

## The Oregonian

# Turning Anxiety to Action on the Cascadia Quake: Editorial

*The Oregonian Editorial Board*

*March 18, 2018*

The New Yorker's Pulitzer prize-winning piece on the massive destruction expected from a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake understandably struck fear in the hearts of many Oregonians who immediately set to work stocking emergency kits. At least some of them did. For a while.

Then came the terrifying video from Multnomah County, showing how the Burnside Bridge could rumble, torque and collapse after an 8-plus magnitude quake. The destruction alone is devastating to watch - even if by animated simulation. But it's almost paralyzing to listen to the narration describing how bridge debris will block cars, emergency vehicles, trains and ships needed to bring supplies and evacuate victims.

It'd be easy to shove another recent state report into that corner in your brain where the darkest worries hang out. But despite its jarring numbers, the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries' assessment released last week hits a few bright notes.

The Cascadia quake could level as many as 1,600 buildings and result in more than \$80 billion in damages to structures across the tri-county area. In the worst-case scenario -- a daytime shake during a wet winter -- between 18,000 and 27,000 residents would likely be hurt or killed and a quarter-million others would be displaced for a long period of time.

That's a staggering statistic that's likely to directly touch us all, whether the victims are family, friends, neighbors or co-workers. Yet the numbers also show that potentially, 99 percent of the metro area's population will survive. As officials with the agency told various media outlets, the Cascadia could actually be "extremely survivable." The takeaway? Put in the time now to potentially improve how you and your family will get by after.

The information should help city and county leaders focus work preparing their communities for the Big One. It should fuel the urgency needed to address the alarming January audit by the Secretary of State's Office on the sad state of Oregon's Office of Emergency Management. The building where agency officials expect to gather and direct emergency responses has yet to be retrofitted to withstand a large earthquake.

Last week's report should also inspire Oregonians to act at home. Sure, it's great to spend thousands on securing homes to their foundations. Such an investment can increase the chance the home will remain habitable after a quake and reduce dangers for neighborhoods. And it's smart to continue setting aside water, canned foods and other emergency supplies, spreading out the cost over time.

Yet folks on the front lines of the Oregon's earthquake and tsunami preparedness recommend a few strategies that are free and worthy of tackling today.

First, sign up to receive emergency alerts on your mobile phone. Then, make a plan. If you're at home, where should everyone huddle until the shaking's over? When it's done, where will everyone meet up outside? If there are fires, explosions or other dangers at that meeting spot, where's another place to gather?

It seems simple enough, yet this can be the most important part of preparedness: steeling for the "psychological disaster" as Mercy Corps' Susan Romanski describes it.

Next, figure out where everyone meets if they're scattered at work or school, remembering the journey could take a while and it'll be tough to communicate your progress. Romanski and others suggest that families with children enlist as many as five neighbors or friends who live near school to check on their children in case of an emergency. And give those names to school officials. That's especially important for families who may live and work on differing sides of the Willamette River.

Of course it's scary to think about, especially for little ones. But having a plan can empower them. Mercy Corps' traveling presentations help families find ways to incorporate drills into their routine so they become regular and at best, rote:

When you think your kids are emotionally ready, schedule an earthquake date. At any time that day, children get to choose when to holler "quake" to launch the drill. Duck, cover and hold. Wait for an adult to say, "The ground's stopped shaking," and kids lead the way to the meeting spot. Once everyone's there, kids get to give the "all clear," which means there are no hazards visible on the path to the shed or other safe place the emergency kit is stored.

The drill can end there. Or, take a cue from the American Red Cross, whose "Camp Prepare!" program challenged families to pitch tents in the backyard to check how well-stocked their kits were.

No matter how far you go, at least start.

Many in the Portland area have. The city is ranked near the top nationwide for the number of formed Neighborhood Emergency Teams. Those are the folks who've volunteered for months of training to help their communities and save lives until first responders arrive.

It's time for the rest of us to start catching up.

## **Amanda Fritz's Skulduggery on 'Open and Accountable' Elections: Editorial Valley**

*By The Oregonian Editorial Board  
March 16, 2018*

City Commissioner Amanda Fritz has certainly been open about her support for a new campaign finance program that gives public dollars to city political candidates who meet certain requirements. She's so open, in fact, that she plainly admitted to manipulating the process to make sure her "Open and Accountable Elections" program would finally move forward.

Although city commissioners approved creating the program in 2016, they have had trouble finding an office willing to own it, as the Portland Mercury's Dirk VanderHart reported. The City Auditor, whose office runs the city elections division, turned down the request to develop and administer the program, which would provide matching contributions to candidates for city offices who promise to cap the size of individual donations. Such reluctance is understandable. It's a huge ask to begin with and the auditor's office already has a lot on its plate. Then consider that the auditor didn't even have a say in whether to create this risky program in the first place.

So Fritz's "solution"? To move the program from one city commissioner to another, so that any commissioner up for re-election in the next two years won't be in charge of doling out funds to potential competitors.

This is, to put it delicately, a terrible idea. To have any chance at succeeding, this program will need consistent management and insulation from any potential conflicts of interest. But Fritz's solution offers neither. Bouncing a program from one overseer to another is bad enough. But as City Commissioner Dan Saltzman noted, just because a city commissioner isn't up for re-election doesn't guarantee he or she will manage the program without bias or the appearance of bias. Commissioners frequently endorse in other races or may even have staff members seeking open seats. Even supportive commissioners acknowledged the flaws, though only Saltzman voted against the plan, which killed Fritz's attempt to pass the ordinance on an emergency basis.

So Fritz simply waited until the next day, when Saltzman was absent, to bring the issue up for another vote. While acknowledging her unusual maneuver, she secured the unanimous approval to immediately site the program in her office. "We need to move very quickly to get a consultant hired" in order to have the program up and running for 2020, she said. It's as if Fritz believes that neither Saltzman's concerns nor the constituents he represents deserve to be taken seriously.

Considering that Portlanders voted to kill the last campaign finance program in 2010 due to the scandals and abuses that tainted it, it's shortsighted to force this through. Fritz should remember that the program is about "open" and "accountable" elections. It's off to a bad start.

## **The Portland Tribune**

### **Council to Reconsider Controversial RiverPlace Towers**

*By Jim Redden  
March 18, 2018*

**Commissioner Chloe Eudaly moves to reconsider the tie vote that defeated the proposed height increase after voting no on March 7.**

The City Council could vote on Thursday to support a controversial redevelopment proposal to build eight tall residential towers on the west side of the Willamette River.

The council rejected the proposal by NBP Capital on March 7 on a 2-to-2 vote. Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, who voted no, moved to reconsider the vote the next day.

The proposal calls for 2,617 new units in the towers, with around 500 being affordable to households earning up to 80 percent of the area's median family income.

Mayor Ted Wheeler moved to raise the maximum allowable building heights in the RiverPlace area for the project from 75 to 400 feet, as requested by the developer. He and Commissioner Nick Fish voted yes, but the motion failed when Eudaly and Commissioner Amanda Fritz voted no. Commissioner Dan Saltzman recused himself because his family owns property in the area.

Eudaly did not have enough information about the project support the motion at the time, according to Marshall Runkel, her chief of staff. Among other things, Runkel says Eudaly wants to know how the council can guarantee the affordable units are built.

The proposal is controversial for several reasons. For starters, the proposal requires the demolition of the existing Douglas Place apartments and townhouses in the RiverPlace area. And city planning policies have long required that buildings "step down" to the river to preserve views and access to it.

In addition, the proposal requires the existing Central City Plan to be amended to raise the height limits, which is what Wheeler's motion would have done. But the proposal was not released until

after the Planning and Sustainability Commission had already recommended its updated version of the plan to the council, causing critics to charge NBP Capital was trying evade public scrutiny and comment.

At the same time, the council has repeatedly said more dense housing needs to be built downtown to accomodate the thousands of additional people expected to live her in coming years. It is also working hard to increase the supply of affordable housing after declaring a housing emergency three times in three years.

You can read a previous Portland Tribune story on the issue at [portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/389100-279980-council-rejects-nearly-3000-new-homes](http://portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/389100-279980-council-rejects-nearly-3000-new-homes).

## **Willamette Week**

### **Pearl District Residents Are Divided and Fractious Over Portland City Hall Blocking Apartment Construction**

*By Rachel Monahan*

*March 16, 2018*

**Did City Council shoot themselves in the foot by completely overturning an approval for a project for the first time in 12 years?**

Developers and economists have cried foul over the City Council decision to block a 275-unit apartment building in the Pearl District, saying it sends a signal to investors to stay away.

But one Pearl District resident, who supports approving the 17-story, 275-unit Fremont Place Apartments, argues the city commissioners also shot themselves in the foot on two long-awaited urban renewal projects.

The city's economic development arm, Prosper Portland, is currently engaged in two major development projects in the central city, not far from the Fremont Place Apartments: the U.S. Post Office redevelopment and Centennial Mills.

In an email today to City Council, David Dysert, who is co-chair of the Pearl District Neighborhood Association's Planning and Transportation Committee, argues the city needs to make sure that developers will want to work in Portland.

Writing on his own behalf, he indicates his opposition to the position of the Pearl District Neighborhood Association, which has been the leading opponent of an apartment building that could block views of the Fremont Bridge.

Last week's unanimous vote to overturn the Design Commission's approval for the project near the Fremont Bridge was the first time in 12 years the City Council had completely overturned an approval from the Design Commission.

"It is troubling that our City Council would take such actions during a time when the City needs to put its best foot forward," writes Dysert in an March 16 email to City Council. "Relationships are two-way. Yes we must search for and demand the best out of our development partners, but the City must also show good faith and be a good partner if we want the best outcomes."

The mayor's office has said that they will reopen the record on City Council's decision next month.

Full email below:

———— Forwarded message ————

From: David Dysert

Date: Fri, Mar 16, 2018 at 10:45 AM

Subject: Final Vote on Fremont Apartments Appeal

To: Mayor Wheeler, Nick, Chloe, Dan, Amanda

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am the Co-Chair of the Pearl District Neighborhood Association's Planning and Transportation Committee. However I am not speaking on behalf of the PDNA but rather for myself as I am bound by our bylaw guidance regarding Board actions.

After the preliminary vote to uphold an appeal of the Fremont Apartments approval by the Design Commission many concerned citizens and experts have sounded the warnings on the chilling effects of this potential action on future development and housing supply in Portland I won't reiterate those as they have been eloquently stated in public forums. I agree with these warnings and I want to issue an additional warning given the timing of Council's actions.

The City and Prosper Portland are currently engaged in establishing massive long term contracts with development partners for both the Broadway Corridor and Centennial Mills projects. The Broadway Corridor project is universally identified as a once in a generation legacy opportunity. As a member of the Broadway Corridor Steering Committee I have spent many hours working with the committee to establish and refine the community benefits and project goals the selected development team will be asked to deliver. It is a long and daunting list that will be difficult to achieve for even the most talented and experienced team. We are not simply asking for quality design and sustainable development. We are asking for specific tangible benefits for Portland's most under served communities who have traditionally been left out of these projects. It is critical we succeed so that all of Portland can thrive.

It is troubling that our City Council would take such actions during a time when the City needs to put its best foot forward. Relationships are two-way. Yes we much search for and demand the best out of our development partners, but the City must also show good faith and be a good partner if we want the best outcomes.

Council's recent actions do serious harm to Portland's reputation as a good faith partner and demonstrate a troubling lack of self awareness. If potential partners are not seriously considering withdrawing they are at a minimum assessing additional risk premiums to offset potential uncertainty in the approval process. Bottom line: Portland will not get the best possible deal and is less likely to achieve critical community benefits.

All Portland citizens have a direct interest in our ability to achieve the best results from these assets. We are relying on your stewardship of these critical investments that will have long term consequences for generations to come.

Damage has been done but there is still time to mitigate some of that damage. Please reconsider your tentative vote and re-establish Portland's reputation as a good faith partner.

Thank you for your consideration.