



CITY OF PORTLAND
Executive Department
Jon P. Jennings, City Manager

August 5, 2020

To Mayor Snyder and Members of the Portland City Council:

Pursuant to Article VI, Section 5(e) and Article VII, Sections 5 and 6 of the City of Portland Charter, I am hereby submitting the City Manager's Recommended \$202 million FY21 Municipal Operating Budget.

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, I was prepared and proud to present you with a FY21 budget that only included a 1.8% tax rate increase, generally aligned with inflation. However, in light of the ramifications we have faced due to the pandemic, the budget I now present to you is drastically different. As you know, the State's Executive Order granted municipalities more time to review and approve next year's fiscal budget. The City automatically carried over its FY20 budget on July 1 in order to give us more time to prepare the new budget and attempt to forecast what our new revenue streams will look like as we operate in this new normal. We set about this work with the goal of no property tax rate increase, and through the hard work and tough choices of each City Department, I am bringing forward a recommended budget which includes a property tax rate decrease for FY21. I felt this was particularly important as we all deal with these difficult economic times.

The City's FY21 revenue outlook has significantly changed since this budget was initially developed back in January 2020. Our non-property tax revenue estimates for FY21 have dropped by almost \$12M. These losses are made up of many activities that came to a halt as people adjusted to life during a pandemic -- a reduction of approximately \$3.2M in Parking Department revenues, \$2.5M in Parks & Recreation Department revenues from a lack of events, lessons, and programs, \$2.1M in Facilities & Waterfront Department revenues from cruise ships, \$1.5M estimated loss in State revenue sharing and \$1M in estimated excise tax revenue, and more. While many aspects of life have re-opened, several of these key revenue areas continue to not function or not function at the same level in which they were before. We expect it will take quite some time for our revenues to fully rebound.

In order to reduce spending, we immediately implemented a non-essential hiring freeze and non-essential spending freeze in the middle of March. Later in March, I had to make the difficult decision to begin issuing temporary furlough notices to staff whose roles were impacted by the pandemic. Throughout April and May, additional staff were temporarily furloughed to further reduce spending in light of revenues falling significantly shorter than normal. In June, temporary furloughs were instituted across all departments, including City leadership, and all cost of living adjustments and performance pay increases for non-union employees were frozen. In total, the City had nearly 700 furloughs across all categories of employees. You'll see that our year over year revenue loss was only approximately \$5 million due to increases in some revenue categories including state and Federal COVID-19 relief funds, general assistance reimbursement, and debt service reimbursement from our Sewer and Stormwater enterprise

funds. Had we not received these monies, we would've had to take even more drastic measures to balance our budget.

I take my fiscal responsibility as City Manager very seriously, as I know you do as well, and I have always been concerned about the affordability of our city and how government can be a driver of costs associated with this. Over my tenure, I have always prioritized ensuring we can perform our municipal operations and the implementation of Council policies in the most efficient and effective manner, and in a way that limits the burden on taxpayers. In light of the negative impacts this pandemic has had on individuals, families, and businesses, I felt it was only right to present you with a negative budget.

As I talk about our efforts to operate efficiently and innovatively in our delivery of services, I want to stress that we continue to remain a compassionate city, one that goes above and beyond in taking care of our city's people. We have continued to dedicate a significant amount of our budget and staff resources to providing social services, emergency shelter, public health, and long-term care to our neediest populations. In fact, our Health and Human Services Department is our largest department and I am supremely proud of the more than 350 city employees who commit themselves daily to serving the people of Portland. This Department was one of only four staffed Departments this year which received an increase in funding and their increase (approximately \$1.75M) was larger than the budget increases in all of the other staffed Departments combined. Over the last 10 years the Health & Human Services budget has risen by more than \$6.3M, the largest increase of any staffed Department over that period. In contrast, no other staffed Departments has received more than a \$4.2M increase over that same 10-year period.

HHS's work has become increasingly harder during the pandemic. Our Social Services division set up isolation and quarantine spaces at one of our Family Shelter buildings for clients, utilized motels for families and individuals needing emergency shelter, and set up a temporary shelter in order to provide additional space at the Oxford Street Shelter, in accordance with CDC guidelines. Our long-term skilled rehabilitation center at The Barron Center also established a quarantine space within its facility and instituted a number of changes in line with best practices to keep its patients and staff safe. At the India Street Health Center, we increased our outreach efforts to ensure continued access to needle exchange services and implemented a contact-free system, as well as pre-screening protocols for STD and Free Clinic patients to maximize how many we could accommodate during each clinic session.

I'm proud of what we've accomplished over my five years as City Manager -- the progress we've made in making municipal government more compassionate, innovative, inclusive, and transparent. As well as our efforts to address some of the long neglected critical infrastructure projects. Since 2015, we've spent approximately \$75 million investing in stormwater and sewer projects to update our aging infrastructure to prevent combined sewer overflow discharge into Back Cove and Portland Harbor, and become compliant with our consent agreement with the U.S. EPA and Maine DEP.

While our department directors took a hard look at where we could make reductions, we continue to face many cost increases outside of our control which exceed the regular rate of inflation, such as debt service costs (an approximately \$1M increase in our pension obligation bond debt service), county tax, and our METRO contribution. The increase in our County Tax assessment alone represented a four cent increase to our local mil rate, which I was forced to offset by making cuts elsewhere in the budget.

This coming year will look much different as we're forced to scale back. Should there be any additional priorities the Council wants to address, I felt it most appropriate for those decisions to be made by the Council before being added to the final budget.

FY20 RECAP

Fiscal Year 2020 is certainly one in which no one could have predicted and had us reacting in many different ways. As the social services center of the state, our commitment to providing key health and human services for our people has not wavered. We continue to provide general assistance services, housing counseling to help people access housing and stay housed, workforce development training, and emergency shelter services at the Oxford Street Shelter for adults, the Family Shelter on Chestnut Street, and overflow facilities. In June of last year, we welcomed an unprecedented number of families seeking asylum in our city and quickly stood up an emergency shelter at the James A. Banks, Sr. Portland Exposition Building. I take pride in our staff who quickly worked together to put this plan in place, and working with the Governor's office in advocating for the inclusion of individuals seeking asylum to be covered by General Assistance. Because of this support, we were able to find housing and other shelter opportunities in and around Portland by mid-August in time for when the Expo had to return to its contractual obligations.

In response to COVID-19, we once again expanded our emergency shelter services by creating a second 24-hour shelter facility, as well as quarantine space for those requiring respite. This created appropriate social distancing, allowing those who needed emergency shelter most to safely access it during the pandemic. In spite of additional housing challenges, our staff worked extremely hard to find permanent housing solutions for our most vulnerable populations, as well as working with area landlords to keep formerly homeless individuals housed. The Oxford Street Shelter placed a total of 147 clients, 27 of whom were long-term stayers into permanent housing. The 147 clients were representative of 19,613 bed nights or 54 years. The Family Shelter served 169 families totaling 561 individuals with 0% recidivism and we housed 152 families totaling 509 individuals.

Following the Council's decision to select the City-owned Riverside Street location, we continue to make progress toward the creation of a fully modern homeless services center that will provide emergency shelter services with on-site access to food, health care, housing counseling, and all other related wrap-around services in order to provide a more humane experience for those who are in need of these critical and basic services. In light of COVID-19, we're incorporating pandemic safety measures into how the facility will be constructed and operated. The City is working with our state and local partners to move this project forward as quickly as possible.

While the beginning of 2020 certainly hasn't gone as we all planned, our Planning and Urban Development Department has seen planning applications, including those for affordable and market rate housing have continued to flow in through our development review process. While we can't say how many applications would be in if COVID-19 hadn't happened, we've seen no drop off in what was already a tremendously busy year (and years) for new projects. These development review applications include housing development but also large commercial and institutional projects like the VA Clinic on West Commercial Street (approved), the Cold Storage project on West Commercial Street (in review), Mercy Hospital's expansion of their Fore River campus (approved), and USM campus planning project (in review), just to name a few recent major developments. This is on top of the many smaller projects that keep the department busy.

Beyond this, we continue to make great strides toward the Council's top goal of creating more housing in our city. Almost 900 units of new mixed-income housing across the city are currently in the development pipeline that have either been recently approved by the full Council, have been reviewed and approved by Council Committees, or will be before the Council for final approval in August. These projects are the result of either an affordable housing TIF District or the recent sale of City property for the creation of housing. Tax increment financing, or TIF as it is more commonly known, is a flexible financing tool utilized by local governments to spur economic growth and assist affordable housing projects. Affordable

Housing TIFs enable communities to use the increased annual tax revenue generated from the affordable housing development district to subsidize the creation of affordable housing within the district. The Housing Trust fund balance is currently \$1,696,395, with just under \$1 million in funding requests being considered by the City Council at their August 3rd meeting.

And we've continued our work to update our land use code regulations to help advance our economy sustainably. The Planning Board unanimously voted to recommend Phase I of our [ReCode](#) effort to the City Council on July 28. Having a new, unified development code will be more user-friendly, advance the goals of the city's [Comprehensive Plan](#), and be better equipped to meet the myriad needs of the city in such areas as housing, design, preservation, conservation, the working waterfront, energy, and transportation.

Our small business community, which makes Portland so unique, has faced extraordinary challenges throughout the pandemic. In response to these challenges, our staff worked hard to pivot quickly and adapt our programs and policies in order to help them stay afloat during this time and reopen to the best of their abilities. In May, the City Council approved a pilot program that allowed staff to temporarily close several streets in order to facilitate the expansion of outdoor dining and retail. The program also included the expansion of outdoor dining and retail operations on sidewalks, parks/squares, private parking lots, and the use of parklets in parking spaces. These temporary business licenses are valid June 1 through November 1, and to date 135 businesses have taken advantage of these new business licenses.

Additionally in May, the Council approved the creation of three emergency business assistance programs with more than \$700,000 in funds, including the Business Assistance Program for Job Creation (BAP-Rehire), the Microenterprise Grant Program, and the Rapid Response Microloan Program. These programs were funded through the use of unrestricted loan funds from the Portland Development Corporation and federally awarded funds through the City's Community Development Block Grant allocation.

Outside of its COVID-19 response, the Portland Development Corporation invested just over \$600,000 in FY19 in 18 businesses and economic development projects, which leveraged more than \$2 million in private sector funds associated with creating 43 jobs and retaining seven jobs. Fiscal year 2019 loan activity included a public to private investment ratio of 1:6.

Despite winning several customer experience awards and breaking passenger records in each of the past four years (2016-2019) our Portland International Jetport suffered a never before seen drop, 97% at its worst on April 14, 2020, in passengers due to the pandemic, travel bans, and drop in tourism and business travel. Volumes today remain down approximately 70% and are expected to recover slowly over the next two fiscal years. Again, this is a stark contrast to the recent record increases. In fact, the Jetport saw all time monthly records for January and February of 2020. This all changed quickly on March 15, 2020 when the World Health Organization declared a worldwide pandemic.

BUDGET GOALS & REALITIES

Given the severity of our revenue shortfalls, I asked every department head to present a budget with a 5% overall reduction so that we could meet the goal of an overall budget with no tax increase. While the pandemic has impacted each department in a variety of revenue and programmatic ways, it was important for each department to be as fiscally responsible as possible during this time. Only three departments came in higher than last year -- Health and Human Services, Permitting & Inspections and City Clerk.

The reality is that we are facing significant erosion across many revenue categories due to COVID. Portland prides itself on having the most diverse revenue base in Northern New England with 55.1% of

our FY20 general fund revenue coming from non-property tax sources (charges for services, licenses and permits, intergovernmental revenue and more). However, in my proposed FY21 budget this percentage decreases to approximately 53.7% due to losses of \$1M of estimated excise tax revenue, \$3M of parking tickets, meters, and garages; \$2.5M of cruise ship revenues; \$1.5M of State revenue sharing; \$2.25M of Barron Center revenues (due to new patients not being accepted); and \$1.5-\$2M of Parks & Recreation revenue (due to no events, programs, and facility rentals).

In order to balance the budget, unfortunately, there are necessary reductions in staffing that we had to make in order to meet a budget with no tax rate increase. These cuts are necessary both due to decreased revenues, as well as because some of the services we provide simply cannot be provided at this point during the pandemic. Overall, this budget includes layoffs and reduction in hours that represent a full-time employee reduction of approximately 65 City positions. In making these hard decisions, we first eliminated approximately 32 vacant positions. This resulted in us needing to cut positions and reduce hours of approximately 42 City employees.

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Health & Human Services

My recommendation for our FY21 Health & Human Services budget (Social Services, Public Health, and the Barron Center) includes a nearly \$1.75M increase in spending up to \$33.3M. This total is the highest amount the City has ever appropriated to HHS and is a nearly 5.5% increase from FY21 when nearly every other staffed Department is seeing a reduction in expenditures.

Social Services: The City Social Services budget has seen drastic funding increases over the last several years highlighted by my decision to turn our Oxford Street Shelter to a 24/7 operation funded in last year's budget. We have continued our commitment to Social Services in FY21 with another nearly \$1.5M increase (11.1%) which expands our general assistance program and adds staffing and outreach in Social Services and our multiple City-run shelters. The \$14.6M allocation recommended for Social Services is the highest in the City's history and is up nearly 75% over a 10-year period.

Public Health: Our Public Health Department budget has increased by 5.9% driven by additional grant funds to assist with COVID-19 prevention and education, tobacco prevention, substance use prevention and harm reduction services, MaineCare enrollment, and minority health. We continue to aggressively pursue funding opportunities, including grants, for areas of public health need in Portland. This is the fourth consecutive year with increases to budgeted Public Health funding.

Barron Center: Although our patient census is down at the Barron Center, (the facility is accepting only limited new patients during the pandemic) the facility has increased costs related to COVID-19. My recommendation for the Barron Center includes an approximately \$165k increase for the facility.

Public Works: This budget includes a 6.7% overall reduction. It includes the elimination of seven positions, which will impact our customer service response times. It also includes line striping reduced to once a year from twice and the elimination of our spring leaf yard waste collection and the collection of recyclables on holidays. We will also no longer be able to use high quality pavement markings, and we'll have a reduction in the use of private contractors for snow plow operations, which will extend the time it takes to complete plow routes by one to two hours on arterials and possibly longer on residential streets. There will also be a reduction in service levels within our Streets and Sidewalks and Island services team.

Economic Development now Housing & Economic Development: This budget shows an overall increase due to the reorganization of Housing & Community Development from Planning & Urban

Development into a newly named department. The Housing & Economic Development Department will work side by side to continue its efforts to meet the goals of the Council's Housing & Economic Development Committees. Separately included in this budget is the elimination of the Marketing Coordinator position and a 50% cost shift of two staff to either the Fish Pier Authority or Portland Development Corporation to align staff services to work on responsibilities and free up TIF revenue for other investments.

Parks, Recreation & Facilities: This budget includes a 20% overall reduction and the elimination of 31.7 positions across Parks, Recreation, Aquatics, Public Assemblies, Golf Course, and Administration. There will be a reduction in park maintenance, financial support for community gardens, cemetery maintenance, reduced capacity to service the community in our Before & After Care school program, loss of "Park & Play" program, loss of Senior Adult program, and limited capacity to fully implement the organic field maintenance program to accomplish the goals of the pesticide ordinance.

Planning & Urban Development: This budget includes a 31.5% overall reduction due to the reorganization of Housing & Community Development staff to Economic Development. However, this change is cost neutral to the City budget and results in a more cohesive Housing program aligned with Council goals as noted above.

Police: This budget includes a 3.2% or \$1.09 million overall reduction. This includes the loss of two sworn officers due to the elimination of school resource officers and a loss of one sworn community policing officer. Additionally, the budget considers cost savings as a result of delays in hiring new sworn officers and communications (dispatch / 911) personnel.

Fire: This budget includes a 2.4% overall reduction. This will result in reduced Fire Prevention and Community Outreach capacity with the elimination of a division chief.

Parking: This budget includes a 5.1% overall reduction due to the loss of parking revenue in light of the pandemic. The City did not conduct parking enforcement of meters and time zones from March to June out of respect for residents and businesses that were adjusting to the new reality of staying at home, working remotely, and offering curbside services. Overall, there continues to be a reduction in the volume of meter and garage revenue. As such, this budget includes the postponement of maintenance and repair projects in the garages.

Permitting & Inspections: This budget includes a 4.2% increase due to the volume of work being processed by the Business Licensing division, including the recently passed marijuana ordinance. The new expenses will be offset by additional marijuana licensing and permitting revenues.

Jetport: This budget forecasts the Jetport will have just 52% of its pre-COVID passenger volumes in FY21. Revenues are budgeted to fall 39% from FY20. Thankfully the Portland International Jetport received \$12.162 million in Federal CARES Act relief grant funding. This funding in conjunction with a 9% reduction in expenses makes up for these revenue losses. The expense reductions include the elimination of two full time positions through attrition.

Finance: This budget includes a 4.5% overall reduction, which will result in reduced capacity to serve customers in Treasury due to a position cut and reduced capacity to complete City procurement due to a reduction in staff hours.

Assessors: The City has postponed the implementation of this year's citywide property revaluation until 2021 due to the unknown real estate market and fiscal implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the unknowns with the changes the real estate market will see from the pandemic, it would not have been prudent to set new values for the April 1, 2020 assessment date. The Assessor's Office will continue to

analyze market data to see what trends emerge as this crisis continues and set new assessment values as of 4/1/2021 for the Fiscal Year 2022 tax billing cycle. In this budget, there will be reduction in capacity to serve customers and an elimination of outside legal services and independent appraisal services.

Information Technology: This budget includes an 11.2% overall reduction with a net decrease in Department headcount of 1FTE for FY21. Several significant IT contractual service items have been either renegotiated or not renewed for FY21 which contributed to the savings as well.

City Clerk: The 3.8% increase in the City Clerk's budget is due to increased costs associated with running the Presidential election this November and June primary in accordance with CDC guidelines.

Executive Office: This budget includes a 21.1% overall reduction. It includes the elimination of the Director of Innovation and Performance Management position and the elimination of a half-time Sustainability Associate position.

POSITIVE BUDGET DRIVERS

Excise taxes are still a significant source of revenue for the city, but we are behind in our collection given in-person transactions were halted for several months during the height of the pandemic. We're in the midst of making up this revenue now that we're able to conduct transactions by appointment, but we're still conservatively projecting excise tax revenue to decrease by just under \$1M for FY21 given many people's own personal finances have been impacted during this time, and rental car companies are not registering as many new vehicles due to the decline in tourism.

Property valuation has grown by \$85 million in the current year due to significant new projects breaking ground and continues our upward trajectory in overall valuation. This \$85 million of new property valuation creates an additional approximately \$986,850 in new tax revenue for municipal use. While this may seem like a significant amount, it represents only a 0.106% overall increase to our FY20 valuation of approximately \$7.985 billion, and can only fund a fraction of the cost increases and budget challenges we face in FY21, which are outside of my control.

Health Insurance: Due to COVID19, our Health Insurance claims have been reduced. We expect the decrease to continue into FY21 and have budgeted for a slight decrease in overall claims expense. The City also recently issued an RFP for benefits management which we hope will further reduce our benefits expense in the future.

BUDGET CHALLENGES

In addition to the significant amount of revenue we have lost during the pandemic, and the fact that new property growth alone has not been able to keep up with the built in cost increases, we continue to face other budget challenges that are outside my control such as previously approved union contracts, debt services increases, Cumberland County tax, and METRO fees for public transportation.

Contractual Salary Obligations: The City Council approves contracts with all eight City bargaining units representing nearly 90% of the City workforce. The remaining 10% is non-union. All non-union personnel will not be receiving salary increases for FY21. One of our bargaining units (Pro-Tech) has agreed to no cost of living adjustments for FY21. Two bargaining units (CEBA and Labor & Trades) voted to retain their previously agreed upon 2.75% cost of living adjustment for FY21 - a budgeted increase of just under \$400,000 for FY21. The remaining bargaining units have not agreed upon contracts for FY21 and have been budgeted at a 0% increase.

Debt Service: This budget includes an approximately \$1M increase in debt service related to our 2001 pension obligation bonds. Similarly sized annual increases are looming in the FY22 - FY26 budgets as well. Overall our debt service is down just over \$600M in the current year as we deferred our first principal payment on the Lyseth Elementary School renovation and the FY20 CIP until FY22.

METRO: The FY21 budget includes a 3.2% increase in our METRO contribution or an additional \$89,286.

County Tax: The FY21 budget includes a 5.6% or \$370,843 increase in Cumberland County tax assessment pushing it to more than \$7 million. This represents a 29.4% increase over the last five years.

BALANCING THE BUDGET

City general fund expenditures have decreased 2.4% from FY20 to FY21. The growth of non-tax revenues and property valuation result in an overall municipal tax rate decrease with a new FY21 city-side mill rate of \$11.61 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, one cent lower than last year.

CONCLUSION

I would like to thank Finance Director Brendan T. O'Connell, Deputy Finance Director Anne Bilodeau, Budget Analyst Jennifer Lodge, Human Resources Director Gina Tapp, and Communications Director Jessica Grondin for their assistance in developing this budget recommendation and presentation, as well as the hard work and diligence of Department Heads in developing budget requests. Thank you to the members of the City Council for agreeing to give us this extra time to develop this budget. In light of all that is going on, we hope the public will have a greater understanding of what we face in the year ahead. We look forward to reviewing this proposed budget with the Finance Committee and full Council.

Sincerely,

Jon P. Jennings
City Manager