



2008 General Election Questionnaire

Please fill in your information and answer the four questions below. Return via email at oregonartpac@yahoo.com. Those of you who answered these questions in the primary election have an opportunity to reconsider your responses.

Responses are due no later than September 18, 2008.

Follow up interviews will take place in the late afternoon of September 22, 2008 at the Pulliam Deffenbaugh Gallery, 929 NW Flanders Street. We will contact you regarding a specific time.

Candidate: Charles Lewis

Contest: Portland City Commissioner Seat 1

Date of Submittal: _____

1. What role do arts and culture play in the life and economy of a region and what do the arts mean to you?

I am passionate about the arts and culture because they play such a vital role in making Portland such a vibrant place. The arts are a crucial part of our economy. Through my work as Founder and Executive Director of Ethos Music Center, I've used the arts to create living wage jobs with benefits. Last year Ethos had 78 employees, with all full-time employees receiving free health insurance and part time workers receiving coverage at a prorated cost.

The arts and culture are also critically important for our schools. I founded Ethos Music Center after Measure 5 budget cuts destroyed music education programs in many of our schools. I believe every child deserves a well-rounded education including significant coursework in art, music, and drama. Today, Ethos serves over 2,200 children, helping them achieve in the classroom and giving them an alternative to the streets, drugs and violence that could rob them of their futures.

The arts and culture also give credence to Portland's reputation as a livable city that attracts "the creative class". People choose to live in Portland because they have access to music venues and art studios. Access to the arts also helps us to bridge cultural gaps, encouraging us to think innovatively and giving us a more meaningful understanding of our vibrant communities.

I've demonstrated my commitment to making the arts accessible to everyone through my work with Ethos over the past decade. As a City Commissioner, I'll work to ensure that our public policy recognizes that arts are crucial to our economy, our children and our neighborhoods.

2. What steps will you take to help significantly increase *private sector* funding for local arts and cultural organizations so that the community's arts organizations can present more high quality arts programs for all citizens?

Through my work with Ethos Music Center I have a demonstrated track record of working with private donors to fund the arts. Currently, over 80 percent of Ethos' million dollar a year funding comes from private sources. I also serve on the board of the Western States Art Federation. As City Commissioner, I'll be ready to step in on day one and use these relationships to be a strong advocate for Portland's arts and culture community.

In addition, I will support Portland's continued participation in RACC's Work for Art program, which provides matching funds to private donations to arts organizations. I gave one of Work For Art's first presentations at Zimmer Gunsul Frasca to get them on board with the program. I will continue to work Northwest Business for Culture and Arts to find more private sector support for the arts in terms of increasing both board leadership and financial support.

3. How much of an increase in ongoing arts and culture funding will you support for your jurisdiction? Please provide a specific amount.

I would like to see Portland Metro area move into the top 10 nationally in terms of per capita spending on the arts. Working with our regional partners, my goal will be to increase funding for the arts and culture by at least \$15,000,000 a year. Investment in the arts and culture can help stimulate our economy in these difficult times by helping to create jobs, by generating tourism, and by strengthening our schools to develop tomorrow's leaders. I would also like to see an increase in the Percent for Arts program to at least 3% by the end of my first term in office.

4. In addition to seeking more funding for arts and cultural endeavors, what other public policies would you pursue to strengthen the creative capacity of the region? Please include your thoughts about integrating arts and culture into the region's educational system.

My campaign has focused on strengthening our economy, supporting our schools and creating vibrant, livable neighborhoods. These three areas of focus are vital to strengthening the creative capacity of the region and vice versa. As I mentioned before, the arts is an important component of our regional economy. Businesses want to locate in a region where their employees can have an enhanced quality of life and access to the arts. This supplies us with the tax base to publicly fund the arts and the patrons who privately fund the local arts scene with their own resources.

Bringing the arts back to children and our schools is the passion that has driven the past decade of my life. I was a graduate student at Harvard studying public policy when I heard about the budget cuts that destroyed music in Portland's public schools. As someone who benefited tremendously from music education as a child, despite the fact that I grew up in a very low-income family, I knew something had to be done. I flew back to Portland, slept on a friend's couch for a year and a half, went without any salary whatsoever for over a year, and started Ethos Music Center on my credit card. Today Ethos serves over 2,200 children, has twice been named one of the top 50 arts programs in the country by the President's Commission on the Arts and Humanities, employs 78 people and has a budget of about one million dollars.

While I am proud of the work Ethos has done, I realize it is only a band-aid to a much greater problem and that we need systemic change. We need to fully fund music programs in our public schools. It's a shame that only half of our schools have a certified music instructor. The Children's Investment Fund has done a great job helping Ethos and other after school organizations bring music back to kids and I encourage Portland voters to renew the Children's Levy this November. However, after school arts programs must not take the place of in school instruction.

Leisure space is an important component to the walkable communities I want to see at the heart of the Portland Plan. People should have access to space where they can see a local artist or performer. Last weekend I attended a concert in Lents Park to celebrate one-time resident Woody Guthrie. As a City Commissioner, I'll work to bring the arts into every neighborhood. We should also make every effort to make sure that artists can afford to live in neighborhoods throughout Portland by dramatically increasing the availability of fairly distributed affordable housing and home ownership programs.