

HVJ Fall 2025 Voting Guide

Portland City Council At-Large

Every election season, Homeless Voices for Justice (HVJ) creates educational voter material and visits several community locations to register people to vote. This year, we sent all candidates a series of questions and have published all of their answers here.

HVJ is a grassroots organization that works for social change with, and on behalf of, people experiencing homelessness and poverty. HVJ is led by organizers who have all experienced homelessness. The founding group in Portland has existed since 1995, and we network in other locations across Maine. Our goal is to build a coalition for, and of, people experiencing homelessness and poverty throughout Maine. We seek to empower people experiencing homelessness and poverty whose perspectives are often excluded from the development of policies and programs that impact their social and economic wellbeing. Disenfranchisement, oppression, and marginalization creates this absence. Therefore, we hope to assert ourselves and our interests in Maine politics through protest, education, positive policy change and reform.

HVJ meets every Monday morning from 9:30-11:30am and is welcoming of everyone who has experienced, or is currently experiencing, homelessness.

For more information, email HVJ@preblestreet.org or call 207-899-6042.

Are you registered to vote?

Visit vote.org to register and see what's on your ballot



Portland City Council – At-Large



Sam Aborne
He/Him



Pious Ali
He/Him

Sam Aborne

- Current Position(s)
 - Head Partners and Alliances at Bloomfilter
 - Investor at North Coast Ventures
 - Council Member at VOCAL
- Issues
 - Affordable Housing
 - Discarded Needles
 - Rising Property Taxes
 - Challenges Obtaining Building Permits
 - Opening Businesses
 - Existing Council Policies



Pious Ali

- Current Position(s)
 - Co-Executive Director at Forward Ever CollectiveFoundation
 - At-Large City Councilor
- Issues
 - Access to Quality Affordable Housing
 - Protect Our Environment
 - Support Education
 - Shared Economic Development
 - Protect and Expand Democracy



HVJ distributed surveys to all candidates running for Portland City Councilor At-large, asking for their perspectives on key issues affecting our community. This guide presents their responses.



In your opinion, what are the three most urgent issues facing the city of Portland?

Sam Aborne:

"Portland is facing unprecedented challenges of finding lasting solutions to homelessness, barriers to building affordable housing and stress on city resources. All of the above are interrelated to Portland's future economic, health and safety. A great opportunity exists, but it requires leadership that will listen, act and put the best interest of the city above politics – together we can restore hope and renewed enthusiasm for Portland's future."

Pious Ali:

"Housing Affordability and Homelessness Portland is facing a housing crisis that has left too many of our neighbors without safe, stable, and affordable shelter. Families and individuals are struggling to find housing they can afford, while shelters and services are stretched thin. Rising Cost of Living The growing gap between wages and the cost of rent, food, and utilities is pushing more people into housing insecurity. Without stronger protections and creative solutions, more of our community members will be at risk. Community Safety and Dignity Homelessness is often framed as a safety issue, but at its core it is a human dignity issue. Our city must ensure that people experiencing homelessness are treated with compassion and respect while also addressing the broader public health and safety concerns."



If you were to distinguish yourself from your opponent(s) for voters, what would you highlight as three critical differences?

Sam Aborne:

"Serving the city is a privilege. Voters deserve a choice which enhances the democratic process of participatory engagement. I am excited as an engineer to bring my world-wide experience and skills to the decision-making process with a data-based and human perspective. I have dedicated myself to problem solving by taking a common sense, reasoned approach while compassionately balancing the needs of those affected"

Pious Ali:

"1. A Lifetime of Service in Portland

For more than 20 years, my life in Portland has been rooted in public service. I have worked in many public service organizations and served on bodies that address the real issues impacting people in our city, including housing and homelessness. My children went through our public schools, and my ties to this community run deep. For me, this is not about politics. It is about giving back to the city that has given me so much.

2. Experience and Proven Leadership on Housing and Equity

I bring a record of leadership that shows results. I have worked to expand housing options, improve affordability, and make sure equity is at the center of decision making. I know how to move ideas from vision to reality, and I understand that safe, stable housing is the foundation of a healthy community.

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If you were to distinguish yourself from your opponent(s) for voters, what would you highlight as three critical differences? (continued)

Pious Ali continued from previous slide:

3. Collaboration and Deep Community Ties

I have built trust and relationships across Portland through years of service. I know how to bring people together, including advocates, service providers, businesses, and neighbors, to solve problems. My approach has always been rooted in listening with compassion, collaborating, and ensuring that the voices of those most affected by homelessness are included in shaping our city's future."

What is your plan to address the root causes of homelessness and help people experiencing homelessness find safe and stable housing?

Sam Aborne:

"There is not one root cause of homelessness, a complex situation with no one solution that fits all. Every individual is unique. Real solutions require compassionate, knowledge-based understanding with a collaborative approach to help people who are struggling.

Everyone deserves a home! The lack of affordable housings a major obstacle for the homeless in being able to rebuild their lives in a safe environment. First step, analyze what is not working and fix it!"

Pious Ali:

"1. Expanding Access to Safe and Affordable Housing

As chair of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, I have worked to fund innovative housing solutions. During my tenure, we have supported nontraditional housing initiatives and recently created the Social Housing Advisory, an idea from a colleague that I supported, to explore new ways to address the housing crisis. I will continue to advocate for policies and programs that ensure everyone has a stable place to live.

2. Strengthening Support Services Through Collaboration

Housing alone is not enough. People experiencing homelessness need mental health care, substance use services, job training, and case management. I work closely with organizations that address these challenges.

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What is your plan to address the root causes of homelessness and help people experiencing homelessness find safe and stable housing? (continued)

Pious Ali continued from previous slide:

When I voted to support the Downtown Ambassadors program, I asked that they connect with Preble Street and Volunteers of America so they could learn from their experience and better coordinate services. I am also open to working with service providers and advocates to explore what has worked elsewhere so we can implement effective solutions here in Portland.

3. Addressing Root Causes with Long-Term Solutions

Homelessness is often the result of systemic issues like poverty, rising housing costs, and lack of access to healthcare. I will continue to advocate for policies that expand economic opportunity, prevent displacement, and remove barriers to stable housing. My approach is rooted in collaboration, ensuring that community organizations, service providers, and city programs work together to create lasting solutions that help people regain independence and security."

Many communities are finding success with Housing First programs, which prioritize getting people into housing quickly with supportive services. What is your position on this approach, and would you support a Housing First location in your district?

Sam Aborne:

"The Housing First approach works, and it has the added value of support services with a compassionate approach to serving the unhoused."

Pious Ali:

"I strongly support the Housing First approach, which prioritizes getting people into housing quickly and providing supportive services. As an at-large councilor, I believe in distributing service locations equitably across the city so that all neighborhoods have access to the resources they need. I have supported Housing First programs in the past, and I will continue to allocate available resources to these initiatives as well as to other programs that help people experiencing homelessness secure safe and stable housing."



If elected, what steps would you take to reduce the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in our city?

Sam Aborne:

"I strongly believe everyone deserves a home. Seeking a lasting solution for the unhoused should be a high priority by addressing the barriers to affordable housing. The city and service providers are doing a good job of referring those in need to shelters but permanent housing is a pathway to reconnecting individuals with their community. More needs to be done!"

Pious Ali:

"I strongly support the Housing First approach, which prioritizes getting people into housing quickly and providing supportive services. As an at-large councilor, I believe in distributing service locations equitably across the city so that all neighborhoods have access to the resources they need.

I have supported Housing First programs in the past, and I will continue to allocate available resources to these initiatives as well as to other programs that help people experiencing homelessness secure safe and stable housing."



In recent months, the federal administration has been pushing a policy of arresting and ticketing people experiencing homelessness. Do you support arresting, ticketing, or moving along people sleeping or sitting outside?

Sam Aborne:

"With winter fast approaching, outreach to the homeless has to be a high priority in getting them shelter and preferably housing. Federal policies should not get in the way of local government except to help with solving the issues of homelessness through a more compassionate approach supporting and funding community-based solutions."

Pious Ali:

"I do not agree with a punitive approach of arresting, ticketing, or moving along people who are sleeping or sitting outside. I believe we need to explore alternatives that address concerns without punishing people for being unhoused. I look forward to having conversations with advocates, service providers, and community members to identify approaches that encourage positive outcomes and connect people to care and support. My goal is to create a community that is compassionate and safe for both residents and businesses"



This fall, thousands of Mainers will likely experience a reduction or complete loss of their SNAP benefits due to the recently passed reconciliation budget. Many impacted individuals and families will likely turn to local safety nets, like General Assistance and food pantries, to compensate for lost benefits. How do you plan to support local safety nets and address food insecurity in our city?

Sam Aborne:

"The legislature failed us in the last session by reducing the eligibility period for GA services, reducing reimbursement for beds at the city's shelter and flat funding of MaineCare in the 2-year budget. Unacceptable and it needs to be fixed! Continued collaboration between the City and social services in Augusta will be important. As for food insecurity, we need to work collaboratively with those organizations providing these services for example the recent business and public school food pantry project."

Pious Ali:

"Portland has a long history of partnering with service providers to support individuals and families who fall through the cracks. I will continue to support these local efforts, including food pantries and General Assistance programs, to help address immediate needs. At the same time, I will work closely with our state delegates to advocate for policies at the state level that ensure Portlanders and Maine residents receive the support they need now that federal programs are being reduced. With the gubernatorial race coming up, this will also be part of my conversations with candidates as I assess the best candidate to support on these critical issues. My focus is on creating a coordinated, compassionate response that strengthens our local safety nets and helps prevent food insecurity."

Where do you stand on the voter ID and absentee ballot referendum (Question 1) appearing on the state ballot this November?

Sam Aborne:

"Oppose"

Pious Ali:

"I am against the voter ID and absentee ballot referendum appearing on the state ballot this November. I believe voting should be accessible to all eligible Maine residents, and policies that create additional barriers risk disenfranchising voters, particularly seniors, people with disabilities, and historically marginalized communities. Protecting the right to vote is essential for a fair and inclusive democracy, and I will continue to stand against measures that make it harder for people to participate in our elections."

Where do you stand on the red flag law referendum (Question 2) appearing on the state ballot this November?

Sam Aborne:

"Support"

Pious Ali:

"I am firmly against gun violence and believe our communities must be protected from preventable harm. While I support responsible gun ownership, I also believe we need commonsense measures to prevent firearms from falling into the hands of those who may pose a danger to themselves or others. The red flag law referendum (Question 2) gives families and law enforcement a critical tool to intervene before a tragedy occurs. I support this approach because it prioritizes public safety, saves lives, and reflects our shared responsibility to protect one another while respecting the rights of responsible gun owners"

The opioid epidemic is one of the biggest public health crises in the state of Maine. What programs or initiatives would you implement to support harm reduction in our city? Do you support safe injection sites in Portland?

Sam Aborne:

"We need to focus in on the root causes of addiction; the opposite of addiction is connection. As a person who has witnessed firsthand the impact of addiction and mental illness on family and friends. I want everyone to focus on connection; how we treat each other matters. It is simply heartbreaking to know and experience the effects of both! Education to remove the stigma. For example, the recent Rally4Recovery event at Payson Park with service providers and a celebration of those on the road to recovery, was informative and inspiring!"

Pious Ali:

"The opioid epidemic is one of the most serious public health challenges facing Maine, and it requires a compassionate, evidence-based response. I support programs that reduce harm and save lives, including expanded access to treatment, overdose prevention resources like naloxone, and comprehensive recovery services. I will reevaluate the needle exchange program we currently have to ensure we take a different approach to collecting used needles and reduce the unintended consequences of having needles on our streets. While safe injection sites are one tool used in other cities to reduce overdoses and connect people to care, any approach in Portland must be carefully evaluated and implemented in close collaboration with public health experts, community organizations, and residents. My priority is to ensure that harm reduction strategies are effective, safe, and integrated with broader efforts to provide treatment, recovery, and long-term support for individuals struggling with addiction"

How do you plan to incorporate the perspectives of people with lived experience of homelessness and poverty into your policymaking?

Sam Aborne:

"Listen, learn, and advocate for inclusivity of all of our constituencies in the process – every voice matters"

Pious Ali:

"My approach to policymaking is always to center the voices of those directly impacted by the issues at hand, as well as the organizations that work closely with them and have deeper insights. People with lived experience of homelessness and poverty, along with the experts who support them, provide critical perspectives that I may not have on my own. I will continue to engage with both groups to ensure their input informs the decisions and programs we implement in our city"



Portland City Council – District 3



Regina Phillips
She/Her

Regina Phillips is running unopposed for Portland City Council – District 3.



Regina Phillips

- Current Position(s):
 - Co-Founder of Cross-Cultural Community Services
 - District 3 City Councilor
- Issues and Priorities:
 - Housing
 - Substance Abuse
 - Homelessness



HVJ distributed surveys to all candidates running for District 3 City Councilor, asking for their perspectives on key issues affecting our community. This guide presents their responses.



In your opinion, what are the three most urgent issues facing the city of Portland?

Regina Phillips:

"housing, substance abuse, and homelessness"



If you were to distinguish yourself from your opponent(s) for voters, what would you highlight as three critical differences?

Regina Phillips:

"I try to meet with folks about the issues effecting the city/their family. If there are two sides to an issue, I will meet with both supporters and non-supporters, along with getting the opinion of city staff and other councilors, so I'm informed and can make a decision I think is best. I'm not afraid to get it wrong sometimes, and say I've made a mistake."

What is your plan to address the root causes of homelessness and help people experiencing homelessness find safe and stable housing?

Regina Phillips:

"I think the city has made some strides looking at the unhoused and housing. We've increased the numbers of individuals staying at the homeless service center - we do need to make the HSC safer and more accessible, - helped the unhoused sleeping on the peninsula receive services - city staff are working hard to provide outreach so people know about the available resources, and soon community policing will be located across the street from Monument Sq - and, since the city has looked closely at affordable housing options/opportunities, and we need to continue to do that.

I think we need to keep doing the same things we've been doing. Collaborating with those who offer substance abuse assistance, employment, health and mental health care. We have great advocates that are working to address homelessness, and I will continue to be available to them to see how I can help."

Many communities are finding success with Housing First programs, which prioritize getting people into housing quickly with supportive services. What is your position on this approach, and would you support a Housing First location in your district?

Regina Phillips:

"I definitely support housing first, as we know it works, and have the data that proves it. I will work with anyone looking to advocate or build more housing first opportunities."



If elected, what steps would you take to reduce the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in our city?

Regina Phillips:

The candidate did not respond.



In recent months, the federal administration has been pushing a policy of arresting and ticketing people experiencing homelessness. Do you support arresting, ticketing, or moving along people sleeping or sitting outside?

Regina Phillips:

"Absolutely NOT! I will advocate to the fullest extent possible not to have this happen in our city."



This fall, thousands of Mainers will likely experience a reduction or complete loss of their SNAP benefits due to the recently passed reconciliation budget. Many impacted individuals and families will likely turn to local safety nets, like General Assistance and food pantries, to compensate for lost benefits. How do you plan to support local safety nets and address food insecurity in our city?

Regina Phillips:

"I will support any policy, ordinance change, or funding needed to address food insecurity, making sure our local safety nets are supported and folks continue to have access to needed services."



Where do you stand on the voter ID and absentee ballot referendum (Question 1) appearing on the state ballot this November?

Regina Phillips:

"I'm voting NO on question 1. Everyone should have the right to vote, and there should be NO barriers to allowing people to vote"

Where do you stand on the red flag law referendum (Question 2) appearing on the state ballot this November?

Regina Phillips:

"I support this bill, therefore I'll be voting YES."



The opioid epidemic is one of the biggest public health crises in the state of Maine. What programs or initiatives would you implement to support harm reduction in our city? Do you support safe injection sites in Portland?

Regina Phillips:

"I'm not involved in these conversations or work, and don't sit on the council's HHS and Public Safety committee. I do know that we need to do everything we can to support those with a substance use addiction. Therefore, I support the safe injection sites, and are more than willing to hear about any other suggestions someone has to address the opioid addiction, and others."



How do you plan to incorporate the perspectives of people with lived experience of homelessness and poverty into your policymaking?

Regina Phillips:

"I'm always willing to have conversations and get the opinion/advice from those experiencing homelessness and/or poverty on any city issue or policy. I know a lot of folks working with the unhoused and homeless, have a great respect for them, and always look forward to hearing what they have to say. Everyone should have a voice in any issue, and the respect to be heard."



Statewide Referendum Questions



Question #1: Citizen Initiative

Do you want to change Maine election laws to eliminate two days of absentee voting, prohibit requests for absentee ballots by phone or family members, end ongoing absentee voter status for seniors and people with disabilities, ban prepaid postage on absentee ballot return envelopes, limit the number of drop boxes, require voters to show certain photo ID before voting, and make other changes to our elections?



HVJ opposes this initiative.



Question #2: Citizen Initiative

Do you want to allow courts to temporarily prohibit a person from having dangerous weapons if law enforcement, family, or household members show that the person poses a significant danger of causing physical injury to themselves or others?

