

PRESIDENT'S WORK GROUP ON THE FUTURE OF SUPPORTIVE HOUSING SERVICES: DISCUSSION

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Departments: Housing, Council Office

Presenter: Liam Frost, Deputy Director of
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Work Session Date: May 1, 2025

Length: 60 minutes

ISSUE STATEMENT

The Metro Council is considering reforms to improve the impact, accountability and stability of regional programs to address homelessness and housing instability. The Council President's Work Group has met four times to consider and discuss potential recommendations to the Metro Council. This work session is an update on those meetings, with a focus on two items that have arisen: a potential overall regional systems analysis, and discussions of potential program vision, goals and key performance indicators.

ACTION REQUESTED

This item is an update only. Councilors may request additional information or provide guidance to support refinement of legislative action and collaboration with partners.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

In line with stakeholder/community input since January 2024, the Council has been considering reforms that address three primary facts:

- The region needs to continue funding in services and affordable housing to address homelessness for decades to come. However, regional funding for both will end within a few years, as the supportive housing services (SHS) taxes expire and Metro's affordable housing bond is fully spent out.
- There is no viable path to extending regional funding to address homelessness without reforming how SHS taxes are used and overseen, so that they can invest in a full range of solutions to homelessness and demonstrate greater accountability, efficiency and transparency.
- There is an extraordinary opportunity to bring together a wide coalition of providers, business leaders and community leaders to advocate for an extension and expansion of SHS, safeguarding the progress that has been made and ensuring that thousands more people can keep stable housing.

The Metro Council discussed a potential policy package in January that included a draft "Ballot Measure Ordinance" (No. 25-1525) that includes reforms that would be submitted to voters and a draft "Companion Ordinance" (No. 25-1526) that would advance a transition to a reformed SHS program upon passage of a measure.

On February 24, Council President Peterson convened a work group of elected and community leaders to discuss potential reforms identified in the above draft ordinances, including the identification of a regional vision/mission for addressing homelessness, as well as Key Performance Indicators and data needs that can help support analysis, communication and strategic decision-making. The work group, co-chaired by Council President Peterson and Clackamas County Commissioner Ben West, has met four times to date, with plans to continue meeting through mid-June. The work group's role is to make recommendations to inform the Metro Council's decision-making; as an advisory work group, it will not be voting or expected to reach consensus.

POLICY QUESTIONS

- Does Council have questions on the proposed systems analysis, discussion or vision/mission/KPIs, or other Work Group conversations?

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Through efforts with many jurisdictions, providers and community partners, the voter-approved 2018 Metro Affordable Housing Bond and 2020 Supportive Housing Services measure have helped thousands of families and individuals across the greater Portland region find stable, affordable housing and get the supports they need to avoid or escape homelessness.

Yet there is more to do. Housing costs continue to outpace what people earn and the impacts of homelessness are felt in every corner of greater Portland. These realities will continue beyond the current 2030 expiration of the SHS program and the successful completion of investments by the affordable housing bond.

Any extension of the SHS sunset or expansion of its uses must be approved by the region's voters. Other elements of proposed changes to governance, accountability and allocation may or may not be included in a ballot measure. However, public opinion research and stakeholder input demonstrates clearly that updates to oversight and accountability are likely necessary to build coalition and voter support for a potential measure.

Building on extensive input from partners, community and stakeholders, the Metro Council has been clear that its immediate focus remains on addressing homelessness – effectively, collaboratively and with clear benefits to all.

POLICY OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

Council should discuss how best to advance its desires through potential reform actions, and continued collaboration with jurisdictional partners, providers, community and business leaders, and other stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

On July 9, 2024, Metro COO Madrigal released recommendations (“COO Recommendation”) to the Metro Council to address several significant challenges and needs in how the region addresses housing affordability and homelessness. The COO Recommendation followed six months of engagement with the stakeholder advisory table, jurisdictional partners, housing and service providers, and community members.

The Metro Council discussed the COO Recommendation, stakeholder engagement and Councilor priorities at six meetings and work sessions between July and October 2024. The Council unanimously adopted Resolution No. 24-5436 on October 17, providing direction on a reform package to secure impactful, stable regional supportive housing services and affordable housing funding into the future. Throughout the fall and winter, Councilors and Metro staff continued engagement with county, city and coalition leaders. Council further articulated goals for Supportive Housing Services reforms at work sessions on November 26 and December 5.

On January 16 and 23, 2025, the Metro Council reviewed and discussed draft language for two ordinances to advance its direction for SHS reforms – one for referral to voters, and the other contingent upon voter approval. The Council opted to postpone consideration of action on the proposed ordinances to allow for conversations to continue at the Council President’s Work Group, as well as among coalitions whose support would be critical for a proposed ballot measure.

Public opinion research has gauged priorities for a potential measure, finding that a measure to extend and improve SHS could be viable, if paired with strengthened oversight and accountability, clear metrics to track and report progress and a strong coalition of support. The Metro Council has not yet determined whether to refer a measure to voters on the November 2025 ballot. The Metro Council is expected to discuss revised ordinances again in June, with potential action tentatively scheduled for late June.

Metro Council President Peterson appointed the Work Group to continue discussions of potential reforms with county, city and community/business partners and stakeholders, prior to a decision on referring a potential measure. The Work Group met on February 24, March 10, April 7 and April 21. Future meetings are planned on May 12, June 2 and June 16, with a webinar planned for May 19. In addition to Council President Peterson, the Metro Council is represented at the Work Group by Deputy Council President Simpson and Councilor Lewis.

Metro Council last had an update on the Work Group’s progress on April 17. Council is scheduled to continue updates and conversations at work sessions through June.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. April 21 Work Group Meeting Summary
2. April 21 Work Group Meeting Minutes