



A Reflection On Portland & Revaluation

I pen this observation from a small cottage in Stonington, Maine

Many years ago, while residents of New York City, this cottage at Cove Meadow became our safe place where we would retreat for a week each year to gather ourselves and to reflect on the evolution of our lives, and to remember what was important and what was clutter. In “the city” the intensity, the traffic, and the crowding were accepted parts of our lives in a deal with the devil made in exchange for world class art museums, access to exceptionally fine restaurants, and theater as found in few other places. The price paid was moving through impossibly crowded subway tunnels and streets, city services pressed to the limit, and an overlay of many fellow residents who could barely afford to be there but as actors, artists, and those who made that wonderful cuisine available, all of them essential to what made New York in the eyes of some, the greatest city on earth.

I’m sure you can see where I am going with this reflection. Fast forward a few years, and now, in our eyes, and in our lives, Portland is that greatest city on earth, magically matching the positive attributes that we left behind, but in no small part, for lack of the downside. At least that’s the way that we found it a few short years ago. I have the good fortune to have been born in Maine, and for extended stretches, to have lived and worked here, with a few sojourns of time being “from away”. With that history I lay claim to the right to have an opinion based on both fact and observation.

Portland is a special place on the face of this oh-so-large planet where, with good fortune, we spend our lives immersed in a naturally beautiful landscape shared with exceptionally nice people. With that comes the sacred trust of keeping and protecting it, understanding what makes it so wonderful, and managing it wisely for all who have spent their lives here as well as for those who would like to. This is no small task as the many of you know who have given of your time to be involved in the hard work of that nurturing. From the chosen members of our city government to the grass roots members of our neighborhoods who love this place enough to get involved, there are a bunch of folks doing the work required to keep it special. It’s hard work, requiring the wisdom of Job, the insight of a seer, and a commitment to do the selfless right thing.

Your mission if you choose to accept it !!

We are facing a seemingly insurmountable real-life problem in the city of Portland. In a nutshell, some people are lucky enough to live here, lots more people want to live here. Property prices are being driven ever higher by demand, and the demand on and cost of public services are rising dramatically. Increased density, a broader tax base and higher taxes are needed but threaten our way of life. There are many living here who are aging in place or working moderate income occupations that contribute greatly to all our lives, and others are just starting out who would love to do it here. These people are threatened by the demands of growth and social evolution in our growing economy. Their being able to live here relies on a stable economic ecosystem that provides affordable housing. That depends to a great extent on fair and equitable property valuation, and a distributed tax base shared by both private and commercial interests.

Property owners have recently experienced a “revaluation” or in other words a reassessment of their property’s value resulting in significant changes in how property taxes are assessed and levied. The increased taxes levied on some residents while not on others based on which neighborhood they live in, will have a profound effect on their lives, on their ability to stay in their homes, and on the ability of other property owners to provide affordable rental units. The city that has for so many longtime residents been their safe place seems to have forgotten them. We can do better than this.

On September 23rd MHNO will host a virtual meeting with a panel discussion on the revaluation of property in the city of Portland. We will explore the mechanics of revaluation, how it was done and by whom, its effect on the residents of Portland, and what is fair and equitable taxation for a growing city.

You are invited but attendance is limited. Follow this link to reserve your seat:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_MRACwSgXTeu-UyepjtSpRw

Sincerely,

Wayne Valzania, President
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