



**City Finance Committee
Recommends Budget to
REMOVE PORTLAND FIRE ENGINE
#1 & FIREFIGHTERS**

*Crew & Engine Are Munjoy Hill Based But
Service All of Portland*

Good afternoon,

I'm writing to update you on the City's budget process and where things stand in regard to one particular matter that impacts you and everyone else in Portland.

During last night's city Finance Committee meeting, that committee recommended to the full City Council a budget for the Portland Fire Department which includes the removal and retirement of Portland Fire

Engine-1 and the removal of the firefighters who man that particular engine. Portland Mayor Ethan Strimling is expected to introduce an amendment to the proposed Fire Department budget which would keep the engine and staff in place through the hiring of at least nine new, full time firefighters.

It's important to know that both the engine and its personnel are based at the Munjoy Hill Fire Station, but **the engine services the entire city, from the West End and Old Port to East Deering and *Peaks Island, (*crew only)**. Engine One also responds to most, if not all reports of open/active blazes throughout the city. Indeed, this is a citywide resource, not simply to the neighborhood in which it's housed. It's removal presents a clear and deadly risk to all of Portland.

This engine responded to the deadly Noyes Street fire of November 1, 2014, where four young lives were lost. Additionally, it was the only engine nearby and available when a large blaze broke out at the corner of Merrill Street and Cumberland Avenue on January 2, 2017. **It is a major resource in the daily protection of Portland lives and property and we desperately need to keep it.**

This truck is one of only five fire engines in Portland. A total of four will be left when and if it's removed.

We want you to know that we support our City Manager and City Council in their efforts to manage the City's budget. Few would doubt it represents their best intentions. The City has been facing mounting debt and millions in interest payments to cover pension loans taken out several years ago. To control the budget, fund what is needed while paying down debt is, without doubt a heavy burden to bear. However, there is indeed money to keep in place what we have had for many years and these cuts are not necessary in order to manage the budget responsibly while making progress on debt. **We believe the public welfare and safety of Portland transcends this proposed level of austerity.**

I must also acknowledge the need of the surrounding neighborhood Engine One is housed within, Munjoy Hill. The Hill is old, with many old wood-framed homes and structures. The neighborhood is dense with buildings and new construction. All just a spark away from a major blaze. The Hill itself is expected by many to experience to most drastic changes in property tax rates following the current revaluation process. These factors alone justify retention of a fire engine and its crew.

During Wednesday's meeting of the Finance Committee, several budgets were reviewed, altered and/or trimmed. While Fire Department funding was punted to the full City Council for consideration, (that meeting is set for Monday night), the committee also voted to remove \$450,000 in proposed funding from the Portland school system, yet it approved a request by the Portland Public Library for an additional \$15,000 to cover new legal fees. That funding was sought, and provided in addition to the funding for legal fees already built-in to the Library's budget.

On Friday, I'll be joining others in holding a brief press opportunity to speak to this issue. The urgency is based on the City Council's expected vote on the budget on Monday evening. Specifics for tomorrow are still fluid but reach out to me if you'd like the details later today. **As for Monday**, I hope you'll join us at City Hall and speak up for why, even during budgetary belt-tightening, we must keep our police, fire and other first responders in place, ready and with the tools they require for keeping the public safe, and in holding the public faith in the abilities and readiness of Portland's finest and bravest.

Warmly,

Jay Norris, President
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PLEASE CONTACT
Dst. 1 City Councilor
Belinda Ray and Ask For
Her Help in Retaining
Engine 1 & Its Crew
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Let's Be Friends!



The Munjoy Hill Neighborhood Organization | www.MunjoyHill.org