

Oregon artPAC — 2016 Primaries

Contest: **City Commission Position 4**

Candidate Name: Steve Novick

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Candidate Web Site: www.novickforportland.org

Date of Questionnaire Submittal: 2/15

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

To contribute to a beautiful low-carbon earthquake- proof city that's fair to all residents.

How many donors have contributed to your campaign?

To date my campaign has received around 580 contributions.

How much money have you raised for your campaign?

We have raised \$195594.83 to date.

What endorsements have you received?

So far, my campaign has received endorsements from SEIU 49 & 503, IAFF Local 43, UFCW Local 555, as well as, Metro Councilors Bob Stacey and Sam Chase, State Representatives Barbara Smith Warner, Rob Nosse, & Speaker of the House Tina Kotek, as well Multnomah County Commissioner Jules Bailey, Nancy Hales, Jordan Menashe, Storm Large, and over 50 other prominent Portlanders. You can view the current list at novickforportland.org/endorsements

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 play an incredibly important role in Portland. We've been a cultural leader for decades, and have been home to so many talented artists, writers, musicians, and playwrights. More recently we've become a regular shooting location for many Hollywood and major television productions, turning our arts and cultural industry into a “traded sector.” So much of our local economy is now tied to arts and culture that it's impossible to deny the value it brings, and the importance of making sure that it can thrive.

Personally, I've always been a big music fan (Commissioner Fish likes to point out how often I use musical quotes in Council comments) and occasional theatergoer. Through my wife Rachel's family I've been introduced to the performing arts community (her brother is a professional ballet dancer who got his start here in Portland), and the local theater (her other brother is a nationally recognized playwright

whose plays have been performed or workshopped at small local theaters.

One of the best days we had at City Hall was when the Decemberists previewed their new album in City Hall itself. Subsequently, the Council declared a “Decemberists Day,” which I celebrated by handing out cinnamon rolls during a Council session, in honor of a line in the song “Sons and Daughters.”

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?

There is little debate that we need to address the problem of housing affordability for middle-income and low-income people, but I would say not enough attention is being paid to how it impacts our creative community and small businesses. I support proposals housing advocates have pushed, like lifting the legislative ban on inclusionary zoning, but I also think we need to deal with the supply and demand aspect of the problem. We need to build more housing, and also build more types of housing. Portland’s iconic bungalow and Craftsman neighborhoods are the reason why lots of people decide to move to Portland. However, these houses are also very expensive and will become more so as our population grows.

I think the concept of housing affordability should also include zoning changes so we can build diverse kinds of housing within neighborhoods. Townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and live-work spaces could offer great homes for people who can’t afford a single family house in Portland but aren’t interested in living in an apartment. And more mixed use buildings could both address the need for housing, while also providing spaces for smaller businesses and arts, which we know do a lot toward building and defining a community. Lots of close-in Portland neighborhoods already have lots of this “middle housing,” but much of it was built decades ago before the current zoning code was adopted. I’m looking at ways to allow more of these kinds of projects, which will help keep our housing within neighborhoods diverse and affordable. We need to make sure that as our city grows, it does so thoughtfully and equitably.

With regard to arts organizations and small arts businesses, we on City Council need to make sure we are doing everything we can to keep in contact with these groups in order to better understand the issues they face, and work together to develop real, workable solutions. The City has an opportunity to connect arts organizations and small arts businesses with resources they may not realize are available. One example is the Oregon Facilities Authority, who helps charities of all sizes secure low-cost financing to remodel, expand, construct, or purchase new facilities, through the use of tax-exempt conduit revenue bonds. This could be used to help nonprofit arts organizations purchase their properties, giving them security and helping them remain even as commercial real estate prices continue to rise.

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

The best way to foster the growth of Portland’s creative economy is for the City to maintain solid and open communication with the creative community. We need to have a consistent back and forth to

determine the ways we can be helpful in connecting artists with valuable public programs, how we can promote our artistic community as we move Portland to a truly first class city, and how we can help protect our artistic community from the sudden growth and development of our city, that has left many in the creative community struggling to stay afloat with increasing rents and overall cost of living.

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

Other than continuing to provide funds from the Arts Tax and supporting adequate school funding in general, I can't claim to have great new ideas, and welcome your thoughts.

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?

I'm a firm believer that art should be for everyone. We need to ensure not only equal access to art, but also equal opportunity for participation in the arts. I've been very heartened to learn about the great work being done by organizations like p:ear, who work to engage people experiencing homelessness in arts education and art as a means of productive expression and opportunity; as well as PHAME, who have done an amazing job promoting individuals with disabilities within the arts community and inspiring individuals with developmental disabilities to lead full, creative lives through arts education and performance. It's important that the City do what it can to support organizations like these, both through promotion and funding whenever possible.

One of the biggest challenges to making progress in this area is finding the funds to support organizations that promote equity and inclusion amongst the creative community.

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

I think the creative capacity of the region is enhanced by having a lively urban environment with enough density and "20-minute neighborhoods" that people can walk and bike and take transit to work, school and play. No disrespect to the suburbs, but I think a true urban environment in which people naturally interact with other people is most conducive to creativity, and creative people are drawn to such environments. I think that by maintaining our commitment to "smart growth" principles, we can enhance our region's creative capacity AND reduce our carbon footprint.

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?

First and foremost we must recognize the great benefit the Arts Tax has given to our schools. Helping to fund important programs that are all too often first on the chopping block.

We also must acknowledge that unfortunately, the Arts Tax has not done as much for the creative

community overall as we had expected. To some extent that is based on factors the city should have been aware of - such as state law requiring that PERS and Social Security in one be exempt. Some of it has to do with the number of people who just aren't paying; compliance has improved as we go along, and as we move into territory where multi-year tax avoiders' bills go from \$35 to over \$100, collection action will make more sense.

Any brand-new taxing mechanism is likely to have high administrative costs. Ultimately, despite the complexities of our property tax system, I think it would have made more sense to have a small property tax. I would be open to considering a switch to that, which would - albeit to a limited degree - also make the tax less regressive.

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?

It's difficult to commit to funding levels when our City budget is in a fairly consistent flux, however I can say that I understand the importance of supporting our creative community. As I mentioned before, it's become a traded sector that not only helps keep the spirit of portland alive, but also provides much needed jobs and revenues. Over the past few years I've learned of organizations like p:ear and PHAME, that not only do great work with the arts but also with underrepresented communities, like those experiencing homelessness or living with disabilities. I wish I had been more aware of these organizations when we were in our last talks about where to place some discretionary spending, and I plan on bringing them into the conversations going forward.