

Mayor and Council Offices

Mark Dion

Mayor

September 15, 2026



Senator Craig Hickman, Chair
Representative Anne-Marie Mastraccio, Chair
Government Oversight Committee
Maine State Legislature
82 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Maine International Cold Storage Facility – City of Portland Role

Dear Senator Hickman, Representative Mastraccio, and Members of the Government Oversight Committee:

Thank you for inviting the City of Portland to participate in the Committee's September 16 discussion regarding the Maine International Cold Storage Facility. In advance of that meeting, we thought it would be helpful to provide a brief summary of the City's limited role in the matter, which was to amend our land use ordinance as needed for the project to advance and to regulate the land use approval process through the City's Planning Board.

Portland has long supported preservation and modernization of its working waterfront and the continued development of the Port of Portland. This policy is reflected in decades of waterfront planning and, most recently, in Portland's Plan 2030, which is the comprehensive plan adopted by the City Council in 2017. The Comprehensive Plan specifically calls for promoting cold-storage warehousing to support a competitive port and the seafood, agriculture, food-manufacturing, and beverage industries of northern New England.

The City's most significant involvement occurred during 2016 and 2017, when the potential development of a cold-storage facility highlighted limitations in the existing Waterfront Port Development Zone. City Economic Development and Planning staff undertook an approximately year-long process to modernize the zone, including more than 40 meetings with residents, waterfront businesses, industry representatives, and other stakeholders, together with extensive Planning Board review.

On September 6, 2017, the City Council approved amendments that, among other changes, established cold storage as a conditional use and updated dimensional standards to accommodate contemporary port and marine-industrial development. The amendments applied broadly to the Waterfront Port Development Zone and were not an approval of a particular development project.

The City's subsequent involvement was principally through its municipal land-use authority. Following two public workshops, the Planning Board unanimously approved a Level III Site Plan and Site Location of Development application for the current facility on October 13, 2020. On May 23, 2022, the Planning Board approved a minor site-plan amendment that reduced the building's size and height and shifted its footprint.

It is also important to note that the City did not own the project property; did not select or recruit the developer of the current facility; did not participate in project financing, construction, or operation; was not a party to the development, lease, or construction contracts; and did not supervise construction or contractor payments. The City is not aware of any City funds having been used for the acquisition, development, construction, or operation of the facility.

In summary, Portland's role was to establish public policy supporting cold-storage and other marine-industrial development, adopt an appropriate land-use framework following an extensive public process, and subsequently exercise the City's normal development-review and regulatory responsibilities.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide the Committee with this history and look forward to answering questions regarding the City's role at the September 16 meeting.

Sincerely,



Mark Dion
Mayor

cc: Peter Schleck, Director, Office of Program Evaluation & Government Accountability
Danielle West, City Manager
Kevin Kraft, Director, Planning & Urban Development