

## Written Testimony - Agenda Item 1066/1026

Agenda Item	Name or Organization	Position	Comments	Attachment	Created
1026	Eecole Copen	Support with changes		Yes	12/13/23 9:49 AM

Testimony By Eecole Copen on Amendment to Tourism Improvement District Code to modify the license assessment rate and remove the periodic sunset review requirement

Dec 13, 2023

Greetings city council members,

Thank you for hearing my testimony today.

My name is Eecole Copen and I have loved living in Portland for 27 years. I have worked on pill hill for 18 as a nutritionist with a focus on sustainability. I wanted to bring you a message of perspective and this proposed amendment was the perfect opportunity. As mentioned in the ordinance, Portland has been slow to recover and event planners are concerned for the safety of their customers given the houselessness and drug crisis. Yes, Portland's image, the tourism industry and housing market are all suffering. This is not a surprise to me.

We are living in an increasingly hard-to-navigate society. So many are confused by how to plug-in to the systems that keep the wheel turning- let alone thrive.

I believe that a radical shift of perspective is needed by our leaders. What if we take "keep portland weird" to the next level? What if Portland was the first city to honestly recognize that there will always be people who can't manage to fit into the system, for whatever reasons. That these folks are not a problem and their situations are often not their fault but a direct result of the society we live in. If we embraced this part of our society, wrapped our arms around it with as much love and attention as we give to sports or our TVs, we would undoubtedly have enough brainpower to figure out brilliant solutions that provide for the most basic needs - protection from the elements and a comfortable and safe place to be, sleep and eat. Perhaps the task of finding ways to help these folks feel comfortable and connected is an opportunity to relearn how to be more human and compassionate. Perhaps these folks are our teachers.....

I've had a vision for years. I see a perimeter of about 250 villages surrounding our city full of microhouses. Each with about 20 people on about 1/2 acre of land which amounts to about 125 acres and houses the approximately 5000 folks currently houseless. Each village has a community kitchen, bathrooms, laundry facilities and common space. I see a dedicated bus and health services making rounds each day. I see each village self-managed, empowering its residents. I see the city of Portland donating 125 acres to this kind of project, making it so much

easier for non-profits or government entities to focus on funding for building. There could even be a model village where tourists visit to see how it all works.

Currently, there are places that houseless folks have gathered with their vehicles that seem to be less of an intrusion into housed people's lives Like NE 33rd and Marine Drive. I congratulate and thank the city for providing recycling bins every few blocks and not sweeping them. As an interim step while villages are being built, I see the city actually condoning parking and camping in designated areas like this and providing basic infrastructure like trash cans, porta potties, hand washing areas, recycling and compost and perhaps even some basic transportation to the city and back. This would be a massive step in cleaning up these areas, building trust, offering support and acknowledging that everyone belongs somewhere.

While i support the amendment today, I would like to propose that some portion of the license fees go towards supporting this infrastructure and ultimately the villages. This would be a win-win for the folks out on the streets, the tourists visiting our beautiful city and all of the business and home owners that currently struggle given the crisis at hand. I have always thought of Portland as one of the greatest cities on the planet. It would make me even more proud to live in a city that took care of all its people. This is our time to show the world just how brilliant, kind .. and weird.. we really are.

Eecole Copen

**Portland City Council Meeting - Wednesday, December 13, 2023 9:30 a.m.**

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>
1026	Eecole	Copen