

SMILE  
Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League  
8410 SE 13th Avenue  
Portland, OR 97202

Commissioner Dan Ryan  
1221 SW 4th Avenue, Room 240  
Portland, OR 97204

Director Adena Long  
1120 SW 5th Ave UNIT 1302  
Portland, OR 97204

March 17, 2023

Dear Commissioner Ryan and Director Long:

On behalf of the SMILE Board I am writing to express our deep concern and opposition to the recent decision made by the City of Portland to remove lighting from multiple parks throughout Portland, claiming that they are beyond maintenance. This decision is in direct conflict with the city's stated goal of providing safe and accessible parks for all residents, regardless of their location.

Removing the lights will effectively restrict the hours parks are available to use. Poorly lit parks encourage an unsafe environment for residents and visitors who rely on them for recreational activities and family gatherings. This decision will negatively impact all families, children, and elders, who will no longer be able to take full advantage of the parks during early morning, dusk or evening hours. This could disproportionately affect communities that work long hours and irregular schedules. The city has committed to increasing recreational opportunities for all of its diverse residents – this decision will negate that effort.

Your Feb. 22, 2023 press release notes that you will “increase park ranger presence at the affected parks and close them at 10 pm”. This will in no way make up for the lack of lighting - we suggest that those increased long-term staffing funds instead be redirected to replace or reinforce the existing light poles.

We also recommend that funds for repairing or immediately replacing the light poles come from the 2020 5-year Parks Levy, which specifically allocates funds to “clean litter and hazardous waste in parks and natural areas, maintain grounds and landscaping,

provide safety checks on play equipment, improve preventative and traditional maintenance”. We urge the Parks Department to allocate the necessary capital, or operating expense to repair or replace the lighting in these parks, and to do so from the current Parks or general City funds.

Our community deserves safe and accessible parks that can be enjoyed by all residents. We strongly urge you to take immediate action by reversing this ill-advised, poorly thought-out decision.

Sincerely,

Elaine O’Keefe  
SMILE President

Cc: SMILE Board of Directors  
Mayor Ted Wheeler  
Parks Levy Oversight Committee (% Claire Flynn)  
Portland Parks Foundation (% Randy Gragg)

\* The SMILE Board of Directors unanimously approved this letter at their March 15, 2023 Board meeting.