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Public Safety Board
September 19, 2024 (3:00 PM) – City Council Chambers
Meeting Minutes

In Attendance

Members: Councilor & Chair Amanda Grady Sexton, Councilor Nathan Fennessy, Councilor Jennifer Kretovic, Drew Biemer, Ana McKenna, Donald Carter, Jessica Eskeland, Steve Edwards, Bouzned (Moe) Djabelarbi, Jeff Foote

Staff: Deputy Fire Chief Hebert, Serina Chase, Police Chief Osgood, Deputy Police Chief Thomas, Deputy Police Chief Moulton, Deputy Police Chief Smagula

Guests: City Manager Tom Aspell, David Gill (Parks & Recreation Director), Jeff Hoadley (Deputy General Services Director), Adam Barnard (General Services/Highways and Utilities Water Field Technician)

Minute Taker: Serina Chase

Welcome from the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 3:00pm by Councilor & Chair Amanda Grady Sexton

Introductions

Introductions were made by attending councilors, members, and guests.

Approval of June 20, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Councilor Fennessy to approve the June 20, 2024 meeting minutes. Councilor Kretovic seconded. Motion Passed unanimously.

Trash Collection Within Homeless Encampments - Councilor & Chair Amanda Grady Sexton, David Gill (Parks & Recreation Director), Jeff Hoadley (Deputy General Services Director), Adam Barnard (General Services/Highways and Utilities Water Field Technician)

Councilor & Chair Amanda Grady Sexton introduced the topic by informing Mr. Gill, Mr. Hoadley, and Mr. Barnard that the Public Safety Board is interested in exploring current options for trash disposal within Concord's unhoused community. She also inquired about what the City has done previously.



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Mr. Gill stated that he is not currently aware of anything that has been done to further ongoing waste collection efforts within encampments. He then explained the City's current waste collection process – Collection takes place via a hired vendor after a camp has been left vacant or abandoned.

He continued, that he reached out to Casella to inquire about their possible interest in assisting the City with waste collection in homeless encampments – A type of pseudo curbside pickup. Casella is averse to the idea for several reasons:

- Biological waste
- Hazardous waste
- Propane tanks

Mr. Gill also addressed the idea of utilizing the blue bag program, as this topic has been brought up at previous meetings. He explained that this program is run by New Hampshire the Beautiful and is solely intended for litter collection as a way to challenge the bottle bill. Because the City does not own the program, it cannot give blue bags out to homeless communities for the intention of waste disposal.

Councilor Grady Sexton asked if there have been any conversations with the homeless outreach committee regarding their possible assistance with disposal of hazardous materials? Mr. Gill explained that outreach workers recently assisted in a cleanup of hazardous materials on Storrs St. before a vendor hired by the City arrived.

The vandalism of a porta potty placed the Friendly Kitchen about 4 years ago was then briefly discussed.

Councilor Fennessy asked if Casella would be interested in providing a dumpster for the unhoused to utilize during specified hours. Mr. Barnard did not wish to speak for the company, but did note that they have provided dumpsters for cleanup initiatives in the past. He suspects that they may be willing to work with the City to collect waste, outside of hazardous and biological waste.

Councilor Kretovic asked about the possibility of reintroducing public porta potties, as well as the vandalism of the porta potty at the Friendly Kitchen about 4 years ago. She asked if the vendor would entertain the idea of placing porta potties at the location again. Mr. Gill responded that they would need to ask, but there is a very low possibility given the outcome of vandalism last time. He also noted that there is a cost of about \$150/week associated with doing so.

Councilor Fennessy asked if there are any vandalism issues with other porta potties at parks around the City. Mr. Gill confirmed that the units are always subject to some sort of vandalism.

Councilor Grady Sexton asked the guests if they are aware of any other municipalities that are working on similar issues – What are they doing to resolve these issues? Mr. Gill said that he is not aware of any, but did note that Dover appears to be having many of the same concerns as Concord.



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Councilor Fennessy spoke about a recent conversation he had with Mayor Hosmer, of Laconia. He explained that Laconia worked with CAPNH, who provided funds to help facilitate a cleanup in the City.

Jeff Foote asked how much has been spent, year-to-date, on cleanup efforts. Mr. Gill informed the PSAB that the City has worked with Clean Harbors in the past, and is now using New England Trauma Services LLC. He estimates the costs could be about \$30,000 annually.

Councilor Kretovic expressed her concern that this is a humanitarian issue. She strongly believes that there is a benefit to reintroducing public porta potties for the unhoused community.

Councilor Kretovic then informed the Board that the school district collects and provides monthly data to the public, which includes the number of unhoused children in their care. Deputy Fire Chief Hebert asked what the total is. Councilor Kretovic responded that there are 100 children from the Concord School District who are currently unhoused.

Donald Carter expressed his concern that there are roughly 60 agencies in the Concord area trying to assist the unhoused community. He asked Tom Aspell, City Manager of Concord, if there has been any discussion about centralizing these agencies into one entity to lead the charge.

Mr. Aspell explained that previously there was a group assembled by the Mayor and City Council to do just that. Unfortunately, group members were uncooperative, which led to it falling apart somewhat. However, the group is reforming.

The City Manager then explained that these groups tend to work best when there is one entity financing everything. That is, there is incentive to ensure that everyone is working together cooperatively and that progress is being made.

Mr. Aspell continued that you can categorize Concord's unhoused community into:

- People who are transitionally unhoused
- People who are permanently unhoused
- People who are somewhere in between transitionally and permanently unhoused

He believes that the focus to help these individuals should not be placed on one category alone. The focus should be redirected, so not one category has sole access to all of the recourses. This is what the reformed group will be trying to focus on, going forward.

Donald Carter asked if the group is available to talk to the PSAB. Councilor Grady Sexton advised that Councilor Schlosser has been providing similar updates thus far.

The City Manager noted that the reformed group should be making significant progress in the upcoming months. He suggested to check in with them later.



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Anna McKenna asked about Concord's Coalition to End Homelessness and what their role has been thus far. Deputy Police chief Moulton explained that they handle the day-to-day actions. Mr. Aspell expanded that they recently assisted with creating transitional housing on Pleasant St and Green St.

Ms. McKenna recounted that she had worked with veterans in the past. She also explained the significance of data collection as a way to start identifying those individuals who may need a little extra assistance.

Drew Biemer remarked that assisting homeless veterans in Concord is a good case study in the ability to replicate things on a larger scale. This is because the homeless veteran population in Concord is quite small – about 10 individuals.

Councilor Grady Sexton asked where does the newly reformed group plan to apply for funding. Mr. Aspell said that he is not sure if they have gotten that far yet.

Councilor Grady Sexton spoke anecdotally about a homeless couple who has been working with the City to get housing however, and although they would likely be successful tenants, they have not been able to obtaining housing.

Drew Biemer conveyed his thoughts regarding 'the incentive to cooperate' and how it relates to funding groups to facilitate positive collaboration within them.

The City Manager noted that perhaps the PSAB, or another similar group, could meet with these groups who are receiving funding to confirm whether or not they are making progress - If they are not, then perhaps the consequence is that they lose their funding.

Councilor Fennessy pointed out that if the PSAB did that, a metric for success would need to be created. He then asked if there is an organization, similar to the Municipal Association, that Concord can join to help come up with ideas or suggestions.

Councilor Kretovic explained that the subcommittee has been meeting with representatives at the county level – These include Judge Kissinger and the members of the SOAR program. The general consensus of the subcommittee is that the county has an abundance of resources for unhoused people, that the City could utilize.

Councilor Grady Sexton asked the City Manager: "Do think that there is merit to the PSAB making a recommendation to General Services that they explore what other communities are doing in terms of some proactive trash pickup?". Mr. Aspell explained that associated costs and obtaining permission to enter encampments are factors to keep in mind. However, he offered to make the recommendation himself, to ask General Services to explore other trash collection initiatives in other communities.

Councilor Grady Sexton also asked the City Manager: "Do you have any recommendations of things that the PSAB could reasonably tackle?". Mr. Aspell replied that the PSAB may want to weigh in on Social Service funding, and whether or not the City is giving the correct amount of money to the right groups.



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Councilor Kretovic mentioned that it is important to note that Mayor Champlin has added the executive director of the Friendly Kitchen to the other task force for homelessness. The executive director has better, more targeted numbers about the number of unhoused people in Concord, because she sees them every day. She also has a better idea of who is food insecure versus who is unhoused.

Councilor Grady Sexton ended with a brief overview of the funding for each social service agency in Concord.

Councilor Fennessy made a motion to recommend to Council to have City staff explore potential alternatives for best practices for waste collection among the unhoused population. Jessica Eskeland seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Update from the Subcommittee on Homelessness

No update from the Subcommittee on Homelessness due to cancelled September meeting.

Future Agenda Planning

- Update from the Subcommittee on Homelessness
- Discussing a plan of action for looking at the applications put in by the City's social service agencies – Scrutinizing them and then determining whether or not the PSAB would like to invite representatives to discuss impact, measurables, and future plans
- Councilor Kretovic will act as Interim Chair of the Public Safety Advisory Board at the October meeting, while Councilor Grady Sexton is out of the country

Adjournment

Councilor Kretovic made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Drew Biemer seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 4:19.