

Portland Press Herald

\$3.00
Monday,
March 27, 2023

WEATHER:
Mostly sunny,
clouds later
High 50
Details, B6

pressherald.com

City Council to consider changes to referendum process

Councilors may propose modifying the number of signatures required and the timeframe to amend measures that pass.

By **RACHEL OHM**
Staff Writer

The Portland City Council is slated to discuss possible changes to the city's referendum process Monday, just a week after voting

to put the latest citizen-initiated referendum out to voters in June.

A workshop is scheduled for 5 p.m. and will be held remotely via Zoom.

In an email to councilors earlier this month, Mayor Kate Snyder said several of them have contacted her about changing the referendum rules and she has been working with city staff to explore the process and timing. Any changes must be approved by voters.

PORTLAND

"Although timing is tight, we have been able to develop a thoughtful process to place a question for voters' consideration on the June ballot, if that's the will of the Council," Snyder said in the email, which she shared Friday with the Press Herald.

The council is expected to look Monday at changes in a few possi-

ble areas including the signature requirement to get on the ballot, the timetable by which the council is allowed to make changes to citizen-initiated ordinances and the inclusion of a fiscal impact statement – something that is not currently required.

The discussion comes a week after several councilors expressed a desire for change during a debate over a citizen-initiated referendum from the Rental Housing Alliance of Southern Maine.

It also follows a busy November election in which voters weighed 13 referendums, including eight from the city's Charter Commission and five citizen-initiated questions.

"The referendum process is a wonderful process, but it can't be the go-to de facto policy tool," Councilor Andrew Zarro, who supports looking at changes, said Friday. "It's getting impossible for

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Photos by Derek Davis/Staff Photographer

Lines form for separate attractions at Hilltop Boilers Maple Syrup in Newfield on Sunday. Owner Michael Bryant is holding five open houses to accommodate more Maine Maple Sunday attendees.

Hitting the sweet spots

Maine Maple Sunday celebrates its 40th anniversary as visitors flock to farms to usher in spring and indulge in all things sugar.

By **BONNIE WASHUK**
Staff Writer

NEWFIELD — The population of this tiny, York County town swelled Sunday when throngs of people turned out to celebrate Maple Sunday at Hilltop Boilers Maple Syrup.

Across the state sugarhouses opened their doors for the 40th annual event, allowing the public to see how white sap is boiled into amber maple syrup and to taste maple products. It's an early spring tradition that is growing more popular.

"You can see the crowd here today," said Hilltop owner Michael Bryant as he looked at the lines of people. "There's so many people who want to get out, celebrate spring, see the animals, see the farm and celebrate maple syrup. This is Newfield, a population of 1,700."

By the close of the day, attendance Sunday will double or triple the town's population, Bryant said.

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Brenna Ott, 12, and her mother, Brandy Berger, both of Lebanon, watch as steam rises from a boiler at Hilltop Boilers. The farm opened in 1984, and of the 40 years Maine Maple Sunday has been going on, Hilltop has participated for 38.

Portland seeks more applicants for police chief job

The city will delay its initial review of candidates by three weeks in the hopes of drawing more applicants.

By **JOHN TERHUNE**
Staff Writer

Portland has pushed back its timeline for hiring a permanent police chief as it attempts to draw more applicants.

The city had initially planned to begin reviewing candidates on March 20, a month after posting the position online. The review will now start on April 10, a spokesperson for the city said Friday.

"We are still accepting applications and hope the updated brochure will increase the number of apps," city spokesperson Jessica Grondin said in an email. She said the city has received 26 applications so far.

Once the review process begins, it will take "at least a couple more months," before the city manager makes a recommendation and the City Council approves the new hire, Grondin said.

Interim Chief F. Heath Gorham has been leading the department since November 2021 following the resignation of Chief Frank Clark, who held the role for two years before leaving for a job in private security.

Gorham was not immediately available to respond Friday afternoon when asked through a



F. HEATH GORHAM
The interim chief has been leading the department since Nov. 2021



FRANK CLARK
Left his post after two years for a position in private security

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Mississippi faces daunting recovery after tornado

By **MICHAEL GOLDBERG** and
EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS
Associated Press

ROLLING FORK, Miss. — Help began pouring into one of the poorest regions of the U.S. after a deadly tornado tore a path of destruction for more than an hour across a long swath of Mississippi, even as furious new storms Sunday struck across the Deep South.

At least 25 people were killed and dozens of others were injured in Mississippi as the massive storm ripped through more than a half-dozen towns late Friday. A man was also killed in Alabama after his trailer home flipped over several times.

"Everything I can see is in some state of

Please see **TORNADO**, Page A5



Homes sit gutted on Sunday in Rolling Fork, Miss. The town's mayor said the Friday storm hit so quickly that the sheriff's department barely had time to set off the emergency siren.

Julio Cortez/
Associated Press