

## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF PORTLAND – ADVOCACY POSITIONS

### I. CITY OF PORTLAND

#### **City Government** (2020, 1991, 1965, 1963, 1961)

The League of Women Voters of Portland believes that a thriving, livable city requires a city government that meets these criteria: accountability, responsiveness, equity, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and nonpartisanship.

Our members believe that to more fully meet these criteria, Portland needs to improve its government structure. The highest priorities for change are to improve citizen representation by increasing the number of commissioners, to institute a city manager, and to establish the City Council as a legislative or policy-setting body. We also support electing some or all city councilors by district.

Within the City Council, the mayor should have the same voting power as the other members, establish the council agenda in collaboration with the other councilors, run the council meetings, prepare a city budget for council consideration, and serve as the formal representative of the city.

We support adequate and thoughtful long-range planning in accordance with other published League positions.

We also support adequate and thoughtful coordination with other local governments in accordance with other published League positions.

We believe city government should solicit broad and inclusive input through fully representative, accessible and robust public involvement processes that reflect best practices. The city should also provide adequate feedback on how community input has been used in its decision-making.

#### **Planning** (2009, 1974, 1973)

The League of Women Voters of Portland supports comprehensive long-range city planning based on:

- Citizen involvement at all stages of the planning process;
- Communication and coordination among citizens, citizen advisory groups, and city and regional planning agencies;
- Consideration of environmental, social and economic impacts of proposed plans and actions;
- Determination of long-range goals and priorities.

Goals should include:

- Area-wide orderly growth and development;
- A visually attractive urban community with a sustainable and healthful environment and a healthy economy;
- Quality infrastructure and public facilities designed to meet the needs of residents and businesses;
- Fair distribution of tax burdens and government investment.

## **Economic Development (2015)**

The League of Women Voters of Portland believes that economic development is a proper concern for governmental entities including the City of Portland. We define economic development to include the broadest range of activities that contribute to the stability, growth and diversification of the Portland economy, measured by the increase and rate of increase in the median family income and standard of living in Portland.

The most important factors to be considered when promoting economic development are:

- Quality and number of jobs
- A healthful environment
- Creation and preservation of open spaces
- Neighborhood revitalization that benefits existing residents
- Effects on existing local businesses
- Equity issues
- Ability to attract private investment
- Overall return on investment of public funds.

We believe effective strategies to advance economic development goals include infrastructure development, targeted job training, and protection of the industrial land base including brownfield reclamation. Other tools that may be employed with appropriate restrictions and accountability include participation in public-private partnerships, tax increment financing (TIF) for urban renewal, loans of public funds to private enterprises, and tax credits and abatements. Prosper Portland (formerly known as The Portland Development Commission (PDC)) is Portland's principal redevelopment and revitalization agency. When Prosper Portland uses tax increment financing for urban renewal, the City must consider the impact on overlapping taxing jurisdictions and the essential services they provide. The City should perform regular performance audits to study the effectiveness of urban renewal and TIF in the delivery of the financial benefits promised to taxing jurisdictions. The City should have a limited ability to amend urban renewal areas' duration, maximum indebtedness, or acreage. Urban renewal districts should be reserved for areas that are physically deteriorated, unsafe, poorly planned, or economically stagnant.

The League supports reviewing the City's system of regulations, fees and taxation to identify unnecessary impediments to businesses operating in the city. City regulations should be less vulnerable to differential interpretation at the permit level. Designated staff should assist businesses in navigating development regulations.

The League supports greater investment in education at all levels, including specific workforce training programs as a key component of local efforts to spur economic development. Educational institutions, private industry and government should cooperate to create a workforce with skills relevant to the needs of local industry.

The Auditor's office should evaluate the expenditure of economic development funds and the effectiveness of those expenditures in accomplishing the stated goals. Governmental agencies

should hold recipients of public dollars accountable with binding agreements for recovering funds when promised goals are not met.

We support transparency and public participation in all phases of economic development projects: planning, monitoring, and evaluating.

### **Neighborhood Associations (2007, 1975, 1973)**

1. The LWV of Portland believes that Portland's Neighborhood Associations have the potential to serve the public good by providing important opportunities for civic participation and improving neighborhood livability. To meet this potential, Neighborhood Associations must be integrated into city networks of communication and decision-making, and they must be adequately supported by city funding and services. Neighborhood Associations, in turn, need to consistently invite and include all residents in their operations.
2. Portland's neighborhood system structure:
  - Neighborhood Associations should continue to be autonomous entities separate from city government.
  - Because Portland's neighborhood system is grassroots in nature, diversity of NA character should be honored. A decentralized system of service delivery is appropriate.
  - District Coalitions, in their varied organizational formats, should remain in place as long as they are effective, with funding from the city.
  - Uniformity and equity should be pursued where possible but should not come at the expense of effectiveness.
3. The city's role in supporting Neighborhood Associations should consist of:
 

At the Council and Bureau level:

  - Informing Neighborhood Associations of city projects and activities affecting them
  - A willingness to solicit and receive neighborhood input
  - Consideration of neighborhood needs within city budgeting process
  - Funding that is adequate to maintain this system

Through the Office of Neighborhood Involvement:

  - Ensuring a neighborhood voice in city operations
  - Encouraging better communication between city bureaus and neighborhoods
  - The setting forth of healthy governance practices in guidelines for Neighborhood Associations
  - Support for neighborhoods and District Coalitions including assistance and adequate funding for communication, outreach, leadership training and technical assistance
4. Successful Neighborhood Associations should:
  - Be independent with the authority to set their own agenda
  - Have the ability to interact with all government and non-governmental entities
  - Work to engage the various populations in the neighborhood
  - Respond to neighborhood needs

- Represent neighborhood interests effectively to the city
- Utilize effective means to communicate with neighborhood residents at least twice a year

Neighborhood Associations should not be the only avenue for civic engagement with Portland's government. If resources are adequate, city assistance could be offered to groups other than Neighborhood Associations to increase organizational capacity. When Neighborhood Associations are functioning effectively, with both the resources to do their work, and city's acknowledgement of their role, encouragement should be given to other community groups to channel work on civic issues through the neighborhood system.

### **Portland Police Bureau (1982)**

The League of Women Voters of Portland believes the primary function of the Portland Police Bureau is the protection of life and property through the just and effective enforcement of the law, including crime prevention programs and strong visibility of the police.

Just and effective enforcement of the law demands good police/community relations. We support the specialized education and training of police personnel in human relations, including the use of specialists from outside the Bureau. The selection and assignment of police personnel should reflect the individual's knowledge of and sensitivity to variations in community needs.

We support citizen involvement in the functioning of the Portland Police Bureau including, but not limited to, budget advisory committees, precinct advisory councils, and citizen advisory groups.

### **Portland Police Bureau: Oversight and Accountability (2021)**

#### **Introduction:**

The League of Women Voters of Portland believes that a safe, just, and equitable public safety system in Portland requires that the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) meet the following goals:

- Accountability for police officers who violate community standards and PPB policies and directives.
- Reduction in the use of force.
- Fair, equitable, and respectful treatment of community members.
- Reduction of bias-based policing with a goal of eliminating it.

#### **Improving Police Bureau Culture:**

Changing the culture within the PPB must be a key goal of the bureau leadership. The PPB must end practices that systematically place police in opposition to or in domination of the public, or that treat community members as enemies. Officers should see themselves in partnership with the community in solving problems and should show respect for all individuals and cultures.

Improving the culture within the PPB should include: officer education in best practices used successfully elsewhere, public involvement, and positive community relations.

Portland Police Bureau policies should require officers to:

- Interact with community members in a professional and courteous manner.
- Consistently show respect for all individuals including those suspected of criminal behavior, experiencing a mental health crisis or causing a public safety concern.

The League supports strengthening when necessary and consistently enforcing PPB policies that apply to interactions with the public and co-workers.

### **Addressing Bias-Based Policing:**

We define bias-based policing as taking harmful actions based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, socioeconomic or housing status, mental or physical ability, or against other groups protected by law or policy. To prevent and reduce bias-based policing with the goal of elimination, PPB should provide ongoing, meaningful anti-bias training at all levels of the organization. The training should be regularly and thoroughly evaluated for its effectiveness in promoting respectful communication and improved understanding of the communities being policed.

PPB should prohibit the use of racial slurs and derogatory bias-based comments by officers while in public and in the workplace. PPB directives prohibiting such language must be supported by every level of the organization, be consistently enforced, and met with appropriate disciplinary actions.

PPB policies and discipline guidelines should include consequences up to and including termination for any officer who has regular or continuous association with groups that are engaged in organized efforts advocating criminal behavior against individuals and groups in the community, including, but not limited to: race, religion, gender, and national origin.

### **Reducing Use of Force:**

Use of excessive force by police not only harms individuals, but seriously erodes community trust. The PPB should set explicit goals to reduce the severity of force used by officers. Techniques such as de-escalation, exhausting other methods before deploying force, and using the least force necessary should be employed to achieve this goal.

The PPB should track its progress by keeping consistent records on the severity and frequency of its use of force. They should make periodic reports that are easily accessible to the public and clearly outline current trends.

### **Investing in Alternatives:**

The city and PPB should invest in programs that assign some duties currently held by bureau members to unarmed, appropriately trained civilian employees. For example, non-sworn personnel with suitable experience and proper preparation can handle administrative tasks or interactions with people in crisis, with mental health issues, or urban camping complaints effectively.

**Enhancing Transparency:**

The public interest should determine the scope and timeliness of releasing records or information. Whether such information demonstrates an error or misconduct or embarrasses an officer should not be a deciding factor in whether to disclose information to the public.

**Strengthening Civilian Oversight and Community Involvement:**

Civilian oversight of police should include an accountability system with the following powers:

- Authority to conduct independent investigations of police misconduct, including cases of deadly force.
- Power to subpoena witnesses and other evidence.
- Authority to compel statements from officers and witnesses.
- Meaningful role in determining findings and administering appropriate discipline in misconduct cases.
- Authority to recommend policy changes to the PPB with Portland City Council having the final say in adoption.
- Authority to use its independent judgment when weighing evidence and determining or recommending findings and discipline in misconduct cases. The oversight board's standard of review should not give deference to PPB's internal determinations.

To function effectively, the accountability system must have sufficient public funding to conduct thorough investigations, maintain adequate staffing, and support a community board.

Just and effective enforcement of the law requires good police-community relations. We support meaningful community involvement in the functioning of the PPB including, but not limited to, police oversight boards, budget advisory committees, and both limited duration and standing advisory committees.