



2024 Portland City Elections Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to fill out United for Portland's candidate questionnaire. Any candidate seeking our endorsement or support must fill out this questionnaire.

The endorsement process and all responses will be made public on our website.

Please return this questionnaire via email to doug@moorestrategicconsulting.com. Please return it as a Microsoft Word document or as a PDF file by 8/30/24.

All questions are open-ended, and an opportunity to tell us about your thoughts on key issues facing our city, as well as discuss your leadership style. This will be shared on our website, and we ask that you take the time to tell us what you really think and what voters should know about you. There are no right answers to these questions, and we don't want you simply telling us what you think we want to hear.

If you need further information about any of the items covered in the questionnaire, please give United for Portland Executive Director Doug Moore a call at 503-729-5175 or email doug@moorestrategicconsulting.com.

**Candidate Name: Jonathan
Tasini**

Campaign Contact: Jonathan Tasini

Phone #: 646-660-0270

**Email:
jonathan@jonathantasini.com**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Tasini", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Candidate Signature:
(can be electronic or signed).**

1. Do you want United for Portland's endorsement and support?

Yes

2. What's your approach to ending unsheltered homelessness in Portland?



In the short term, I support expanding more dramatically the tiny villages approach as temporary shelter. But, long term, we need to significantly raise wages in the city, specifically the Metro minimum wage. While addiction and mental illness are a factor in homelessness, the truth is—borne out by statistics—that homelessness is primarily caused by economics. In plain language, the inability to pay the rent.

To rent a two-bedroom home in Portland would require a \$32-per-hour minimum wage (source: National Low Income Housing Coalition); no city minimum wage supports the ability to rent a modest place so Portland does not stand in the field. We cannot *end* homelessness, as the question poses, without being serious about raising peoples' ability to pay the rent.

I believe business should support raising wages, in the model of the NECA-IBEW partnership (see below in Question 5), because the long-term effect of a minimum wage hike is beneficial to overall economic growth. As the book-ended Card study (1992) and Reich study (2023) demonstrate, there is very little, if any, negative impact on jobs. In fact, as Reich found, a higher minimum wage is better for job recruitment and retention. [Card: "...we find no evidence that the rise in New Jersey's minimum wage reduced employment at fast-food restaurants in the state". Reich: "The higher wage makes it easier to recruit workers and retain them. Turnover rates go down. Other research shows that those workers are likely to be a little more productive, as well."]

3. How do we create housing sufficient to meet future needs, not just current needs? What mix of housing does that look like to you?

First, we need to change our zoning laws to encourage far more density. Portland's housing culture emphasizing single-family homes is understandable and long-standing. But, that was appropriate for a city with a population 30 percent smaller than today. There are plenty of corridors, including in District 2, that could accommodate taller residential structures. My general view of regulations is that no large organization is perfect nor immune from the need to revisit long-held standards. On July 1st of 2024, all the bureaus with a role in permitting were consolidated into one bureau



(Portland Permitting and Development). They should be supported and allowed to adapt to this new system with strong oversight by the City Council. After a year, should changes be implemented, there should be a review to understand how the changes have impacted staff and customers and whether the permitting timelines have been reduced (which was the main goal of the Permit Improvement Project (PIP)).

Second, I am working on a significant public housing plan, in cooperation with outside investors and a developer. My overall view is that housing should be a universal right, similar to Medicare and Social Security. We have to invest in social housing. Austria and Singapore have done it; in fact, in Singapore 80 percent of the population lives in public housing. In the U.S. we now see significant new initiatives in Hawaii and California. Roughly 100,000 New Yorkers live today in apartments built by the labor movement (for example, Co-op City, Penn South, 1199 Plaza in East Harlem. We can help finance a significant effort through union pension fund money, something I'm working on. In any housing effort, we have to ensure that the we are not creating temporary affordability that wanes in the future.

I would support a local housing bond. I support the National Low-Income Housing Coalition and United for Homes proposal to “modify the current mortgage interest tax break by reducing the size of a mortgage eligible for a tax break to \$500,000, and to convert the deduction to a 15% non-refundable tax credit. The revenue generated from these savings would be used to fund the National Housing Trust Fund.”

4. When you think of public safety, what does that mean to you? What will you do to ensure public safety for all Portlanders as a member of the city council?

I view public safety in a variety of ways that I believe will inform the City Council deliberations. First, we need to have a conversation that is rationale matching facts with public safety concerns, especially as it relates to the level of policing. In 2023, crime actually declined in Portland, including homicides and other serious offenses. Yet, partly due to a long-standing tendency by media to over-sensationalize specific crimes, there is a sense of foreboding among people that simply does not match the reality of what is



happening in the streets. Thus, as a City Council, we need to match the actual statistics and trends with the proper level, and nature, of policing.

In that regard, I support the expansion of Portland Street Response to give it even more resources because I believe PSR can have, and has had, a dual influence on increasing public safety by, first, responding to a crisis that reduces confrontation and escalation, which contributes to the safety of people in crisis, and also frees up policing resources to address other needs. I would add, as an aside, PSR needs to be the first step in a chain of wrap-around services so we aren't simply dealing with the crisis of the moment.

When we use the term “public safety”, we also need to be clear about what “public” we are referencing. Housing, and shelter for the unhoused, is a public safety issue because 42 percent of the people who died while walking were unhoused. That is a public safety issue. Our roads are dangerous because they've been structured in a way that gives a priority to driving, not safety. So, that would inform the City Council to do even more to harden infrastructure, increasing, speed bumps, bike lanes, and center lines.

The “public” includes communities of color who are disproportionately the victims of racial profiling and police gun violence. Thus, to have the highest level of safety for the public of communities of color we should support a strong Police Accountability Commission.

Public safety should bring climate change into the conversation in at least ways. First, as our climate changes, we are experiencing far more threats to public safety due to extreme weather, either stifling heat or bitter cold (think of last winter's freak ice storm)—which pose significant threats to life and limb. So, as a City Council, we need to be resolute in aggressively combating climate change. Second, the presence of the Critical Energy Infrastructure (CEI) in our midst is a threat to public safety, either in the event of a large earthquake or on an on-going basis because of the particulates emanating into the environment. The new City Council should demand from the state an urgent process to create a plan to relocate the CEI from its present location, which is a threat especially to my District as well as the whole city.



Lastly, I have been a member of my Neighborhood Emergency Team (NET) for five years. The entire NET community is a vital, if under-the-radar, public safety resource, deploying in a whole set of circumstances (e.g., protecting the public from downed power lines or staffing COVID vaccination sites during the height of the pandemic—deployments I took part in). Yet, it is severely understaffed. We need to correct that lack of funding.

5. What do you see as Portland's economic engine, and what do you believe it should be for the future?

Workers who have sustainable paychecks have always been, and will always be, the economic engine for Portland, especially in an economy (local and national) in which consumer spending accounts for 2/3 of economic activity. Indeed, reflecting on the most recent visit organized by United for Portland to the NECA-IBEW training center, we need to see the \$60-per-hour wage for a licensed electrician in Multnomah County (plus the additional \$40-per-hour benefits on top) as a gold standard, clearly attained through employer-union partnership. Higher such wages and benefits are especially relevant in a country that does not have national health care, which is a burden on every individual's economic life.

I have been making this argument for over 30 years, including in this TV discussion with Stephen Moore, a conservative economist, who agreed (at about 2:20) that wages are too low (as an aside, he and I once discussed doing a radio show together but never had time to make it happen)—
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVzCK96VEdE&t=148s>

6. Tell us about your leadership style. How will you work with constituents and interest groups? How are you going to address the inevitable disagreements in a brand new council of 12?

I have successfully managed broad coalition work for over four decades. I oversaw, as president of my Local union for 13 years, the work of an executive board representing different constituencies and views. I had to manage a legislative body of more than 120 delegates on an annual basis, mastering Roberts Rules of Order, but utilizing diplomacy to move along an



issue. Finally, I met regularly with my rank-and-file members who lived in cities around the country to address their specific concerns, a process similar to engaging with constituents and, truthfully, one of my favorite parts of my leadership role.

My basic philosophy is: the minority view must be heard and the majority vote must prevail. In other words, we have to have open debate but, at some point, we need to deploy the simple democratic process to get the work of the Council done. As the candidate with by far the most labor support of any City Council candidate, I have committed to meet regularly with unions. I believe, as well, that I am uniquely positioned to help build a bridge of conversations between labor and other constituencies.

7. What would you do to align Portland's taxing and spending with our city's needs and values?

This is a very broad question. Four general points to make.

As a city, we need to lead a change in the state's tax "kicker". The "kicker" is the premier example of poor tax policy, which does affect the city. In 2024, more than \$5.6 billion is being "kicked back", the vast majority to the wealthiest people in the state. With the \$5.6 billion, we could pay for every single need our city has—higher teachers' salaries, school infrastructure, student programs, housing, more addiction services, transportation upgrades, climate change measures and more—and still have money left over for a "rainy day" fund.

I will advocate for, and hope the City Council supports, a reform along the lines of the Oregon Center for Public Policy's proposed "Working Class Kicker". The OCPP reform would mean that a middle-earner would receive about \$2,100. As important, the "kicker" amount going to the top 20 percent of Oregonians would drop from about two-thirds of the entire pool to a more reasonable 20 percent. A reformed kicker would directly affect the areas mentioned above.

Second, we should use our spending power lift up the quality of jobs throughout the public sector, especially for lower-wage workers. We can do



that through rules and laws and how we spend our money. The Service Employees International Union in Oregon has laid out a set of policies for janitorial, security and laundry workers (many of whom are immigrants and people of color) that are a template for how I think the Council should view a segment of its spending:

Require contractors to pay wages and benefits that meet the standards set by the federal Service Contract Act, which sets a floor for wages and benefits for federal contractors based on job classifications.

Retain predecessor contractors' employees to maintain service quality and prevent worker displacement.

Document Labor Peace: binding agreements that reduce the risk of labor disruption, such as a labor peace agreement, collective bargaining agreement, or labor- management partnership.

Third, we also need to address the massive shortfall in transportation revenues due partly to the increase in electric vehicles (in other words, the decline in revenues the city realizes from gas taxes). In my opinion that will require a vigilance and engagement with the 2025 long-term state transportation legislative package. Indeed, maintaining the 50/30/20 split that has been in place for state transportation revenue ash to be a priority for our legislative lobbying team.

Finally, inevitably we will be addressing the funding and spending of the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund since it has become a far larger presence in the overall economic “pie”. It has recently been viewed, in light of shortfalls in some agency budgets, as a potential “piggy bank”. I strongly support PCEF and its mission, and believe the City Council should both defer the PCEF leadership in considering how to utilize its revenues and put forth, in regular order, proposals that would align with PCEF’s mission.

8. Is there an issue, topic, or policy we didn’t ask about, but is very important to you? If so, feel free to ask and answer your own question(s).

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PORTLAND