

## Jul 22 PM Council Session - Public Testimony - Item 615

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**From:** [Roberta Jortner](#)  
**To:** [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** July 22, 2020 - Support for Agenda items 615 and 616  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 21, 2020 2:06:39 PM

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Dear Mayor Wheeler and Portland City Commissioners:

I am writing in support of two items on your July 22 agenda.

1. I support the resolution proposed by Commissioner Amanda Fritz (Item 615) to make broader use of city property, including for park space, community garden, and habitat. This will provide more equitable opportunities for access to nature and growing food in Portland's urban areas.
2. I support the Mayor's proposal to refer to the voters a five-year local option tax levy for the November 3, 2020 General Election to restore recreation programs and protect parks and natural areas (Item 616) These funds are needed not only to allow the re-opening of many community centers, pools, and camps, in 2021, but also maintain and enhance Portland's urban forest, and our parks and green spaces which have also been impacted by lack of funding and reduced staffing.

During the Covid-19 pandemic Portlanders flocked to local parks and natural areas to spend time in nature. There is a need to address inequities in access to nature and in distribution of tree canopy and associated benefits, including stormwater management, cleaning/cooling air and water, and reduce the impacts of urban heat island. Addressing these disparities will require funding so that the City can maintain trees in parks and natural areas, but also to continue its programs to plant trees on city streets and in yards.

Also needed is City investment in street tree maintenance, both to maintain this several billion dollar public infrastructure asset, and to reduce the cost burden on property owners that creates resistance to planting new trees and perpetuates disparities in tree canopy across the city. About two years ago, the City Council directed Portland Parks and Recreation to establish a task force to evaluate options for funding Street Tree maintenance. Unfortunately, this effort was subsumed under Sustainable Futures. It is important not to lose sight of this issue, and if the levy passes to continue moving forward toward a viable programmatic solution.

Thank you for your good work, and for considering this testimony.

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