

The Oregonian

City hires real estate broker to find home for Right 2 Dream Too: Portland City Hall Roundup

By Andrew Theen

After trying, and failing, to move Right 2 Dream Too on its own, Portland is turning to the experts to try and accelerate the search for a new home for the city's most famous homeless community.

Portland's Facilities Services staff signed a two-week contract with Cushman & Wakefield on Jan. 23. The commercial real estate broker will present a final report by Feb. 7. The two-week search will cost up to \$1,000, according to the contract.

In the meantime, Right 2 Dream Too remains at the corner of Northwest Fourth Avenue and West Burnside Street in Portland.

Brokers will present two options to the city, according to the contract. Both options must be within a 1.5-mile radius of the Portland Building and "near public transportation."

Behind door 1: bare land, either a paved or gravel surface lot with utilities available. The city is eyeing land anywhere from 10,000– 15,000-square-feet. Option 1 could be zoned commercial, employment district or industrial.

Behind door 2: a building of some sort, "which may include warehouse, carport, garage or building with open floor plan ranging from 5,000-15,000-square-feet. Option 2 could be either commercial or employment district zoning.

Last month, Portland Mayor Charlie Hales pulled the plug on a warehouse in Old Town, an idea he floated in December. At \$335,000, the total costs to make the warehouse habitable proved to be too much. Hales' proposal included a 15-month stay at the Hoyt Street warehouse, costing a total of \$150,000.

After Hales tabled the Hoyt proposal, R2D2's attorney penned a letter of conditions and a specific timeline for the city to address the homeless group's desires. Hales' office denied a public records request asking for that letter last week.

Mark Kramer, R2D2's attorney, said last month that R2D2 was prepared to bring a lawsuit against the city to enforce a previously agreed upon plan to move the homeless to a city-owned lot underneath a Broadway Bridge onramp.

Last fall, Commissioner Amanda Fritz announced a settlement to a previous lawsuit filed by Kramer, which did away with more than \$20,000 in fines levied against R2D2's landlord and allowed for the move to so-called Lot 7. Prominent Pearl District developers spoke out in October against that move. Four months later, R2D2 remains at the same location. The political stalemate, too, remains.

Kramer said R2D2 is now giving the city until March 14 to find an alternative location or some solution to the stalemate.

R2D2 can afford to stay at Fourth and Burnside, Kramer said, because of a \$35,000 anonymous donation received in January.

Kramer said that generous donation helps the homeless community "fulfill their obligation" to Michael Wright, one of the owners of the property R2D2 has called home since October 2011.

The anonymous donation allows R2D2 to pay Wright's property taxes as well as purchase tents, cots and other items.

Beyond that, Kramer said, R2D2 remains "in limbo."

"They are there at the sufferance of the owners," Kramer said of Wright and his business partners. Come March, if the city hasn't found a suitable location, Kramer said he maintains the ability to file a lawsuit to force the city's hand.

The Portland Tribune

Portland and Gresham spar over emergency communications tower

By Jim Redden

Gresham Mayor Shane Bemis is complaining that Portland is ignoring his city's concern about a 140-foot emergency communications microwave tower on top of Gresham Butte.

Portland says the location is good for improving emergency dispatching in the region. Bemis says it is one of Gresham's most treasured open-space vistas.

According to Bemis, despite his overtures, Portland Mayor Charlie Hales directed his staff to resubmit a land-use application for the tower on Friday.

Bemis says the two mayors had lunch on Tuesday, in an attempt to reach a compromise.

"I left that lunch feeling, for the first time, like Mayor Hales might be starting to understand how important this issue, and that butte, are to our residents," Bemis said in a prepared statement. "Unfortunately, somehow we're still not there yet."

Bemis says he appealed to Hales to put the brakes on the application, so that the two jurisdictions could negotiate in a neutral environment.

"It's awfully hard on our end to pursue an alternative that has a hope or a chance when Portland is simultaneously gunning full speed ahead on an option our residents will never accept," Bemis said.

According to Bemis, Hales pledged to pursue alternatives over the next 30 days.

"I like Mayor Hales, which is part of what makes this issue so frustrating," Bemis said. "My strong hope is to like him even more 30 days from now, if Portland pivots to a viable solution that works for everybody."

According to Bemis, Portland's initial land-use application for the tower, which would be more than three times taller than a current tower and largely visible above the butte's scenic tree-line, was remanded as incomplete by Gresham planning officials late last summer. Bemis had hoped that, prior to Portland resubmitting its updated application, the two mayors might agree to pursue an alternative.

The tower proposal is opposed by the Gresham Butte Neighborhood Association and many of Gresham's elected officials. Gresham planning staff will now re-evaluate the application for completeness, which will be followed by a 14-day public comment period, and an eventual staff evaluation and decision.

As an adjacent landowner, the city of Gresham is an "interested party" to the land-use application, and will submit its own analysis of why other alternatives to Portland's proposal could both meet the technical and public safety goals of the project, and protect the view of Gresham Butte.

"We have opposed this blight from day one, and we will oppose it until this proposal is dead. Too many generations of Gresham residents worked too hard for too long to protect this icon for us to sit idly by and let Portland capriciously mar our scenic vista," Bemis said.

Willamette Week

State Hopes to Complete City Hall Harassment Investigation Within Six Months

By AARON MESH

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales is dealing with the latest allegation of misconduct by his staff—a civil rights complaint by a mayoral aide charging that chief of staff Gail Shibley discriminated against him for being HIV-positive. The mayor says he won't comment until a state investigation is finished.

Hales is going to have to wait.

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries, which investigates workplace complaints, is hoping to complete its investigation into the complaint against Shibley within six months, says agency spokesman Charlie Burr.

"We will be conducting a BOLI investigation," Burr tells WW. "Yes, it has begun. We have an investigator assigned."

The state investigator has one year to examine the civil rights complaint, Burr said, but that the case probably won't take that long. "I think it's reasonably likely to be completed within six months," he says.

WW first reported Tuesday that a mayoral staffer filed a Jan. 14 complaint saying Shibley pressured him into revealing that he is HIV-positive and then verbally harassed him because of his illness. The complaint says Shibley called him a "skank" and said his previous boss, former Mayor Sam Adams, was also a "skank."

Shibley has said the allegations are "groundless." The staffer has declined to talk to WW.

Burr says BOLI will attempt to interview both the staffer and Shibley, and look for documents independently verifying what happened.