

...A working person's guide to the Portland mayor's race

(From Page 2)

- When budget shortfalls make staff cuts necessary, the cuts should focus as much as possible on management and overhead, not on the front-line workers who provide the City's services. A state law Smith helped pass in 2011 sets a goal of 11 workers for every manager at large state agencies. The ratio in Portland is estimated to be 6 to 1, and all three candidates thought that was too high.

- The City should discourage bureaus from over-using temporary, seasonal, contracted out or prison labor.

- The City should buy goods and services locally when possible.

- All three said they would support a requirement that employers provide paid sick leave. [Seattle adopted such a measure in 2011.]

- None are in favor of Walmart-style big box development.

SOME DIFFERENCES:

THE ECONOMY

Brady has made private sector job development the center of her campaign for mayor. She says she would spur jobs by making city permitting easier, getting city to buy local goods and services, and persuading employers from elsewhere to locate in Portland.

"I'm a recruiter by nature," Brady said. "I'm a business person. I know how to read a balance sheet and profit and loss statement. So I will be on the phones every week recruiting start-ups and other organizations, both for-profit and non-profit, to move to Portland."

Brady said she would also work to reform the city's "job-delaying permitting process." She says she wants to consolidate permitting into a single bureau, create a "no-surprise" permitting system, and make it more affordable.

Hales, on the other hand, says the best thing the City can do for the local economy is return its attention to what it's supposed to be doing: providing good public services at a good price.

"The city of Portland is a great big blue-collar service operation," Hales said. "We pave streets and mow grass and teach kids how to swim and put out

fires and respond to 911 calls. We're not Congress. We're not the Legislature. We're not an issues debating society... If we occasionally want to have a debate about recycling, the public will put up with that, but what we're really supposed to be doing is paving their streets and putting out the fires."

Hales said he'd like to adopt a paperless permitting and inspection system along the lines of what Salt Lake City has: Permits can be filed online, and inspectors come out with iPads, making reports in real time that are accessible online.

Smith's favored approach to economic development is "economic gardening," — helping existing small and medium-sized businesses to grow — rather than "hunting" big companies to get them to relocate. He also wants to establish 311, a one-stop phone number that citizens can call when they have non-emergency questions or issues with local government. And more than the other candidates, Smith says he wants to focus on the problems of Portland's less affluent outer east side, including greater light rail safety, more parks, putting in sidewalks, and paving streets.

COLUMBIA RIVER CROSSING

"It's the biggest public works project that we'll have here for the next decade," Brady said, "and if we don't proceed with it, it may be another 10 years before we can even have the possibility of leveraging the federal dollars to get it done." Brady, who calls herself

a booster of the project, says that though the project may get "skinnied down," the dollars are there at the federal government, and so is the commitment by Oregon's and Washington's congressional delegation.

Brady's support for CRC was a big part of why she got Operating Engineers Local 701's endorsement, said Local 701 political coordinator Cherry Harris. [Harris also credited Brady's willingness to learn about unions, and her support for enforcing apprenticeship utilization requirements on public-private projects.]

Hales, meanwhile, says the existing proposal can't be built because of recent objections by the U.S. Coast Guard.

"What's really needed is not somebody who's a cheerleader for this project, but somebody capable of negotiating success," Hales said. "We have to come up with a version of the project that is buildable and that we can afford and that we can start on soon." Hales said he would favor a simplified main span and light rail, but not a Hayden Island interchange.

Smith is the most critical of the CRC, saying it can't be built because it's too expensive — that funding is uncertain in Congress, that Oregon and Washington are unlikely to come up with the required hundreds of millions of dollars of contributions, and Clark County residents may not support tolling that would be needed to pay for the bridge. Instead, Smith says he would push for neighborhood-scale public works projects, that will spend public money on construction workers, not just engineers and consultants.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Smith said he worked hard to defend Portland's Voter-Owned Elections system of public campaign finance, and still feels bad about its defeat at the polls in 2010, by less than 700 votes. Smith thinks some modified version of the proposal should go before voters again.

Hales disagreed. "It was a noble idea that voters have now turned down," Hales said. "I certainly prefer to be in an environment where money wasn't such a big factor in elections, but how we get to that utopia with the voters having turned it down, I'm not sure."

BANKING

Hales is pushing a plan called Community Credit Portland, which he says is modeled on the Bank of North Dakota. The idea is to deposit the City's bank balances in local banks and credit unions, and use it to make loan guarantees to local businesses.

Brady's not so sure. "I think the success of that particular model has been oversold," Brady told the Labor Press. Unemployment is low in North Dakota because of the natural gas boom, Brady said, not because of community lending.

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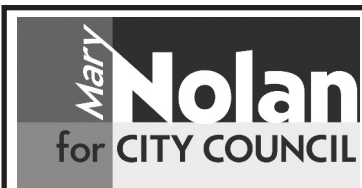


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