

# Melissa Stewart

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November 11, 2021

Commissioners JoAnn Hardesty; Dan Ryan, Carmen Rubio, Mingus Mapps  
City of Portland  
City Hall  
Portland, Oregon 97204

**SUBJECT: The Destiny of the Noise Office**

Dear Commissioners:

I write today to offer a bit of useful history and perhaps some less than readily available information of the Noise Control Office that may offer insight to you in your effort to make decisions for the future of Noise. I speak as a six-year veteran of the Noise Review Board, having spent the last year there as Chair (2012-2018) and with the support of my colleagues. Thus, my experience dates back to the time the Noise Control Office was part of the Bureau of Development Services, where it belongs.

When I joined the Board in 2012, Paul VanOrden was the sole manager of the Noise Control Office and the office ran smoothly, for he was balanced in science, concerned for the environmental health of the public of our city, and even-handed in working with developers whose concerns often challenged the established codes – the first City Noise Ordinance in the nation – to protect a City from excessive and health threatening noise.

When the Noise Control Office was arbitrarily moved into what is now the Office of Civic Life, then under Amanda Fritz, the Noise Control Office and its portfolio began to devolve into what is now a mere shadow of its former self, underfunded and understaffed; staffed with individuals without viable credentials in positions of power, lacking political neutrality, leaving a harried Noise Control Officer without the control he has more than demonstrated he is without equal to perform.

If you compare the population of the City in 2012 to that which we experience now it is impossible to expect one officer, restricted to 8 – 5 business hours per day at a time when few infractions occur, who is the only officer authorized to sign a notice of infraction, to take care of a city of the size ours has grown to be? If you accept the science that excessive noise is a health hazard, then how do we keep our city safe in the current environment?

I urge you to give back to Paul VanOrden the authority and portfolio to bring

the Noise Control Office back to its rightful, and useful place in the service to the public that it once fulfilled honorably and which brought nationally favorable attention to this city.

This does, of course, assume that appropriate funding will follow because, at this point in 2021, if things continue to spiral as they have thus far, there is really no point in pretending to have a Noise Control Office at all.

Sincerely,

Melissa Stewart

cc: Noise Review Board : Carol Gossett; David Sweet; Susan Pearce;  
Kerrie Standlee