

ADAMS, from page 10

I.B.: Both you and Commissioner Amanda Fritz have managed to do what very few elected officials over the past decade have been able to do — strike a balance on Portland sidewalks related to issues of homelessness and poverty. Saying that, it is thought with a change of leadership in Portland that there will be a strong push for the city to crack down on people experiencing homelessness, specifically on sidewalks. Are we striking the right balance, and what's your advice to avoid falling into the same trappings that have historically plagued the community working on this issue?

S.A.: A couple of thoughts: One, I think it has been very corrosive to businesses and retailers downtown, to human service organizations and efforts downtown to have a decade of putting something out there on sidewalk management that then is ruled unconstitutional (sit-lie laws). You feel good about it for four to six months and then you are back to the drawing board. Whatever your view on this issue is, I think a lack of stability on this issue does detract from the core problems. How do we always improve downtown Portland for retail and business, while also doing our best to take care of folks that are suffering from illness or are hitting tough times?

I think we struck a balance with what we had, more importantly, we got off this cycle of seesawing back and forth that I witnessed in City Hall and in the community. This constant seesawing between well-intentioned groups is more corrosive and harder to deal with. It is more corrosive for business and for the folks social service programs are helping. I have worked two decades on this issue. Does that mean what we have now can't be improved upon? I am not saying that, but if anyone thinks that the courts are suddenly going to view any other get tough scheme any differently than they have in the past, which is to rule it as unconstitutional, then I would say those efforts are wishful thinking.

I.B.: There are many people who believe that the visible homeless curtail business downtown environments. What's your honest opinion on these issues?

S.A.: It definitely can. A certain percentage of people visiting or new workers traveling to downtown and in our neighborhoods are folks from afar and come from the suburbs. It can be startling.

There are also people out there who shouldn't be on the street. We try to manage that situation based on reality. It's also a

reality that the state and federal government and the counties have cut the hell out of basic health services for those who are mentally ill and poor.

There are virtually no affordable addiction or recovery services in the city of Portland. There are folks that are untreated in terms of mental illness and are untreated in terms of addiction. I believe in personal responsibility, but there is also a collective responsibility. Plenty of people want to make an effort to have a better life and to get off the street who are having tough times.

My approach to governing and leadership is radical common sense. I can be tough and supportive simultaneously. When it comes to mental illness, addiction and folks that are suffering tough times or bad luck, the biggest misnomer among the general public is that that's exactly what they want to be doing. We don't give people much of a glimpse of how it could be better because we have cut the hell out of social services. We have a lot of work to do on this front.

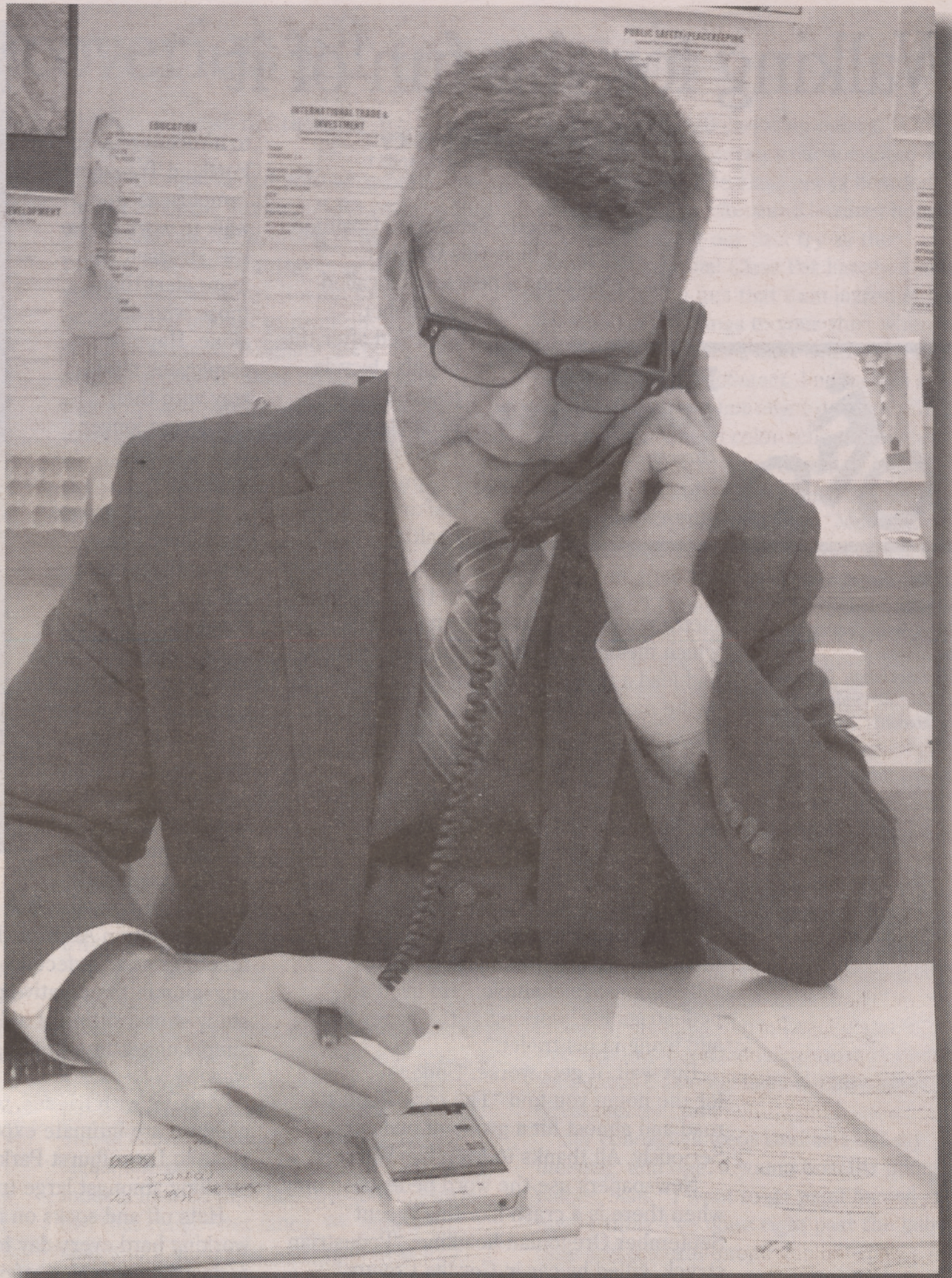
I.B.: I don't think people understand the pressure it must take both physically and mentally running an entire city. Not to mention constantly being under a microscope, while balancing varying viewpoints and interests. How do you internalize the work you do day-in and day-out?

S.A.: I am wired to see opportunities. My boyfriend jokes that when we go to see something like a house that may be viewed as a dump, I say, "No this is an opportunity!" My brain is just wired to always be thinking about new ideas.

I surround myself with smart people who have their own ideas. I delegate a lot. And I feel this great sense of responsibility. I try to be very clear with people.

I got involved in the government because I saw my mom, a high school drop out with four kids, hardworking, smart who made some bad decisions and had some tough luck, but ultimately wanted to make her life better for her and her kids. I saw how important government was. Things like food stamps, subsidized housing, etc., it allowed her to earn her high school degree and college education while raising four kids in a troubled marriage and then on her own.

At the same time, I saw and valued at an early age how the government, nonprofits and the faith community can help. I also saw how hard it is for somebody who is trying to make his or her life and community better



Mayor Sam Adams communicates to more than 55,000 Twitter followers.

and how government with the best intentions can sometimes stand in the way.

I take each day and the work I do very seriously. My roots are a kid from Newport, Oregon. I've been very blessed in my life, but I also have had to stand in line for paper food stamps and hold the place for my mom. I will never forget that and I do my best to govern with my roots.

Saying all of that, yes, this job can be incredibly intense. To see Portlanders shot and lying dead in our city, it's heartbreaking. You go from this environment some days straight to a speech or ribbon cuttings in a couple of hours. This job can eat you alive, or it can make you a screaming banshee.

You have to constantly work at stress management.

I am lucky. I have served eight years as an elected official and 30 years of service. For 22 years, I was a staff person. I never set out to be an elected official. I view this job and will continue until the last day of my term, as a great opportunity to help people and to serve Portland. Even on the worst days, it's still a great opportunity. I'm not going to waste a minute of it. Portland has high expectations and very involved people. It's the people of Portland who are the raw materials that make are city great.

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