

Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to share with you my comments on the proposed FY'18 city budget. As you know, Article II, Section 5 of the City Charter empowers the Mayor, "To consult with and provide guidance to the City Manager in the preparation of all city budgets..." Likewise the City Manager has a duty, in Article VI, Section 5, "To prepare city budgets, in consultation with and incorporating policy guidance of the Mayor..." Once budgets are prepared in accordance with these provisions, the Mayor is then expected to provide comments on the final recommended budget upon its presentation by the City Manager. I am pleased to make those comments today.

Now that the legaleze is out of the way, let's get to the heart of the matter.

About a year ago, I delivered my first budget comments as mayor and closed my speech, perhaps infamously, by saying, "In the end it comes down to whether we as a government are serving people over pavement, or whether as I believe, we can serve both." The point was that government can and should be part of the solution for our most needy and that progress must be measured by how we meet the needs of the entirety of our population. As we seek those solutions, we must always put our future ahead of political wins and losses. I believe that the budget before us today does just that - it puts progress over politics.

Upon my initial review, I am pleased with the work the City Manager and his staff performed in formulating this proposal today. It is crystal clear that he took the priorities that we on this body outlined seriously by developing a budget that makes a concerted effort at meeting our priorities and reaching our shared goals around the environment, our economy, customer service, health and human services, diversity and parks, to name a few.

But there is a delicate balancing act that must take place to ensure that government meets our needs and expectations while doing so within constraints that do not unduly burden Portland taxpayers. This budget appears to strike that balance.

In fact, it is in part because of the prosperity and growth that we are experiencing in Portland, fueled by increased tourism and a growing tax base, that we can meet our goal to limit this year's tax increase while still meeting our obligations to our most needy, the middle class, the business community and families across the city. Since last year, our growing economy has resulted in increased revenue of almost \$1.8M into the city budget, allowing us to keep the tax rate for working families reasonable. We are now able to utilize that prosperity to support the worthy projects and programs that the City Manager outlined and that I will touch upon during my comments.

The progress in this budget manifests itself in ways big and small. So let's start by talking about some of those "big" ways in which this budget addresses some of our most pressing needs.

While both the City Manager and I lament the loss of state and federal funding for many critical public health programs related to family health as well as chronic disease prevention and education, I am told that city staff is working hard to claw back some of that funding in order to keep existing programs afloat. Their efforts have included finding creative ways to continue to provide our residents with services surrounding substance use disorders, obesity and tobacco cessation. Further, our new Public Health Director, Dr. Bankole, will be focused on health trends, outcomes and policy development that will allow for a more holistic and coordinated public health strategy. This approach should show measurable dividends as we explore indicators to design targeted public health programming.

This budget adjusts funding and staffing in accordance with the transition of our Positive Health Care services to Greater Portland Community Health. While I am not interested in reviving last year's debate on that decision, I am pleased that this budget reflects this body's strong position to maintain our existing services and presence at the India Street Health Center.

In fact, not only are we continuing the Free Clinic, STD Clinic and Needle Exchange at India Street, as the City Manager outlined in his memo, we have partnered with Grace Street Recovery Services to offer additional capacity to provide more and different substance use resources at that location. I am hopeful that residents in need, some of our most vulnerable neighbors, will be able to receive services at India Street for the foreseeable future and this budget reflects the city's firm commitment to ensure that's the case.

We are also directing dollars to provide senior level support for our EMTs as they respond and deliver lifesaving services to our residents. In the midst of an unconscionable opioid epidemic, adding capacity to bolster our hardworking first responders is not only smart, but critically necessary.

This budget also funds the Office of Economic Opportunity: serving immigrants, people of color and other underserved populations. I firmly believe that this effort will unlock the potential in our residents that will improve the lives of both new and longtime neighbors alike. It is indeed an exciting step towards our goal to ensure that Portland's rising tide lifts all boats.

This budget also directs funds to realize our commitment to workplace diversity, inclusion and customer service. While I believe I can speak for the City Manager when I say that we have a long way to go until the city's workforce truly is representative of our

community, the funds and human capital dedicated to this effort as a part of our Human Resources operation is a welcome step.

This proposal also provides funding to help our Community Policing program further expand into the Bayside/Parkside area. Expanding this program has been a consistent policy goal of mine, as well as one that I know is shared by many of my colleagues on the Council. I'm pleased that we are transforming that goal into meaningful and measurable action.

On issues impacting our public lands and our environment, this proposal reflects this body's commitment to a clean and sustainable city. We have added capacity to city staff to maintain and grow our plantlife and tree canopy as well as keep our playgrounds safe and clean. And although ideally we would increase our number exponentially, we have added another electric vehicle to our fleet. We're moving forward on our LED street light program. We're putting into practice a more effective and user friendly way to recycle. We're beautifying some of our most popular city parks. We're exploring our first dedicated bike lane for our two-wheeled commuters. These efforts and their accompanying budget allocations will have a major impact on the look, feel and long term environmental health of our city.

During our budget discussions, it was clear to me that the City Manager gets the most excited when talking about the nuts and bolts of government and how we can be more effective and efficient when serving our customers. What people might refer to as "small" things. This budget reflects that excitement, and it is an excitement that I share. Because we believe that thoughtful government can not only meet our residents and businesses' expectations of City Hall, but it can be a catalyst for innovation and improve the lives of all Portlanders.

It is often the quality of life issues that have the most immediate impact on our daily lives - and those issues and experiences are the ones we remember most. The City Manager and I talked about his getting numerous emails praising the fact that our new city trash bags have drawstrings. Seriously, in our discussions about a 240 million dollar budget, we discussed drawstrings! But it is in that example that showed that if we sweat the details, we can be part of the solution.

Throughout this budget is funding for initiatives that go directly to the customer experience. This budget makes sure the lines, crosswalks and bike lanes on our streets stay brighter, longer. It puts in place resources to better coordinate street repairs as well as address cleanliness and safety issues in our neighborhoods. There's a plan in development to keep City Hall open later one night a week and we just completed construction on gender neutral bathrooms right above us on the third floor of this building. Soon we'll have self service kiosks around City Hall and are working on a plan to make available a city staffer in the rotunda to help folks navigate city services. And in the near future you'll even be able to add money to your parking meter just by using an app on your cell phone. All of these initiatives are designed to enhance the customer experience, and are ones that I wholeheartedly support.

One of the biggest complaints I've heard in the past has been the wait times related to permitting in the city. Through reorganization and efficiencies, those complaints are becoming fewer and fewer. We are moving toward our goal of 48 hours for the fulfillment of the vast majority of permits, and more resources in this budget are being brought to bear to maintain that progress. In fact, soon someone will be able to complete the entire permitting process electronically without ever having to set foot inside City Hall. We know that the more responsive and efficient we are during permitting, the more responsible growth can occur with the help of government, not in spite of it.

An initiative that might not grab headlines but will undoubtedly have a major impact on the look and feel of our city is the rewrite of our zoning rules. Perhaps a better description would be a “clean up” of our myriad and scattered rules and regulations that, in their current state, are nearly unintelligible to most of our residents and business owners. Through what I have been assured will be an open and public-facing process, this initiative will help us get a better sense of where we are currently and highlight potential ways in which our zoning process can be improved.

Before I go further, I want to highlight an aspect of this budget that, as we discuss dollars and cents, often and unfairly goes overlooked. That is the dedicated public servants who are tasked with carrying out our vision and making this budget come to life every day. And while each month we honor a few employees for exemplary behavior, for every “Employee of the Month” there are scores more who come to work every day and serve the residents of portland in their own way. To them, I wish to express my deep gratitude. Because while there will be pages upon pages of budget documents to review over the coming month, we must always keep in mind that no policy is greater than the people who carry it out.

Now, I’d like to shift gears a bit regarding the budget. As the City Manager and I discussed in our meetings, this budget does not do it all. It simply can’t. But that does not mean that we should stop looking for creative solutions to current and anticipated challenges.

The first solution the finance committee must find is one that the City Manager alluded to in his remarks moments ago. We must, as a body and as a city, find a way to address the state’s draconian law that cuts off state aid for asylum seekers after 24 months. We must work with our Corporation Counsel to draft a legally sound and decisive solution to ensure that our newest neighbors do not get caught up in this misguided and

shortsighted game of political chicken. The only answer we cannot accept is one that leaves those in need out in the cold.

Second, while this budget successfully achieves the goal of limiting tax increases, we can and must do more - especially for our fixed income seniors. That is why I urge the Finance Committee to work with me on implementing the senior citizens property tax relief program I outlined in my State of the City address. Getting targeted relief to those who helped build our city and who now need our help in return is essential as we try to ensure that all of our residents can continue to enjoy Portland's quality of life.

And third, even though this budget adds an electric vehicle, we should do more to reduce our fleet's reliance on fossil fuels. Included in those efforts should also be a way for us to encourage more solar projects throughout the city. I ask the Finance Committee to explore ways to implement this vision of a greener Portland as we seek to become a clean city in the decades to come.

In summary, as I've highlighted, this is a solid budget. It maintains our progress by meeting the basic needs of government and putting in place measures that make us more efficient and more responsive. And if we can meet the environmental, tax relief and humanitarian initiatives I just outlined, we will have made even greater progress.

But finally, as we on the dais now begin to put our mark on this process, I want to ask us to think even more boldly. And perhaps even a little differently. I mentioned that this budget can't do it all. But what if it could do more?

Whenever I meet with kids around the city, I ask them to imagine themselves as "Mayor for a Day." And, then I say, "As Mayor, if you had a magic wand and could pass any law or help any group or build any building or if you could do anything at all to help the city

of Portland, what is the one thing you would do?” Honestly, from these conversations I get some of my absolute best ideas (having a “Clean City by 2040” came from a conversation with a King Middle School class).

Today, I want us to ask ourselves the same question. I want all of us around this dais to think about what you would do if you had the money you needed to make a difference in our city in the one way you see as most impactful.

During our budget discussions, I asked the City Manager, if I could find him another million dollars, what would he would put it toward. His answer was expressed in two words: “Opiate Addiction.” Who on this dais would disagree?

So now I ask each of you. Each Councilor. Each person sitting in this chamber. Each person watching at home. What would you do with an extra million dollars? Would you invest in broadband? Would you pay teachers more? Would you focus on climate change? Would you reduce the property tax rate? Or dredge our harbor? Or market our city? Or expand public transportation? Or construct bike lanes? Or build more affordable housing? The possibilities are only limited by our imagination.

Whatever the issue, I want every member of this body and every resident of the city to think outside the box and dream about what could be. As Bobby Kennedy taught us, we cannot simply ask, “Why?” We must ask, “Why not?” And I ask you, the public, to ask us that same question. The Finance Committee will be meeting every Thursday in April. I will be there and I hope you will too. And I hope you will share your dreams with us every week and I hope you will then ask us, “Why not?”

Because when it comes down to it, this budget isn’t the City Manager’s budget or the Mayor’s budget. It’s not the Finance Committee’s or even the Council’s. This budget is

yours. It is your money and it is your hope for our future. Let's work together as one community to make it the absolute best it can be.