



PORTLAND BUSINESS ALLIANCE

Leading the way

December 20, 2011

The Honorable Nick Fish
Portland City Council
1221 SW Fourth Ave Suite 240
Portland OR 97204

Dear Commissioner Fish:

The Portland Business Alliance has read the proposed resolution introduced by you, Commissioner Leonard and Commissioner Saltzman that would allow “small-scale, limited overnight sleeping options” in parking lots of participating churches and “community service provider organizations.” While we are always concerned about the precedent of incrementally relaxing enforcement of the existing camping ordinance, we appreciate your efforts to address a real issue in Portland and, at the same time, limit the impacts of this proposal. We would like to work with you on making sure this proposal is successful and its impacts are minimal to the surrounding neighborhoods, residents and businesses. To this end, we recommend the following inclusions in the resolution:

- 1) The resolution should include a sunset date, concurrent with the time of review (as stated, within 12 months). This way, a broad spectrum of religious organizations, service providers, neighborhood associations and business associations can review the program to determine its impact and successes and make recommendations about potential adjustments, should City Council decide to continue it.
- 2) The resolution should provide a precise definition what a “community service provider” is and who would be eligible to provide overnight sleeping locations. This way the city can precisely define where overnight sleeping may occur and, at the same time, identify where potential concentrations of overnight sleeping might occur within certain neighborhoods. Thus, the city would be able to establish limits to avoid over-concentration. It should also provide a more precise definition of “existing parking lot” to avoid any confusion about what constitutes a “parking lot” of sufficient size and orientation to accommodate guests.
- 3) The resolution and its exhibits should require those who are providing overnight sleeping locations to have clear guidelines for behavior, sanitation, hours of operation, etc., that are made clear to the overnight sleeping guests. We recommend that the city provide suggested guidelines and that the providers post or submit written rules for the guests so that an agreement is established and there are clear triggers for enforcement. That way, uncertainty around expectations or responsibility is eliminated.

4) The resolution should include a reaffirmation that the city's camping ordinance will remain enforced and that camping, by definition of that ordinance, is prohibited. We are concerned that the city is sending a message that other codes may not be enforced over time. This could cause grave unintended consequences. Defining the scope of this effort as much as possible, while, at the same time, reinforcing important codes and ordinances will do much to alleviate the impression that the city is permitting unlawful activity.

Thank you for considering the incorporation of these recommendations into your resolution. As you know, this effort is addressing just one symptom of the economic challenges facing our city, homelessness. The Alliance would like to continue to work with you on targeting the root causes of homelessness in order to eliminate it; in particular, we ask you to partner with us on creating living-wage jobs for all Portland residents so that individuals and families can afford to pay for basic necessities like food, clothing and shelter. We welcome your efforts and collaboration on this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra McDonough". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the "y" at the end.

Sandra McDonough
President & CEO
Portland Business Alliance