



CANDIDATE NAME: April Fournier

City Council At-Large

- What actions should the City Council take to support local businesses amid the coronavirus crisis? How would you ensure the council pursues these actions?

I think that allowing outdoor dining options this winter helps to keep businesses open during a very long cold season for us and something that is certainly an investment beyond the COVID crisis. There are cities working on contests for sustainable outdoor dining ideas and countries in Europe have been doing this for a long time. What are the low hanging fruit that we can implement immediately-coverings to block wind, heating elements, and reminding people that winter and cold are just a different experience.

Creative options don't necessarily provide relief, so it is critical to continue to work with our state and national delegations to push for more direct relief for small businesses. We also need to protect small businesses from evictions and rent hikes during the crisis, so we should ensure that there is a freeze on both evictions and rent increases.

When we begin to work together as a new council we will have at least 2 new members. If we are going to get work done quickly for our community we will need to work collaboratively, engage with those most impacted (local business owners), and get to work. We should address the immediate need, but also consider what's possible 3, 6, or 12 months down the road and develop ideas for then as well.

- Outside of the immediate needs of the pandemic, what three things would you work on that would help local businesses in Portland? How would this work alleviate the challenges local businesses currently face?

- 1) *If you want to keep staff working at your business they need to make enough to live. There is a larger cost for training and onboarding new staff. If the rate of turnover is high, that cost will keep going up. Businesses should focus on retaining their employees by ensuring they are paid a liveable wage, have protection when they are sick and have safe working conditions during this pandemic.*
- 2) *Inclusion is a priority for me. When we talk about local businesses and building a thriving, diverse local business community I want to work to ensure that we're actively working to include all businesses. That means as we make policy decisions we should be looking around the table to ensure all business owners are represented and part of the conversation.*



3) *One of the priorities of our Sustainability Office is “Walk, Ride, or take the Bus to your destination.” If we want local businesses to get local traffic we need to ensure that people can get there. With our parking situation that can be a barrier. When we create more transportation options we’re helping local businesses and our environment.*

- What are your thoughts on the minimum wage referendum that would raise the minimum wage in Portland to \$15/hour?

Many other cities around the country have already adopted \$15/hour as a minimum wage. If we want to keep our workers we need to ensure they are making enough to live on. This means supporting an increase to \$15/hour for our minimum wage.

- How do local, independent businesses contribute to the vitality and strength of Maine's communities? Do franchises and chains offer the same value to Maine's communities?

I don't know the owner and operator of Starbucks, but I do know the owners of more than a handful of local coffee places around our city, and often chat with them at. No two are alike and each contributes so much to our community. The decisions we make as consumers, as neighbors and as leaders directly impact them. I have an opportunity with these owners that I don't have with Starbucks, I can engage them in conversation, discussion and learn how proposed decisions might affect them or better yet involve them in generating ideas from their own experience as business owners and community members.

- The City Manager is pursuing spending cuts and layoffs due to the budget shortfall caused by the pandemic. Which departments or programs do you think are most acceptable to be the focus of spending cuts? What is one department or program for which you would be unwilling to approve spending cuts?

I believe our focus on retaining funding is in the wrong areas. Without health (mental and physical) we continue to perpetuate the issues our community members face. We continue to cut and create barriers to our public health system and yet stomp our feet and tantrum that we have community members who are in mental health crises living on our city hall steps.

We want to end the preschool to prison pipeline and yet we cut 64 Parks and Recreation staff all while the police department remains whole. We have to be bold and be ok with saying that our priorities are our community members.

- Rising real estate prices have impacted both commercial and [residential rents](#).



- a) As commercial rents have increased, local businesses are being pushed out of Portland, and chains are moving in. What policies would you pursue that could help alleviate this problem?

Other cities have implemented restrictions on how many chain stores can open in a certain area. We could do this with zoning restrictions.

- b) availability of affordable middle-market housing is critical to support a robust small-business community - for both owners and employees. How do you plan to address the critical shortage of affordable market-rate housing for the "missing middle" in the City?

I think when we're talking about "affordable housing" we should be talking about housing that both owners and employees of the small business community can "attain". That means based on the wages they are earning, they can "afford" to live there. So we're talking about creating more housing for people working in the jobs created by the small business community.

- *Let's look at how we define median area incomes and ensure the data is accurately reflecting Portlanders and not the surrounding communities.*
- *As we're working on the recode and change to zoning, we need to think about higher density zoning*
- *If we want to then develop higher density middle income housing we also need to really focus on transit and creating ways for neighborhood hubs to connect to downtown so people can access other areas of the city in a less single car focused way. (less parking spaces means more space available for housing)*
- *As we work with developers on projects we should be partners, where we're each getting something out of the project. The developer may get an incentive like lowering the density, but committing to a certain amount of middle income units.*