

Northwest because it's never been managed as a nonprofit organization, which is what it is. And that means that we have obligations, mandates, things that we operate under that haven't necessarily received as much attention in the past as they should have, so that's what we've been working on to solidify the organization itself so that we can continue, which is our number one responsibility—ensuring that the organization continues. So in that area, we have a lot of work. I'd give us probably a B or a C.

In terms of the festival, I think we actually do a good festival. Are there always logistical issues that we're working out, figuring out, all of that sort of stuff? Always. An event that large, it's always going to be there. But in terms of what we're able to accomplish with what we have, I'd give us an A.

JO: The Pride Parade went on for about three hours. Do you think that's too long?

Porta: Honestly, I don't know. Most of the reason that the parade was so long is because we had more entries than in a long time. It was pretty close to last year, actually. We had more people marching in the parade, which just made it huge. It was big. There are stops in the parade that we have no control over—TriMet. Buses will stop. Trains don't stop. But we deal with that every year. So the size of the parade this year really had an impact on how long the parade is. No one has come to me with concerns about the fact that it was three hours, but I don't think anyone was expecting it to be that long. But it's obviously a discussion that we will have to undertake, particularly if someone wants us to undertake that discussion.

JO: Did you receive any complaints this year about indecency during the parade like you did last year [involving a sex sling]?

Porta: No.

JO: Is Pride Northwest making an effort to bring the parade route back downtown? Some feel attendance has been sparser since it moved to the new route.

Porta: We explained this in a letter that was published in *Just Out*. We moved it for two reasons. The parade originally used to follow



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—DEBRA PORTA, PRESIDENT, PRIDE NW

this route, or at least close to it up until 2005, 2004. The decision at that time, before any of us were on the board, was to move the route to where it went, and the community was very vocal about not being happy with that move. They were still vocal about that when I joined the board a couple of years after it happened. There were relationships that were broken; there were partnerships that had been built in the community that were severed because of that original move. We made the decision to move the parade because the overwhelming feedback that we consistently got from the community was not being happy that we had abandoned our business area.

JO: When you refer to relationships that were broken, you're referring to relationships with the businesses in Old Town?

Porta: Right, for the most part, yes. The other reason—and this is why I'm going to harp on the nonprofit part of things—is that we have a responsibility to run a budget, and the parade gets more and more expensive every year, as does the festival. Three things: listening to the community feedback we had gotten



since the original change, listening to community feedback about people who could no longer walk the route, so to speak, because they were physically unable—and that's a significant population—and the increase in the cost of the parade to be able to put it on were the three factors we took into account in looking at making the change that we did last year.

JO: Pride Northwest has a non-smoking policy for its events, right? Namely at the festival on the waterfront.

Porta: We have a designated smoking area policy.

JO: How is that enforced?

Porta: It's only a couple of years old. It's still something that we're working the logistics out on. At this point, most of the enforcement, so to speak, we really expect it to come

from the community—to respect those areas and respect the fact that there's a large portion of the community that doesn't want smoke going up and down the aisles. We do not wish to be the smoke police at the festival, although we will respectfully ask people to move to those areas. And if there are suggestions on how to better handle it, bring them along.

JO: The Pride Northwest website lists three members on the Pride Northwest board, but your bylaws stipulate you should have four. How many do you have?

Porta: We have three board members at this point in time. We are aware of the fact that the bylaws say four. We're also aware of the fact that we have the ability to amend or suspend portions of the bylaws if absolutely needed and then get to the state where we're in line with them again as soon as possible.

JO: But you are planning to elect a vice president?

Porta: Yes, very much so.

JO: Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Porta: I came across an interview by the board president in 1999 [Tobin Britton] in *Just Out*, and it was a full-page interview, and her mantra throughout the interview was getting the community to understand that Pride happens because the community's involved. And at that time they had 10 people on the board, and she felt that it was not enough. And given what we deal with, I can see that. So now we have three, and we had fantastic volunteers this year—people who have come on board to help out, and that's what we need. We need partners who will help facilitate and make sure that things happen, because this is a large undertaking. It's not separate from the community although it may only happen three days out of the year. The planning for it, the success of it takes the entire year, and that's really my big message. This is the community's festival and it takes the community to make it happen. JO

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