

September 22, 2021

Dear Mayor Wheeler, Commissioners, and Office of Management and Finance (OMF),

Last week, September 15th, we sent you a letter urging you to postpone the renewal of the upcoming Clean & Safe Enhanced Services District (ESD) contract. Since then, we have reviewed the draft of the proposed contract, which has only amplified our concerns and reinforced our call to postpone this renewal.

OMF claims in their press release that there has been “extensive community engagement collaboration”, yet the public has been given only one week to review the contract before the hearing. The public should be able to see multiple drafts of the contract and have ample time to assess it and give meaningful input. This did not happen.

We were also caught off guard by this proposal’s co-sponsorship by Commissioner Mingus Mapps, despite having almost zero communication with our group about our concerns, and only becoming involved in this process in the past few months. Meanwhile, the Mayor’s Office, specifically Sam Adams and Khanh Tran, met with us once back in March and failed to make any more efforts to communicate with us, despite our vocal concerns arguably instigating the formation of the public listening sessions altogether

We are also directing our concerns specifically to OMF staff Tom Rhinehart and Geraldene Moyle, who played key roles in the crafting of this draft contract.

We thank Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty for consistently responding to community concerns around ESDs, especially Clean & Safe.

Because the public review of the ESD audit has yet to even begin, postponing the contract is a crucial and necessary course of action. The contract itself only vaguely states Clean & Safe will commit to evaluate the audit. There is no indication of what this evaluation will look like or how changes to the contract can be made during this evaluation process.

Since the beginning, our primary concern with this contract has been the ways in which this funding has been used to increase policing in downtown Portland, specifically targeting unhoused community members. It is obvious from this draft that the impact this program has on unhoused people is being made negligible, with almost no mention of homelessness in the contract or corresponding press release.

The public safety program, as outlined in the draft contract, does little to address the concerns of the community, especially the unhoused community. The “changes” proposed simply amount to meaningless re-branding without addressing the harm perpetrated by the policing and security apparatus managed by Clean & Safe.

The contract says there will be a maximum of fifteen security officers per shift and a maximum 25% of them armed at any given time. However, the amount of security officers and the details of who is and is not armed has not been made publicly available. **This information has been redacted during public records requests.** Because of this lack of transparency, for all we know this new “maximum” could very well result in an increase of armed security officers.

We still stand firm in our demand to get rid of the security contract entirely, whether armed or unarmed. Private security officers should not be able to patrol in public space. As a reminder, the Portland Committee on Community Engaged Policing (PCCEP) recommended the City of Portland remove all private security patrols from public space. These recommendations have yet to be implemented by the City, despite overwhelming community support.

PCCEP also recommended, in line with our demands, the City of Portland disallow ESDs from contracting with the Portland Police Bureau. Despite this, OMF and Portland Business Alliance, with the support of Mayor Wheeler and Commissioner Mapps, have opted to continue this relationship. The draft contract states there will be a commitment to “revisit funding” for the four police officers overseen by Clean & Safe, but this will not happen until June 2026. Five years is a long time, and City Council may very well look entirely different, prompting a whole new process. We remain firm in urging City Council to immediately terminate this contract.

Notably, the contract mentions only the four officers Clean & Safe is funding, entirely neglecting to acknowledge the additional two officers Portland Police Bureau provides to Clean & Safe at no charge. We would like to know if the two extra officers will still be working under the supervision of Clean & Safe.

We also remain concerned about the relationship between Clean & Safe and the District Attorney’s Office. Clean & Safe currently funds a staffer in the DA’s Office. The draft contract does not make any changes to this relationship, rather it “clarifies” the relationship. Part of that “clarity” is affirming this DA staffer does not do any prosecution. However, our concern is not solely regarding prosecution services, rather that this staffing relationship allows Clean & Safe and Portland Business Alliance unfair access to information. This information can be easily weaponized against unhoused community members in downtown and Old Town.

Our demand to cut ties with the District Attorney’s Office is twofold. Currently the DA staffer acts as the facilitator of the Downtown Security Network. We asked for this network to be dissolved. The current draft makes no mention of the Downtown Security Network whatsoever, despite it being one of the main components of the ESD. Optimistically, this means OMF and Portland Business Alliance have agreed with our demand and dissolved the Downtown Security Network. More likely, and concerning, the Downtown Security Network will remain as a wholly clandestine component of this contract, giving space for private security, Portland Police Bureau, the District Attorney’s Office, and Portland Business Alliance to continue to secretly meet regarding public space services predominately impacting unhoused community members.

The intermingling and funneling of millions of dollars between Portland Business Alliance, Portland Patrol Inc, the Portland Police Bureau, and the District Attorney's office is likely a major contributor to the normalized practice of criminalization as a response to the housing crisis. Over 50% of arrests are of unhoused people, with enormous harm to the victims and costs to the county and state. Furthermore, research from the Mapping Action Collective found that where the average amount of unhoused people arrested per square mile in Portland is roughly 6 people, in the Clean & Safe district that number jumps to over 139 unhoused people arrested per square mile.

In what appears to be an attempt to assuage these concerns about the contract, the draft contains a proposal to create a "community health outreach program". This program is not what the community asked for. **It is an expansion of privatized public space services.** We do not want to see more privatization of services that should be public in the first place. We find it extremely hypocritical that Mayor Wheeler and Commissioner Mapps would advocate for investment in mental health services which would ultimately be overseen by Portland Business Alliance, yet have continued to lag on the expansion of Portland Street Response, a publicly managed mental health response team. The contract also states the mental health teams will occasionally work with police, which is counter to the community members' broader demands to decouple mental health services from policing. The proposal for this misguided program, facilitated by Clean & Safe and Portland Business Alliance, further illustrates the complete lack of community input in these contract negotiations.

OMF's press release says the draft contract addresses transparency and accountability concerns, but in reality this draft offers very little changes, while continuing to raise many concerns around these issues. Most of the things highlighted in the scope of work are things Clean & Safe was already required to do, such as submit a yearly financial audit and share incident reports to the City. The only changes suggested are the frequency in which reports are submitted and who they are submitted to. Many of these reports will have to be submitted to the recently hired ESD coordinator, however there is no clarity around how the public can access these records. Assuming the public would have to submit a public records request, who's to say OMF will not try to charge people hundreds, possibly thousands of dollars to fulfill those requests?

The contract claims there will be an annual report submitted to City Council about the district, however, traditionally, report agenda items are not open for public testimony, meaning there will be no designated opportunity for public comment on Clean & Safe operations until the next contract renewal. The ESD coordinator will be a non-voting board member, however this does nothing to address transparency concerns with the board. Will the meetings be open to the public? Can more people join the board besides property owners? None of the questions have been addressed by this draft.

The draft contract clarifies which Portland Business Alliance employees are funded by Clean & Safe and how much of their time should be spent with Clean & Safe. While transparency on whose salaries are being paid by this funding is valuable, it does not address the larger issue of

the money that is siphoned to Portland Business Alliance executives, including their paid lobbyist, Jon Isaacs. Finally, we are concerned with the continuation of providing general fund money to the Downtown Retail Advocate position, further publicly subsidizing Clean & Safe's lobbying efforts. Using public money to fund private business interests is inappropriate, especially when that funding could be used for far more pressing issues facing community members in Portland.

Overall, this contract does very little to change the status quo. Clean & Safe has functioned for more than thirty years with very little done to change the most harmful elements of their operation. Renewing this contract for another five years is too long. **We need radical change now.** For too long the City of Portland has prioritized the desires of downtown's wealthiest property owners and Portland Business Alliance over the material needs of our most vulnerable community members. This contract renewal is a shameful reflection of this history and makes abundantly clear the City of Portland doesn't care about community members who aren't financing their elections.

We are once again urging you to push pause on this contract renewal, and spend time actively engaging with unhoused community members who are most impacted by these services. Until then, we will continue fighting this contract and the undue influence Portland Business Alliance has over our City.

