

# Linda McConnell

**#278175 | March 16, 2021**

## Testimony to **Portland City Council** on the **Shelter to Housing Continuum Project, Recommended Draft**

I strongly object to the proposal of temporary siting of shelters in parks for no more than 180 days. This will remove the parks from public use. I have already curtailed bicycling and walking on the Peninsula Crossing Trail as I feel unsafe as a senior woman. I walk on the opposite side of the street from Portsmouth Park because of the proliferation of RVs and boats being used as shelters. Without express permission to shelter in parks, there is already a problem of overuse and lack of supplies in park porta-pottis or entrances to park restrooms being blocked by the homeless. Review of Nextdoor posts of residents near parks and temporary encampments shows increased property theft. The encampment by Pier Park in St. John's is already known as the spot to go look for your stolen bicycles. County and state campgrounds have regulations and staff to maintain restrooms, trash, fire use and grounds-keeping. How is the City of Portland planning on dealing with the daily needs to keep city parks clean with long term camping? PP&R has such a backlog of maintenance issues that the voters were asked to pass a bond to take care of them. We did. Now you are expecting the same taxpayers (who also have passed various measures to help the homeless) to not even be able to enjoy the parks we are paying for. There are simply not enough trash cans, restrooms or water to make long term camping of up to 6 months viable! It's not sanitary. Add to that the problems of drug use, mental illness, assault and physical health issues and you are making the parks unsafe for the public, the neighborhoods and the campers themselves. There were 2 recent stabbings in a North Portland encampment. How will an unsupervised city park be any different? Once you allow this, there will likely be no enforcement and the 6 months will be extended because of another "emergency" or plain old lack of action from a City that plans and proposes but is short on long term, realistic solutions. I think one issue that is often ignored when looking at the plight of the homeless is that many people who are housed do not have funds to be able to provide other recreational activities outside of our parks and cannot afford to have property crimes committed against them, such as theft of bicycles and water. I think Portland has to find a way to increase resources for the homeless without decreasing safety for everyone else.

Testimony is presented without formatting.