



# Portland Parks Foundation

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## 2020 City Council Candidates Q&A on Parks and Open Space

*On May 19 Portlanders will cast their first votes to reshape City Hall. With three open spots on City Council, there's a lot at stake. The Portland Parks Foundation wanted to provide a forum for Portlanders to learn our candidates' views on parks, open space and urban design. As a result, we invited each of the city council candidates to complete a questionnaire. Highlights and their full responses from those who responded to our inquiry are provided below.*

### Highlights from Each Candidate's Response

#### **CANDIDATES FOR COMMISSIONER, POS. NO 1**

##### [Candace Avalos, Advisor of Student Affairs at Portland State University](#)

- Improvement: PP&R can improve in many ways once we reinvest our resources into the parks by expanding the operational budget and improving parks in low income neighborhoods. Columbia Pool closing gives me a sense of urgency to address our parks funding.
- Equity: I would first want to do an accessibility audit to assess the conditions of each of our parks and prioritize new infrastructure in neighborhoods that have historically been neglected.
- Funding: I would do a complete overhaul of the entire budget process to find inefficiencies early and make more strategic decisions on how to reallocate our funds. We could create new revenue streams by encouraging more community partnerships for events in our many parks.

##### [Tim Dubois, Carpenter, PSU graduate student in urban planning](#)

- Improvement: Need to address cleanliness and safety issues in playgrounds and other facilities. The east side suffers from this more than the west, with 48% of parks in East Portland being undeveloped; reopen parks public restrooms, mostly closed in 2012, to help "alleviate the scent of urine that Portland has become known for . . ."
- Equity: ensure PP&R is an integrated, coordinated partner with city agencies working on reducing homelessness, such as A Home for Everyone and Homelessness and Urban Camping Impact Reduction Program; create a different pricing structure for low-income families who are interested in participating in community classes.
- Funding: Create an independent parks district that has the ability to tax, ensuring that citizens know that their taxes go directly to parks; permanent vendors in parks; commercial sponsorship, i.e. "PGE Park."

##### [Carmen Rubio, Executive Director of Latino Network](#)

- Improvement: make it easier to create and support "friends" groups to partner on parks maintenance without displacing any paid positions.

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#### Executive Director

Randy Gragg

- Equity: hire more leadership of color, and increase access to parks and programming in East Portland
- Funding: Explore a levy/bond option, wealth tax or food & beverage tax (or a combination of these); investigate possibility of exemption to state rules precluding use of systems development charges for parks maintenance.

#### Mary Ann Schwab, Community Advocate

- Improvement: Parks Foundation volunteers join forces with the PP&R Budget Advisory Committee volunteers. Thereby, approving a Parks District Bond to equal the playing field — no pun intended.
- Equity: [Answer cannot be summarized. See full questionnaire-editor]
- Funding: It is time Portlander’s lobby City Council to bring a Parks District Levy to the voters.

### **CANDIDATES FOR COMMISSIONER, POS. NO 2 (To Fill Remainder of Term)**

#### Margot Black, Housing Rights Activist

- Improvement: Restoration and even expansion of recreational programming; increase accessibility at all parks facilities, particularly playgrounds; increase funding to parks rangers program; more opportunities for at-risk youth through apprenticeships.
- Equity: prioritize funding high-quality programming for younger children with materials a variety of languages; establish a wealth-based tax district that bypasses general funds.
- Funding: a modest increase in fees for families living above 200% of the FPL

#### Cynthia Castro, Senior Policy Advisor for Commissioner Amanda Fritz

- Improvements: PP&R needs to institute safety and security protocols such as active shooter training across the bureau; provide more budgeting training for employees and tracking tools to assist them; offer opportunities for PP&R employees to be more proactive instead of reactive to budgets and workloads.
- Equity: find funding solutions that not only supported the long-term maintenance of what we have, but also the prioritization of building new parks, or renovating blighted parks in the areas where parks are sparse; work with the Urban Forestry team, local nonprofits and private funding to support growing the urban tree canopy--trees should not be a luxury.
- Funding: Develop more public/private partnerships as we have in Summer Free For All and the \$6-million partnership with Under Armour; talk with Parks staff and get community input to understand where priorities should be to do a deep dive on facilities, programs and property that need to be right-sized or eliminated with any cut scenarios made through an extensive equity lens.

#### Sam Chase, Metro Councilor

- Improvement: Reduce inequities by building new North Portland aquatics facility; increasing tree canopy and playgrounds in east Portland
- Equity: improve sidewalk, bike lanes, and safe crossings surrounding parks and nature in underserved areas; identify major projects where Metro can step up and invest in capital and on-going projects.
- Funding: strongly support the PP&R’s continued work on Sustainable Future; support referring any new funding proposals to the voters for approval, even if City Council has the authority to implement them without a vote.

#### **James (Das) Davis, Public Affairs Professional**

- Improvement: Build an inner-eastside community center; focus on parks space and classes to growing, preserving and preparing food
- Equity: Build inner- and outer-eastside community centers; subsidize transit to community centers for disadvantaged.
- Funding: Increase the PP&R budget by generating new revenues and shifting some public safety funds: cut facilities in the highest income communities that have greatest capacity to save their centers or develop private alternatives.

#### **Julia DeGraw, Director of Portland Forward**

- Improvements: maintain our public greenspaces and parks without the use of chemicals
- Equity: Create more parks and green spaces in East and North Portland and prevent the closure of any parks, pools, or community centers; partner with other bureaus to create safe ways walk and bike to parks; engage communities in educational events and stewardship activities.
- Funding: It's clear that Portland Parks and Rec knows how to stretch a dollar, but I would consider instituting staff-to-management ratios to free-up some money to pay staff better and hire more workers; explore ways of allocating Portland Clean Energy Fund money to PP&R; explore a wealth tax, potentially a payroll tax, and push the State to tax corporations to help fund these kinds of public services.

#### **Tera Hurst, Executive Director, Renew Oregon**

- Improvement: We can't expect Portland Parks and Recreation to improve without adequate and stable funding.
- Equity: Continue to implement the outcomes of the five-year equity plan PP&R adopted in 2017; ensure funding for and expand the Community Centers for All Initiative that I led in Mayor Hales' office.
- Funding: I would support an increase in any non-regressive taxes, i.e. a tax on temporary lodging taxes dedicated to the PP&R; it is time for another parks bond

#### **Jack Kerfoot, Principal at JL Kerfoot Energy Services**

- Improvement: Better promote volunteering opportunities, in particular to tap Portland's growing population of retirees; treat staff more fairly as an important and worthy investment.
- Equity: Work to ensure that PP&R's equity and inclusions team and others working in leadership at PP&R—and work together to make an active engagement with all Portland's communities a reality.
- Funding: Rent space to food carts at PP&R's busiest facilities; seek corporate sponsorships of parks and rec centers, reduce developers' minimum parking requirements on new apartments in trade for parks investments.

#### **Jeffrey Lang, retired CEO, Community Activist**

- Improvement: Stop closing community centers! Turning them over to private non-profits is bad policy; improve park access on the east side.
- Equity: keep Columbia Pool open until a new north Portland aquatics facility can be completed; keep fees low for recreation offerings; produce more free concerts and programs in parks.
- Funding: Parks representatives have forwarded five potential funding options, including forming a special parks district, utilizing bonding authority, and a food beverage tax. Another one could be a

1.0% vehicle tax on each private passenger car sold in Portland—a progressive tax since higher priced cars would pay higher taxes.

#### [Alicea Maurseth, Engineer in Training](#)

- Improvement: Invest in more restrooms in parks and multiuse and community centers; add community gardens and pavilion structures to parks near schools to foster education community use.
- Equity: Each park should be evaluated for improvements starting in disadvantaged areas. People within the surrounding communities should be involved in these discussions and consulted on potential solutions.
- Funding: Tourists come to Portland and enjoy our parks, yet Portland’s municipal hotel tax is 6%, while Seattle’s is 15.6%. The new Ritz-Carlton hotel should be taken as a signal that Portland’s tourism industry isn’t endangered and matches Seattle.

#### [Dan Ryan, former CEO of All Hands Raised](#)

- Improvement: Will work with Parks to build bridges between non-profits, law enforcement, and Metro to address the homeless issue in parks.
- Equity: Recreation scholarships for disadvantaged youth. Equal distribution of trees and investing in tree planting in East Portland for “greenspaces equal Forest Park.”
- Funding: One-time bond to cover the costs of the \$450M deferred maintenance needs; summer hospitality restaurant tax, like Ashland and Yachats, to capture revenue from visitors.

#### [Loretta Smith, former Multnomah County Commissioner](#)

- Improvement: proactively manage parks system a prioritized asset, thinking more strategically about long term planning around maintenance and growth; more active application of an equity lens on issues ranging from PP&R staff to the types of services and resources that are available at parks and community centers across the city
- Equity: building parks and recreation centers in areas where communities of color live (there are 10 community center west of I205 and one east); prioritize free transportation and culturally relevant services and activities that will bring people out of their homes and into parks and recreation facilities.
- Funding: look is at the City of Portland’s Debt Portfolio to figure out opportunities from that funding being freed up; as well, reexamine city policy of limiting general obligations to 0.75 percent and limited tax bonds to 1%; pull more public health funding into PP&R as parks are undoubtedly a public health tool.

### **CANDIDATES FOR COMMISSIONER, POS. NO 4**

#### [Sam Adams, former Portland City Commissioner and Mayor of Portland](#)

- Improvement: Find out and provide the kind places, programs, experiences, facilities more Portlanders want so they will fund more deeply what they view as an integral part of their daily lives.
- Equity: Deepen partnerships with Multnomah County human services, local school districts, and neighborhood community groups to gain a deeper understanding of needs in park amenities and program designs.

- Funding: Investigate the feasibility of options presented by the Alternative Funding Task Force: General Obligation Bond, Special District, Local Option Levy, Transient Lodging Tax, Cell Phone Tax, and Prepared Food/Beverage Tax

#### **Chloe Eudaly, incumbent City Commissioner**

- Improvement: invest significantly in making existing playgrounds more accessible and inclusive; activate our waterfront and creating better access to the river; create more car-free areas and public plazas.
- Equity: make up for historical underinvestment in east Portland and better coordinate with PBOT to ensure safe pedestrian and bike routes to new parks; create more culturally specific and responsive planning and programming to ensure that all Portlanders feel welcome and included in our parks and programs.
- Funding: Continue the late Commissioner Fish’s work in bringing the community together about new revenue. A General Obligation Bond seems most promising and a Transient Lodging Tax seems worthy of consideration given our parks system is a huge draw for tourism.

#### **Mingus Mapps, Candidate**

- Improvement: PP&R must ensure that regardless of which zip code a child lives in they have access to playgrounds, green spaces, and activities like swimming lessons and art and dance classes.
- Equity: Build new parks and facilities in historically and currently underserved neighborhoods; insure families can access these parks with safe sidewalks and walking and biking paths.
- Funding: Evaluate and refer funding proposals to the voters that reduce PP&R’s reliance on fees and secure sustainable funding to maintain and expand parks facilities throughout Portland

#### **Keith Wilson, President, TITAN Freight Enterprises**

- Improvement: Fence in dog areas; prioritize maintenance, safety and cleanliness of PP&R assets until a more sustainable funding model is developed.
- Equity: Go beyond scholarships for children in programs and lower the drop-in rates for disadvantaged youth; create a cadre of park volunteers—retirees retirees, college kids on break and other professionals and organizations like the Audubon Society, Oregon Zoo, OMSI and music and theatre groups to go to the parks and bring the wilderness and world to the community.
- Funding: review parks fees and charges to maintain PP&R’s value pricing but position closer to market rate; create new tax for parks, similar to the Arts Tax; renew the replacement bond to maintain existing assets.

#### **Seth Wooley, Software Engineer**

- Improvement: as underserved communities what they would like to see instead of golf; develop urban limited-stay RV camp sites and overnight tent sites for tourism.
- Equity: Analyze effects of parks proximity and increased tree canopy on property values and resulting taxes and create an “incumbent access special assessment” dedicated to equity; better police homeless camps in open areas for greater, safer access.
- Funding: consider a substantial levy focused on 50% improved services to existing parks and 50% to improving equitable access to park services by developing more parks in underserved locations; consider a wealth tax.

## COMPLETE RESPONSES

### **CANDIDATES FOR COMMISSIONER, POS. NO 1**

#### **Candace Avalos, Advisor of Student Affairs at Portland State University**

##### **1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

The people of Portland value their access to parks, and it is often a contributing factor to why people move and stay in Portland. Therefore, we must give it the resources it needs to not only build more parks, but ensure operations are keeping up with the pace of growth. Personally I am a huge advocate for parks as a board member on the Oregon Kickball Club and frequent user of the parks. Overall I believe our parks are providing an incredible and necessary resource for the city, and I hope to see it continue to improve the services it provides to Portlanders.

##### **2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

I think Portland Parks & Recreation is doing well in continuing to develop relationships with community parks to increase usage, and raise awareness of this valuable public resource in our neighborhoods.

##### **3. How might PP&R improve?**

With the help and influence of the City Council, PP&R can improve in many ways once we reinvest our resources into the parks. I'd like to see more funds secured for expanding our operational budget, and a commitment to improving parks in low income neighborhoods. For example, I spoke with Portlanders in the Portsmouth neighborhood and they shared with me their concerns for the Columbia pool closing. This is the only pool nearby that offers programming and a sense of community for many on this side of town, including partnerships with elementary schools to teach kids how to swim. It's stories like these that give me a sense of urgency to address our parks funding to ensure these resources that are important to the community are expanded.

##### **4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

We need to be better in how we put resources towards maintenance and operations of all the parks. For example, a colleague of mine lives in St. Johns and mentioned to me that in their community park they lay their own mulch, with materials provided by Parks employees. While there is value in encouraging the neighboring community to be invested in the maintenance of a park, this practice can burden communities of color while wealthier neighborhoods with more resources and influence can maintain their parks with city operational funds. Additionally, there are several parks that don't have safety infrastructure around them (lights, sidewalks, etc.) and therefore make communities less likely to use them—which again often impacts poorer neighborhoods first. If I were in charge of this bureau, I would first want to do an accessibility audit to assess the conditions of each of our parks and prioritize new infrastructure in neighborhoods that have historically been neglected.

**5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to *maintain* its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

I absolutely think parks funding should increase, and I would begin to address that by doing a complete overhaul of the entire budget process. In our current system where the Mayor has the authority to present a budget—and can do so without consulting with commissioners overseeing all the bureaus—we continue to struggle in reflecting a bigger picture, values driven budget process. The last budget process made that most evident when Commissioner Hardesty was forced to create her own budget to push on the Mayor to consider everyone’s voices in the process instead of simply presenting a budget for commissioners to vote on. Addressing our budgeting system can help us find inefficiencies early and make more strategic decisions on how to reallocate our funds. Additionally, we could create new revenue streams through the Parks by encouraging more community partnerships for events in our many parks.

**6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

Portlanders show great pride for their abundant parks and opportunities to enjoy nature in their neighborhoods. Therefore, we must harness that pride and use it to hold each other accountable and committed to preserving this important resource. It is the role of the business community to partner with the City on initiatives to increase usage of parks and help maintain the surrounding neighborhoods in relation to the parks. It is the role of private citizens to show care for the parks when using them, and fostering a culture of community in our parks through events and gatherings.

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**Tim Dubois, Carpenter, PSU graduate student in urban planning**

**1. How would you describe the general condition of the city’s parks system?**

Portland has a great diversity of natural parks, play areas, and recreational programs within the city, yet some are in need of work. For example, playground facilities show signs of neglect and the city’s homelessness problem is spreading to our parks as many of the 2,000 unsheltered citizens struggle to find a safe place to sleep. The inadequate parks and recreation budget only worsens the problems, and causes closures to well-loved community areas, like the Columbia Pool. Our city has good parks, but they need to be safer and more accessible.

**2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

Portland’s commitment to providing parks and facilities for less advantaged areas during times of city-wide budget cuts is commendable. Amanda Fritz’s creation of two parks on the east side provided access to a public green space for families that previously had nowhere else to go. Teen Force provides free activities, events, classes, and volunteer opportunities to children aged ten to eighteen in traditionally poorer areas. The needle box programs and general improvements in parks like Colonel Summers have resulted in a more upscale atmosphere that helped keep urban campers and drug users

away, and brought families back. There has also been an increase in nature-based play areas, such as Westmoreland Park, where children can explore and play safely without the need for as many artificial structures to be built and maintained.

### **3. How might PP&R improve?**

Before anything else can be done, the city needs to find a sustainable financial structure. Once that has been accomplished, we need to address cleanliness and safety issues in playgrounds and other facilities. The east side suffers from this more than the west, with 48% of parks in East Portland being undeveloped and many more have poor facilities and access to roads and sidewalks. Reopening public restrooms that were mostly closed in 2012 would help to alleviate the scent of urine that Portland has become known for, and increasing staff would help curb the drug use and crime that has congregated. Cleaning litter, especially from play areas, and restoring aging playground equipment that is no longer safe under ADA guidelines, would be a welcome step towards regaining the trust of parents looking for a safe place to take their children.

### **4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

One solution is to focus Portland's Housing First resources in areas with greater ethnic diversity and greater economic disadvantage, thereby restoring parks spaces for the community. Part of this strategy is ensuring that the Parks and Recreation system is an integrated, coordinated partner with city agencies working on reducing homelessness, such as A Home for Everyone and Homelessness and Urban Camping Impact Reduction Program (HUCIRP). Refining the Housing First approach to focus on these areas will reduce homelessness and the inappropriate reliance on park spaces by the homeless in these areas. Nationwide Parks and Recreation agencies spend a significant portion of their budget on resources dealing with homelessness and handling community member's complaints about the homeless. As homelessness decreases, more of the park's budget will be free to create a safe, enjoyable community space.

Another solution is to create a different pricing structure for low-income families who are interested in participating in community classes. Similar to Teen Force, and Trimet's honored citizen passes, community centers could provide discounted prices through enrollment in social services like Oregon Health Plan, SNAP, or TANF. This would open up lessons and classes to those who normally wouldn't be able to afford it, which would benefit the community and help create revenue for facilities that struggle with less than adequate funding.



**5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to maintain its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

A funding increase is necessary. Parks are directly related to better personal health and greater economic success. Parks increase property value and tax revenue, and help to keep the area desirable for new and existing businesses. They provide free exercise for all age groups and help to lower stress. The CDC found that individual and community health improved 25% for those who exercise three times a week, and Penn State found that the longer you spent in parks, the better your perceived health became.

Large changes will need to be made to ensure future financial improvement. One option is to create an independent parks district that has the ability to tax. Doing so ensures that citizens get the comfort of knowing that their taxes are going directly to the parks in their communities, and in this case, was overwhelmingly supported by the public. Seattle has described their experience as a huge win for the Parks Department. Additionally, an increased commercialization of our parks could lift some of the burden off taxpayers. Bringing in permanent vendors could not only bring in additional revenue, but would help maintain clean and safe facilities. Trimet does this at some of their busier Max stations very successfully. Providing a place to buy simple snacks and drinks provides a friendly presence that makes the area safer and more comfortable for families. Similarly, the use of advertisements could be a good way to pay for parks while also promoting local businesses, like PGE Park where Portland General Electric paid \$1 million to put their name on the stadium.

**6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

Citizens and Businesses are integral in increasing park use. As community members use parks more, their sense of ownership and pride in the park increases and they develop a vested interest in making the park a safe place. Businesses are also integral because they can attract people to use the park. The National Recreation and Park Association recommends food concessions on the periphery of parks, accessible to both park goers and walkers along the street. This increases the perception that the park is safe. The greater sense of security people have in a park, the more the park will be used which can decrease the probability of antisocial behavior. As the park budget decreases, citizen and business involvement becomes more critical to maintain, fix or build parks. Bryant Park in New York is a great example. In the 1990s the park went from a run-down, drug-infested park to one of the most used parks in the US. Kiosks for food, drink, and theater tickets were installed as well as the park hosting multiple special events. Crime dropped 92% and park attendance has doubled. Another success story is the Los Angeles Summer Night Lights program (SNL). L.A. was spending a lot of money fighting gang violence. A year after implementing SNL, keeping park lights on late and showing movies at night, gang-related homicides decreased 57%. It was so successful SNL spread to 24 other parks. Half of the \$5.4 million budget came from private donors.

## **Carmen Rubio, Executive Director of Latino Network**

### **1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

As a community leader, the Executive Director of a non-profit that serves more than 7,800 people in the Portland area, a resident and a public servant, I am both personally and professionally aware of the integral role parks play in the livability of the City of Portland. As a City Commissioner, I would absolutely be committed to ensuring that our parks and natural areas receive that support they need to ensure that they can continue to serve all Portlanders.

Our parks and recreation facilities are a treasure in our City. When you look at the general condition from a community use standpoint, Portlanders love their parks and parks programs. 94% of Portland residents visit a park at least once a year. New parks are being built in areas of the city that need them. However, city budgeting and financing maintenance have not kept pace with the true cost associated with the growth and scale of our Portland Parks & Recreation system. So, we are at a crossroads where we as a City and community must make decisions to align our high value and expectations of our parks facilities to resources that are available and that we are all accountable to. The questions are what can we afford and how are we going to pay for it?

In addition to playing a role in the social, recreational, and environmental health of our City, Parks are also an integral part in our emergency preparedness planning. We are starting to see this in action as a result of the CoronaVirus. Parks facilities are serving as Incident Command Centers and shelters. The greater role they play in community safety is an important consideration for how we plan for and support our parks and parks facilities.

### **2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

Parks has done an amazing job of prioritizing equity and equitable access to communities in Portland. Parks also has hundreds of dedicated and committed workers who truly love this resource and take great pride in maintaining and growing our parks access. In addition to the highly dedicated staff, Parks has almost half a million hours of volunteer time dedicated annually to park stewardship. Despite declining resources, these staff and volunteers do a great job of keeping parks maintained, safe, and accessible.

### **3. How might PP&R improve?**

PP&R can improve by continuing the work it has already begun with the Sustainable Futures Initiative - closely monitoring its budget to flag shortfalls; engage in long term, multi-year budgeting, and look for permanent, alternative funding revenue streams to address decades of deferred maintenance and increasing operations costs. These things are currently underway, so I am eager to follow these deliberations as they develop.

Parks staff should also be supported in their efforts to protect and improve the almost 8,000 acres of natural area that they maintain. Parks natural areas, ranging from Forest Park to Rocky Butte – support

an incredible amount of native plants and animals. There is a value that our natural areas contribute to addressing climate change that we need to capture. Additionally, maintaining natural areas is difficult and complicated and needs additional resources consistent to the benefit it provides us all.

**4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

As the Executive Director of a nonprofit that is a longtime organizational partner of PP&R, I have seen firsthand the tremendous strides PP&R has taken to increase equity. Their dedicated employees and community partnerships are invaluable. Places PP&R can improve are to continue to diversify its staff to include more bilingual and multilingual workers, hire more leadership of color, and increase access to parks and programming in East Portland. Materials translated in multiple languages is also important for community access as well.

The second way PP&R can support equity is to address the need for park access in East Portland. 33% of youth in the City of Portland live East of I-205 and 59% of those youth do not have access to a playground. In all other parts of the city, only 27% of youth don't have access to a playground.

**5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to *maintain* its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

Absolutely, PP&R funding must increase. I recently watched the PP&R work session on funding alternatives, and want to be thoughtful when considering an additional regressive tax that could impact low income families, but also understand the reality of the need. I am intrigued in exploring a levy/bond option, wealth tax or food & beverage tax (or a combination of these). I am also curious about exploring SDC regulations, and if it is possible for City Council and Government Relations to advocate for state changes to allow flexibility for parks maintenance to accompany investments to increase capacity. I believe we could make a compelling case for why PP&R deserves an exemption or special rule.

**6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

I believe we all have a role as private residents and business communities in caring for our parks. This is evident in the 200+ partnerships that currently exist with community groups, neighborhoods, businesses, and schools. I would love to explore how local areas and neighborhoods can take a greater role in their local park, similar to the Friends of Mt. Tabor Park; a volunteer group who organizes a foot patrol, runs a gift shop, conducts stewardship events and more. I would support making it easier to create and support groups that are scaled down for smaller parks that could be great partners to parks maintenance (but of course not displace any paid position that could/should be a parks job).

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**Mary Ann Schwab, Community Advocate**

**1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

Broken

**2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

Stewardship response depends solely on your zip code. My point of reference LWV Education Equity Study when meeting with Mayor Sam Adams, he agreed Jim Crow still existed. So surprised me, I asked him to repeat it with Dixie Johnston plus 9 others who attended the same meeting in his office.

**3. How might PP&R improve?**

Parks Foundation volunteers join forces with the PP&R Budget Advisory Committee volunteers. Thereby, approving a Parks District Bond to equal the playing field — no pun intended. Starting with the Mayor Ted Wheeler's annual budget review. Dating back to former Mayor Vera Katz, the PP&R Bureau has been City Council's lowest priority for funding. Least we forget, it takes three votes to get anything done in Council Chambers.

**4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

When I referenced the LWV Education Equity Study results depended solely on parent's zip code — "Jim Crow" — I asked Mayor Sam Adams to repeat his response to 10 others, who also attended (my) meeting. Scheduled the day before the Planning and Sustainability Commissioners would be voting on the Comp Plan 2035. (surely our meeting roster is on file with the City of Portland Archives and Records center: [www.portlandorgon.gov/auditor/archives](http://www.portlandorgon.gov/auditor/archives))

**5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to *maintain* its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

How many facilities 24, 48... ? Golf Courses? Community Centers? Laurelhurst Dance Studio? Swimming Pools? Public access to Kelly Park, Mt. Tabor Park, Forrest Park?

Years ago, when several inner-southeast residents applied to Parks Foundation for resources to keep the Buckman Swimming Pool open — as I recall — the PP&R Commissioner Nick Fish did not approve. Nor were the City's Systems Development Charges available for Park maintenance. Yet, we felt SDC resources were directed to other City Projects.

It is time Portlander's lobby City Council to bring a Parks District Levy to the Voters. Children have no voice at the table, for that matter nor to the elderly.

When PP&R Commissioner Amanda Fritz recognized how dire Park's list of deferred maintenance she turned to the Voters. Sponsored the *Fix-Our-Parks Bond*, \$58 million was simply a tourniquet to stop further damage to community centers, Parks employees' need for garage on SE Division, etc. Obviously, current funding is not adequate to keep up with maintenance, need to hire additional Park Rangers, and layoff of 56 seasonal employees needed last summer. Did you know that parents dropped their children off in the park where PPS provides free lunches, and after work stop to pick up their children? Can you tell me which zip code has the number of Registered Pedophiles living near Portland's Parks?

**7. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

Apparently, there may be serious lack of communication between the Parks Foundation Advisory Committee and private citizens working cooperation with Parks Maintenances, starting with Friends of Mt. Tabor Park, the HAND neighbors living the rose garden circles, and Laurelhurst neighbors maintaining the Joan of Arc round about. All of whom continue pay property taxes — still waiting for PP&R to locate available resources to construct the Phase underground parking lot, and Phase 2 the Recreation Center, on 4.5 acres open field at SE 12th Avenue and SE Cesar Estrada Chavez Boulevard. Have you seen the WA-MO Master Plan?

And have you seen the Master Plan for Laurelhurst Park — yes— like WA-MO Master Plan for lack of resources is still pending completion. Laurelhurst Park was designed by Emanuel Mische, Portland's Superintendent of Parks and former horticulturist for the Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture ...

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**CANDIDATES FOR COMMISSIONER, POS. NO 2 (To Fill Remainder of Term)**

**Margot Black, Housing Rights Activist**

**1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

It's clear that Parks staff are the vibrant heart and soul of this city, though many buildings and infrastructure need investment in maintenance. The closure of community centers last year was a devastating failure on the part of the city to use its prior investments to meet a community need.

**2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

The expansion of parks in East Portland is a significant equity improvement, and the fact that all new parks developed have their operations and maintenance needs factored into the budget is a distinct improvement on the former system. In general, the bureau has done a good job in maintaining aging facilities, especially given its limited resources.

The recreation and summer programming for families is phenomenal, well attended, and beloved by my own family. The significant scholarships available for low-income families for educational programs are absolutely essential to our community.

### **3. How might PP&R improve?**

A restoration and even expansion of recreational programming, particularly for areas where underserved youth lack alternative opportunities. An increase in accessibility at all Parks facilities, particularly playgrounds. Infrastructure must be repaired and improved. More year-round bathrooms need to be made available. Increased funding for the Parks Rangers program, especially in parks that are facing increased vandalism and drug use. I would like to see more opportunities to recruit youth from underserved communities into building trades through job training apprenticeships through our city's public facilities, including our amazing park system. The existing Summerworks program is a good opportunity for at-risk youth to get job experience and make some money, but it could be expanded to include more year-round work and to include older adults, which would be to the benefit of the community and the park system. PP&R also needs a budgetary review process that provides more stability to Portlanders.

### **4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

We need to place a priority on increasing high-quality programming for younger children and ensuring that materials (such as course catalogs) are available in a variety of languages.

We should also consider establishing a wealth-based tax district that bypasses general funds. We are currently funding the gradual decline of our city's \$400 million in Parks assets. Parks should not have to compete with public safety services for funding when they are so essential to many in our community's day to day life.

### **5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that just to *maintain* its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

Park funds should increase using predictable and reliable funding sources, such as tax districts. I also would support a modest increase in fees for families living about 200% of the FPL. PP&R funding must increase if we want this city to be liveable and equitable. I don't support any more cuts, which would be foolish in the short and long term.

### **6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

The efforts of PPF to fundraise and organize volunteers are commendable. However, we must develop a more predictable, holistic source of funding to maintain and build upon the parks legacy we have

inherited. Volunteers should be actively encouraged to participate in programs such as ivy-pulling, trail-building, and park clean-ups, however, these are not sustainable solutions to much-needed ongoing maintenance that should be done by trained city staff.

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**Cynthia Castro, Senior Policy Advisor for Commissioner Amanda Fritz**

**1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

An estimated \$450 million in major maintenance needs over the next 10 years looms over Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R). The passage of the 2016 Parks Replacement Bond, done in partnership between PP&R and the Portland Parks Foundation, provided \$68 million to take care of some of the most urgent repairs and capital costs. The bureau also receives \$1.8 million in General Fund annually for major maintenance. The bond and General Fund support cannot address the full backlog of maintenance in the queue. As a former PP&R employee, I saw firsthand the bureau's difficulty in keeping up with the maintenance needs, making small problems compound into larger and more expensive issues. In addition to the struggle to maintain our existing assets, the bureau is still working to expand services to parts of the city that are parks deficient.

Over the years, to keep up with rising personnel costs and budget cuts, the bureau's recreation division has had to increase program fees. This has priced some community members out and created conflict for Parks in balancing equity goals and revenue targets.

I believe the general condition of the parks system is moderate. We still have destination parks and quality recreation services, more parks coming online, and repairs and improvements continue to happen, but limited capacity to maintain an aging infrastructure while meeting the demands of a growing city are still major challenges. If the bureau continues as is, our parks and recreation system may continue to shrink due to program reductions, staff reductions, asset failures, and more. To me, our parks and recreation system is something that sets Portland apart from other cities and provides tremendous environmental, health, and community benefits. It is why putting the bureau on a sustainable financial path is one of my top priorities.

**2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

As a past employee of Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) I am extremely proud of the people who work in the bureau, the dedicated volunteers, and partners who collectively steward our vast and diverse parks system. Some of the things I believe PP&R has done well in its stewardship are making energy and water efficiency upgrades (which also translates into cost savings and supports the City's priority in combating climate change), progressing the bureau's Ecological Sustainable Landscapes Initiative as seen by the additions of nature patches in parks, expanding tree canopy, and empowering the next generation of environmental stewards through the Environmental Education Program and Youth Conservation Crew.

### **3. How might PP&R improve?**

I believe PP&R needs to institute safety and security protocols across the bureau. When I became the director of the Charles Jordan Community Center, I responded to staff concerns about safety by completing the Portland Police Bureau Active Shooter Training, then inviting an officer to provide an abbreviated version of the training for my staff on site, and doing a walkthrough with the officer to identify modifications we could make within our building to be better prepared for an active shooter incident. Leading up to summer, I trained summer seasonal staff on safety protocols, and covered the protocols as part of the onboarding process for new employees. I also know that we have PP&R employees in the field who have faced threats while trying to do their job. The bureau needs to continue to work to help PP&R employees feel safer.

Putting PP&R on a sustainable financial path is a top priority for me. This includes providing more budgeting training for employees and providing tracking tools to assist them. I created tracking tools for my employees at the Charles Jordan Community Center who oversaw budgets for their respective programs to help inform budget decisions that were under their control. I also had employees who were interested in becoming community center directors, I walked them through budget development and City budgeting systems. This needs to be expanded upon to all levels of the bureau.

Finally, I had many colleagues who wished they could be more proactive instead of reactive and to have more manageable workloads. This requires preserving capacity for reflection, creating work plans (and periodically re-evaluating them), prioritization, and discipline (i.e. in saying “no” which is hard to do). Support from leadership is crucial.

### **4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

First, we cannot turn away from parks deficient communities, even with the budgetary discussions we are having. Most of the park deficiencies in Portland are in areas populated by communities of color, and economically disadvantaged households. We cannot have an equitable parks system without giving people equitable access to parks, green spaces and recreational facilities. Part of the solution in funding cannot be at the expense of communities who are in need. I would commit to work through funding solutions that not only supported the long-term maintenance of what we have, but also the prioritization of building new parks, or renovating blighted parks in the areas where parks are sparse.

Secondly, I would work with the Urban Forestry team, local nonprofits and private funding to support growing the urban tree canopy. We know that tree canopy not only helps with carbon emissions, it also helps with lowering the temperature in those neighborhoods. In Portland, your zip code is a huge determiner of your health and well-being, and having hotter temperatures impacts health and especially in the summer can be critical in households with elders and young children. Trees should not be a luxury. They are critical to our community and planet’s health.



**5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to *maintain* its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

Despite the benefits Portland Parks & Recreation has given us, the bureau has suffered budget cuts year after year, annual maintenance funding gap, and aging infrastructure. Last year's City budget process brought the deepest cuts in bureau history. Nearly 100 staff either lost their jobs or were forced to bump fellow staff to save themselves. These were my colleagues, some of the most dedicated public servants, and they deserved better. Two community centers were closed and Columbia Pool, the only covered pool located in North Portland, is slated to close this year. Though the Mayor's budget guidance for fiscal year 2020-2021 required no further cuts, no additional ongoing general fund dollars have been secured, meaning PP&R is no better off.

We need to find a funding path that includes public/private partnerships. We need to expand on the relationships we already have with private industry (as we have in Summer Free For All, or the over \$6M secured through a partnership with Under Armour) and local non-profits but also find new partnerships. Companies continue to move headquarters to the greater Portland metro area and having access to the parks system is high on the list for their employees. Those same companies should help by investing back into the park infrastructure their employees and their families are enjoying.

Additionally, before naming off cuts, I'd have to talk with Parks staff and get community input to understand where priorities should be. I fully support doing a deep dive and revisiting facilities, programs and property that need to be right-sized or eliminated. There are many possible scenarios and it would be presumptuous of me to believe I know better than the many stakeholders already at the table. Finally, any cut scenarios would have to be made through an extensive equity lens, assuring that the budgetary burden is not placed on the shoulders of the communities who are already lacking in access. Because of what I saw happen with the Parks Bond measure, I know PP&R has a lot of data on users, mapping and accessibility. I would immediately dig deep into that data to support the sustainable funding discussions.

**6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

Private community members contribute thousands of hours of volunteerism to help maintain parks through the formal Friends & Partners groups, the land stewardship program, and the street tree planting teams. These partnerships demonstrate how valued this system is to Portlanders and how stewardship responsibilities have not rested with the bureau alone.

Friends & Partner groups are diverse in their support of the Parks system. At the International Rose Garden at Washington Park there are dozens of volunteers who deadhead roses, support the maintenance of the park and provide tours for example. Then there are groups like Pittock Mansion or the World Forestry Center that are fully run non-profit agencies who participate in activating our parks as well as providing programming and stewardship. We also have groups like the Parks Foundation who

are focused on fundraising and advocacy. These groups were also critical in passing the Parks Bond measure. These relationships are necessary to our Parks system, and without them, our system wouldn't exist as it does today.

PP&R also has long-term financial relationships with private industry through Summer Free For All. Donors like Comcast, NW Natural and Bank of America have been critical to keep summer programming going and making sure our children have access to a free healthy lunch during the time their schools are closed, often being the only meal they may get.

The future of a healthy parks system will rely on public, private and non-profit working together. Our system is too vast and too plentiful to expect that the City will be able to continue alone. All of these stakeholders need to be at the table to figure out the future funding, because nobody wants to see our parks system fail.

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**Sam Chase, Metro Councilor**

**1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

Parks perennially struggles with a lack of funding. The bureau currently has a \$450 million maintenance backlog, and there are 50 closures, like restrooms and picnic shelters. That number will continue to grow unless we change the bureau's trajectory. This past year was exceptionally difficult for Parks. I am committed to putting the bureau on a financially sustainable path.

Portland Parks and Recreation has outlined the inequities in our system today, modeled three funding levels and what level of service the community could expect from each, and presented six funding alternatives to provide additional funding. I support the unanimous Council agreement that Parks should move forward with a funding scenario that includes additional resources, reduces inequities, and prevents additional closures.

Last year's budget was especially challenging with a \$6.3 million funding gap. Parks has grown rapidly in the past decade, but the bureau's revenue model is over-reliant on fees, and revenue has remained relatively flat. Serial one-time strategies had allowed the bureau to patch the hole, but they were not sustainable and no longer enough. 27% of the total bureau operating budget (and 50% of the Recreation Division's budget) is funded by fees. The problem was too big to be solved by raising fees. The final budget reduced 70 positions (47 filled, 23 vacant). Many of the affected employees found other employment at the City.

**2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

Parks has over \$2 billion in total asset replacement value. Currently, Parks' maintenance funding budget is 10 times lower than industry best-practice. Despite this major challenge, PP&R continues to deliver exceptional parks and operations on many levels.

### 3. How might PP&R improve?

Despite a strong effort over the past decade to reduce inequities in the parks system, people still have different access. Three examples:

- As of July 1, North Portland residents won't have access to a year-round aquatics facility, including life-saving swim lessons. Although Parks has pledged to construct a new aquatics center at Charles Jordan Community Center, North Portland will be underserved for several years during construction.
- Tree canopy on the West side is over 50%. But east of the Willamette, tree canopy is 21% – lower than Los Angeles. Trees provide countless benefits to people, the climate, and wildlife. For starters, they can help people save money on energy bills, they clean the air and water, and they reduce flooding and stormwater runoff.
- 1 in 3 Portland kids live east of I-205, but less than half of them can easily walk to a playground. West of I-205, 70% of kids have a playground within easy walking distance.

### 4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?

Research shows over and over that communities of color and economically disadvantaged people lack access to natural areas and parks. In addition to my call for long-term sustainable funding, short term options are available to pursue. Partnering with others to better utilizing existing resources in the system will help create more access. I'll champion efforts to:

Improve access to existing parks and urban natural areas with improvements to sidewalk, bike lanes, and safe crossings surrounding parks and nature in underserved areas. Partnering with existing programs will provide multiple outcomes for taxpayers. That will include transportation funding for active transportation and from Safe Routes to School where linkages to our education systems can be made; and drawing on Metro's on-going and capital resources for improving access to nature in urban areas.

Identify major projects where Metro can step up and invest in capital and on-going projects. Suburban communities throughout the region have been highly successful securing capital and on-going funds for urban natural area infrastructure. As a Metro Councilor, I've successfully championed efforts to win both park and affordable housing resources for the Albina Vision to provide restorative justice, as well as funds that could be used for crewing improvements and operating the Willamette Cove. I'll fight for Portland to get fair treatment from Metro and fund these two regionally significant projects.

### 5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to *maintain* its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?

I will strongly support the bureau's continued work on Sustainable Future. At this point, we're still in the research phase. I look forward to a robust community conversation to make sure we get this right.

When the time comes, I will also support referring any new funding proposals to the voters for approval, even if City Council has the authority to implement them without a vote.

I will be a steadfast champion on Council for the Parks bureau. That includes putting the bureau on sustainable footing for the long term, protecting union jobs, building new parks in east Portland and other underserved communities, and moving swiftly to construct a new aquatics center to replace Columbia Pool.

I'll bring my deep experience passing and winning capital and on-going funding to the table. I have been a part of each of 5 successful regional open space and natural area measures; two as a community organizer, and three in shaping and co-leading campaign efforts as a Metro Councilor. My active engagement in shaping and passing Metro's operating levies provide special insight to the challenges of addressing maintenance needs with voters.

In the coming years before Sustainable Future is fully implemented, I will work with my Council colleagues to make sure Parks can hold the line and not go backwards. That means we need to focus on the basics – maintenance needs, ADA accessibility, and modernization projects that save the bureau money on staff time and utilities.

**6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

We'll have a big lift to gain community support we need for sustained parks funding. The business community, community leaders, citizens and park users are our most important park ambassadors. We'll need to work together to articulate the importance of parks and recreation to our livability, economy, physical and mental health and so much more.

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**James (Das) Davis, Public Affairs Professional**

**1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

City parks are generally well maintained on the west and inner east side, and could likely use more attention in outer east Portland.

**2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

Portland Parks & Recreation does a good job managing its community centers and park spaces. In particular, PP&R maintains a good schedule of classes at its centers and maintains its pools and aquatics programs in good condition.

### **3. How might PP&R improve?**

PP&R could follow through on proposals to site a community center in inner southeast Portland. More importantly, PP&R should incorporate an increased focus on classes and park space devoted to teaching our communities about growing, preserving, and preparing food.

### **4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

PP&R should develop community centers on the inner east side and in outer east Portland for easier access for all Portlanders to community centers. PP&R could also subsidize bus trips to and from community centers for economically disadvantaged individuals.

### **5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to *maintain* its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

The city council should increase the PP&R budget by generating new revenues and shifting some public safety funds. If not, then facilities in the highest income communities should be cut as those are the communities with the greatest capacity to save their centers or develop private alternatives.

### **6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

All citizens, based on ability to contribute, owe it to the community at large to contribute to the building and maintenance of park facilities.

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**Julia DeGraw, Director of Portland Forward**

### **1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

The City has had a consistent issue with finding adequate funding to pay for park and community center maintenance and operations. Part of this issue is that the Commission form of government leads to Commissioners seeking expensive capital projects that win votes and get headlines. But then, Commissioners often fall flat on committing to the equally important but fare less exciting follow-through on making sure there are ongoing funds for maintenance and operation costs—which keep facilities open to the public and ensure living wage jobs with benefits for City employees. Across the city, we see parks and community centers that need more funding for upgrades, maintenance, and operations—however, in some parts of the city not only are parks and community centers struggling, there simply aren't enough of them to begin with. Particularly in the far East side of the city, not only is there a lack of green spaces, we also lack safe roads and sidewalks to get to those areas. This is why we need to both find funding for new parks in areas that are lacking and find ways to restructure the City's

budget to find more money for operations and maintenance. Additionally, new revenue streams to help cover ongoing maintenance and operating expenses for parks and community centers should also be explored.

## **2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

The Level of Service project is a big step in the right direction to address the equity issues around access to parks in the City of Portland. I like that the program is gathering data from communities to inform future actions. It's important to take the time to gather information before acting, and I am a firm believer in community-led decision-making. Once this process leads to a vision, we must find a way to create programs, projects, and funding to make that vision a reality.

I have a place in my heart for the No Ivy League. I was involved in the project leading work crews and putting in countless hours removing English Ivy from Forest Park and other natural areas in Portland from 1998 through about 2002. My passion for conservation and stewardship came from that work and my time launching the "Green Team" in partnership with SOLV at my high school. I am impressed at what Parks and Rec can do on such a tight budget to maintain and restore the natural areas as well as the parks in our city. It's clear that Portland Parks and Rec knows how to stretch a dollar.

## **3. How might PP&R improve?**

I want to find a way to make all of PP&R toxic-free. Finding a way to maintain our public greenspaces and parks without the use of chemicals should be a goal we are actively working toward. With evidence that toxic chemicals like glyphosate cause cancer and build up in peoples' fatty tissue, it's become clear there are no real safe ways to use chemicals to control weeds.

It seems from the stories in the news that PP&R, like many bureaus in the City, is grappling with equity and inclusion issues. Shifting a work culture in a city rooted in strong historic white supremacy is going to be challenging no matter what. Nonetheless, I hope there has been progress in this area since the new leadership took charge in 2018. How the Bureau and HR deal with a specific problem employee who seems to have been harassing other workers and elected officials, will hopefully demonstrate PP&R's commitment to justice and creating a safe and inclusive work environment. I think the City's leadership can improve by doing a better job of providing funding for PP&R to do its job, and that's something I will commit to doing as a Commissioner.

## **4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

One way is by creating more parks and green spaces in East and North Portland and preventing the closure of any parks, pools, or community centers. Any creation of new parks or centers must include deep community engagement throughout the entire process. We also must partner with other bureaus outside of PP&R to make sure that it's safe for neighbors to walk and bike to parks and, perhaps most importantly, make sure we have strong anti-displacement policies in place that ensure the neighbors

who helped bring about the community space can stick around to enjoy it as the neighborhood improves.

The second way is to engage those communities in educational events and stewardship activities, as well as creating spaces and providing resources for these communities to host culturally-relevant events in existing community centers and parks.

**5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to maintain its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

I am 100% committed to finding a way to reallocate existing resources through restructuring Portland's budget to find more funding for maintenance and operations. I want to explore finding ways for some PCEF money to go into some of PP&R's projects that both assist with carbon sequestration and create green jobs for black, indigenous, and people of color and other historically marginalized community members.

We should explore a wealth tax, potentially a payroll tax, and push the State to tax corporations to help fund these kinds of public services. Moving forward, we must require that all new capital projects within PP&R have plans to fund the ongoing maintenance and operations of those new developments.

Lastly, there is one area I'm willing to consider for saving money. The City of Portland has a staff-to-management ratio issue: it's a very management-heavy city. I would consider instituting staff-to-management ratios to free-up some money that would mostly go to pay staff better and possibly to hiring more workers.

**6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

Just as the No Ivy League experience was transformative/formative for me, I know that program and others like it must have had similar impacts on hundreds of Portlanders who participated in that or other PP&R programs. It's a profound, grounding, and bonding experience to connect people to the earth and the plants and animals that live among us but that we miss because we're always indoors or in our cars.

When I was in college, I interned with Wolf Tree and led city youths into the forest to streams where middle schoolers would put on waders, walk into the stream, and collect macroinvertebrates (insect larvae/pupae/nymphs) to identify them and learn about the stream health from the kind of critters that were living in the stream. I recall girls whining about not wanting to put on the ugly waders, and once they were made to try at least once, it was usually these very girls who refused to take off the waders because they wanted to turn over more rocks to find more "bugs." Kids trying to appear disinterested, like nothing was cool, eventually lit up as they identified the critters they captured and learned the story these small creatures

could tell about the place they live.

Humans in cities spend too much of their time physically disconnected from the natural world, from dirt, plants, trees, the wind, and wildlife. If members of the public and the Portland business community engaged more in stewardship of our outdoor spaces, I think it would benefit the health of not only the green spaces, but the health of our communities and of specific individuals as well.

While the public sector should ensure access to parks for all, but we should engage the business community and private citizens in the ongoing cultivation and stewardship of these spaces: it builds character, it builds community, and it creates a deep sense of connection and responsibility to the land, to the plants and animals that live here, and to each other.

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**Tera Hurst, Executive Director, Renew Oregon**

**1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

Portland's Parks are the heart of our city and what makes Portland unique. But currently, we are facing an unsustainable path. We've deferred maintenance, we've shut down community centers, and we've laid off park staff. We need to prioritize our parks as the essential service they are. We can build community trust by sustaining the spaces our community needs and make sure they are not under continuous threat of closing. Parks, community centers, and pools need adequate and stable funding, and City Hall needs a real champion for the parks system to make sure they are a top priority in our City. I will be that champion as your next City Commissioner.

**2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

Urban green spaces and parks are vital to a community's public health and well being, but we need a stable funding source to ensure adequate maintenance and upkeep and that we are expanding so that every neighborhood has a park nearby. My son and I are the beneficiaries of this stewardship on a daily basis-- when we are lucky; especially in the pandemic, our parks are playing such a critical role in maintaining mental health and well-being. Parks employees do a great job both in Community Centers and by maintaining properties. Volunteers do a lot to support this as well. But there's only so far that a cut-back maintenance staff and volunteers can do. It's clear after this last budget cycle and the significant cuts to the parks services, that City Hall needs the leadership to establish consistent and adequate funding to better steward our parks, or parks will further deteriorate and we will lose one of the best things about our city.

**3. How might PP&R improve?**

Due to deferred maintenance and constant budget cuts and shortfalls, our parks and natural areas need extra care. Plus, nearly forty percent of east Portland households still lack a park within a half-mile of their homes. But we can't expect Portland Parks and Recreation to improve without adequate and stable funding.



**4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

- 1) Continue to implement the outcomes of the 5 year equity plan PP&R adopted in 2017. Since this was a process and plan that involved stakeholder and community output, I would want to ensure there are adequate resources and funding going toward continued implementation of this plan, resulting in the goals and outcomes needed to make our parks system more equitable for all Portlanders.
- 2) Another priority of mine, that also creates access, would be to ensure funding and expanding the Community Centers for All Initiative that I led in Mayor Hales' office. The creation of the initiative was in direct response to the unprecedented gun violence in Portland that was significantly impacting communities of color and economically disadvantaged communities. As we were looking to address this issue we heard from many community organizations at the Community Peace Collaborative, a meeting brought together by the Office of Youth Violence Prevention, that outreach and community organizations were not able to access our Community Centers because they were already rented out and when they were available the cost was prohibitive. These conversations and experiences led to the creation of the community center initiative. Some of the outcomes were dedicating Montavilla a teen center from 3pm -8pm, and we expanded programming at Mt. Scott, East Portland, Matt Dishman, and Charles Jordan. This started as a way to prevent violence and create better access for our community-based organizations to utilize our community centers, but it really was an initiative that addressed the very root causes of violence and built a real lifeline for center workers and youth.

**5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to maintain its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

I support an increase in funding in line with the 2.5 billion dollar 15-year proposal Parks laid out last budget session. I would support an increase in any non-regressive taxes, like for example a tax on temporary lodging taxes to add to our general fund that would be dedicated to the PP&R budget. Visitors to Portland benefit from our Parks system and that would be a way to contribute. I also believe it is time for another parks bond and would be open to working with PP&R and the Parks foundation on that and other funding measures that would enable us to prioritize parks in a meaningful way. I would like to be a leader on helping ensure adequate and stable funding for parks.

**6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

Whether it's through our tax dollars, grants and donations from businesses, or volunteering our time, we all need to play a role in the support of our parks. The Portland Parks Foundation has been instrumental in developing funding for critical programs in our City by building partnerships with the

business community and individuals who care about funding our parks. Summer for All is a great example of a public-private partnership within parks. It's not only a livability issue to have the incredible parks system we have but it is critical in addressing public health, safe spaces for youth to go after school, and affordable summertime childcare options. Businesses have a vested interest in maintaining this system and ensuring it's successful. The foundation has been a critical voice in building partnerships with the business community to contribute to parks. I would love to lead that in partnership with the foundation. Portland parks are a treasure and we must continue to prioritize as a core city function.

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### **Jack Kerfoot, Principal at JL Kerfoot Energy Services**

#### **1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

[The Parks 2020 Vision](#) summed up the situation in 2000 as: "Our parks and natural areas have never had as many visitors as they do now, but they are being loved to death -- and many suffer from overuse." In 2020, I would characterize our city's park systems as suffering from "under-investment," instead of overuse. In my opinion, Portland's parks and recreation services are world-class, but unequally distributed and facing an existential threat from serious funding challenges and from a failure to engage younger generations of Portlanders.

At the time Parks 2020 Vision was written, Portland was expected to grow by 65,000 residents by 2020. Actually, Portland grew by twice that number of residents. Some important steps forward, such as the System Development Charges (SDC) expansion and the purchase of additional acres of open space, and the construction of new community centers, have improved PP&R, since 2000. However, we have not kept pace with the rate of growth, and in some neighborhoods existing services have been cut back. This past year budget shortfalls and cost-overruns--in the city's general fund, and at Parks specifically--have resulted in further cuts and now the layoffs of 60 employees and counting, and the closure of several recreation centers.

#### **2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

The Portland's trails and greenways are arguably the most-used and most-popular component of the PP&R system, and among the best city trail systems in the world. At more than 100 miles of interconnecting trail networks nearly circling the metro area, and planned to connect with the Pacific Crest Trail, the "40-Mile Loop" is just one of many trail treasures for Portland and the region. Portland's leadership in getting this trail system built and maintained sets an example for our neighboring cities and is a legacy, which Portlanders can be proud.

However, I am concerned that trail construction on the 40-mile-loop has fallen far behind the stated goals. I believed our city council must recommit to following through on our trail construction program. If elected to the city council, I pledge to make a point of walking the 40-mile loop over a weekend, as a way to earn media coverage for the wonderful trails we have in this city. I make this commitment, regardless of whether or not I am assigned the Bureau of Parks and Recreation by the mayor.

Another area where Portland is doing well, but needs to do even better, is volunteer engagement. I would put the question like this: ***How is Portland doing at nurturing and engaging the community's volunteer ethos to keep our parks maintained and staffed at their best?*** I think it's a major achievement that Portland gets so much value from volunteer engagement programs, with one hour of volunteer work for every three hours of staff time (as of the 2009 progress report on the 2020 vision plan) and with 446,502 hours, worth a loosely estimated \$5.7m, in the '2018/2019 fiscal year. (That's per the ['18-'19 volunteer impact report](#).) Obviously, the volunteer program is achieving something important for Portland, and without it the city's budget would be in even worse shape.

### **3. How might PP&R improve?**

Although PP&R does have strong participation in the volunteer engagement program, I believe there is real potential to further increase Portland's volunteer-powered park services. The volunteer hours have been relatively flat over the past several years, even though our city's population has continued to increase.

Portland has a growing population of retirees that may be looking for ways to give back to the community. Volunteering with PP&R could be an ideal fit for them. Our city also has a steady influx of young people that are moving here for the quality of life and looking to make new friends. Volunteering with PP&R could also be a great opportunity for them to build new friendships and put down roots in our city.

PP&R website's navigation only displays a link to the 'volunteer' page *after* a site visitor has selected 'about us' from nine options in the top navigation menu, and even then 'volunteer' appears only as the bottom-most of 26 options on a left-hand navigation menu. It's hard to imagine burying the volunteer program more completely. In my opinion the volunteer link on the PP&R website should be one of the most prominent navigation options on the web page.

Also, I am deeply concerned by the city council's treatment of PP&R's labor force and the failure to value workers' rights. In 2019, the city laid off sixty PP&R employees and announced plans to close five community centers. The layoffs undermined morale of city employees. Many of the community centers were located in underrepresented and/or low-income areas of our city.

The city council's decision to lay off employees and close community centers was due to irresponsible fiscal policies. The city had been paying many PP&R "perma-temp" staff at city recreation centers, below the \$15.00 per hour wage and not providing benefits to some full-time staff. The city [lost an arbitration](#) case and was then required to do right by PP&R staff. The city was required to either increase the allocation from the general fund to PP&R, or aggressively cut costs which resulted in job losses and closure of community centers. Although PP&R may now be treating their workers better, the fact that this happened is an indictment of PP&R's mismanagement. PP&R must be a bureau that views every one of its staff as an important and worthy investment. I'm committed to finding ways to expand the budget at PP&R and avoiding future staff layoffs or community center closures.

**4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

From the prominence of discussions of equity in PP&R's 2020 parks vision plan written two decades ago, it is quite clear that Portland's Parks Board has long been aware that parks and recreation services are unequally distributed around Portland. Progress has been made in many areas, for example there are now more than twice as many community gardens as there were in 2000, and they are more evenly spread around the city. I think success with expanding this program across the city is a result of PP&R listening and collaborating with Friends of Community Gardens and Grow Portland and Thrive and the Oregon Food Bank and many, many other groups and, of course, all the hundreds of individuals with their own small plots in these gardens. That's a model I think Portland needs to build on, to tackle equity challenges in other of PP&R's service areas.

I applaud PP&R for its aspiration that race will have no detrimental effect on people of color, refugee or immigrant communities in accessing our parks and natural areas, or from the benefit of our services, and appreciate that they created a [five year racial equity](#) plan which renews a commitment to nondiscrimination in all hiring and promotion decisions, and calls for actively engaging communities of color and refugee and immigrant communities.

If I am elected Commissioner, I will work to ensure that the 'thirteenth floor' of PP&R—the equity and inclusions team and others working in leadership at PP&R—and all the other divisions within PP&R work together to keep this commitment in mind, and to make an active engagement with all Portland's communities a reality.

**5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to *maintain* its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

I believe it is essential that our city provides adequate funding to develop and maintain an equitable distribution of green space, parks and community centers across our city. I believe the city must develop a sustainable and stable source of funding to maintain and operate our park facilities.

In my campaign outreach, I have listened to a diverse range of ideas to help maintain PP&R's current resources. The ideas for funding include:

- a) Actively promote renting park facilities for private functions. As an example, the Pittock Mansion is available to corporate donors, as part of a package program. Apparently, there is no option for individual donors, nonprofits, etc. to rent Pittock Mansion or many other park facilities at premium prices for special events.
- b) Portland is famous for the excellent cuisine available in our food trucks. Portland's food trucks could rent a space in the parking lot at Pittock Mansion, or at other busy Portland parks on busy summer days.
- c) Actively seek corporate sponsorship for community centers and facilities. Companies that sell sporting equipment like Nike, Adidas, Columbia, Under Armor may be willing to provide major sustainable, financial support for community centers and/or facilities in exchange for center naming writes and/or other opportunities to enhance their brand.

d) The City Council could reduce the minimum parking requirements for new developments, if the developer makes an investment in maintaining local green spaces, parks or community centers. Continuing to listen and collaborate with businesses and residents can help us find more and better ways to put Portland's park treasures to work.

## **6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

I believe our parks are the soul of our city. Portland's technology companies use our parks, as a selling point to recruit top talent to their companies. Most Portlanders are very proud of our parks system. Portland's green space, parks and community centers should be cherished and supported by everyone in our city.

Programs like the U.S. Bank Park Champion program are good, but do not go nearly far enough. Every Portland Community Center should have a business sponsor from the community. Of course, Nike or Intel would be great partners, but there's no shortage of businesses in Portland that want opportunities to burnish their reputations and reinvest the money from Portlanders who buy their products back into Portland. Let's get a one-mile segment of the spring water corridor named the "Bob's Red Mill Mile" and then let's do that again x1000.

We can also approach our athletic teams for support, which could include:

- a) Financial investment in maintaining park infrastructure. A team may be interested in adding "sponsored by the Portland Timbers" to the name of one of our parks or community centers.
- b) Holding an 'athlete volunteer day' or, e.g., a Timbers-visit-the-East-Portland-Community-Center day.

Youth engagement in Portland parks has been falling. The 2009 progress report on the Parks 2020 Vision found that "households with a young person participating in a recreation program has gone from 53% in 2001 to 36% in 2007." That's a trend that we can work to reverse by getting support from our city's youth's role models, such as the players on our local teams. For this to work, we must remember that partnerships are two-way streets, and PP&R must work hard to celebrate our partners for their support. One partner whose contribution I think can be more widely advertised is, which has brought its volunteers to do more than 10,000 hours of volunteer work in Portland's parks.

The local community is also an often-under-utilized resource. There should be a prominently displayed request for donations, and for volunteers, at every entrance to every community center, and a secured donation box at the entrances, trailheads and other access points to Portland's parks and trails. More than that, if we are really listening and collaborating with every Portlander, we can look to regular Portland citizens to recognize the funding challenges our parks face, and to approach their favorite businesses and ask them to partner with PP&R.

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**Jeff Lang, retired CEO, Community Activist**

**1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

**Portlanders love their parks.** Portland parks are an important and irreplaceable part of our city given that the majority of Portlanders regularly utilize city parks, community centers, and recreational opportunities. In a 2017 survey, nearly 94 percent of Portlanders visited a park or natural area in the last year and 50 percent visited a park in the last month.<sup>[1]</sup> Eighty-six percent of those who reported visiting a park rated the quality of Portland's parks as good or excellent, while maintaining existing parks and facilities was rated as the highest long-term priority.

**Yet Portland parks are deteriorating.** Portland Parks are in need of bold leadership to ensure that the parks system is well-maintained and thriving for generations to come. Despite citizen perceptions, our parks are deteriorating. Water fountains, restrooms, and community centers have \$450 million in backlogged repairs and maintenance, with 42 percent of park assets in poor or very poor condition. The Parks budget is also in a tenuous position given a \$6.3 million budget shortfall, a \$450,000 operating deficit, and a \$5 million capital deferred maintenance issue. From 2013 to 2018, parks' expenses grew 34 percent, while revenues grew just 13 percent. The late Commissioner Fish noted that the budget shortfalls were a result of the Parks Department not receiving a fair share of resources from the general fund and a budget that was overly reliant on fees.

**Portland needs bold leadership for our parks system.** As city councilor, I will work hard to ensure that our park assets are fully funded and maintained. We owe it to current residents and future generations to maintain our parks system so it will continue to be a vibrant part of our community in the years to come.

**2. What is PP&R doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

**The Willamette Greenway.** One of the boldest plans ever proposed in Oregon is the Willamette Greenway, a 200-mile-long park with a trail system linking North Portland neighborhoods with the Willamette River which provides recreation and access to jobs. The project was funded under Governor Straub in 1967, and I have been involved in the project since 1976. Today, the Greenway has an expanding system of trails supported by volunteers, sponsors, neighborhood organizations, local government, and private businesses. One of the most successful aspects of the project is the excellent collaboration between the City, Metro, the University of Portland, citizens, and other stakeholders. I have also been working with a citizen's group called North Portland Greenway that has been responsible for pulling this project together, with a goal of eventually extending the East Bank Esplanade north to the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia River.

**Youth park amenities.** Portland Parks has been doing excellent work providing low-cost yet fun amenities for youth in the neighborhood parks. For example, Holladay Park by the Lloyd Center has ping pong tables and a chess set that gives kids and young adults a place to hang out outside, play games, while adding to the community flavor. As city councilor, I will work to provide these types of amenities for youth throughout the city's parks.

### **3. How might PP&R improve?**

*Stop closing community centers!* Portland Parks can improve by immediately ceasing the practice of allowing public assets to be disposed of and turned over to private non-profits. The Sellwood Community Center was a well-loved gathering place with activities for people of all ages and a day care center, yet the city decided to close it due to a \$6.3 million budget gap. Even though community members were able to turn the center into a private non-profit, closing the center and turning it over to private hands is a bad policy that should be avoided at all costs. Portland Parks also had plans to shutter the Multnomah Arts Center and Columbia Pool to close budget shortfalls. Community centers are a vital part of our community that provides essential year round programming, including classes and programming for seniors that improve community cohesion and socialization. As city councilor, I will fight hard to ensure that our beloved community centers and pools stay open and adequately funded.

*Improve park access on the East side.* Portland Parks could improve by continuing to develop parks in neighborhoods that lack access. Between 2013-2018, the city built six new parks mostly in the poorest and least-served parts of Portland, even as existing facilities aged. Yet in East Portland, 2 in 5 households still do not have a park within ½ mile of their home. In North Portland, only 3 in 10 residents have access to a community center within 3 miles. I will work to ensure that East Portlanders have the same access to parks and recreation and their West side counterparts.

### **4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

*Save Columbia Pool!* The Columbia Pool in North Portland is a year-round, well-used, historic facility that currently serves some of Portland's most racially and economically diverse residents. In May of 2019, the Portland City Council voted to close the Columbia Pool, noting a \$6.3 million funding gap in the Parks budget and high operating and maintenance costs at the pool. The pool needs an estimated \$5 million in repairs, including a new roof and heating system and suffers from high annual operating costs (\$768,000) that exceeds the \$320,000 in revenues. Yet, the Parks Replacement Bond invested \$6 million in outdoor pools which operate an average of 11 weeks per year, including \$4 million at pools located in high income and predominantly white neighborhoods. Portland Parks says it plans on replacing the Columbia Pool with a full-service aquatic center at the Charles Jordan Community Center that is estimated to cost \$20 million or more, while similarly requiring ongoing repairs and maintenance. As city councilor, I will fight to keep the Columbia pool open until the new community center is completed so North Portland residents will maintain access to their neighborhood pool.

*Low fees for classes and programs.* Parks can create more equitable access by continuing to keep fees low in order to maintain access for all residents, most notably communities of color and low-income residents.

*Free concerts and theater in the park.* The benefits of the arts include improved health and well-being, sharpened cognitive skills, and the ability to bring people together across demographic, economic, and social lines. The late Commissioner Fish was a champion for free, fun concerts in the park that support

Portland's tradition of music, culture, and unity. As city councilor, I will work to ensure that smart investments in the arts are made to improve accessibility and availability for those in our community who might otherwise lack access to the arts.

- 5. An internal study found that just to maintain its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double, with current funding resulting in closing 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

Portland needs a visionary leader who will not close community centers and allow the city's parks assets to deteriorate. Clearly, the key to accomplishing this goal is securing adequate funding. In a presentation before City Council last November, Parks representatives forwarded five potential funding options, including forming a special parks district, utilizing bonding authority, and a beverage tax. Another potential funding alternative could be a 1.0% vehicle tax on each private passenger car sold within the City of Portland to fund parks. The tax is also progressive since higher priced cars would pay higher taxes. As city councilor, I will tap my decades of business experience and financial acumen to seek out innovative funding streams and solutions to ensure that Portlanders will have improved access to world-class parks and recreation for generations to come.

- 6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

No answer provided.

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**Alicea Maurseth, Engineer in Training**

- 1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

Public parks are one of the best aspects of the city. They require maintenance. Some parks have fallen behind on this and need some attention. I would like to review the overall city budget and evaluate the existing parks to see where there is room for improvement and if there are any opportunities to work outside of the budget (without negatively impacting low income households).

- 2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

There are so many parks in a variety of sizes and with varying accommodations, such as walkways, play areas, art, etc. I also love all the events -- they are a great way to bring people within a community together and some invite people from outside communities as well.

- 3. How might PP&R improve?**

For cleanliness, I think it is important to make sure the maintenance people hired are enabled to do their job properly and that there are enough garbage and recycle receptacles on site for visitors. I understand that people aren't always as tidy as we might like, but we can post educational signs and host educational presentations, if needed. I also know that people experiencing homelessness have



occasionally contributed to the poor conditions. The city should be investing in solutions like transitional housing and medical care for those that need it.

I have noticed that there aren't enough restrooms at some of the parks and some don't have any. It may be worth investing in more multi-use spaces or community centers as well. These spaces could be used for more community engagement, educational, or recreational type activities. More art, play areas, and dog parks might be worth investing in as well.

I feel like I would want to evaluate and discuss the future of each park with the surrounding communities, but here is an example. Parks near schools could add a community garden area, restrooms, pavilion type structure, etc. for educational and community use. These areas would be available for the school and people visiting the park, but would be maintained by the school. The pavilion would be available to use for hosting school, art, and cultural events. For example, when whatever is grown in the garden is ready to harvest there could be a community event to eat what was grown and host.

**4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

Ultimately, I think each park should be evaluated for improvements. People within the surrounding communities should be involved in these discussions and consulted on potential solutions. We would likely start in the areas that are most disadvantaged. For example, Portland's parks are a popular tourist attraction, but many of the most famous ones are on the west side, which is historically the wealthier, whiter side of Portland. Let's build another great park on the east side, in a disadvantaged neighborhood. Let's ask those communities for their involvement and their consent, so it is sited where it is most welcome, and equipped most appropriately. If this is successful, we could expand to other regions and implement a similar approach.

We need to reevaluate the budget

- Raise taxes on those individuals and businesses with extremely high incomes and revenue,
- Redefine "low income" to reflect cost of living, and
- Ensure we find equitable solutions to the problems faced by the city.

I think there is a lot of overlap with these issues and we may be able to find solutions that solve multiple issues. I would want to discuss and research this further before stating any percentages or values.

**5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to maintain its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

Tourists come to Portland and enjoy our parks, yet Portland's municipal hotel tax is 6%, while Seattle's is 15.6%. The new Ritz-Carlton hotel should be taken as a signal that Portland's tourism industry isn't endangered and matches Seattle. I think it is a politically pragmatic, progressive tax which can make up much of this short-fall. Similar ideas should be considered as well.

**6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

I think people need to love Portland's parks. We need more welcoming, inclusive events to draw people in, and we need to teach them to clean up after themselves.

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**Dan Ryan, former CEO of All Hands Raised**

**1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

The 3,300+ employees, thousands of volunteers, and over two hundred partner groups make our park system a best practice nationally. The Parks Bureau maintains and manages 15% of Portland's land (11,000 acres)—which includes a portfolio of pools, community centers, nature trails, a large urban tree canopy, sports facilities and fields—even trains. It is imperative that continued investment in the Parks Bureau and its leadership is prioritized by the City Council. As City Commissioner, I will aspire to continue the legacy, service, and commitment of those who came before me.

97% of Portlanders participating in the 2019 insight survey stated they had visited a park or natural area in the last year. Access to the outdoors is one of the top priorities of Portlanders and it is one of the ways we build community. It is a part of our collective Portland story—no matter race, socioeconomic or background. Maintaining safe and clean parks that are accessible to all—especially those east of 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and those in North Portland—is central to the vitality of our city and the health of our children, families, and neighbors.

Parks has done a great job under numerous leadership changes to meet many of the goals outlined in their strategic vision and is currently poised to continue great work—but financial stability is needed. There are growing concerns about aging infrastructure, safety, and a \$450M deferred maintenance backlog. As a City Commissioner, I will work closely with stakeholders to support creative and innovative solutions to fund our parks in a sustainable way and continue to meet the equity goals outlined in the bureau's 5-Year Racial Equity Plan.

**2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

As I mentioned above, Portland Parks & Recreation is doing the best job possible maintaining our parks, community centers, trails and tree canopy—keeping in mind the aging infrastructure and limited resources available to address all of the needed upgrades. Parks has also faced the challenging response to population growth and relocation trends, all while protecting our natural resources and investing in the recent environmental upgrades at many of our community centers. I also applaud parks for doubling their goals on equity with three new parks in underserved communities, increased contracting with minority owned and women owned businesses—and, programs like Parks for New Portlanders and Summer Free For All, which showcase the Parks Bureau's ability to mobilize support for community building, equity, and access.

### **3. How might PP&R improve?**

Downtown and in many places in our city the homeless crisis is creating more public health and safety issues. Creating more collaboration with non-profits, law enforcement, Metro, and enterprise is necessary to ensure the vitality of our parks continues. As City Commissioner, I will work with Parks to build bridges between these groups in order to support your vision. I am committed to continue to investments in local communities where the need is greatest. We are at our best when we share the pride and ownership of continuous improvement. The Community Youth Ambassadors program is a perfect example of this—communities identify barriers and challenges related to parks services, and then partner with organizations to improve and create impact. This can be replicated at all levels of leadership.

### **4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

As a former Portland Public Schools Board Member and CEO of All Hands Raised I spent the majority of my work in North Portland and outer East Portland. With one-third of our city's youth living in East Portland and one-fifth of those youth not being within a half mile of a park or greenspace—and nearly half having no access to a playground—it is clear to see progress has been made, but there is still work to be done.

Equity is at the forefront of the management decisions made by those overseeing our parks and green spaces—and this is evident by the progress being made in response to the Parks 2020 vision and the 5-Year Racial Equity Plan. For example, Parks partners with five school districts and a variety of hunger relief agencies to provide free lunches and recreation activities for kids in the summer. Summer is where the *haves and have nots* separate. *Summer slide or melt* is when kids without family resources fall behind—this contributes to academic and nutritional disparities along the development continuum. It's commendable that Parks has done their part for over one-hundred years to make fun and food FREE in parks across the city.

The two ways that I would increase equitable access for communities of color and economically disadvantaged:

1) Scholarships are needed so all children who qualify for free and reduced lunch have access to community centers and swimming lessons. This community investment will provide for long term health and vitality for our children and youth.

2) Equal distribution of trees and investing in tree planting in East Portland. East Portland has 33% tree canopy compared to over 50% on the west side. It is possible that East Portland with greater tree planting could have green spaces matching forest park. This will have an environmental impact that is critical to meet global warming (often on the East side temperatures can be 15% higher because of less tree canopy).

**5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to *maintain* its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

We must have a big, bold, long-term vision for our parks. It should be both an environmental investment and an investment in the health, wellness, and the vitality of our city. Sustainable and stable funding must be prioritized. I support efforts for the following:

- 1) One-time bond to cover the costs of the \$450M deferred maintenance needs; and
- 2) Creating a summer hospitality restaurant tax, like Ashland and Yachats, to capture revenue from visitors.

**6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

We should all be involved stakeholders in our parks. The work of The Portland Parks Foundation and The Portland Parks Board are critical to advocating and providing community input and securing private investment for our most important community assets. Also, we must continue to increase neighborhood involvement opportunities and engage diverse voices to create pride in our local parks.

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**Loretta Smith, former Multnomah County Commissioner**

**1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

Portland Parks represents one of the, if not the, biggest assets our city has. As a former County Commissioner, I had the opportunity to travel nationally, connecting with elected officials and community leaders from across the country. In nearly every conversation people would share their admiration for our city parks. The general condition of our city's parks system is strong and is poised to continue serving as a central place for Portlanders to engage and play with each other, as well as a main tourism attraction. The health of our parks system is representative of the broad desire for multi-functional, open natural space built into communities across Portland – a desire that will only grow as we see more people move into Portland in the future.

**2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

I believe Portland Parks & Recreation is successfully deploying available resources to maintaining the health and growth of our parks system. PP&R, in conjunction with the Portland Parks Foundation, is also doing a great job in marketing our parks system as a national model for open public space that serves as a tool for both community engagement and improved health and wellness.

### 3. How might PP&R improve?

I believe that we have to talk more about ensuring that we are proactively managing our parks system as a prioritized asset and thinking more strategically about long term planning around maintenance and growth. Additionally, we need a more active application of an equity lens on issues ranging from recruitment and retention of PP&R staff to the types of services and resources that are available at parks and community centers across the city.

### 4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?

One main way that we can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals is by ensuring that we are building parks and centers in communities where they live. For example, there is only one community center east of Interstate 205 – East Portland Community Center. When you compare that to the ten community centers west of Interstate 205 and the fact that many communities of color and low-income families have been displaced to neighborhoods east of I205 due to affordability and other livability issues, then the inequities in how we provide access becomes really clear. Additionally, we need to prioritize free transportation and culturally relevant services and activities that will bring people out of their homes and into parks and recreation facilities. That may also require us to start investing in programming at more non-traditional times in an effort to increase participation from those prioritized populations.

### 5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to *maintain* its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?

There is no question about it – we have to maintain and grow parks funding. One of the first places we need to look is at the City of Portland’s Debt Portfolio to figure out what projects will be falling off of the debt service portfolio and the opportunities that can be garnered from that funding being freed up. In that same vein, I think we should look at the city’s debt policy and revisit, even if only for short periods of time, the self-imposed restrictions on how much property tax-secured debt can be outstanding at any time. The state statutory limit on general obligation bonds is 3%, with no statutory limitation on limited tax bonds. However, our policy limits general obligation bonds to 0.75% and limited tax bonds to 1%.

Additionally, as a County Commissioner I utilized public health dollars to assist in the construction of Cully Park. It had never been done before, but I think we should also be looking at how to pull more public health funding into PP&R as parks are undoubtedly a public health tool. And of course, it can’t be understated that we need more businesses and individuals with financial mobility to become more engaged in parks funding for both short term projects and long-term sustainability.

**6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

Our parks system is a community treasure – that means we need the entire community engaged in maintaining and growing it. Private citizens enjoy the amenities and improved neighborhood quality that parks provide. The business community benefits from the tourism our parks system generates and improved neighborhood quality that often includes their businesses. We need both groups to come in bigger and more consistently for the present and future of our parks system. I believe that we should be cultivating investments in parks similar to those investments private citizens and businesses make into art, research, and libraries. I believe that the Portland Parks Foundation is already charting a strong path forward in that regard and hope to have the opportunity to help enthusiastically carry that work forward as the next Parks Commissioner.

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**CANDIDATES FOR COMMISSIONER, POS. NO 4**

**Sam Adams, former Portland City Commissioner and Mayor of Portland**

**1. How would you describe the general condition of the city’s parks system?**

The general underlying condition of the city’s parks system is terrible. The Foundation and staff of the Parks deserve our hearty thanks for working hard to keep things operating and looking as best as they can. But Portland’s parks and recreation system is rotting away. It would cost nearly half a billion dollars to fix the backlog repairs. It likely will cost even more to offer more services, programming and activities that the City needs.

**2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

I love Portland’s parks. Portland’s many and diverse parks should be one of the highlights of our city. I live in the Concordia neighborhood and I love that I can walk to Alberta and Fernhill Parks, which both have off-leash dog areas. Some of my favorite Portland public spaces include the Foster Flood Plains wildlife area, Powell Butte, and Kelly Point Park. But not everyone has the same access to our green spaces and too many areas in East Portland have little tree cover and no parks within walking distance.

I applaud PP&R’s efforts to ensure every Portlander has access to a park or natural area within half mile from home. I am impressed by the newer parks such as Cully, Gateway Discovery, Luuwit View, and K<sup>h</sup>unamokwst.

**3. How might PP&R improve?**

There are a lot of unmet needs in Portland. If Park is going to get funded at the level it needs, I suspect Parks must become more relevant to more Portlanders in their daily lives. Said another way, Portland Parks needs to provide the kind places, programs, experiences, facilities more Portlanders want.

It is imperative that each Portlander lives within a half of mile from a city Park. It should be just as important that at least one member of every household use or visit a city park at least monthly. What will that take? We need to find out. Why is strengthening and deepening the connection of local residents to their local park important? More Portlanders will fund more deeply what they view as an integral part of their daily lives.

**4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

Two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals, include:

1. Deepening partnerships: I would also explore deepening Parks health and human services partnerships with Multnomah County. Strengthening its co-programming efforts with local school districts. And, there are opportunities to work closer with the neighborhood community groups to gain a deeper understanding of neighborhood needs when it comes to park amenities and program designs.
2. Going to voters offering to help fill urgent unmet needs: Portland needs more facilities for those who are houseless, senior centers and housing, and more low-cost childcare: how can Parks help with these issues, even without running the actual programs?

Obviously, PP&R also should continue its focus to expand parks and green spaces in East Portland, and get creative with the kinds of spaces the City is building. PP&R or the Foundation could advocate to other bureaus that many parks in East Portland lack safe access to them, with no or inadequate sidewalks, poor lighting and dangerous crossings, meaning families or people in mobility devices can't or won't visit them. We should look to the work of advocates, like the Safe Routes to Parks program, an initiative of the National Recreation and Park Association in partnership with Safe Routes to Schools that provides local governments with evidence- and practice-based guidance on creating safe and equitable access to parks for all people.

**5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to *maintain* its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

Yes, absolutely, Parks funding should be increased, even doubled. But, as I have mentioned, I believe that level of additional funding, will require testing out options for reimagining what Parks does in the future in a way that deepens the connect to voters.

The funding structure of Recreation Programs being 50% revenue dependent is unsustainable, especially if our goal is to create access for the people who need it most, therefore keeping user fees low. This revenue cannot reliably keep up with cost increases, contributing to a serious funding gap. The general fund allocation for PP&R for daily maintenance of parks is not enough to care for the entirety of the

parks system because the acreage is so big and getting bigger as we build new facilities. Funding our growth needs to deliver on our equity goals presents another challenge, as it is not enough to fund only the capital costs but the operational costs as well.

Across the city 1 out of 5 households does not have ready access to a park (measured by ½ mile) but in East Portland, that number is 2 out of 5—and that is the area where 40% of Portland’s youth live—many of whom are youth of color. We must be bold and innovative in our approach to finding funding sources for one of the most important accesss in our city.

I am interested in investigating the feasibility of options presented by the Alternative Funding Task Force:

- General Obligation Bond
- Special District
- Local Option Levy
- Transient Lodging Tax
- Cell Phone Tax
- Prepared Food/Beverage Tax

**6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

I believe there are opportunities for partnership between residents, business leaders, place-based community organizations and the Parks Bureau to work together to identify community needs and deliver solutions. Cully Park, in NE Portland, is an inspiring example of what can be achieved when we find the right mix of vision, expertise, political will and community empowerment. Built on the site of a former landfill, the 25 acre park in one of Portland’s most diverse, park deprived neighborhoods, Cully Park embodies a private-public partnership at its best. The park was designed, built and funded through the efforts of Cully residents, led by non-profit Verde, who provided job training and wealth building opportunities for minority- and women-owned businesses through design and landscape services. Verde and PP&R raised over \$11M from more than 40 foundation, government and corporate partners, like Meyer Memorial Trust, the Collins Foundation, and federal, state, county and city funding. It is truly impressive and, with adequate Parks maintenance budgets, it can and should act as a model for future community and city partnerships, with opportunities to engage our business leaders to provide funding, creating closer ties with their customers and neighbors.

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**Chloe Eudaly, incumbent City Commissioner**

- 1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**
- 2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system? (I'm answering these together).**

Last year almost every Portlander visited a park. Portland's parks system is one of the best and most beloved in the country. I'm proud of investments we've made to expand the system in underserved areas, especially in East Portland. The bureau is focused on the right values--equity and accessibility--so



that all Portlanders, in every neighborhood, can easily visit a park, and so that every part of town has a full-service community center. And new Director Adena Long is prioritizing core priorities like fiscal stewardship and a solid business model. But the system has grown faster than the resources to sustain it, and we face a significant challenge--our current City resources are not enough to take care of the system we have, let alone take care of the new parks and natural areas we are building. We have a \$450 million maintenance backlog, and will need significant new resources to operate the fully built out system. I'm looking forward to working with my colleagues and our community partners to prioritize and tackle this work.

### **3. How might PP&R improve?**

First and most importantly, it is clear that PP&R needs a permanent source of revenue to maintain, operate, and expand its facilities and programming. Like many City bureaus, PP&R has not adequately planned or budgeted for maintenance over many decades. As you know, the bureau faced a significant budget gap and had to make the hard decision to cut positions and close facilities last year. PP&R began the critical conversation about sustainable funding with the establishment of the Alternative Funding Task Force and a City Council Work Session last year as well. I look forward to working with the bureau, the Parks Foundation, the community, and my colleagues to ensure a vibrant and equitable future for our parks system.

ADA Title II Transition: As with many other city bureaus, PP&R is behind on ADA compliance. I would particularly like to see a focus and significant investment in making our existing playgrounds more accessible and inclusive. Inclusion begins at home; every child should be able to enjoy their neighborhood playground. Years before running for Council I tried to advance a project called "Everybody Swings" which would locate an adapted swing at every accessible playground in the city. At the time I estimated it would cost about \$50K to purchase and install these swings across the city. This is just one example of how PP&R could greatly improve accessible play opportunities, with a small investment, for young Portlanders everywhere.

Activating our waterfront and creating better access to the river: in my travels in the US and abroad, I've been struck by how differently other cities access, use, and enjoy their waterfronts. While the Tom McCall Waterfront Park is a vast improvement over Harbor Drive (I watched my dad help excavate the waterfront for the park in the late 70's), there is still a lot we could do to activate the waterfront from the south end to the north. I'm an enthusiastic supporter of efforts such as the Human Access Project, and I would love to see more seasonal and year-round destinations and activities happening along with waterfront--from restaurants and food vendors to rentals to performance venues. I passed an amendment in the Comp Plan that would allow for a flotel at the north end of the waterfront. The project fell through, but the zoning is ready for the next adventurous flotelier who comes along!

Creating more car-free areas and public plazas: I believe in streets for people and would love to advance more people-oriented street transformation projects with PBOT and PP&R. Portland has some of the shortest city blocks of any major American city, which means an inordinate amount of public space is taken up by roadways. The Ankeny Square food cart pod--which my office and PBOT has been significantly involved in and utilizes a small park--will involve repurposing parking spaces for food carts,

street closures, and pedestrian safety improvements on Burnside. I'm also enthusiastically supporting PP&R's plan in collaboration with PBOT to permanently close streets adjacent to the Portland Art Museum and P5, as well as the Green Loop and the Culinary Corridor.

**4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

East Portlanders need more access to parks and playgrounds, North Portland residents need greater access to community centers, and the entire Eastside needs a significant increase in its urban canopy. It's no surprise that these districts are home to our most diverse neighborhoods, as well as concentrations of low-income residents, it's also unacceptable that we let this inequity continue. Similar issues exist within our transportation system--the most diverse and lower-income neighborhoods are less likely to have adequate pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. As Parks continues to make significant investments in East Portland to make up for historical underinvestment, I would also like to see better coordination with PBOT to ensure that there are safe pedestrian and bike routes to new parks.

We also need more culturally specific and responsive planning and programming to ensure that all Portlanders feel welcome and included in our parks and programs. I sincerely appreciate the work of PP&R's Native American Community Advisory Council which was critical in creating Cully Park's Native Gathering Garden. I want to see the bureau build on their work with native communities to make sure our parks and natural areas honor both indigenous land practices and cultural values and their history as indigenous spaces. Similarly, I respect the work of Parks for New Portlanders, a program focused on "providing recreation opportunities for immigrant and refugee communities," and want to see this work continued and expanded to ensure that our system reflects and serves the full diversity of our communities.

**5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to maintain its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

I absolutely support increasing funding for PP&R, and we must act with urgency, not just to maintain existing facilities but to fulfill our vision for an equitable and vibrant parks system in the years and decades to come. Commissioner Fish did his best to get a handle on a growing multi-million dollar budget gap. He made difficult but responsible choices, and he pledged to put the bureau on solid financial footing. Then, he brought Council and the community together around a conversation about new revenue. We must continue the momentum he built and put solutions in place as soon as possible. Of the options considered late last year, the General Obligation Bond seems to be the most promising. I'm also interested in the Transient Lodging Tax--our parks system is a huge draw for tourism and, in my opinion, a legitimate use of TLT. It wouldn't generate the total revenue needed, but it would help.

**6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

At this point, it's clear that the contributions of private citizens, the Parks Foundation, and the business community are essential to the survival of our parks system. In our current economic reality, where the wealthiest corporations and individuals don't pay their fair share, and the tax burden is shifted more and more onto workers, we simply do not have the revenue we need to sustain our general fund bureaus. Portlanders are generous with their time and money. I believe many Portlanders, who aren't currently engaged, would love to contribute to the care of our treasured parks system if given an easy and accessible way to do that, and I would love to explore ways to make that happen.

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**Mingus Mapps, Candidate**

**1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

I've spoken with tens of hundreds of voters since launching my campaign and it's clear that Portlanders love their parks and access to nature. As the result of underfunding and a revenue model heavily dependent on fees, our parks system has room to improve when it comes to ensuring safety and access for every family.

**2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

Even in the face of a maintenance budget far below nationally recommended levels, PP&R has been able to keep many parks and facilities open and operational.

**3. How might PP&R improve?**

PP&R must ensure that regardless of which zip code a child lives in they have access to playgrounds, green spaces, and activities like swimming lessons and art and dance classes. As it stands, a family's income level and which side of 205 they live on will determine whether or not they have access to parks.

**4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

1. Build new parks and facilities in historically and currently underserved neighborhoods.
2. Ensure families can access these parks. Without safe sidewalks and walking and biking paths, even if new parks are established, families won't be able to access them.

**5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to *maintain* its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

Yes, I do believe parks funding should increase. Time and time again voters in Portland have supported measures that protect and expand access to parks and natural areas. On City Council I will use my expertise -- I received my BA in political science from Reed College and my PhD is in government from Cornell University, plus my time working as a public servant for the City of Portland -- to evaluate and refer funding proposals to the voters that reduce PP&R's reliance on fees and secure sustainable funding to maintain and expand parks facilities throughout Portland.

**6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

We must all do — and pay —our fair share. I would encourage the expansion and promotion of PP&R's Friends Groups. These private citizen groups help with litter clean up, invasive plant mitigation, maintenance and know the needs of their neighborhood parks better than anyone. Whether a separate non-profit Friends Group such as Friends of Mt. Tabor or a community lead group such as Friends of Irving Park, we need to foster, support and grow them. In addition, I would advocate for the involvement of our neighborhood associations in their neighborhood parks. My platform of hiring a city manager would create a better working relationship between bureaus. This would only enhance our parks. Finally, I believe we should explore public-private partnerships with the local business community to bring additional funding to our parks and recreation programs.

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**Keith Wilson, President, TITAN Freight Enterprises**

**1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

The general condition of our parks is good but where parks bond funds to renovate (e.g. Peninsula Park Pool) are being applied the remainder of our system can be seen falling into disrepair or needing maintenance. Walking through Columbia Park, the place I spent most of my childhood, the paths are aging, lighting is less and compromised but the general grounds are still beautiful, and the canopy of firs is standing strong providing a much-needed green space for this economically diverse and dense public housing area of Portland.

The general condition of our Portland Parks budget is stressed and precarious. Our city, from 2013 to 2018, added five needed new parks which increased overall operating costs. However, at the end of the decade, our City Council cut funding to many of our community centers that for years brought our neighbors together and nurtured our children.

Our parks are Portland's treasure. We have one of the largest and smallest parks in the United States and need a better funding and expense model to match the wide range of parks we cherish.

Our city needs parks to be healthy and strong, now more than ever.

## **2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

Focusing on expanding access to parks in East Portland stands out as one of the most admirable accomplishment. While this move has only exacerbated park funding issues, the displacement of our low-income residents to this part of Portland is slightly mitigated by adding these open spaces.

50 years and going strong: I grew up enjoying Portland Parks and now my children boast the same privilege. I spent most of my Summer days at the Columbia Pool while my children learned to swim and still spend many of their days and evenings at the Grant Pool. Free lunch and play have been a fixture for at least 50 years. While I must admit that, I am disheartened to see these programs significantly reduced and available at fewer parks than ever before.

Community centers are all wonderful and well run. They have outstanding programs. Facilities are available and low priced. I personally use community centers for events and have found no other facilities in Portland that match the overall value.

Concerts and movies in the Parks are a hit with everyone.

Expanding dog parks have brought Portland neighbors together like no other improvement I have seen.

The professionalism I have received from park employees and park rangers after each interaction make me proud of this bureau.

## **3. How might PP&R improve?**

Small to large:

Fence in dog areas.

Prioritize maintenance, safety and cleanliness of PP&R assets until a more sustainable funding model is developed.

Reevaluate over all funding model. Discussed fully in question #5.

## **4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

Recognizing the funding shortfall at PP&R, I am offering two pragmatic, generally revenue neutral programs:

PP&R currently offers scholarships for economically disadvantaged individuals up to 50% off monthly and annual fees based on family income. However, drop-in are not reduced and apply across all socio-economic levels. Not all economically disadvantaged persons have the time or application skill to participate in the scholarship program. Lowering the drop-in rates for children and offsetting with

increases for adults enable more access for disadvantaged youth. Our parks are for the benefits of everyone but have the strongest effect on youth and creating positive early experiences. Disadvantaged youths have less access to other activities. Our parks are one of the best resources in leveling the playing field and creating future advantages.

Reimagine and expand our parks Summer programs. Imagine park day areas that offer Free Lunch + Play being open longer hours and providing more activities. Imagine volunteers teaching kids groups. We should create a cadre of park volunteers from nearby communities that may include retirees, college kids on break and other professionals and community persons and leaders. As our baby boomer generation retires, there is an opportunity to include a wealth of experience from members in our community to teach and spend time building strong connections and trust in their community. To compliment this localized approach, include volunteer programs from organizations like the Audubon Society, Oregon Zoo, OMSI and music and theatre groups to go to the parks and bring the wilderness and world to the community. This is low cost and highlights the community and parks as the focal point of a healthy community. We can engage communities of colors and economically disadvantaged individuals to dream of what they can achieve because of the examples set by their neighbors, the people they trust. Imagine this program eventually using many of the shuttered day areas throughout Portland. Our parks are a bridge to a healthy community.

**5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to *maintain* its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

Yes, funding should increase. Parks are one of Portland's most valuable assets and recognized by nearly all Portlanders as our greatest treasure. They must be maintained for today and generations to come.

Current short-term funding gap should be made up through the general funds.

Near term there should be a review of parks fees and charges versus comparable municipal operations (e.g. North Clackamas Aquatic Park, etc.) and private services (e.g. day care services, event and facility rentals, etc.) Focus on maintaining PP&R's value pricing but position closer to market rate. With PP&R's new higher cost labor contract, professional workforce and clear market advantage and scale, undervaluing parks will only lead to additional funding challenges.

Long term, House bill 2001 passed this Spring, which removed all single-family residential zoning, will have a strong positive effect on our city's revenue. As we transition from single family residences, where system development charges barely cover the infrastructure costs, to a denser housing city, our property tax base and revenues will steadily expand. However, tax and revenue gains will not be meaningfully impacted for 10 to 20 years. Once these increased revenue streams are realized, our city will have funds to better manage our assets and ensure a meaningful budget to better cover parks maintenance and capital expenditure needs.

To bridge the gap between our current and long-term future tax revenue gains, there are a host of options that we should consider:

**Parks Tax:** The Portland Arts Tax collects approximately \$8.6 million annually. This tax was popular when it was approved. I believe a similar tax to fund parks would be equally well received. However, the Arts Tax is losing favor and 25% of Portlanders are no longer paying when requested. A sunset provision that matches property tax gain estimates would make it more acceptable to Portland.

**Parks Bond:** Renew our Parks Replacement Bond. Our parks are experiencing hundreds of millions in deferred maintenance. Funding a much larger bond would enable continued investment in one of our city's most important assets and also lower annual maintenance costs with improved, and lower cost structures.

We must all work together to find the best path forward.

## **6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

Community support in maintaining, fixing and building parks creates ownership and a caretaker attitude that breeds respect for parks and facilities. Private citizens and our business community are vital to both fund and truly support our parks. While the PP&R bureau assignment will change from time to time and over relatively short horizons, private citizens and the business community act as permanent caretakers to ensure continuity. Just as communities have stepped forward to clean up schools, they can also step up to have days to tend their local parks. Access to natural areas, forest canopy and areas to run and roam help families, children, dogs and local businesses thrive and succeed.

Access to natural areas is important to our health and society. Our parks are the gathering place for our community and when people commit and assist in tending these treasures, they will be reminded of their value.

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**Seth Wooley, Software Engineer**

### **1. How would you describe the general condition of the city's parks system?**

Portland's Park system has world class jewels focused around the West Hills such as Forest Park and urban innovation such as the McCall Waterfront Park.

But the rest of Portland, particularly the Eastside, has few parks in most areas, outside those associated with mounts in the Boring Lava Field. Smaller regional parks exist, but their facilities, such as pools and restrooms, are frequently closed due to lack of funding.

Compounding this issue are some recent poor employee management issues that lead to budget balance issues regarding the role and levels of paid employees in managing parks. This created a priority

inversion—a situation in which a lower priority item blocks a higher priority item. Basic needs of parks were left to fail. This management issue was a result of political decisions at the highest level and wasn't in my view truly the fault of PP&R's public servants.

## **2. What is Portland Parks & Recreation doing well in its stewardship of the parks system?**

I would say that I believe that PP&R has managed bond funds efficiently per the most recent annual report and performance audit. All of those projects were executed well. I'm really happy with the ability of PP&R to execute when it has funding and proper political leadership.

Regarding expanding equity, PP&R recently reopened Luuwit View (formerly Beech Park) and opened Gateway Discovery, which were sorely needed, particularly as they are in under-parked areas of the City. Lents Park recently received a new playground, too. These are a good start but more focus should be done in this area, as I'll get to later.

Other parks have had recent upgrades that improved safety significantly. For example, Couch Park had recent upgrades that also seemed to clear out drug users. Heroin users were seen often in this park and it didn't seem safe after dark. It appears safer now at night after the recent upgrades of play equipment and other aesthetic features. Additionally, in Colonel Summers Park, a bathroom was installed, a metal fence was installed around a covered area where addicts used to shoot-up, leaving needles on the ground, biohazard boxes for disposing of needles had been added, and a kiddie pool was added so young children and families can enjoy water on a hot day. Recent bond reports show dozens of completed projects available to review, and while they might appear to be merely a long list of government spending, the improvements are real and impactful.

## **3. How might PP&R improve?**

A recent audit of PP&R discussed issues with, for example, misaligned services such as what to do about our golf courses. While at least one candidate suggests we could build housing on them, this is going in the wrong direction and would hurt our available park land. Currently PP&R is doubling down on trying to "increase access" to golfing as a sport through increased diversity in their recruiting efforts. This is absurd. Golf is a dying, expensive-to-maintain sport that should not have so many resources. I think we should consider gradually restoring golf courses to natural areas that could become places for picnics and activities underserved communities would actually want to see. While it is true that golfers tend to pay enough in fees to keep such courses going, other revenue generating activities could certainly take the place of golfing. Asking underserved communities what they would like to see instead of golf would be where I would begin.

Another area where Portland doesn't support an underserved recreational community is in the form of urban camping. It is rare in big cities to see land turned over to camping because it is presumed that everybody owns a home or rents who are contributing to taxes, or who votes in elections. Missing out is the fact that Portland is becoming more of a tourist destination, and that brings dollars. The city should provide alternatives to short term rentals and hotels and should provide locations where people can



safely camp both in RVs and in tents. This should include a significant reserve for those arriving by bicycle or on foot, with bike lockers available. Small, reasonable fees would sustain such locations and they could be monitored by guest hosts and rangers. One reason why camping is such a problem in Portland is that it is criminalized and there are not any spots for legal recreational camping. Legalizing camping and charging for it would ensure that camps are safe, have access to hygiene-maintenance facilities, and have people from many income levels, ensuring their long-term popularity. Recently, the city did manage camping in Dodge Park, via the Portland Water Bureau, on its property well outside the City at the Sandy / Bull Run confluence.

I would provide funding for and place PP&R in charge of developing urban limited-stay RV camp sites and overnight tent sites. Use fees would go toward providing washrooms and rangers. There is dedicated funding from the state for state parks from lottery funds. Such funds could be leveraged to help build out state-city joint parks with support for camping, an area where state parks excel. Touring cyclists traveling the Trans America route could camp in Portland and experience the same amenities they found on the rest of the route. With the support of limited stay camping, people who visit for short times would be invited to visit, but then would have to move on. One of the many problems with camping the city faces is that in the summer the camps explode in number from travelers - without enforcement there is no effort to rotate the camps and people will be able to camp for a few months until the weather changes. If one looks in the depth of winter, the camping problem is greatly reduced through weather pressure. I ride the 205 path and the Springwater Corridor every weekend even in winter. This would allow us to identify truly local residents experiencing homelessness right off the bat so we can provide them support services such real housing with real beds. One of the exacerbators of the West Coast's issues with homelessness is the 9th District decision regarding Boise's draconian behavior toward camping. Providing alternatives such as actual support for temporary camping via legal means that can generate fees would be beneficial. Those who can't afford the fees can be given short term access to the same campgrounds as a form of transitional housing mixed in with campers with higher incomes. This would also reduce the stigma of temporary camping, as well, all while providing access to facilities to make camping safer.

Regarding recent park improvements funded by SDCs with help from PDC funds and non-profit partnerships, the leveraging of PDC funds and non-profit partnerships is fairly standard and those projects wouldn't have happened were it not for SDCs (and SDCs can only be used for such new development). As such, the growth of our parks system is conditioned upon development growth. That's not enough to make up for the lack of access to parks in much of Portland. Many developed areas of the city are severely under-parked, and development actually puts pressure upon parks too. Thus, I see this as mostly a form of water-treading rather than making real progress. Most people in East Portland still don't have easy access to parks and we need about half a billion dollars just to bring things up. The Parks Replacement Bond didn't come close to meeting the needs of our Parks and I'd do a much bigger ask once the city has solved the aforementioned priority inversion issue and has developed trust enough with taxpaying voters to make bigger asks.

**4. What are two ways in which the city can create more equitable access to parks and recreation facilities for communities of color and economically disadvantaged individuals?**

PP&R can pursue many avenues. Primarily, PP&R should pursue a funding push focused on equitable access to parks. There are many areas of the city seeing increased property values as a result of disproportionate park access. A number of academic papers have examined the effect of increased tree canopy on property values or the availability of open space on property values. This type of holistic analysis should be linked to the budget process, and the accrued benefits should be geographically plotted and analyzed to show the public how inequitable such access is. Once we know what proportion goes to their value, we should seek to collect that back from e.g. property tax revenues during the negotiation phase of budgeting. Since property tax revenues have limitations, the City could create an “incumbent access special assessment” dedicated to equity. Homes that are close to parks should see an annual bill that incorporates the access and those funds should be collected to a dedicated fund for building out brand new parks in areas of greatest ethnic diversity, or areas that are most economically disadvantaged. Such a bill should be based on the cost of maintaining those local parks and how far away people visit the park (e.g. Forest Park gets visitors from all over the city, so the catch area could be high, while a small park might benefit a fewer number of neighbors). Is this too much like Novick’s ill-fated street fee? I’d rather not introduce charges for entry to parks in general, to be more analogous to the better gas tax.

One way in which the city is struggling to provide access is because other city policies have enabled “marginal” camping in and along city parks. I would surmise that any place that sees regular police activity due to informal camping isn’t an inviting place for disenfranchised communities. Ideas to mitigate that issue should be explore, as I’ve noted elsewhere, so that all feel welcome to such areas.

**5. A recent internal study by PP&R found that, just to maintain its existing parks facilities, current parks funding would need to double. Continuing current funding levels would result, long term, in closures of up to 1 in 4 facilities. Do you believe parks funding should increase and, if so, where should the money come from? If not, what would be your top 2 priorities for cuts?**

I think PP&R needs to be given the permission to think bigger about how it can get funding. But I don’t think that heavy public-private partnerships are key. Those tend to be advertising avenues cloaked as philanthropy. Given the success of the recent replacement bond, I think the City should consider a substantial levy focused on 50% improved services to existing parks and 50% to improving equitable access to park services by developing more parks in underserved locations. I generally prefer levies because they don’t incur interest but are pay-as-you-go. In an era of low interest rates, bonds are alluring, and have their place (quick access to funds), but we already had one recently and we should consider a much higher ratio of equity investments compared to what we did for the bond.

In addition to a levy and the access special assessment mentioned elsewhere, which are forms of wealth taxation, I would also consider an income tax or a more typical but holistic land value tax, which is more general than the special assessment but comes from the same thinking. Use fees for some of the services that require the most resources, such as camping, should continue. But there should be provisions for exemptions for all use fees for those qualifying for other low-income services to piggy-back on other need-based evaluations.

**6. What is the role of the private citizens and the business community in maintaining, fixing, and building parks?**

PP&R has historically used private non-profits to great effect. It has also used philanthropic grants from individuals and corporations. I would caution to avoid the use of highly advertised philanthropy because I consider it a form of purchased ads filling up our natural spaces. I would limit acknowledgements to small plaques rather than to large painted logos or naming rights. Many in the business community have helped provide everything from Benson Bubblers to better athletic facilities. This should all continue. But it should be on civic terms to prevent exploitation. Another candidate has proposed concession services in parks. I am skeptical of this because it could be seen as a public giveaway to private profit. If it could create revenue, I think the city should be reaping the profits to invest in future services. I also think it is best to use public employees to ensure public benefits are afforded workers. I would be concerned that a small business would be exempt from everything from providing health care to paying good wages. This would be setting a bad example and again converting public resources to private profit. Private contracting should be limited to the best practice: niche short term high impact and high value roles providing direct expertise ensuring high wage jobs are created.