

# Deborah Scott

**#278844 | March 24, 2021**

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

Mayor Wheeler and Members of Portland City Council: I support the City to find workable and humane solutions for responding to houselessness, but strongly urge you to remove the recommendation to use open spaces, which would include parks, natural areas, trails, golf courses, parks-related parking lots, and community centers as temporary shelter spaces, except in the case of natural disasters and short term emergencies. The use of these spaces and facilities should not be allowed during a Shelter Shortage as defined in the proposed code. These spaces are meant for recreational, not residential use. The citizens of Portland have voted for significant tax measures to support both houseless services and parks. We need to honor the intent of the voters and make certain that all can use our parks for their intended purposes. The use of these spaces as sites for shelter is a short-term solution that would create long-term problems. Please rethink your assumptions related to siting of temporary shelters as described in 33.296.030.H. Shelters should be sited so that they can remain in place if they are successful. These sites should be able to evolve, in terms of services and facilities, to meet the needs of the residents. To disrupt all of that and force the entire camp to relocate for no reason, except that 180 days is up, does not make any sense. It is not fair to the campers or the non-profits running the site. There is also a chance that while the non-profits running 180-day sites leave once their permit expires, those living in the sites would not. This would create a huge strain on the City to move the campers and restore the site to its pre-housing use. I am concerned that providing short-sighted shelter relief will exacerbate the houselessness crisis (by not providing "real" relief) and will also needlessly pressure open spaces—Portland Parks & Recreation does not have the means to repair the damage that camping will do to parks and trails. If these “temporary” shelters are sited in open space zones, and if campers did move, they would continue moving from one park site to another, doing even more damage. This whole idea appears inefficient, expensive, and unfair to everyone. Instead, “temporary” shelters should be sited in locations where they, if desired, can become permanent. Temporary shelters in parks do nothing but move camps around within the city, disenfranchising other park uses and damaging park landscapes. They also leave the cost of remediation with PP&R whose budget is already limited and strained. There is funding now available from federal COVID relief and the Metro Homeless Services ballot measure. This money should make it possible to lease property in all parts of the city to establish mass camps, tiny house clusters, and safe parking for occupied vehicles. I support innovative solutions that solve problems, not trade one for another. I expect the City of Portland to do the same. Thank you, Deborah Scott

Testimony is presented without formatting.