

Multnomah County Commission Candidates D1 & D2  
Responses to Homelessness Solutions Coalition Questionnaire  
Megan Moyer, Candidate for District 1

**Questions for Multnomah Co Commissioner Candidates  
Updated 8/22/2024**

1. What will be your number 1 priority if elected to the Multnomah County Commission, and what plans do you have to realize outcomes from that priority?

*My number one priority is to fix our broken mental health and addiction treatment system. My goal is to build a system that can provide the right treatment on demand. What I mean by that is that when someone is ready to seek care, there is a way to connect that person with the right treatment within hours. This is a lofty goal, particularly with the state of our treatment system today. We must build this system on the foundation of Medicaid, both through OHP in partnership with Coordinated Care Organizations but also access Medicaid long term care established in Oregon's 1915K state plan (which I helped to write). The county must use a significant portion of its Supportive Housing dollars to help stand up the physical infrastructure needed for the continuum of behavioral health care services need, but we must also assure the services are Medicaid reimbursable and funded at a sustainable rate as to guarantee access. This work will require collaboration with OHA and at times possible CMS.*

2. Do you support a policy of ending unsheltered camping in Portland? If yes, what alternatives do you suggest for people who are currently unsheltered?

*I support a goal of ending unsheltered camping in Portland, but unlike my opponent I don't think jailing the homeless with result in ending camping. A few hours or days in jail is expensive and will not end anyone's homelessness. I support offering true alternatives that are appropriate and safe. I do support sweeping streets when people refuse to leave, and they are making sidewalks unpassable or disrupting local businesses.*

As a follow up: Based upon the recent Supreme Court decision that struck down legal limitations placed on local public camping bans, neighboring states like Washington, California and Idaho are now free to enact camping bans, even if shelter is unavailable.

Oregon is still restricted by House Bill 3115, enacted in 2021, which directs that public camping can only be outlawed when adequate shelter space is available or when camping violates "reasonable" restrictions.

Do you favor amending or revoking HB3115? How?

*I do not favor amending or revoking this law. I think this is a totally reasonable standard. I do not look to our current supreme court for moral guidance, and I strongly disagree with their decision in this case. The standards set in Martin V. Boise by the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit were well reasoned. I believe we can expand housing options to meet the standards set by HB 3115.*

3. With the Joint Office of Homeless Services having spent \$1 billion over the past five years, how well do you think that money has been spent, and what changes would you propose to get better outcomes going forward?

*I'm extremely disappointed with the effectiveness and oversight of the \$1 billion spent so far. I don't think we have much to show for it honestly. Part of the reason I believe the joint office has not been effective is their lack of transparency. How is success being measured, what happens when a contractor is not meeting their goals, what long term outcomes are we achieving? What investments are having the best results moving people into more stable long-term housing successfully. I want to redefine how we measure success. First, we need to define success differently for the distinctly different populations experiencing homelessness. Those who face eviction or are newly unemployed require a different strategy than those who have been chronically homeless for years and are experiencing mental illness and / or substance use disorders. We need to define long-term success for all communities by where are they in two years. If we could build our responses around these population specific strategies and keep our measure of success "where are people in two years", I believe the joint office would be much more strategic with investments and have better results to show as a result.*

4. Multnomah County has pushed hard for Housing First strategies, which prioritize moving people into housing over temporary shelter and treatment. Do you agree with this strategy and set of policies, or would you take a different approach? If so, what would that approach be?

*I think people including those at the county are misunderstanding housing first as a strategy. It is not a smart strategy to move someone who has untreated SUD, disability or mental illness into a one-bedroom apartment in a mix income development. That is not going to be a successful placement. What a successful housing first strategy is to provide a safe place where some care live and their stuff will not be stolen and they know they can come to sleep every night, once that is in place work is done to engage that person in the next steps in their recovery, that will look different for each person. Some people might need long-term services and supports and we should be willing to provide that in order to prevent them from returning to homelessness.*

5. Re-criminalization of drug use in public areas under House Bill 4002 allows for treatment as an alternative to incarceration. Do you believe treatment should be mandated? How should this work, and how does that compare with the direction the county is currently taking in establishing a deflection center?

*I'm confused by your question. HB 4002 allowed for deflection as an alternative to being charged, not treatment. Oregon law already allowed treatment in lieu of incarceration via drug courts that predated M110. I do support people being able to choose deflection over picking up a charge. I am disappointed that the legislature did not provide the funding to ensure that when someone goes through deflection and wants treatment, that treatment is available for them. I am scared we are going to miss chances to save lives by not having the treatment options we need available. As far as mandated treatment, no I think it needs to be a choice. Involuntary treatment has poor outcomes and is often unsafe. People can choose treatment or jail. I am ok with people not liking their options. Right now I'm not sure what deflection will even offer people. I support a robust treatment system to be in place so people can actually get the help they need.*

6. What approach do you support for addressing drug addiction and public drug use—a low barrier, harm reduction approach or an approach that focuses on treatment, recovery, abstinence, and personal responsibility?

*Both, to some extent. I believe people cannot get clean if they are dead and I don't believe in giving up on people. So, to that extent I support giving people clean needles and Narcan etc. I am completely committed to offering treatment and supporting recovery. Abstinence is one approach to sobriety, but I am supportive of many evidence-based treatment and recovery options. I am unclear what you mean by personal responsibility.*

7. How will you engage the public, businesses, and nonprofits in having a reasonable voice on homeless policies and actions taken by Multnomah County?

*I am very interested in hearing from a diverse group of voices on how to address our homelessness crisis. I think great ideas can come from anywhere and I am open to them. These issues are not easy, but I want to build support for the work of the county and that requires being open to public input and being willing to make changes when needed.*

Follow up:

For example, how could the County work with neighborhoods to designate areas for shelters serving unhoused individuals and for behavioral health facilities? Citing these facilities is often the biggest barrier to their successful implementation.

*I have been working on the citing issue with the Oregon legislature for several sessions and I am frustrated by the Republican House Caucus repeatedly trying to turn this issue into something about sex offenders. First, there is no correlation between people in treatment and sex offenders. Second, the fair housing act prohibits creating discriminatory rules that make it hard to cite housing or services for people with disabilities, which includes people receiving SUD treatment. I will*

*continue to work on legislation to stop violation of the fair housing act as it applies to people with disabilities. As a county commissioner I will be publicly supportive of removing any local barriers and I will defend providers when they seek approval. We must treat people with disabilities including those with mental illness as our neighbors.*

8. In your opinion, what percent of people currently unsheltered in Portland are capable of employment and increased independence?

*97ish%, but that may look different than what people expect. Some people need very little assistance once they have been housed, but others will need significant supports potentially for life. No matter what issues someone faces, employment is almost always possible. I am a fan of supportive employment programs and employment opportunities are important in anyone's life and journey of recovery. I support people's right to live in the least restrictive setting that they can. This right was upheld by the supreme court and I strongly believe in it.*

Follow up: Could priority for benefits like rent support and subsidized housing be given to people who commit to job training and employment, leading to independence? How would that work?

*Work requirements for benefits are often very expensive to administer and have not shown successful results. I think Vocational Rehabilitation has not done a very good job helping people with disabilities find employment. In addition, our federal government has made it very hard for people on disability for work more than a handful of hours a week without jeopardizing their benefits. What is most concerning is working even part time can jeopardize someone's Medicaid, which is life threatening for many people. I strongly support changing these laws to make it easier for people with disabilities to work, but I will not punish them for a system they cannot change.*

9. Currently the Multnomah County Chair has significant power to control the agenda, policies, actions, and budget for the County. Do you believe this current structure is appropriate, and what would you do to change it if you feel it is not appropriate?

*I strongly support changing how the county's agenda is set. It is undemocratic to have the executive control the legislative branch of a government. I would not allow the chair veto power over agenda items or the ability to remove items from the agenda that another commissioner has added. I think it's ok if agendas get longer. Commissioners and the Chair need to be willing to have longer meetings and open discussions about topics they may not agree with.*

10. With the successful merger of county and city operations in places like Indianapolis, Nashville, and Miami, where systems run much smoother and businesses have been attracted to their areas, would you support a merger of Multnomah County and the City of Portland? Why or why not?

Responses from **Megan Moyer, Candidate for District 1**

*No, I would not support an actual merger. Multnomah county is not just the city of Portland. I support the independence of all the cities in Multnomah County. Portland does also overlap a small amount of Washington County so I'm not even sure how that works. In Oregon we have tasked the counties to deliver any of the services that state funds. I don't think mixing those services with the priorities of cities will lead to effective service delivery. None of the cities you mentioned do a very good job serving the most vulnerable members of their community. I do support close coordination of services and service alinement especially in emergency response, care transitions, building services etc. We need to make it easier to start and run businesses in Portland and Multnomah County and coordinate and an elimination of duplication could help support that effort.*

*These answers have been provided by Meghan Moyer to the Homeless Solutions Coalition and are not to be shared outside of the members of that coalition.*

Multnomah County Commission Candidates D1 & D2  
Responses to Homelessness Solutions Coalition Questionnaire  
Vadim Mozyrsky, Candidate for District 1

**Questions for Multnomah Co Commissioner Candidates  
Updated 8/22/2024**

**(Vadim Mozyrsky responses)**

1. What will be your number 1 priority if elected to the Multnomah County Commission, and what plans do you have to realize outcomes from that priority?

My first priority is to bring accountability and trust back to our County government in order to address our most pressing issues: increasing homelessness and tragic deaths on our streets, underlying causes of drug addiction and mental illness, and unmet public safety needs. I will achieve this by concurrently doing the following:

- a) Requesting an outside forensic and performance audit of the Joint Office of Homeless Services. We need to understand which taxpayer-funded programs are working and which ones are not. With a \$400 million budget next year, we should expect better results, but there is a lack of publicly available data to ascertain the effectiveness of our spending.
  - b) Fully implement a by-name list so that we have a better understanding of the causes of homelessness for each individual and be able to maintain a continuum of treatment.
  - c) Increase the number of shelter options available, including night congregate shelters, as quickly as possible to meet needs. We need to leverage both public and private resources.
  - d) Coordinate amongst service providers to ensure they're working together and not overlapping services. Perform outreach to encampments and work together to transition people from living on the streets, to shelters & villages where they can receive drug addiction, mental health, and housing services, and eventually long-term housing and vocational assistance.
  - e) Expeditiously build a 24/7 drop-off sobering and stabilization center.
  - f) Utilize our public safety infrastructure, including HB 4002 and sit/lie ordinances to coerce service resistant individuals into needed treatment and housing. We would also need to work with NAMI and the legislature to pass practical reform to our civil commitment statutes.
  - g) Once the aforementioned alleviates some of the pressures on our first-responders, re-focus those resources to address our most pressing public safety needs.
2. Do you support a policy of ending unsheltered camping in Portland? If yes, what alternatives do you suggest for people who are currently unsheltered?

## Vadim Mozyrsky, Candidate for District 1

We need to quickly build out shelter options, focusing on congregate and night shelters, but including TASS sights and motel rentals. We already have a wide breadth of options, including high- and low-barrier congregate shelters, Safe Rest Villages, TASS sights, and micro villages. We could focus on expanding capacity for those shelters that could be built quickly (e.g., Washington County expanded congregate shelter beds by 10x over the span of two years), but while maintaining options for those individuals needing a higher level of care.

As a follow up: Based upon the recent Supreme Court decision that struck down legal limitations placed on local public camping bans, neighboring states like Washington, California and Idaho are now free to enact camping bans, even if shelter is unavailable.

Oregon is still restricted by House Bill 3115, enacted in 2021, which directs that public camping can only be outlawed when adequate shelter space is available or when camping violates “reasonable” restrictions.

Do you favor amending or revoking HB3115? How? Yes, I am in favor of amending HB3115 so that it comports with the current Supreme Court decision, or revoking it, which would lead to similar outcomes. I would work with the governor, state legislators, League of Oregon Cities, business and nonprofit organizations (many of whom have endorsed my campaign) to lobby for these changes.

3. With the Joint Office of Homeless Services having spent \$1 billion over the past five years, how well do you think that money has been spent, and what changes would you propose to get better outcomes going forward?

The money has not been well spent. In the past 7 years, we’ve seen the JOHS budget increase ninefold, At the same time, homelessness has increased by roughly 50%. Deaths on the street have increased 400%. Overdose deaths in the homeless community have increased 500%, and homicides in the homeless community increased by a staggering 650%. Throwing money at the problem has not been the answer. The answer is better planning, policies, and coordination. As noted above, we need a forensic and performance audit of the JOHS. ECONorthwest is in the midst of its own forensic audit, but without the assistance of the County, it will take years and lack enough specificity to make needed changes. We need to act with more urgency in evaluating how effective the programs being funded are. We also need better coordination amongst service providers. The County Commission through JOHS and the HereTogether coalition should follow the Houston model for effective service coordination.

4. Multnomah County has pushed hard for Housing First strategies, which prioritize moving people into housing over temporary shelter and treatment. Do you agree with this strategy and set of policies, or would you take a different approach? If so, what would that approach be?

## Vadim Mozyrsky, Candidate for District 1

Housing First has not worked because of the preference for a harm reduction approach over recovery and rehabilitation. Besides that, due to the sheer number of housing units needed, coupled with budget and time factors, we cannot build our way out of this crisis. While we certainly need more housing to increase affordability, we need to focus on addressing underlying factors of homelessness such as drug addiction and mental illness by building out temporary shelter options and providing services there.

5. Re-criminalization of drug use in public areas under House Bill 4002 allows for treatment as an alternative to incarceration. Do you believe treatment should be mandated? How should this work, and how does that compare with the direction the county is currently taking in establishing a deflection center?

Yes, I believe treatment should be mandated. We have skyrocketing overdose deaths both in the housed and unhoused communities. Places like Bybee Lakes and City Teams have demonstrated that a treatment approach has better long-term outcomes than merely a harm reduction approach. There are various deflection programs that have been shown to work, such as through a substance abuse court, or even a LEAD model. These approaches do not actually require a deflection center, which is not evidence-based. We do need a sobering center, and the current focus on a deflection center seems to be impeding the real work of building and staffing a sobering/detox center.

6. What approach do you support for addressing drug addiction and public drug use—a low barrier, harm reduction approach or an approach that focuses on treatment, recovery, abstinence, and personal responsibility?

treatment, recovery, abstinence, and personal responsibility

7. How will you engage the public, businesses, and nonprofits in having a reasonable voice on homeless policies and actions taken by Multnomah County?

I am proud of my record of working with the public, businesses and nonprofits to find common sense approaches to our shared needs. I am the only candidate that is endorsed by numerous community leaders, business organizations, and leaders from the nonprofit sector. I will continue to involve neighborhood associations, community groups, and business associations to understand needs and work together to address those needs.

Follow up:

For example, how could the County work with neighborhoods to designate areas for shelters serving unhoused individuals and for behavioral health facilities? Siting these facilities is often the biggest barrier to their successful implementation.

We need to get early buy-in from neighborhood associations that know their community and where there is opportunity for additional facilities. The emphasis



## Vadim Mozyrsky, Candidate for District 1

should be places that would have least impact on the neighborhood and business interests. I would ensure that neighbors and any affected organizations have buy-in and oversight through Good Neighbor Agreements and public oversight boards.

8. In your opinion, what percent of people currently unsheltered in Portland are capable of employment and increased independence?

Based on the point-in-time data and the self-reported intersectionality of drug addiction and mental illness, coupled with length of time living unsheltered, I would estimate that 30% of the currently unsheltered could have independence, and employment with the help of vocational rehab. With drug addiction services, medication, and medical and psychiatric attention, that number would increase dramatically.

Follow up: Could priority for benefits like rent support and subsidized housing be given to people who commit to job training and employment, leading to independence? How would that work?

Subsidized housing could be prioritized, and arguable should be prioritized, for individuals that would be more likely to remain housed while assimilating into the workforce. We could couple subsidized housing with a requirement to go through a vocational rehab program. A case manager could monitor progress. I've seen a similar program in the context of Social Security disability, where an individual is evaluated for his/her ability to hold down a job, even in a sheltered environment, as a prelude to ascertaining whether disability benefits would be warranted.

9. Currently the Multnomah County Chair has significant power to control the agenda, policies, actions, and budget for the County. Do you believe this current structure is appropriate, and what would you do to change it if you feel it is not appropriate?

The current structure is untenable. It effectively gives the Chair veto power over Commissioners' proposals by withholding them from the agenda. With three votes on the County Commission, there are ways around this, including holding special meetings. However, as Stoel Rives pointed out, the current practice is illegal and should be challenged either internally through the Office of Multnomah County Attorney, or if needed, through the court system.

10. With the successful merger of county and city operations in places like Indianapolis, Nashville, and Miami, where systems run much smoother and businesses have been attracted to their areas, would you support a merger of Multnomah County and the City of Portland? Why or why not?

Yes. While I believe our government is only as good as the officials we elect, if the bifurcated government system is unworkable or causes too many negative externalities, I would support looking into how to merge Multnomah County and the City of Portland.

Multnomah County Commission Candidates D1 & D2  
Responses to Homelessness Solutions Coalition Questionnaire  
Sam Adams, Candidate for District 2

**Questions for Multnomah Co Commissioner  
Candidates Updated 8/22/2024**

**Sam Adams  
September 10, 2024**

1. What will be your number 1 priority if elected to the Multnomah County Commission, and what plans do you have to realize outcomes from that priority?

**My #1 goal: Functional end to homelessness. A functional end to homelessness includes the idea that the number of people exiting homelessness matches the number of people entering it. This balance ensures that homelessness remains rare and brief, with systems in place to quickly provide housing and support, preventing it from becoming a long-term issue. The focus is on sustainable solutions that address root causes while ensuring rapid re-housing for those affected.**

Also see my answer to question #4.

2. Do you support a policy of ending unsheltered camping in Portland? If yes, what alternatives do you suggest for people who are currently unsheltered?

**Yes, as the new TASS site open, I support a phased-in countywide ban on self-sited camping, in the neighborhoods around each site. Based on research my city hall team and I completed, these are my reasons why:**

<https://www.portland.gov/council/documents/resolution/adopted/37595>

As a follow up: Based upon the recent Supreme Court decision that struck down legal limitations placed on local public camping bans, neighboring states like Washington, California and Idaho are now free to enact camping bans, even if shelter is unavailable.

Oregon is still restricted by House Bill 3115, enacted in 2021, which directs that public camping can only be outlawed when adequate shelter space is available or when camping violates “reasonable” restrictions.

3. Do you favor amending or revoking HB3115? How?

**Yes, I support revoking HB 3115. My position is based on the belief that local communities should have local control over their own issues.**

**Voters should be able to elect local government candidates based, in part, on their stance regarding policies for managing outdoor homeless camps. Additionally, voters should have**

## **Sam Adams, Candidate for District 2 Responses**

**access to the local initiative process to create laws on managing outdoor camps in their communities.**

**HB 3115 severely limits these policy options for both voters and local governments.**

**To pursue its repeal, I propose including this policy position in Multnomah County's state legislative priorities for the 2025 session and lobbying the state legislature to support the change.**

4. **With the Joint Office of Homeless Services having spent \$1 billion over the past five years, how well do you think that money has been spent, and what changes would you propose to get better outcomes going forward?**

**Upwards of \$700 MILLION Each Year for Homelessness...For What?**

**The goal: Functional end to homelessness.**

**A functional end to homelessness includes the idea that the number of people exiting homelessness matches the number of people entering it. This balance ensures that homelessness remains rare and brief, with systems in place to quickly provide housing and support, preventing it from becoming a long-term issue. The focus is on sustainable solutions that address root causes while ensuring rapid re-housing for those affected.**

**The reality: A \$700 million mess.**

**Local decision makers are pouring upwards of \$700 million this year alone in homelessness, housing, mental health, drug addiction.**

**Yet, the number of people living outdoors keeps rising.**

**Why?**

**Because this massive \$700 million effort is siloed, piecemeal, and lacks accountability. Without a unified, coordinated approach, all this spending risks being ineffective.**

**Systemic changes underway: Not near enough.**

**The modest Joint Office of Homeless Services (JOHS) organizational changes agreed to during the contentious Portland and Multnomah County IGA renewal earlier this year are nowhere near enough.**

**Our growing homelessness crisis continues to expose systemic inefficiencies, and these small changes barely scratch the surface. We need a major shape up and overhaul.**

**The County and its partners must reorganize and treat outdoor homelessness for what it truly is—a full-blown emergency.**

## **Sam Adams, Candidate for District 2 Responses**

**This isn't just another policy issue. The crisis is urgent, growing, and impacts every community member.**

**Without bold, decisive action, this situation will only worsen. We must act now before more time and resources are wasted.**

**The HRAP: Hope fades.**

**Seven months ago, the County gave us hope with the announcement of the Rapid Homelessness Response Plan (HRAP). It promised real results with clear numbers and deadlines. But after the initial fanfare, silence. HRAP was barely mentioned in the Chair's budget, and after a six-month delay, it's hard to see how they will meet their deadlines or effectively implement the plan.**

**Sobering delays and deflection.**

**Too often. It's as if the county can work well on one issue at a time. This proposal will expand the expert capacity of the county. The sobering and deflection centers need to happen together and within an overall unified County and cities homelessness effort that this proposal provides.**

**These delays also reveal a larger issue—ongoing confusion between the County and local cities over who's responsible for what. And this is symptomatic of poor internal organization at the County level.**

### **The Path Forward**

**County must lead on homelessness.**

**For complex, urgent problems like homelessness, clear leadership is crucial. Right now, no single entity oversees the entire issue, leading to a fragmented response.**

**The voters also deserve to know what government is accountable for outdoor homelessness.**

**Multnomah County, with its public health expertise, is best positioned to take charge. The County can address the root causes—mental illness, addiction—and ensure the necessary services are delivered effectively.**

**To stop the scattershot strategies, the County must step up, take full responsibility, and align cities behind this unified approach. Only then can we move forward with real progress.**

**Cities should lead on housing production.**

## **Sam Adams, Candidate for District 2 Responses**

**As the County tackles homelessness, Portland and other local cities must focus on solving the housing shortage.**

**Cities have the tools to expedite affordable housing development through urban planning and development incentives. Zoning, permitting, and funding processes must be streamlined to build housing quickly and efficiently.**

**Multnomah County should support this effort by ensuring resources are aligned to meet the needs of newly housed individuals.**

**This division of responsibilities will allow both homelessness and the housing crisis to be addressed more effectively.**

### **Solutions to Drive Progress:**

- **Appoint a Homelessness Czar**  
The buck has to stop somewhere, or we will get continue to get nowhere. Elevate Dan Field, Director of JOHS, to Homelessness Emergency Czar, with emergency powers to coordinate all homelessness services across the County, Portland, other cities, and—if the Governor agrees—the state’s work within county boundaries.
- **Create a Homelessness Working Group**  
We need a group of doers. Establish a daily operational group to tackle prevention, encampment removal, shelter placements, rapid rehousing, and one-intake client care management. The County should lead, with cities supporting.
- **Develop a Unified Homelessness Budget**  
Follow the money. The Homelessness Czar must create a joint budget for approval by the Multnomah County Board, Portland City Council, Home Forward, and local state agencies. This budget should cover all homelessness-related spending, including ambulance, EMT, Portland Street Response, and police services. A unified budget will allow us to find cost savings, close gaps, reprioritize less important spending, and track outcomes.
- **Phased-in Regulated Ban on Camping**  
Allowing hundreds of often moving camps to scatter across the 466 square miles of Multnomah County is not a compassionate public health approach to homelessness. It’s ideology- and magical-thinking-based policymaking. We have enough resources to get resources to a dozen of official outdoor camps but not hundreds of self-sited camps.
- **Establish a Unified Client Care Portal**  
This should be done ASAP. Create one care tracking system for all services. This will ensure clients receive the help they need, allow caregivers to follow up, and provide taxpayers with transparency.
- **Public Outreach and Accountability**

## **Sam Adams, Candidate for District 2 Responses**

**The County’s public outreach must change. Quarterly in-person updates on results should be provided at city council meetings, neighborhood meetings, and business district meetings. Feedback should be requested and received.**

**Require an annual public report card of joint homelessness efforts—not just siloed ones—so the public can see what’s being done, whether goals are being met, and what actions are being taken.**

**The current approach to homelessness is fragmented, inefficient, and lacks accountability.**

**Without unified leadership from Multnomah County, this crisis will continue to spiral out of control. We have the resources, but we lack the structure and coordination to make meaningful progress.**

**By appointing a Homelessness Czar, creating a unified budget, aligning efforts across government levels, and ensuring public accountability, we can stop the scattershot strategies that have failed us.**

**The stakes are too high to delay any further. Let’s take bold action now.**

5. Multnomah County has pushed hard for Housing First strategies, which prioritize moving people into housing over temporary shelter and treatment. Do you agree with this strategy and set of policies, or would you take a different approach? If so, what would that approach be?

**I believe the Housing First approach has significant merits, particularly its focus on providing stability through permanent housing. However, I would take a more balanced approach, recognizing that while long-term housing is essential, we must also address the immediate needs of those experiencing outdoor homelessness.**

**In Multnomah County, the waiting list to get into permanent housing is 5 to 10 years. That’s far too long for people living on the streets today. While we work toward long-term housing solutions, we can’t ignore the need for immediate shelter and supportive services. Not everyone is ready to transition directly into permanent housing, and many individuals need interim support—such as shelters or treatment programs—to stabilize their lives before they can succeed in housing.**

**We must create a mix of housing, shelter, and support options to meet people where they are and help them transition at a pace that makes sense for them. This balanced strategy would reduce pressure on our system while still prioritizing permanent housing as the ultimate goal.**

## **Sam Adams, Candidate for District 2 Responses**

**By addressing both immediate needs and long-term solutions, we can create a more responsive and flexible system that supports individuals at every stage of their journey, rather than leaving them waiting for years on a housing list.**

**This is what I propose to do to see the creation of more local housing:**

**Emergency: Appoint Housing Czar, Fund Housing Now, Prep 400 Sites**

**We basically are at a dead stop in housing production. This is a full blown emergency and we need to act now.**

**As always, reply and let me know your thoughts as I finalize my proposal.**

**Housing is too expensive, and there isn't enough of it.**

**Recently, the Portland City Council approved a detailed housing production plan. I want to laud the early project prep work done by Commissioner Dan Ryan, and Commissioner Carmen Rubio who really delivered in bringing the project home.**

**My concern is the agreed upon next steps are not urgent enough.**

**Current situation:**

- **Local housing production is at a virtual standstill, with only 500 units in the pipeline, the lowest since 2009. (The Oregonian)**
- **To meet demand, we need to build 6,800 new housing units a year for the next 25 years. We aren't even close to being on track to do this.**
- **Most renters are cost burdened and spend 30+% of their household income on housing alone. (KGW) That's too much.**
- **Our housing shortage will push more neighbors into homelessness (ECONorthwest)**
- **People who are currently homeless are waiting up to 5 to 10 years to get into permanent housing. (Willamette Week).**

**This issue is personal to me:**

**I grew up in public housing with my mom and siblings after my parents divorced. It helped get us through some tough times. I don't know what we would have done without it.**

**My life experience fuels my affordable housing public service commitments.**

- **Under Mayor Vera Katz I helped lead the city's financing efforts to redevelop North Portland's Columbia Villa into the New Columbia neighborhood.**

## Sam Adams, Candidate for District 2 Responses

- While mayor I budgeted \$280 million for affordable housing and created the city's first Bureau of Housing. (2009-2012 Mayor's Proposed Budgets)

The big challenge now:

While the City Council has approved a housing production plan, we lack the necessary emergency "booster rockets" for implementation.

We risk repeating the underwhelming results of Ordinance 187371 from 2015, which declared a housing emergency, but *failed to achieve needed results because no one person is in charge and has under-powered implementation requirements*. We can't afford to let that happen again.

The big solutions needed:

My Emergency Housing Production Implementation Proposal provides the needed focus, funding, and accountability of emergency-level actions to build more multifamily rental housing faster, including:

### Unified Leadership

- Appoint a "Housing Production Czar" and get the county, the cities, and state on the same page with one accountable person leading the local process for all in a coordinated way.
- Place all housing related staff from all departments in all governments, including all permitting and zoning staff, under the matrixed direction of the Housing Production Czar.

### Community Engagement

- Create a diverse Emergency Housing Production Implementation to advise Housing Production Czar.

### Rapid Action

- Develop a Production Plan with five-year phases over 25 years. Key upfront actions include:
  - Cities and county enact local funding plans (more on this below) for 1-80 MFI housing subsidies.
  - Approve 400 shovel-ready and nail-ready sites for 35 apartments at each site.
  - Reverse engineer multifamily housing developments to reduce costs per unit at every possible inflection point.



## Sam Adams, Candidate for District 2 Responses

- Provide development bonuses for required prevailing wage construction and expand union skilled trades apprentice training programs to meet workforce demands.
- Conduct outside review of why national funders are bypassing Portland for multifamily housing investments and seek to address concerns.

### Secure Funds Now

- Cities and the county should redirect up to 50% of funds, on an ongoing basis, for housing from ballot measure approved programs when their tax proceeds are higher than what the proponents forecasted.
  - The type of housing subsidized can fit into the measures' mission (i.e. Preschool For All funds going to subsidized housing for single parents like my Mom).
    - Include in this funding a redirect effort for the Streets to House Services, Portland Clean Energy Fund, Portland Children's Levy, Arts Tax, CEO tax, new TIF districts, and Preschool for All programs.

Given our urgent housing crisis we need bold, decisive actions to address it. This is not the time for slow, incremental steps—it's a moment that calls for transformative leadership and an aggressive, focused implementation strategy to increase housing production now.

I have a proven track record of helping to create and implement large-scale initiatives just like this. I understand the complexities involved in affordable housing development, from public-private funding and zoning issues to community engagement and cross-agency collaboration.

Multnomah County deserves bold leadership that can navigate bureaucracy, secure the necessary resources, and drive urgent, large-scale action to tackle this crisis and others head-on.

6. Re-criminalization of drug use in public areas under House Bill 4002 allows for treatment as an alternative to incarceration. Do you believe treatment should be mandated? How should this work, and how does that compare with the direction the county is currently taking in establishing a deflection center?

I support a balanced approach that emphasizes both accountability and the opportunity for rehabilitation. The model used in Pima, AZ, is an excellent example of this, where deflection occurs at the local jail. Offenders are given a choice: take the door that leads to

## Sam Adams, Candidate for District 2 Responses

**treatment and rehabilitation or continue down the criminal justice system path. This approach provides people with a real-time opportunity to change their trajectory while holding them accountable for their actions.**

**Under House Bill 4002, treatment as an alternative to incarceration is an important step, but I believe treatment should be mandated in certain repeat cases to ensure individuals are getting the help they need, especially when public safety or personal well-being is at risk.**

7. What approach do you support for addressing drug addiction and public drug use—a low barrier, harm reduction approach or an approach that focuses on treatment, recovery, abstinence, and personal responsibility?

**I believe addressing addiction requires a comprehensive and individualized approach that iterates until a path to success can be found. It can include both harm reduction and pathways to treatment, recovery. Awakening and activating an individual's sense of personal responsibility is key. These are not always mutually exclusive, but at time can be components of complementary or sequential strategies to a healthy lifestyle.**

8. How will you engage the public, businesses, and nonprofits in having a reasonable voice on homeless policies and actions taken by Multnomah County?

Follow up:

For example, how could the County work with neighborhoods to designate areas for shelters serving unhoused individuals and for behavioral health facilities? Siting these facilities is often the biggest barrier to their successful implementation.

**The County's apparent current practice of choosing a site, signing a lease *then* engaging stakeholders, is wrong headed. I will reverse this order and sequence of how the county selects sites.**

9. In your opinion, what percent of people currently unsheltered in Portland are capable of employment and increased independence?

Follow up: Could priority for benefits like rent support and subsidized housing be given to people who commit to job training and employment, leading to independence? How would that work?

**I don't know what percentage of people currently unsheltered in Portland are capable of employment and increased independence. I know a percent of those experiencing homelessness do work. I assume many more could.**

**Based on research my city hall team and I completed, I would continue to assess options to increase coordination and enhance unhoused access to paid non-standard work:**

**<https://www.portland.gov/council/documents/resolution/adopted/37595>**

## Sam Adams, Candidate for District 2 Responses

I believe that tenants of the 10,000 housing units managed by local cities and the county should be required and supported to contribute toward their rent if they are able-bodied.

This could be through work experience programs, training, or education that empower them to eventually transition into market-rate housing, making room for others to benefit from the housing support they've received. This approach helps individuals stand on their own financial feet and encourages self-sufficiency, offering a clear path toward independence.

For those who are not able-bodied or face significant barriers to employment, it's essential that they have access to disability benefits or other appropriate support. This ensures we are setting realistic expectations while providing a tailored approach based on each person's capabilities. Balancing work opportunities, education, training, and disability support creates a fair and focused system that promotes long-term success for everyone.

10. Currently the Multnomah County Chair has significant power to control the agenda, policies, actions, and budget for the County. Do you believe this current structure is appropriate, and what would you do to change it if you feel it is not appropriate?

I was the first person to raise the fact that Chair Vega-Peterson was violating the County Charter when she blocked Commissioners' attempts to place items on the Board agenda. I got Stoel-Rives to conduct a detailed legal analysis of the issue which validated my initial views on the issue. Three strong independent County Commissioners can Board rules that better balance the power between it and the Chair.

“At least one Multnomah County Commission candidate is talking about the issue on the campaign trail.

“That a county chair can corrupt a board-approved rule, meant to ensure transparency and accountability, to achieve the exact opposite, typifies the rot at the top of Multnomah County's undemocratic decision-making,” said [Sam Adams](#), the former Portland mayor who is [running for a county seat](#) representing North and Northeast Portland.

Adams this month criticized the county chair's control over legislation and policy in a newsletter he sent to his 13,000-person email list.

“Our county commissioners are effectively muzzled,” he wrote March 18. Read more: <https://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2024/03/multnomah-county-chair-has-unparalleled-power-to-block-proposals-she-doesnt-like.html>

AND:

“The little-known and unparalleled authority also conflicts with changes to Multnomah County government approved by voters four decades ago and “has the potential to create

## Sam Adams, Candidate for District 2 Responses

undemocratic and unjust results for Multnomah County citizens,” claim Stoel Rives partner Jeremy Sacks and associate Alex Van Rysselberghe.

“The pair detailed their legal analysis in memo provided to Sam Adams, the former Portland mayor and a current candidate for the Multnomah County commission, and reviewed by The Oregonian/OregonLive.”

**[Read the memo]**

**READ MORE:** <https://www.oregonlive.com/watchdog/2024/04/multnomah-county-chairs-unparalleled-power-to-block-fellow-commissioner-proposals-is-illegal-analysis-claims.html>

11. With the successful merger of county and city operations in places like Indianapolis, Nashville, and Miami, where systems run much smoother and businesses have been attracted to their areas, would you support a merger of Multnomah County and the City of Portland? Why or why not?

**Yes, for the reasons you mention in your question, I support a merger. I led the staff work on County Chair Bev Stein and Mayor Vera Katz’s 1997 failed initiative to merge the county and city of Portland. Some state laws need to be changed to make a merger easier and more cost effective.**

## **Homeless Solutions Coalition Questions for Multnomah Co Commissioner Candidates**

1. What will be your number 1 priority if elected to the Multnomah County Commission, and what plans do you have to realize outcomes from that priority?

Housing and homelessness. I want to see us make big gains over the next four years now that we know how much Metro's Supportive Housing Services tax is raising. We need to move quickly to open buildings we can operate as shelter, and frankly I'm frustrated that buildings the county bought when I worked there are sitting empty instead of sheltering people. I want to work with my fellow commissioners to develop a North Star framework for our housing and homelessness work, so we can agree that we're rowing in the same direction. And I hope to do the same with our new city council and mayor.

I'm running because I've spent decades working with people who need help getting into permanent housing. I know what works and I know what doesn't. And I'm sick and tired of watching politicians bicker and throw blame around instead of rolling up their sleeves so they can get to work. I'll be on the job day one with a fire in my belly to get things done.

2. Do you support a policy of ending unsheltered camping in Portland? If yes, what alternatives do you suggest for people who are currently unsheltered?

I support ending homelessness in Multnomah County and have been working to do so for many years. I have personally helped hundreds of people into permanent housing and off the street. What those years of direct service have taught me is that there is not a single solution that universally addresses this humanitarian crisis.

For some people, having a stable place to stay on the street while they find their way through the bureaucracies that prevent poor people from succeeding is enough. For other people, they want to find access to sobering services, or behavioral health services. Some people need to escape an abuser. Some people just need a better job, or help with some outstanding debts.

The best thing that Multnomah County can do is recognize that we need more of everything. More shelter, more sober housing, more low-barrier programs to help people with complex needs. We won't make progress if we are dogmatic and inflexible about our approach to this crisis.

As a follow up: Based upon the recent Supreme Court decision that struck down legal limitations placed on local public camping bans, neighboring states like Washington, California and Idaho are now free to enact camping bans, even if shelter is unavailable.

The city of Portland is already enforcing its ordinance on public camping. We'll see what the outcomes are soon enough. Making unsanctioned camping more illegal than it already is won't change what we see on our streets. People are sleeping outside because they can't afford an alternative.

We have to recognize that we can't change that overnight for everyone, and because of that, we have to find balance. As cities do their work to ensure public space management, the county needs to be a partner in trying to get as many people off the streets as possible when enforcement is occurring.

Do you favor amending or revoking HB3115? How?

I think we should watch how things progress, and see if we can learn anything about what the best policy framework might be. I'm frankly tired of politicians rushing to put something in law and then having to repeal it a couple years later because it didn't work. Let's learn from what's happening on our streets and in our jails today and we can let that inform our engagement with the legislature in the future.

3. With the Joint Office of Homeless Services having spent \$1 billion over the past five years, how well do you think that money has been spent, and what changes would you propose to get better outcomes going forward?

I have given the Joint Office a C for their performance to date. It does appear that the Joint Office is doing a better job of ensuring that supportive housing services funds are reaching people experiencing and at risk of homelessness in our community. That said, I am committed to community accountability. That means holding institutions, including the Joint Office, accountable for the effectiveness of current policies and investments. While the Joint Office has made progress, there is more work that needs to be done. In particular, we need to do a better job of keeping people who move out of homelessness into housing from falling back into homelessness. Multnomah County needs to invest in a housing retention system that responds to the needs of the person housed and supports them in rebuilding a community of support while also providing support to landlords and property managers. A robust housing retention system is a critical component to any effective response to homelessness.

I'm also looking forward to having more frank debate among our county commissioners about the progress we're making and the administration of these programs. I want us to move beyond the notion that there's a policy fight here — we all want to see an end to homelessness. But there are people who are frustrated because they don't feel like they're being heard. I want to make sure they are being heard and we're learning what we can from them and putting it to good use.

4. Multnomah County has pushed hard for Housing First strategies, which prioritize moving people into housing over temporary shelter and treatment. Do you agree

with this strategy and set of policies, or would you take a different approach? If so, what would that approach be?

I support anything that works. And what doesn't work is being dogmatic. Across the programs funded at Multnomah County, there are a lot of programs that HUD wouldn't fund because they aren't housing first programs. But those programs have been working well in our community for a long time. We know they work and we should keep funding them.

We also know that rent support, coupled with supportive services can be very effective. Which is why I support the continued investment in those programs. We need a range of programs that address everyone's needs. We won't have that if we get stuck in these fights over what we should call something, or whether it fits some kind of test.

I want to be really clear here. There are a lot of people who will say there's too much money spent on shelter or housing programs, but the reality is that we don't have enough federally supported public housing. Because of that, local governments on the west coast are struggling to close a gap that's larger than their budgets are capable of. That means we need to focus on what works, and to the extent we can, lower costs.

So that's my approach. I don't care if your program is housing first or recovery housing. What are your outcomes? How many people are you serving and at what cost? Because if we fail that test and let unsuccessful programs get funded, it means that someone doesn't get the help they need to get back on their feet.

5. Re-criminalization of drug use in public areas under House Bill 4002 allows for treatment as an alternative to incarceration. Do you believe treatment should be mandated? How should this work, and how does that compare with the direction the county is currently taking in establishing a deflection center?

Look, effective behavioral health treatment should be prescribed like any other medical care. That means it should follow the evidence to ensure that patients are going to actually see better health outcomes. Treatment mandates aren't popular because they tend to underperform alternative approaches.

We don't currently have appropriate treatment services even for those who are actively asking for help. To sustainably reduce drug use in public areas requires investing in the strategies that we know work to engage people who are actively using and to motivate them to participate in treatment. And most importantly, we have to invest in having appropriate treatment services and recovery supports available to people when they need them.

I'm glad the County moved forward with the vote to start construction on the deflection center, I'd hate construction delays to be what slows things down. We must also address the need for beds throughout the continuum otherwise we have nowhere to deflect people too. I look forward to working with my colleagues at the County, Cities, and State to address the behavioral health needs of our community.

6. What approach do you support for addressing drug addiction and public drug use—a low barrier, harm reduction approach or an approach that focuses on treatment, recovery, abstinence, and personal responsibility?

I support all of the effective approaches currently in place in our community. Low-barrier, harm reduction strategies do not encourage addiction or diminish the importance of treatment and recovery, including abstinence-based recovery programs. They recognize that often getting someone to engage with treatment requires meeting them where they are and helping ensure that their currently bad situation does not become even worse. The goal of both low-barrier and harm-reduction strategies is to build a connection with those who are not already asking for treatment and to use that connection to keep them as safe as possible while getting them to a place where they are ready to commit to a recovery program.

For other people, abstinence or sober group housing programs are helpful. We need a range of solutions to make sure we're not turning people away who want to overcome their addiction.

7. How will you engage the public, businesses, and nonprofits in having a reasonable voice on homeless policies and actions taken by Multnomah County?

I am fully committed to transparent accountability, and with that comes my pledge to be available to meet with representatives of the public, businesses, unions, non-profits, and other interested parties and community members on critical issues facing the County, including on homelessness. I will also support - and work to make effective - the various advisory bodies that have been set up to give multiple constituencies the opportunity to have input into homeless policy and to hold the County, the City, and the Joint Office accountable for their policies and spending to address homelessness.

Follow up: For example, how could the County work with neighborhoods to designate areas for shelters serving unhoused individuals and for behavioral health facilities? Siting these facilities is often the biggest barrier to their successful implementation.

Neighborhoods have a role to play in land use, zoning, and permitting decisions that regulate the types and location of residential, commercial, and public facilities that can be sited within their boundaries. This role is no different for the siting of shelters and behavioral health facilities. I believe it is very important to notify neighborhoods and to seek input on siting decisions, and to create appropriate reciprocal good neighbor agreements when a new program is contemplated. But we are watching up and down the west coast the consequences of a kind of reflexive “not in my backyard” opposition to growth. That’s hampered our ability to build housing and it’s helped fuel our homeless crisis. So I want to work with people to get to yes, but if we’re never going to agree, we need to move on and do our work. I know from my own work that shelters and behavioral health programs can be very good neighbors when they are adequately



funded and well managed, and as County Commissioner my role would be to help make sure that this is true of all County-funded residential programs.

8. In your opinion, what percent of people currently unsheltered in Portland are capable of employment and increased independence?

Susie was a woman I worked with when I was running the SAFE Shelter. She struggled with behavior expectations due to her addiction and was exited from the program 13 times, most often for violence, once for having drugs on site. We always allowed women to get back on the waitlist and get a bed again in 30 days (or when their name came up if a bed was not available in 30 days). She was in and out of shelter for 2 years. The last time she moved into shelter, she came to my office and thanked me for exiting her before. She said she understood that her behavior wasn't okay, and that she appreciated that she knew she could always come back and try again. Susie was able to use her shelter stay to engage in the 12 step program we offered in our day center. She got Medicaid, mental health treatment, and primary care services. She went on to begin her employment search with support from our partners at an agency that offered supported employment programs. We found her an apartment with a landlord willing to give her a chance and were able to provide move-in costs and rent assistance for a few months so she could get settled. She was able to get a job and become financially independent but we continued to provide retention services for a year to help her rebuild her community of support. Today, Susie is working to support other people to move from homelessness back into housing while she maintains her sobriety and mental health treatment. Susie is someone that many people would say wasn't capable of employment and increased independence.

Everyone who is unsheltered today is capable of much more than what their current circumstances allow. Being unsheltered is an enormous barrier to achieving one's potential, including in the realm of employment and greater financial independence. Some percentage of people who are currently unsheltered have such severe and persistent disabling conditions that conventional employment and financial independence are very likely out of reach but they have potential that can't be realized while they are still unhoused. Others are of retirement age and have very limited fixed incomes that mean they will require a long-term rental subsidy in order to get off the streets, and they also have important contributions to make to their friends, loved ones, and community that require stable housing. For the vast majority of unsheltered people, employment and increased financial independence are achievable, but they face barriers that they need support overcoming in order to reach their potential. Housing is one of those barriers, but those who are unsheltered, like other groups experiencing homelessness, often also struggle due to lack of access to appropriate, high quality physical and behavioral health care, child and dependent care, job training, and living wage employment opportunities.

Follow up: Could priority for benefits like rent support and subsidized housing be given to people who commit to job training and employment, leading to independence? How would that work?

I would approach it the other way around. We've found in Multnomah County that providing housing support to people engaged in workforce training or job skills programs leads to higher wages and more successful job opportunities.

One of the important things about the Metro-wide supportive housing services program is that it created flexible dollars that aren't tied to federal or congressional mandates. That allows us to do innovative things that otherwise wouldn't happen. I'd like to find ways to fill gaps in our existing programs with some of these dollars.

Look, when I did street outreach, a lot of times I had to convince a landlord to give someone a second chance, or drive them out to a job interview myself. Once your home is gone, things get so much harder to manage that even maintaining your basic records becomes a daily challenge. We have to do this work with our eyes wide open.

As I'm talking to people in the district and going to candidate forums, one thing that I think is missing from the conversation is the huge opportunity that Multnomah County has to build wealth and skills for folks through our public works projects. Do I think those workforce opportunities should be better aligned with our anti-poverty work? Absolutely.

But prioritizing resources for people who can work leads to the question – what about the disabled veterans and seniors? It leads to questions about how mothers who need to care for their children would be served. We need to be more open to the reality that the many people in our community will need different paths out of poverty. And that's OK.

At the end of the day, we should do what works, is most cost-effective and fair.

9. Currently the Multnomah County Chair has significant power to control the agenda, policies, actions, and budget for the County. Do you believe this current structure is appropriate, and what would you do to change it if you feel it is not appropriate?

I've honestly never had an issue getting on the board's agenda as an advocate. If that changes as a commissioner I'll take a look at what we can do to change it then.

10. With the successful merger of county and city operations in places like Indianapolis, Nashville, and Miami, where systems run much smoother and businesses have been attracted to their areas, would you support a merger of Multnomah County and the City of Portland? Why or why not?

I think it's a great idea. The details would matter. It's been a while since the city and county had a working group examining this. I'd support funding one.