

THE HOMELESS VOICES FOR JUSTICE NEWSLETTER

OUR VOICE, YOUR VOICE

February 2022



Inside this issue:

HVJ Basics	2
Initial Plans for the City of Portland's Homeless Services Center	3
The Dignity Pilot	4-5
Relationships with City Councilors	6
Minute-by-Minute Updates	7
Celebration of Life: dee Clarke	8

Stay tuned for the next issue which will highlight:

- 2022 Legislative efforts
- The City's progress on the Homeless Services Center
- Advocacy updates!

## THE BASICS

---

**Who we are:** Homeless Voices for Justice (HVJ) is a grassroots organization that works for social change with, and on behalf of, people who struggle with homelessness and poverty. Our goal is to build a coalition for, and of, people experiencing homelessness throughout Maine. We seek to empower people struggling with homelessness and poverty whose perspectives are often excluded from the development of policies and programs that impact their social and economic well-being. Disenfranchisement, oppression, and marginalization create this absence. Therefore, we hope to assert ourselves and our interests in Maine politics through protest, education, positive policy change, and reform.

**When we meet:** Homeless Voices for Justice meets every Monday , 9:30-11:30 am at 55 Portland Street. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are both virtual and in-person options for attendance. All are welcome to attend!

**Come talk with us:** Interested in advocacy or HVJ? Questions about what we do? Issues you would like to see us address? Email [HVJ@preblestreet.org](mailto:HVJ@preblestreet.org)!

## HVJ ADVOCATES

**HVJ Leaders:**

Ben Martineau  
Carolyn Silvius  
Cher Harkins  
Jim Devine  
Mike Stuckmeyer

**HVJ Members:**

Lisa Franklin  
Richard Reamer  
Wesley Royal



## INITIAL PLANS FOR THE CITY OF PORTLAND'S HOMELESS SERVICES CENTER

*By Ben Martineau*

On the 15th of this past December a focus group came together to discuss the planning of the Riverside Street shelter.

It will be a single level 178 bed facility with added amenities. The main building will be approximately 750 ft. away from Riverside St. [about the length of 2 1/2 football fields] and will be close to a quarter mile away from public transportation. There will be two men's wings of shelter beds [114 in all], one women's wing consisting of 60 beds, and two rooms with two beds each for non-binary people.

Also, there will be a dayroom with approximately 112 seats. Adjacent to it will be a serving kitchen. At this phase, meals will be prepared off site. Women's laundry will also be off site but men's laundry is currently in the building plans. There will be a large open space for congregating just inside the main entrance with meeting rooms and conference rooms fanning off of it. Also, a clinical section and a services block will be present.

A substantial size parking lot with a single entrance driveway to Riverside St. will be out front of the structure. To the side will be a large open space where multiple outside activities can take place. The plans show an area with multiple bike racks alongside the entrance drive. A smoking area is in the plans, but the exact location can't be decided on until policies are established.

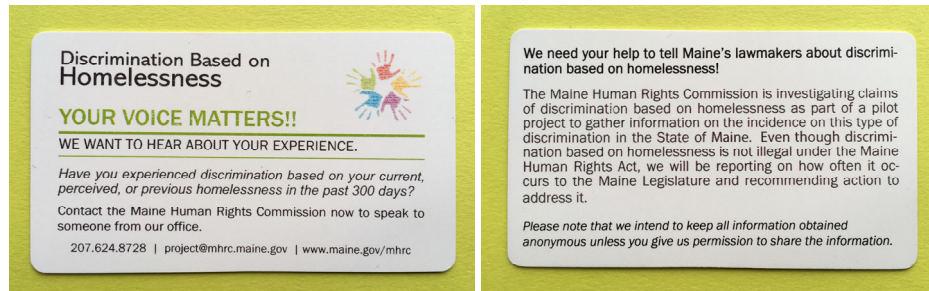
Many questions arose from the presentation and multiple hands were raised. The questions were gathered in a poll to put the collective issues from the group together in order of priority of issues, with substance use disorder being the most pressing. Following in order of importance were bathroom design/overdose protocol, the amount of non-binary beds and their locations [one is off a men's wing and the other is off the women's wing], transportation issues, smoking area strategies, the collective "other" issues, sanitation/cleanliness, and mental health challenges.

Significant as this is, it's a starting point from which to go forward. Three more workshops are going to be held. First, there will be a site workshop followed by one involving layout design. Last there will be another on operations.

Attendees' perceptions of the presentation in the focus group were gathered in another poll at the end of the meeting with the average feelings ranging from cautiously hopeful to concerned. All in all, there was valuable conversation that hopefully will bring some more serious thinking into the planning of this key link in the homeless community. In my personal experience in housing and building maintenance, the artists rendition of the finished project likely won't be the same as what gets produced. If firsthand experience and knowledge of what works are accepted, the Homeless Services Center may fill the needs of people experiencing homelessness greater than this present plan.

---

## THE DIGNITY PILOT



*By Cher Harkins*

"Hey, what are you doing over there?"

"You're trespassing. If you don't move along I'll call the police."

"Nobody cares about you or where you are. If they did then you wouldn't be here."

"You don't have the right to use a Park and Ride. You don't have an address to go home to. Leave or I'll arrest you."

I'm sure that many of you have heard some of these things and most likely have heard a lot worse. Many end up in a violent confrontation. It is hurtful and damaging and no other human has the right to impose their cruel and prejudiced words and actions upon another, especially if the only reason is the fact a person has no physical structure currently to call home. I know these things are said to people because each one of those comments were said to me. I know how much they hurt. All you want is for the pain of uncertainty to go away and yet you have the local church or the thrift store clerk who sees you picking gloves out of their dumpster in a snowstorm and literally makes you return them to the trash, or the State Trooper who blue lights you while you're sitting in the Park and Ride on Christmas Eve when all you are trying to do is deliver presents to your little boy.

*Continued on the next page*

I'm Cher from Homeless Voices for Justice and these things are some of the reasons I came to HVJ. These are the reasons State Representative Rachel Talbot Ross sponsored LD1294, our Dignity Pilot. We wrote the Pilot because we all firmly believe that every person has a right to be treated equally and with the same amount of respect that they are expecting. Governor Mills signed LD1294 on Valentine's Day last year because all people deserve to be treated with dignity. We all just deserve a break once in a while.

LD1294 gives you the right to anonymously file complaints about people or businesses, within a 300-day period, if you have been discriminated against due to homelessness or housing status. That means if someone won't serve you at an eatery or give you a job or an apartment simply because you're homeless, a complaint should be made. If you're treated badly or CTO'd from a shelter for baseless reasons, report that. The Maine Human Rights Commission will listen. They want to know about these things. They know how wrong it is. HVJ knows too because every one of us has lived through homelessness. We don't want to have it happen to us or to any one of you ever again.

A picture of the plastic card we hand out is at the top of this article. Read the front and the back. Please make use of this opportunity to take back the dignity that you deserve. This is only one of the ways HVJ says we care about you all. Please stay safe.

Representative Rachel Talbot-Ross speaks with HVJ about LD 1294 in the Joe Kreisler Teen Shelter pre-pandemic.



## RELATIONSHIPS WITH CITY COUNCILORS

*By Jim Devine*

The mission of HVJ is to work for social change with, and on behalf of, people who struggle with homelessness and poverty. One group of people who can dramatically impact the realities for people experiencing homelessness for good or ill are elected officials, including federal, state, and local.

That is why HVJ has and will continue to organize candidate forums at election time and make an effort to register people experiencing homelessness to vote.

At this time, Portland has elected several new city councilors who appear to have views that would be more helpful to people experiencing homelessness than those of the councilors that they have replaced. In particular, one city councilor has communicated that he has experienced homelessness himself.

At this time, there are some issues pending that could have an impact on the homeless community. The relocation of the homeless shelter from Oxford Street and the effort to impose shelter licensing requirements are two examples.

Of course, new issues could arise that we are not aware of yet. That is why HVJ is making an effort to meet with and discuss concerns with new city councilors, existing city councilors, the mayor, and the city manager.

We believe it is good strategy to establish good working relationships with elected officials as issues arise.

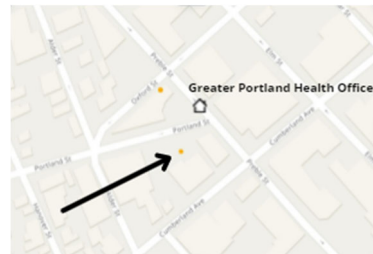




## MINUTE-BY-MINUTE UPDATES: PREBLE STREET FOOD PANTRY'S TEMPORARY RE-LOCATION

*By Mike Stuckmeyer*

The Preble Street Food Pantry has temporarily relocated to 14 Portland Street (the rear entrance of the former Maria's Restaurant). The pantry is open from Tuesday through Friday from 1:30 to 4 PM. This location, although temporary, is an indoor, walk through pantry that allows a few people to be served indoors at a time. While in the pantry, people can select food from a variety of shelves and coolers that house both perishable and non-perishable items. We will keep everyone aware of future changes.



PORTLAND: IT'S TIME TO WAKE  
UP ABOUT HOUSING!



## dee Clarke

dee Clarke was a tireless advocate, always speaking up and speaking out with compassion in support of social justice. dee passed away on Sunday, October 21, 2021, at Gosnell Memorial Hospice House and will be dearly and deeply missed.

dee was an advocate with Homeless Voices for Justice for over 20 years and fought relentlessly for housing rights, expanded mental health and substance use disorder treatments, and justice in her community. With her dear friend Steve Huston, she fought to establish the 'first in the nation' safeguards for homeless people who were being attacked solely because they were homeless. In addition to HVJ, dee led on other advocacy efforts to bring justice to our community, including POWER (Portland Organized to Win Economic Rights) and Community WELLness (Women Engaged in Learning Leading Neighborhood Enrichment Sensitivity and Service).



In 2015, dee founded [Survivor Speak USA](#), an organization led by people who are survivors of trafficking. dee's experiences sharpened her belief that survivors must be driving solutions. Survivor Speak USA lives out its mission via a combination of outreach, education and training, legislative policy advocacy, and intensive survivor mentorship and leadership development.

From her experiences in soup kitchens, on street corners, and in homeless shelters, dee listened to those who needed to be heard and passionately spoke up for social justice. dee worked tirelessly on behalf of poor and oppressed peoples with fierce compassion, kindness, forgiveness, and love.

dee was an advocate, mother, sister, teacher, actor, playwright, leader, friend, and so much more. She will be deeply missed in HVJ and all the lives she touched along the way.