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## Why I'm Voting for Dan Saltzman

### Steve Novick

It matters to me that Marcus Mundy, head of the Urban League of Portland, has endorsed Dan Saltzman.

I understand that some people will want to vote against Dan Saltzman for Portland City Commission out of a desire to hold someone accountable for the Aaron Campbell shooting. I want to hold someone accountable for the Aaron Campbell shooting. But I am still voting for Dan Saltzman.

I am voting for Dan Saltzman, in part, because if he did not happen to be police commissioner, voting for him would be a no-brainer. Dan Saltzman was the driving force behind the Children's Levy, which provides needed services for vulnerable children. Dan Saltzman played a key role in ensuring that urban renewal money was not diverted from meaningful economic development efforts in Lents to build a ballpark in Lents that, in my view, would have done nothing for the Lents economy.

I'm voting for Dan Saltzman in part because, according to friends of mine at EPA - which at one point was considering suing Portland under the Clean Water Act over sewer issues - played a thoughtful, constructive role in discussions with the Feds, helping to avoid confrontation. (I don't know details, I just know that folks at EPA had difficulties with some people at the City but found Dan constructive. Often, when politicians get involved in discussions like that, it's the other way 'round.)

I'm voting for Dan Saltzman in part because, at the Portland City Club debate, both of his opponents repeatedly, in one way or another, called for increasing spending and decreasing revenues - which always sets my teeth on edge. I consider promising simultaneous tax cuts and service increases an ethical lapse, and a worse one than failing to disclose that your girlfriend works for an applicant for a grant you're voting on -

although that was a really dumb thing for Dan to do.

But what do I say to people who might say: “But Steve, Dan Saltzman is the police commissioner, and isn’t he coddling an out-of-control racist police force that runs around shooting people?”

Part of my response involves what you might call “appeals to authority.” It matters to me that Marcus Mundy, head of the Urban League of Portland, has endorsed Dan Saltzman. If Marcus Mundy thought that Dan Saltzman was coddling an out-of-control racist police force, he wouldn’t be endorsing him.

It matters to me that a well-respected criminal defense lawyer I know – while expressing a series of concerns about the Police Bureau – also said that on balance, she thought Chief Sizer was doing a decent job, and that neither the many admirable officers in the Bureau nor the Bureau itself gets enough credit for the Bureau’s successes -- echoing, actually, what Chief Sizer herself has said. (My friend added that the Bureau could do a better job of highlighting those successes, and publicly commending officers who – for example – defuse dangerous situations WITHOUT using force. And she said that yes, there are some racists in the Bureau, and she wants more people of color in the Bureau, and she thought it would help to have a residency requirement. But she still said that on balance she would keep Rosie Sizer.)

And even though I know statistics are cold comfort to the family and friends of Aaron Campbell, it does matter to me that the use of force and complaints about the use of force by the Portland Police have declined significantly over the past several years.

I want Dan Saltzman to understand that beefing up the Independent Police Review Division is not a sufficient response to the death of Aaron Campbell. New processes are not a substitute for personal accountability. I expect a thorough investigation of the potential personal responsibility of everyone involved. The fact that the officer who fired the shot did not, according to the Grand Jury, commit a crime does not answer the question of whether that officer belongs on the street. And the search for accountability does not end with the officer who fired the fatal shot. What about the officer who fired the beanbag rounds – which, according to the Portland Mercury, remains completely unexplained? What about the officer in charge at the scene, who seemingly was not ‘in charge’ enough to ensure that the other officers at the scene knew what Campbell was saying to the officer doing the negotiating? And can there really be any excuse for the fact that it took half an hour for medics to reach Campbell? As Marcus Mundy said, how can it be that "An EMT (emergency medical technician) didn't come, but a dog was called over? They would allow the dog to come, but not a lifesaver?"

If the conclusion is that it was all a failure of training, who’s responsible for the training? If the real problem was the absence of radio equipment that would have ensured adequate communication at the scene, who’s responsible for equipment?

People understandably – not just understandably, but reasonably – want to hear more than just “it was a communications failure.” They want – I want – to hear who was responsible for the communications failure.

Reluctantly, I suppose I have to acknowledge the possibility that the most extensive and thorough investigation in the world won’t clearly identify a single person or persons who was or were to blame in a way that warrants dramatic discipline. Sometimes, in a horrible situation, what each person did made some twisted sense from that person's perspective. But there are a lot of people who need to answer a lot of questions before anyone should accept that as an answer here. And in this situation there are several factors for which I have a hard time even imagining a plausible explanation.

I am trusting Dan Saltzman to understand that. Because I trust him to understand that, and for the other reasons listed above, despite the fact that I want to hold someone accountable for the Aaron Campbell shooting. I am voting for Dan Saltzman.