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done is address the underlying problems that were there in the first place. I'm talking about poverty, homelessness, drug addictions, mental illness and racial inequality. We haven't addressed these issues. We've pushed them aside, or out of the urban core.

People who come to the central city might think that everyone in Portland is prosperous, healthy and white. We know that is not true. What we need to do is recognize the reality that we have tremendous inequality in our community, still.

If we really want to live up to our potential and create what Martin Luther King called the "beloved community" we can't push these problems under the rug. We have to address them, we have to come together as a community and provide the resources that are necessary to make sure that people that are mentally ill, dealing with an addiction and/or homelessness can get help somewhere other than a jail bed.

**I.B.:** *That's great, but these are hard times. It's been 11 straight years of budget cuts for the county. Is tackling these issues even possible under these circumstances? Do we need something more, like a housing or mental health levy?*

**J.C.:** We have to do a bunch of different things. One thing is we do need additional revenues to really make a difference, whether it's a housing levy or a mental health levy or something along these lines. It's true.

I can tell you that the county board wants to raise taxes on things like tobacco, for example, to support the community, but we are prevented from doing that by the state. The tobacco lobby has the legislature locked up tight, and we have to fight this.

Our top legislative priority should be to get rid of these horrible and ridiculous preemptions on what local governments can tax to do good things. We should have our own community decide what we value, and how to spend local dollars.

**I.B.:** *So in essence these statewide preemptions to raise taxes on things like tobacco are really holding local communities around the state hostage?*

**J.C.:** Yes, they are. There is a whole series of ways in which special interests capture the legislative action and prevent local communities from providing local solutions to their own problems.

**I.B.:** *Do you feel like our state reps in Portland have their eye on the prize?*

**J.C.:** Our local representatives in Salem have all been supportive of us getting rid of the preemptions, and I really appreciate that. My hope is that in the coming session they will collectively step it up and not just be supportive, but have it be one their top priorities.

**I.B.:** *It seems like it's a community responsibility to push our local state reps to make that a top priority as well?*

**J.C.:** Yes, I agree. Me grumbling about it alone will not be enough, so I really do feel we need that. The community must weigh-in.

We also have to think more creatively about how we solve our problems. We can't keep doing what we've done for the last 50 years and just saying, "Gee, when we get more money we can start new programs." It's important that we start to come up with creative solutions that we can do even when we're broke.

We have to find real ways of making a difference. This is really important to the other question we were talking about, ways of inspiring people and showing people that government has the ability to think creatively and make a difference in solving problems. One of my favorite examples of this is what we've done on hunger issues because we have organized the second hungriest state in the country.

**I.B.:** *Are we talking about the County C.R.O.P.S. program adopted by the county?*

**J.C.:** Yes. We heard from the Oregon Food Bank that 36,000 people a month in Multnomah County were relying on the Food Bank for food. The Food Bank was having trouble keeping up with the demand. They came to the county and asked us for help. It was also while we were cutting \$30 million dollars from our budget. We couldn't help in the traditional way by giving them money, but we still were able to do something creatively. The county has surplus land, and specifically out in Troutdale at the old county poor farm, which had been lying fallow for decades.

What we did, along with the help of the private sector and volunteers, was build a farming infrastructure on the surplus land. We brought irrigation to the land and cleared the land for farming. With the help of volunteers, many unemployed themselves, we created a farm that now grows tens of thousands of pounds of fresh organic food for the Food Bank. Very little county money goes into that, and it's a community effort.

What government did was help provide the idea and the land and then helped convene the community. And that's something we have the ability to do even when we're broke. We have to be creative during hard times and not just think we have to throw money at projects. Don't get me wrong, we need more revenue to solve our underlying problems, but we also have to also be thinking outside the box and acting on it.

**I.B.:** *Which leads me to my next question. Politicians are so focused on staying on message and making sure to not rock the boat in order to work with a wide variety of partners. Are there areas where you feel like local leaders, including yourself need to take more risks to move a specific agenda forward?*

**J.C.:** One of the biggest problems that we face, I think, is a culture of playing it safe. I really do believe in terms of solving our problems both locally and nationally, we've got to do things differently. We've got to look at things differently.

When you think outside the box, when you try something new, you might fail. But why are we doing this unless we are willing to fail? It's actually something I think that government can learn from the entrepreneurial culture that we have in Portland.

If you're not willing to take risks politically, and if you're not willing to fail, you're very unlikely to make anything truly important happen during your tenure. On the other hand, and if you are willing to take risks and you're willing to fail, you are probably going to fail sometime. You have to live with that. It's a little scary, particularly as a politician, because you know you want people to vote for you and when you fail, they say, 'Look, he failed.' On the other hand, if you are willing to take risks sometimes, we can actually begin to change some of the things we have been talking about.

**I.B.:** *How significant to the county is the loss of \$11 million in state funding, and what is the county's plan for filling that gap?*

**J.C.:** These cuts are very devastating and we're very concerned about how these will affect some of our most vulnerable populations — people in need of mental health care, seniors, children and families. The Board of Commissioners is going to have to make some very tough choices pretty soon. We're mindful about the impact this will have on everyone. At the end of the day, though, people should know that our decisions are going to be based on making sure that those in need have as much access to services as possible.

**I.B.:** *On a lighter note, what are you reading these days?*

**J.C.:** I just finished "Shantaram." It's about this Australian guy who becomes a heroin addict and is sent to prison. He escapes from prison and ends up in India, hiding in the

Bombay slums. He eventually ends up founding a health clinic and becoming a local hero in the slums of India — awesome story, incredibly captivating.

**I.B.:** *Given that Sam Adams is not running for re-election, are you positive that you're not going to run for Mayor of Portland?*

**J.C.:** I've learned never to say never, but honestly all I'm worried about today is making the county the best it can be.

**I.B.:** *OK, then, what would you like to see in the next mayor of Portland?*

**J.C.:** Well one of the things that's really important is that we have leadership at the city that understands how important partnering with the county is. We are really two sides of the same coin.

For example, in housing, the city plays a critical role in building the physical facilities. I'm talking in particular for housing for low-

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income people and people with special needs. The county plays an equally important role in providing services for people who need services to keep stable in their housing.

The system is such that if you take an action in one area, you can have an effect in another. To really make a difference, we all have to be pushing in the same direction, and if the city is pushing one way, and were pulling another, then nothing great is going to happen. Recently, we've been able to do some amazing things together with the new mental health and domestic violence centers. I'm hopeful.

**I.B.:** *There's talk of a countywide ban on chemical bisphenol-A (BPA). Can you talk more about this?*

**J.C.:** The BPA is a toxic chemical. It's still used in some products — that is astonishing — like baby sippy cups and baby bottles.

The state legislature took up a bill and tried to ban the chemical. It's something that has passed in other states and passed with bi-partisan support. In Oregon it got caught up in partisan politics and special interests. The chemical lobbyists influenced the state from doing the right thing. I feel as Multnomah County Chair, I'm responsible for the Health Department, and it's our responsibility to protect our residents. When we see the state fail to act, locally, we need to step up.

I've convened a group in partnership with City Commissioner Dan Saltzman that has been studying to see if there's way we can do something about this. It looks like we can do something, and we're working on a pathway forward to banning BPA in Multnomah County. I'm hopeful that in the next month or two we will begin taking action.

**I.B.:** *Who are your mentors and inspirations?*

**J.C.:** Politically, (City Commissioner) Dan Saltzman. I was his Chief of Staff, and more than anything else he showed me the importance of persistence and focus. Then, (former Multnomah County Chief Executive) Bev Stein taught me the importance of relationships. Beyond the politics, my most important inspiration comes from the world of music. I would point to Bob Marley and Jerry Garcia who taught me the power of one love and of joy.