

**To:** Mayor Snyder and Members of the Portland City Council  
**CC:** Danielle P. West, City Manager  
**From:** Kristen Dow, Director of Health & Human Services  
Keith Gautreau, Fire Chief  
**Date:** July 14, 2023  
**Re:** Encampment Crisis Response Team Update



This memo is intended to provide an update on the purpose and progress of the City's Encampment Crisis Response Team (ECRT)<sup>1</sup>, established to coordinate resources among public and private partners to effectively transition as many individuals as possible into shelter or housing prior to the scheduled resolution of an encampment.

Since its inception, the ECRT has focused its efforts on the encampment along the Fore River Parkway Trail at Frederic Street. As of July 10, there were a total of 46 tents and approximately 50 individuals at this encampment. Based on the size of the encampment, as well as anticipated shelter and housing availability, an encampment resolution date of September 6th has been set and communicated to the organizations who are participating.

ECRT command staff meet multiple times per week to discuss progress, barriers and ongoing priorities of the group. Each oversees a sub-group tasked with a specific role; updates from the ECRT sub-groups are below:

### **1) Mobile Engagement Center**

The Mobile Engagement Center sub-group has taken on the considerable challenge of bringing together 21 people from a total of 14 different organizations. Four City of Portland departments are represented by five people. 10 different community partner organizations are represented by 16 people. The group had a vital participatory role in the creation of the By Name List, which is essential to support focused outreach, deeper relationships, and higher likelihood of positive outcomes. Improved communication has been fostered throughout the varied organizations through a series of group meetings and almost daily emails. This communication has aided in strengthening trust through addressing specific requests originating from the Frederic St. encampment, understanding and addressing some perceived barriers to shelter, and the creation of daily bed availability flowing directly from the HSC to outreach workers. We have begun to engage members of the Frederic St. encampment with the intent to bring their important perspective to the ongoing conversations that surround how we can all work together to best help realize positive outcomes in our increasingly housing-focused, coordinated outreach.

### **2) Performance & Data Management**

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<sup>1</sup> The structure of the ECRT is included with this memo as an attachment hereto.

The Data Group has met several times and morphed into the Case Conferencing group. As we pivoted to Case Conferencing we agreed to utilize the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) for centralized data collection. The initial Data Group had many of the same folks and agencies that would ultimately be involved in case conferencing so it made sense to prioritize the By Name list; the overall plan once the By Name list is completed will be to reconvene with a focus on data.

### **3) Case Conferencing**

The Case Conferencing group consists of The Opportunity Alliance, Preble Street, Spurwink, Common Space (Amistad), United Way Southern Maine, Maine State Housing Authority, HUD TA and City of Portland (Public Health and Social Services). It has held two meetings and this week moved to a weekly standing meeting. The By Name list initially took time to formulate but has taken shape over the past week. Our community outreach partners have 45 individuals on the By Name list. 19 have completed full Coordinated Entry (CE) assessments and were entered into HMIS; 6 are entered into HMIS but waiting on completion of the full CE. The remaining 20 individuals have been identified and are in various stages of completion of CE, HMIS entry and/or are being assigned to a point person via case conferencing. We have re-assigned some of our Public Health team to more of a housing focused outreach role. The State Coordinated Entry team voted to approve our Public Health team as a CE Access Point and they will be completing the HMIS training to allow them to enter data and complete CE Assessments.

### **4) Basic Needs**

The Basis Needs group has 23 people representing 13 organizations, which include non profit organizations, churches, health care, and municipal officials. The group was formed and started meeting the week of June 12, 2023. That week, 3 different meetings were held to make an inventory of what basic needs were already being provided on site, and what basic needs were desired or needed. This included on-site field visits to determine potential placement of a dumpster, porta potties, needle boxes, etc. After the initial week of multiple meetings, we have moved to a weekly meeting on Monday morning for updates and adjustments as needed.

The Basic Needs group have provided the following resources to date at the Fore River encampment:

- Trash dumpster which is monitored and emptied daily by the Public Works Department.
- 2 Porta Potties, which are cleaned and restocked 2X daily by staff from the Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department. The units are pumped empty 3X weekly.
- Potable water station is in progress, under coordination from the Fire Department and an outside contractor.
- A large post-office box sized sharps container has been installed in the encampment. This has reduced the number of sharps on the ground.
- Efforts are underway to improve efficiency of food delivery utilizing volunteers, so that non-profit social service providers can focus less on food delivery and

- more on their core team function of connecting homeless individuals with housing.

## 5) Housing Inventory

The Housing Inventory Group has been meeting regularly with a standing weekly meeting. The group consists of individuals from CHOM, Preble Street, United Way of Southern Maine, the City of Portland (Social Services), Through These Doors, Portland Housing Authority and HUD TA. Early on, we created a spreadsheet that tracks anticipated shelter housing placements with the goal of allowing outreach staff to talk with unsheltered individuals and reduce any trepidation and dispel any rumors or concerns in advance of shelter beds opening. This sheet is set as a shared google doc allowing staff from each of the local shelters (HSC, Milestone, Elena's Way, Joe Kreisler, Florence House, & Through These Doors) the ability to update in real time. Since June 28th 30 beds have become available at the HSC. While outreach has occurred to those in the encampment offering the shelter beds, only two from the Fore River encampment have accepted a bed at the shelter. There is ongoing work with outreach staff to identify barriers, such as arranging tours of the HSC, so that this issue can be addressed.

We have also worked to identify housing options and available subsidies. Portland Housing Authority has been a great asset; PHA is working to compile a comprehensive list of subsidized housing units in Cumberland County and surrounding counties. They are also compiling a list of properties currently under development (that should be around 186 units). We are beginning the process to get a PHA release over to the Mobile Engagement team; PHA has offered to cross reference Fore River clients to ensure they are on all open housing lists and/or what subsidies may be available to them.