



CANDIDATE NAME: **Kenneth A. Capron**

City Council

- What actions should the City Council take to support local businesses amid the coronavirus crisis? How would you ensure the council pursues these actions?
The City Council should do everything in its powers to assure the health of Portland's business community. Mostly we need to LISTEN to suggestions from businesses. This is a time to loosen restrictions, not tighten them. This is not a time to look for new taxes, increased parking rates, nor anything else that makes life difficult.

As just one of seven counselors, I will need to build business coalitions within the council with people like Tae Chong. I will also encourage more ways for businesses to be heard - especially with the power of the virtual community tools.

I have been and will continue to be a supporter of Buy Local and Donate Local. I have encouraged the use of local businesses in economic development.

- 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?
I will work to block any local options sales tax. I will actively work to oppose unreasonable minimum wage ordinances. I will continue to be outspoken in getting government out of your back office. We all know that running a business is tough enough without excess regulation. I will bang that drum loud and often.
- What are your thoughts on the minimum wage referendum that would raise the minimum wage in Portland to \$15/hour?
Honestly, you and your business are the best judges of what you need to pay to attract workers. Artificial supports cause more harm than good. As an entrepreneur, you are in the driver's seat of your reputation as an employer. IF a minimum wage is established by whatever means then that definition needs to include the value of ALL benefits in the calculation of 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?
Both of these questions depend on the attitude of the owners. Both business forms create jobs. Both can be welcomed or rejected by their clientele and by their relationship within their communities. The major difference is that franchises send a chunk of their 'profit' to some out-of-state organization which may not have our best interests at heart.

On the down side however are the large stores that come in and put local



businesses out of business - exactly what has happened to almost all of our hardware stores. The few survivors of that storm have to compete on the price and on customer satisfaction. That's hard to do. To remain competitive, we cannot be handcuffing our family-friendly local owners with minimum wages and more taxes.

- 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 don't necessarily support spending cuts. I support smart spending. There are ways to shift the tax burden off residents IF our legislators would support them. An example would be for the City to bill out its actual costs for accident coverage to insurers. The same concept could be applied to fire and rescue services. Fire/rescue/police makes up ~33% of our budget.

The City could expect more of entities that do not pay taxes - which compose 11% of our taxable base.

We can sell off City-owned properties at 'market rate' prices.

There are numerous small budget lines, like travel, that could be limited but they just don't make a big difference.

Of course HHS and Education are our big budget lines. I'm not sure we can cut much more there. But I would vote to perform an efficiency audit. I have done these myself in the past with excellent results - often with better services at lower costs as a result.

- 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?

Generally I support all kinds of economic development. I do not like when our EconDev funds go to out-of-state entities. Before welcoming "chains", we need to make sure we are getting our money's worth. Are they developing a workforce in Maine that would not otherwise gain skills for future generations? Are they bringing talent to Maine which has a propensity for starting a business and adding to the local economy? Are they good neighbors and enhance our quality of life (and work). If their only reason to be here is profit, we need to make sure they don't get access to tax breaks and E/D grants and such.

I would like to raise an example of another impact I saw in 2020. The 1500 concrete blocks used in the new MMC garage all came from Western Mass. Why? Because that is the closest place that pre-stresses concrete. It would have been smarter for Maine if we had developed that ability or



capacity right here in Maine instead of paying shipping charges which we will never get back in value. We need a policy change!

- 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?

Somebody please define "affordable" housing.* It doesn't include rents over \$1000 per month ... more like \$300 - 500/month for the working class. What happened to Strimling's plan to force new construction to fund affordable housing?

I made my best suggestion for a fix to low income housing with the proposal to permanently dock a cruise ship along our waterfront. For the same costs as a 200 bed shelter, we could have 800 to 1600 units (two acres+) of new housing. That's a conservative estimate because the idea includes so much more for the neighborhood that gets the ship.

But that's not all. Most or all of the funds would be raised via a nationwide Capital Campaign led by a team out of Los Angeles. I will stand by the concept. I get calls from all over the World from people who hear of the concept and want to come look. We could really do something no one else has had the courage to try.