



CANDIDATE NAME: Rosemary Mahoney, City Council District 4

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

To the extent possible, I would involve the city in landlord/tenants' negotiations. Seeing longstanding and successful businesses closing or moving out of the area due to increasing rents and the intransigence of landlords is so harmful to the small business climate of Portland. The current trajectory is not sustainable. Portland is literally at the point where we must decide whether we want to retain character and charm of a small New England cultural center, or whether we want to abandon that in the interest of becoming Anytown, USA. That's the crossroad we're standing in.

- 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?

The first thing to do is to LISTEN! Many stakeholders in Portland have been speaking, but has the council been listening? The several referendum questions we face on the ballot is evidence of "no". I will listen. And I will expand the conversation.

Traffic flow and efficiency and parking – I will work to ensure that we get to work on traffic flow that works for everybody. We will explore more efficient methods of public transportation and other greener options, and also work with small businesses to look for opportunities for coordinating deliveries and access on our smaller streets and/or to better accommodate closing streets for improved pedestrian traffic and outdoor commerce.

An honest inventory or review of fees and fixed costs (i.e. Licensing and insurances) that businesses are required to pay. We must look at the financial toll that these costs take on businesses and homeowners and determine where duplication or excess is occurring and make the necessary adjustments.

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

I support a \$15 hourly wage as a standard in Portland. I support it because I know what it is like to spend all my waking hours at work to keep a roof over my head and food on the table. I believe that ONE full time job should provide the compensation necessary to meet a person's basic needs. We are living in an era where that is often not the case. And Portland is expensive!

Sadly, the minimum wage question on the ballot goes too far. Referendum question A proposes ideology at the expense of reasonableness. I do not agree with the mandate of a "hazard wage". I do not believe that is right or appropriate for a municipal government to impose this sort of mandate. The "beyond \$15/hr" is where this question loses my support. That part of the proposal is harmful to businesses and to the small business community in Portland.



I do think that businesses that can should pay a hazard wage. But I do not support making it a condition of doing business within the city limits.

- 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?

This is one of those questions that is so easy it is hard to answer. Local and independent businesses are the lifeblood of our state and our city. They support our causes, and our little leagues, and every community effort that comes along. Small businesses are often the engines for social change. They are the leaders that chains and franchises look to when they seek a pathway to social consciousness.

I must use an example to illustrate what I mean here: Shop Small Saturday. I committed a long time ago to shop small for all of my holidays shopping. Never one to embrace the chaos of "Black Friday" I always looked forward to Shop Local Saturday. And that used to have a special feel – local people supporting local businesses in a protest of the commercialization of the holiday season. It was a festive community effort. Then American Express coopted it. So, while it still happens, and it still brings business to our small locally owned businesses – the sentiment of it has changed. It has become part of the hustle instead of an element of tradition. A minor adjustment, but a minor adjustment that tarnished a gem.

- 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?

Any department or program that subcontracts it's work to an outside entity will be first on my list for reduction or elimination. Subcontracted labor is always more expensive than direct employment.

The department for which I am unwilling to approve spending cuts is our Public Schools. Without our public schools none of the rest of this is possible.

- 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?

Anything that I have to say about this would be mostly speculative at this point, and with that in mind I offer that we have to find a way that can and will attract socially conscious developers, and the extent to which we could regulate the sale of commercial real estate, I would advocate for that. We need to promote and retain locally owned real estate – in state, on site real estate owners. Ideally owner occupied in a collective effort of local success and local promotion.

- 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?

Again, this is problem is a many headed monster. We know the symptoms that have created this problem – house flipping, and investment properties are wreaking havoc on the available rental and residential housing stock. This is not the only, but it is the primary, reason that I will vote YES on question E in the upcoming referendum. Portland does not need Airbnb to support or sustain the tourism economy in Portland. The proliferation of Airbnb has been harmful to the local housing economy and it has had a giant ripple effect including safety and security in our neighborhoods

In terms of keeping existing housing affordable, it would make sense to explore what could we do to incentivize owners and developers to provide more income-eligible homeownership opportunities in Portland. Another component to a comprehensive solution would be to maintain and grow the Housing Trust Fund and to closely monitor how we are growing and spending the funds available. Another possibility would be to build up (taller buildings) in select areas of the city and take some of the development pressure off the peninsula. We should focus on thoughtful developments and create vibrant urban nodes, like Woodford Corner or East Deering. If we were to take a comprehensive view of housing, transportation, and businesses, it could really enrich these amazing pockets in the city and create manageable development that focuses on all demographics, not just the socioeconomic extremes.