

Overlook Neighborhood Association

Christian Trejbal, Chair

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March 2, 2018

Mayor Ted Wheeler, MayorWheeler@portlandoregon.gov

Commissioner Dan Saltzman, dan@portlandoregon.gov

Commissioner Amanda Fritz amanda@portlandoregon.gov

Commissioner Nick Fish, nick@portlandoregon.gov

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, chloe@portlandoregon.gov

Director Suk Rhee, suk.rhee@portlandoregon.gov

Re: Possible elimination of ONI's Graffiti Abatement Program

Dear Mayor Wheeler, et al.,

At its general meeting on March 1, the Overlook Neighborhood Association (OKNA) voted to encourage Portland City Council and the Office of Neighborhood Involvement to maintain funding for ONI's Graffiti Abatement Program. The "5 percent" cuts proposed by ONI's Budget Advisory Committee would eliminate the program to the detriment of neighborhoods and our city as a whole.

The budget advisory committee recommended cutting the program because it allegedly "does not align with ONI's mission." On the contrary, maintaining livability in our neighborhoods is precisely within the scope of ONI's mission, which states in part that it is to build "safe and livable neighborhoods and communities." Graffiti abatement does this more so than other programs Council has placed within ONI such as recreational marijuana regulation and managing publicly financed political campaigns.

Graffiti has long been a problem in Portland. But, in the past 3-5 years, there has been explosive growth in graffiti. The growing presence of graffiti affects us all; it adds to the increasing sense of loss of control and sense of safety in our environment and our neighborhoods.

For years, the Overlook Neighborhood has successfully worked with the Graffiti Abatement Program through our neighborhood cleanups and other efforts to remove tags and other marks painted in public spaces. The abatement program has provided guidance, supplies and support. Juliette Muracchioli, the Program's only full-time employee, has been especially helpful.

Eliminating the Graffiti Abatement Program would seriously hamper morale and set us back in our efforts to fight and clean up our neighborhood. There is no other program or resource in Portland we can look to for getting the kind of guidance and assistance that we get from the Graffiti Abatement Program. The program is completely in line with ONI's Mission to foster civic engagement and improve livability. We respectfully urge you to maintain this program and its funding.

If Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, Director Suk Rhee and the Council seek to save money within ONI, other items in the proposed budget are better choices. The Graffiti Abatement Program costs \$407,980. ONI,

meanwhile, proposes spending far more – \$750,000 – on a new emergency preparedness awareness program. OKNA vigorously supports emergency preparedness as demonstrated by our strong Neighborhood Emergency Team (the best in the city), but that is a job already handled by the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management and need not be co-opted by ONI. Likewise, \$181,304 for a new communications specialist is unwarranted when money is in short supply.

We do not envy you having to balance a budget with so many competing needs, but there are better places to cut than Portland's successful Graffiti Abatement Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christian J. Trejbal". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "C".

Christian Trejbal

Chair, Overlook Neighborhood Association