

**AMENDMENT TO RESOLVE 7-19/20 OUTLINING POLICY GOALS FOR THE CITY OF PORTLAND'S SINGLE-ADULT SHELTER FACILITY**

**SPONSORED BY COUNCILOR BELINDA RAY**

**RE: COMPLETION OF BEDNIGHTS CHART FOR Q4 OF 2019 AND ADJUSTMENT OF ANNUAL AVERAGE; CONTEMPLATION OF AN OFF-SITE TRIAGE FACILITY; ELIMINATION OF "PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS" LANGUAGE FROM POLICY GOAL #8; AND ADDITION OF POLICY GOAL #14 REGARDING DIVERSIFICATION OF REVENUE STREAMS FOR FACILITY CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION**

**WHEREAS**, for the past 30 years a residence located at 203 Oxford Street, which was built in the year 1900 and originally designed as a two-family dwelling,<sup>1</sup> has been leased by the City of Portland to serve as a single-adult shelter facility, namely the Oxford Street Shelter; and

**WHEREAS**, the Oxford Street Shelter, which opened in December of 1989 with 50 beds has since expanded as follows<sup>2</sup>:

- to 62 beds in October 1994, due to an increase in homelessness;
- to 80 beds in 1996, due to an increase in homelessness;
- to 108 beds in 1998, due to an increase in homelessness;
- to 127 beds in 1999, due to an increase in homelessness;
- to its current maximum capacity of 154 beds as set by the Fire Department in 2000, due to an increase in homelessness; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2001, when the Oxford Street Shelter reached its maximum capacity of 154 beds, a plan for emergency shelter overflow was developed; and

**WHEREAS**, in April of 2003 the Salvation Army gym was used for the first time to accommodate overflow from the Oxford Street Shelter; and

**WHEREAS**, since that time alternative overflow options for the Oxford Street Shelter have been developed, including 75 mats at the Preble Street Resource Center and a limited number of mats at the City's General Assistance office; and

**WHEREAS**, the average nightly bed counts for the last three years, along with high and low censuses by month are as follows<sup>3</sup>:

	2019			2018			2017			
	AVG	HIGH	LOW	AVG	HIGH	LOW	AVG	HIGH	LOW	
January	241	271	212	227	248	208	222	238	185	January
February	240	271	212	227	238	211	225	247	178	February
March	239	261	199	219	246	184	228	239	212	March
April	227	257	204	222	240	202	227	243	207	April
May	203	217	178	201	220	177	224	245	204	May
June	203	222	181	199	222	172	221	235	185	June
July	191	211	171	201	221	185	213	227	187	July
August	171	188	135	207	229	186	204	222	182	August
September	155	176	141	201	215	185	206	226	181	September
October	<u>156</u>	<u>166</u>	<u>144</u>	207	223	188	201	225	184	October
November	<u>159</u>	<u>178</u>	<u>120</u>	211	248	182	204	227	169	November
December	<u>179</u>	<u>203</u>	<u>155</u>	228	254	199	208	244	165	December
<b>ANNUAL AVG</b>	<del>208</del> <u>197</u>			213			215			<b>ANNUAL AVG</b>

**WHEREAS**, the only physical expansion of habitable space at the Oxford Street Shelter over the 30-year period from 1989 to 2019 occurred in 1995 when the City began leasing the adjacent property, a former auto body shop located at 197 Oxford Street; and

**WHEREAS**, each increase in the number of beds was recommended by the Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee (ESAC), which was jointly established in August of 1987 by the City of Portland and the United Way to monitor shelter beds in the City and serve as an advisory board to the City regarding homeless issues, with staff from the City Social Services Division serving as staff on ESAC<sup>2</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Portland is currently working through a process to replace the Oxford Street Shelter with a new facility; and

**WHEREAS**, in conjunction with this process, the City Council’s Health & Human Services and Public Safety Committee has held a series of meetings to examine and discuss the City’s current single-adult shelter policies in order to ensure this City service is being provided in accordance with Council priorities and goals and in the best interests of the City and all of its inhabitants; and

**WHEREAS**, for the past three years the Oxford Street Shelter has served a population that generally comprises 28% stating they are from Portland, 40% stating that they are from other communities in Maine, and 32% stating that they are from out of state or out of country; and

**WHEREAS**, the Council recognizes that in operating the Oxford Street Shelter for these past 30 years, the City of Portland has been providing a regional service that benefits communities and individuals far beyond the City’s boundaries; and

**WHEREAS**, the Council recognizes the need to bring together more resources from other municipalities as well as the State and Federal governments to encourage a more regional approach to addressing homelessness; and

**WHEREAS**, addressing homelessness was identified as a 2017 priority by the seven communities comprising the Greater Portland Council of Government’s Metro Regional Coalition, or MRC (Cape Elizabeth, Falmouth, Gorham, Portland, Scarborough, South Portland and Westbrook); and

**WHEREAS**, on October 8, 2019 the MRC updated its Fiscal Year 2020 workplan goals under the heading of “Homelessness” to add the following:

1. To house more of the homeless in the Greater Portland area;
2. To more equitably distribute the responsibility of caring for the homeless across municipalities; and

**WHEREAS**, the Council recognizes the need to balance competing priorities in the City budget in order to best serve all of Portland’s residents; and

**WHEREAS**, there is no prior written record of Council guidance regarding its policy goals for the City’s single-adult shelter services aside from annual approvals of the municipal budget;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the City Council does hereby proffer the following policy goals to provide staff with guidance on Council objectives as the City plans for its new homeless services center for single adults:

1. Continue to employ a housing first approach, using the homeless services center as a place to help stabilize people experiencing homelessness as they transition to more permanent housing;
2. Continue the excellent work of the award-winning Long-Term Stayer Initiative<sup>4</sup>, which seeks to focus resources on housing those people with the longest stays in homelessness in the City;
3. Look into Diversion and Prevention tactics such as the Pine Street Front Door Triage program, a program staff reports has successfully diverted “nearly 20% of individuals from ever entering homelessness and spending a night in a shelter.”<sup>5</sup>, and consider establishing a separate triage facility on

the peninsula or in another convenient location where individuals experiencing homelessness can present to determine their best path forward;

4. Along with diversion and prevention tactics, seek other methods to decrease the average nightly census at the City-run facility;
5. Continue to work with other cities and towns to develop a regional strategy for addressing homelessness and more equally distributing the responsibility of caring for the homeless across municipalities;
6. Continue to work with community partners and local and national experts to determine national best practices that will ensure the safety of staff, clients, and community members;
7. Continue to pursue partnerships to help to address the needs of specific homeless populations, increase the supply of permanent housing for the chronically homeless, and reduce the average nightly census at the City run facility;
8. Ensure the new facility is built with ample capacity to handle our current average annual nightly census-, which, for the last three years (2017-2019) has been approximately 200 individuals per night; for the previous 12 months. As of September 30, 2019, the average nightly census for the previous 12 months is 210;
9. Ensure the new facility has adequate capacity to handle overflow onsite as needed;
10. Over time, as the average nightly census regularly and on a year-round basis comes in below 200, consider establishing an appropriate cap on city services at the facility, with sufficient advanced notice to other communities and the State government regarding when said cap will go into effect;
11. Develop clear transportation guidelines to assist clients in reaching the facility and accessing outside services in the City as necessary;
12. Develop a clear policy for Criminal Trespass Orders and other cases in which a suspension of services may be merited so that clients can easily see how specific behaviors will impact their ability to stay at the facility; and
13. Develop clear guidelines establishing that services provided by the shelter, including meals, are only for shelter clients who have completed or are completing the intake process.

14. Work to diversify revenue streams both for the construction and operation of the new facility, involving as much as possible other municipal, state, and federal funding sources as well as contributions from community partners, individuals, and the private sector.

## ATTACHMENT A

### References

1. Maine Memory Network, <https://www.mainememory.net/artifact/67713>, accessed on October 17, 2019.
2. *Oxford Street Shelter History*, City of Portland Department of Social Services, circa 2004, <https://www.portlandmaine.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2288/Oxford-Street-Shelter-History>, accessed on October 17, 2019.
3. Chart created on 10/22/2019 by Belinda Ray and based on Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee Monthly Shelter Statistics for the Oxford Street Shelter on the City of Portland website, <http://www.portlandmaine.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=61>, accessed on October 17, 2019.
4. *National Alliance to End Homelessness Honors Pioneers in Innovation and Excellence at Annual Awards Ceremony*, National Alliance to End Homelessness Press Release, Washington D.C., October 10, 2017. <https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Awards-Ceremony-FINAL-101017.pdf>, accessed on October 22, 2019.
5. DHHS Staff Memo to HHS & PS Committee from Sarah Fleurant, Oxford Street Shelter Director, dated September 23, 2019. Available in the HHS & PS Committee packet from October 8, 2019.  
<https://portlandme.civicclerk.com/web/UserControls/DocPreview.aspx?p=1&aoid=608>