

Oregon artPAC — 2016 Primaries

Contest: **Multnomah County Commission, District 1**

Candidate Name: Mel Rader

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Candidate Web Site: www.mel4mult.com

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In a 140-character “tweet” format, tell us why you are running for office.

Mel has 10 yrs experience fighting for healthy schools, clean air & affordable living. He'll bring a bold, progressive vision to the County.

How many donors have contributed to your campaign?

15

How much money have you raised for your campaign?

\$9,150 has been collected. An additional \$2,500 has been pledged.

What endorsements have you received?

Metro Councilor, Bob Stacey
Metro Councilor, Sam Chase
Many Community Leaders

What role do the arts and culture play in the life of our region and what do the arts personally mean to you and your family?

Arts and Culture are a creative and economic force in our region that can be a catalyst to promote social justice and cultural transformation. When our streets and public buildings are wrapped in art, then we feel pride and a sense of community in our neighborhoods. When we invest in creative education for our kids, then we are developing a new generation that can think outside the box and is passionate about creative expression. When we offer world-class music, dance, and theater, then we attract new artists and creative thinkers to our region, and we will create strong community spirit and improved quality of life.

I grew up surrounded by art and music. My mother studied oboe at Juilliard. Many nights, I fell asleep to the meandering sound of a wispy oboe. My grandmother was an accomplished artist, gifted at capturing unique expressions in clay. My aunt is a professional cellist in the Barcelona Orchestra. While I grew in a

low-income household, art and music made my childhood very rich.

For college, I chose to go to Oberlin because of its music scene. There I met world-class musicians, studied classical guitar and flute, and found all parts of my life enriched by the experience.

Despite the impact that music had on my life, my preferred form of personal expression is poetry. Here is a short poem I wrote after visiting Portland's Saturday market:

An Idle Walk along the River

The clarity of the air
The pulse of the crowds,
The old iron bridge downriver,
And cherry blossoms along the bank.
It is a wide open day, wandering
Among potters and woodcutters.
Yearning for purpose
In this quiet life, waiting
For a glance to be returned,
Or a lightning strike of inspiration.

My commitment to the Arts and Culture now extends to my kids, aged 2 and 5. I want them to also have an upbringing surrounded by art. They both take dance and music classes, enjoy painting, and my older child is in love with her new violin.

We are so blessed with already having a County full of amazing artists who need greater support.

How will you address the growing affordability crisis in our region for artists, arts organizations, and small arts businesses as it relates to housing and creative space?

It has always been hard for artists to make a living, but our rent and livability crisis has pushed artists out even more. I believe we need broad approaches to addressing affordability including investments in affordable housing, expansion of preschool programs, and smart land use and transportation policies to promote mixed-income, mixed-use neighborhoods – all of which will help create an infrastructure that will help families live affordably.

We can do a great deal to get us on that path.

(1) I believe there should be County investments in Arts Education and public art.

- (2) I support an increase in County funding for the Regional Arts and Culture Council.
- (3) I would advocate that the County integrates art into its investments in schools, housing, and health services. The arts should be integrated into a range of services that are offered by the County, particularly in mental health and youth programs.
- (4) There should be investments made directly for public art and incentives for community programs to enhance their buildings and surrounding spaces.
- (5) Finally, the County should broker community benefits agreements on large infrastructure projects to provide additional investments in public art supporting by local communities.

How will you foster the growth of the creative economy in our region?

I see multiple avenues for promoting growth of the creative economy:

- (1) Invest in arts education and art therapy in schools. Multnomah County should partner with school districts and the state to provide high quality arts education in all public schools. Moreover, school counseling programs can be expanded to include art therapy to better reach children who are less verbal and more artistically expressive.
- (2) Create an inventory of public art. Multnomah County should inventory all public art and neighborhood art projects so that we know the state of our art infrastructure, and therefore can make more strategic and equitable investments in public art.
- (3) Invest in public art projects. Multnomah County should increase contributions to the Regional Arts and Culture Council and integrate art into all infrastructure investments
- (4) Host public discussions and policy initiatives to support arts and culture in our region. The County can be a helpful convener to elevate discussion about the Arts and culture in our region.

How will you enhance the delivery of and support for arts education in school and neighborhood settings?

The county should work with school districts to create high standards for arts education in schools. Multnomah County should also invest in resources ensure that schools, particularly schools serving low-income families, have the resources and teachers they need to provide excellent arts education. One opportunity is to increase the role of art in SUN schools, which are focused on at-risk kids.

The county can also promote more joint use agreements so that school buildings can be used after hours for art, dance, theater, and music classes to provide more opportunities for affordable arts education.

How will you further the values of equity and access to the arts and culture? What do you see as the biggest challenges to progress in this area?

There are significant disparities in access to art and culture education. Schools with higher income families tend have much greater investments in arts education. Furthermore, higher income

families can afford to pay for high quality art, music, and dance classes while lower income families can't, thus increasing the equity gap in arts and culture.

I believe one of the best ways to help close the equity gap is to invest in high quality arts education in schools. In addition, we will also need to develop strategies to provide more affordable arts education outside of school hours. And lastly, investments in public art would better enable everyone to enjoy art equally.

Finally, I believe we need to narrow the achievement gap by expanding preschool education. I have a bold plan to look at funding universal preschool, ages 3 to 5, as has been accomplished in three states. Kids should have the opportunity to receive a high quality early childhood education, which includes explorations of the Arts and Culture.

What other public policies would you pursue to strengthen the creative capacity of our region?

In addition to public investments in arts education and public art, I believe Multnomah County can help strengthen the region's commitment to the Arts and Culture. The County can actively build partnerships with private sector partners, solicit community input in arts and culture programs and policies, and invest in an infrastructure that can better support our creative economy. The County should create an award for artistic contributions to the community, implemented in a similar way to the award for "Public Health Heroes."

As an example, one recipient of this award would be Chris Fish Herring, a local independent light designer who, together with collaborators, brought in OMSI, PGE, and many other sponsors for the recent Portland Winter Lights Festival. This weekend-long free family friendly event was the Portland art community at its best. Chris volunteered as the event's Creative Director and contributed hundreds of volunteer hours to our inaugural lights festival, and his dedication earns his broad recognition.

Finally, the County should collaborate more closely with city governments and private sector partners to coordinate investments in the Arts. Multnomah County Commission and the Portland City Council should have an annual joint session to work on areas of collaboration, and the Arts and Culture should be a key priority area for collaboration.

The following question is for candidates in City of Portland contests only. Do you support the voter-approved Arts Education and Access Fund and do you commit to maintaining it? What changes, if any, would you make to improve its administration?

The following question is for candidates in City of Portland, Clackamas County, Multnomah County, or Washington County contests only. Each year, you will have the opportunity to vote to approve a budget for arts funding through the Regional Arts & Culture Council (RACC). Do you commit to maintaining or increasing this budget allocation and funding level?

I would commit to voting to expanding the budget beyond what's been allocated in 2016.