

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ServiceCallComments@SouthPortland.org

All emails sent to this address will be shared with all members of the Working Group, the City Manager, and the Facilitator

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17:34:20 From James Wilson - Fire Chief to Panelists : that is great that others have gotten help from hospitals, and I hope the would be willing expand. I was only relating our experience that we ran into a wall with them.

17:40:54 From April Caricchio - City Councilor to Panelists : True Pedro. The corporate bureaucratic system is not invested in helping

17:43:45 From April Caricchio - City Councilor to Panelists : 100% Chief

17:44:37 From Pedro Vazquez - Resident to Panelists : I know that case. Our FD responded to the suicide.

17:45:09 From Pedro Vazquez - Resident to Panelists : He hung himself in a very public way on a bridge in Westbrook

17:45:14 From April Caricchio - City Councilor to Panelists : I can't figure out the raise hand

17:46:06 From Dana Baldwin - Behavior Health Liaison to Panelists : Yes, Pedro, that is the one.
:(

17:50:34 From April Caricchio - City Councilor to Panelists : True Greg

17:51:48 From April Caricchio - City Councilor to Panelists : there was another suicide last night a man in recovery turned away from St. Joe's when he asked for a partner accompany him

17:52:47 From Pedro Vazquez - Resident to Panelists : heartbreaking and avoidable

17:53:54 From April Caricchio - City Councilor to Panelists : Right chief thank you so much

18:01:39 From April Caricchio - City Councilor to Panelists : Right

18:01:39 From sascha braunig to Panelists : What about spending on police cruisers, gear and weaponry?

18:21:03 From sascha braunig to Everyone : Could someone post that survey in the chat?

18:31:22 From April Caricchio - City Councilor to Panelists : I don't think that has been released

18:34:47 From James Wilson - Fire Chief to Panelists : Pedro, does that dispatch center use a set triage system for calls, similar to the emergency medical dispatch we currently use?

18:36:35 From Pedro Vazquez - Resident to Panelists : I don't have specific information about it but I am seeking to participate in an informational session with CAHOOTS consultants to gain a clearer picture. If I am able to set something up would you be available to participate?

18:53:06 From April Caricchio - City Councilor to Panelists : Agreed!!

18:53:20 From April Caricchio - City Councilor to Panelists : About community paramedics

19:03:19 From April Caricchio - City Councilor to Panelists : THANK YOU ALL we are fortunate to have such a vibrant community and staff!

19:03:40 From sascha braunig to Everyone : thank you for clarifying