

Munjoy Hill Neighborhood Organization

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Proudly serving Portland's Munjoy Hill neighborhood since 1979.



MHNO's Real Estate Tax Revaluation Panel Recording Now Available

Thanks to all who participated in MHNO's Real Estate Tax Revaluation Panel and Discussion, held September 23rd. A lot of good information was provided.

Anyone who is thinking about filing a formal appeal would do well to first listen to Attorney Peter Murray's segment of the presentation.

A recording of the full program is available on YouTube, clicking on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOPFMDO-kDw>

The entire program is approximately 1 hour and 42 minutes. To help navigate to a particular section, this is a summary of topics and speakers:

Background, Why Revaluation Now and Legal Parameters, MHNO President Wayne Valzania, Chris Huff, Tax Assessor, Mayor Snyder, Councilor Ray, minutes 0:00 to 19:00;

How Portland's Revaluation Was Conducted, Chris Huff, Tax Assessor Gynt Grube & John Valente, Tyler Technologies, minutes 19:00 to 37:30;

Contesting Your Tax Assessment: The Formal Appeal Process, Attorney Peter Murray, 37:30 to 1:02:00;

Possible Real Estate Tax Relief Programs (with a footnote on Rent Control), Chris Huff, Tax Assessor, Mayor Snyder, Councilor Ray, Barbara Vestal, 1:04:00 to 1:23:00;

Questions from the Public: 1:23:00 to 1:42:00.

Post-Panel Reflections on Tax Strategies by Councilor Ray and Mayor Snyder

In addition to being a guide to what is and how one might be able to get some relief, the Panel generated a lot of small group, post-Panel discussion about tax equity. Some comments focused on why we find ourselves with tax bills that seem to have hit Munjoy Hill disproportionately hard. Others focused on longer-term structural change to try to have a different way to distribute the revenue-raising burden five to ten years from now.

When asked about creative approaches that might make Portland less dependent upon real estate taxes, Councilor Belinda Ray and Mayor Kate Snyder e-mailed the following observations, both of which both focus on the importance of a **local option sales tax**:

Councilor Belinda Ray:

RE: becoming less dependent on property tax, the City of Portland is very fortunate to be one of the only municipalities that derives something like 45% of its income from revenue sources other than property taxes.

With the number of rental car companies here in Portland, the excise tax is a good revenue generator, as are the cruise ships when they are coming because they pay per ticket fees to help with infrastructure.

Also, over the last few years, we've implemented new impact fees to help cover sewer/water/school costs, we've raised parking rates, and we've come up with new revenue generators like parklets and hotel room impact fees for new hotels. These are all helpful, but at this point, what we really need is a change to the state's law which disallows municipalities from instituting local option sales tax.

That's a battle that's been ongoing for decades at this point, with communities in Southern Maine wanting to be able to lobby these taxes and communities in Northern Maine feeling like it would be a tax on them when they visit a place like Portland. I'd love to see that change, and it's perpetually on the docket in Augusta. The only way to move that needle is to get more rural communities to buy in, and I'm not sure our legislators have been able to do that yet.

If we can get beyond COVID, that may be a discussion those communities would be willing to broach again, but getting them to collaborate will require helping them see how it could be helpful to a larger region, and not just Portland. I have faith that Mayor Kate could make that case - she's very diplomatic - but we'll certainly need our Portland legislators (and other regional legislators) on board as well.

Mayor Snyder:

There's not a whole lot I can add to Councilor Ray's thorough response (thank you, Belinda!).

One thing I will offer though is that Portland now has one of the lowest mil rates in the region.

In other words - we "charge" less per \$1000 of assessed value than many of our surrounding communities. This speaks to Councilor Ray's point about Portland's unique diversity of revenue sources which support the municipal budget.

I agree that the local option sales tax is critical for Portland. However, there has not been broad support in Maine, nor from the Governor on this front. I know that the Legislature got close in 2019 - but that was only for a lodging local tax. Ultimately, it failed to get the votes needed. If ever you want to invite local legislators to a panel (a la Thursday evening) I'd be happy to join - and I suspect City of Portland Economic Development staff could offer some insights.

Councilor Ray, continued:

And, I would add that some communities across the country have the ability to institute their own income taxes as part of a local option tax. This is a state

by state decision, and in Maine, we don't have the option to levy any sort of local option tax: sales, income, sugary drinks--all off the table.

In other states, municipalities have the ability to levy taxes aside from property taxes, and the way in which this is instituted varies greatly. Some only tax the pay of residents, some tax all workers, resident and non-resident alike who work in the municipality. Some levy a percentage, say 1% of pay. Others levy a flat tax as low as \$2/month.

If we could do that in Portland--or institute a sales tax, even a seasonal one--it would represent great relief for property taxes. Of course, there are pros and cons to the implementation of any tax, but...it would be nice to have the option.

Here are a couple of associated resources that are interesting to peruse.

The City of Portland's FAQs on the Impact Fees that were enacted in 2018
<https://www.portlandmaine.gov/DocumentCenter/View/23424/Impact-Fee-FAQs>

The National League of Cities graphic from 2018 that shows areas in which municipalities are pre-empted from making local decisions by their state government.
<https://www.nlc.org/resource/city-rights-in-an-era-of-preemption-a-state-by-state-analysis/>

From The Balance, a list of states where municipalities levy income taxes.
<https://www.thebalance.com/cities-that-levy-income-taxes-3193246>

CITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS: INFORMATION AVAILABLE

AT-LARGE COUNCIL AND DISTRICT 2 CANDIDATE FORUM OCTOBER 14, 6:30 - 8:00 PM

As they have done for several years, the Western Promenade Neighborhood Association and the West End Neighborhood Association are co-sponsoring a candidate forum on Thursday, October 14th from 6:30 - 8:00 pm. The forum will include candidates for the City Council At-Large and District 2 (West End) races. (Note: this forum does not include candidates for the District 1 race, but District 1 residents might be interested in the At-Large portion of the program.)

Who:

- [District 2: Jon Hinck](#)
- [District 2: Victoria Pelletier](#)
- [At-Large: Stuart Tisdale](#)

- At-Large: Brandon Mazer
- At-Large: Travis Curran
- At-Large: Roberto Rodriguez (cannot attend)

When:

- Thursday, October 14, 2021 - 6:30 to 8:00 PM

Where:

- Via Zoom

What will they talk about? You can help decide:

- Submit a question for the candidates by emailing hello@wenamaine.org no later than October 10.

There is no guarantee that all questions will be posed to the candidates. WENA and WPNA reserve the right to group similar questions into one and to edit questions for tone and/or clarity.

Zoom info:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87434633328?pwd=dmFESDgrd2Z6VFFhRzQ0Q3VmdFdEZz09>

Meeting ID: 874 3463 3328

Passcode: 181238

BAYSIDE, PARKSIDE AND EAST BAYSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS TO CO-HOST CANDIDATES FORUM MONDAY OCTOBER 25TH

In an ambitious undertaking, the Bayside, Parkside and East Bayside Neighborhood Associations will co-host a remote candidates forum on Monday, October 25th at 6:30 pm. They are scheduled to have candidates from the City Council At-Large, District 1 and District 2 races, as well as the At-Large School Board race (and School Board District 1 and District 2 and Water District, all three of which are uncontested).

Save the date. The Zoom link will be provided when it is available.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE:

MHNO continues to be a vibrant, community-based organization. We could never have anticipated the great changes this past year and a half has brought. But these have only reinforced our mission. We are here for the people who live on or have businesses on Munjoy Hill. To do this, we need your help. Please join us, stay involved, and encourage your friends and neighbors to do the same. Change is not only good -- it's essential. We embrace new members, and welcome their thoughts, ideas and involvement. Please visit us at www.munjoyhill.org.

The next monthly business meeting of the 13-members of the Board of Directors of the MHNO will be held on Monday, October 4th at 6:00 p.m. Monthly meetings are held remotely using Zoom. If you are a member of the MHNO and are interested in sitting in on the Board of Director's meeting, please send an email to info@munjoyhill.org and request that you be emailed a link to the September MHNO Board of Director's meeting.

Wayne Valzania,

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President



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