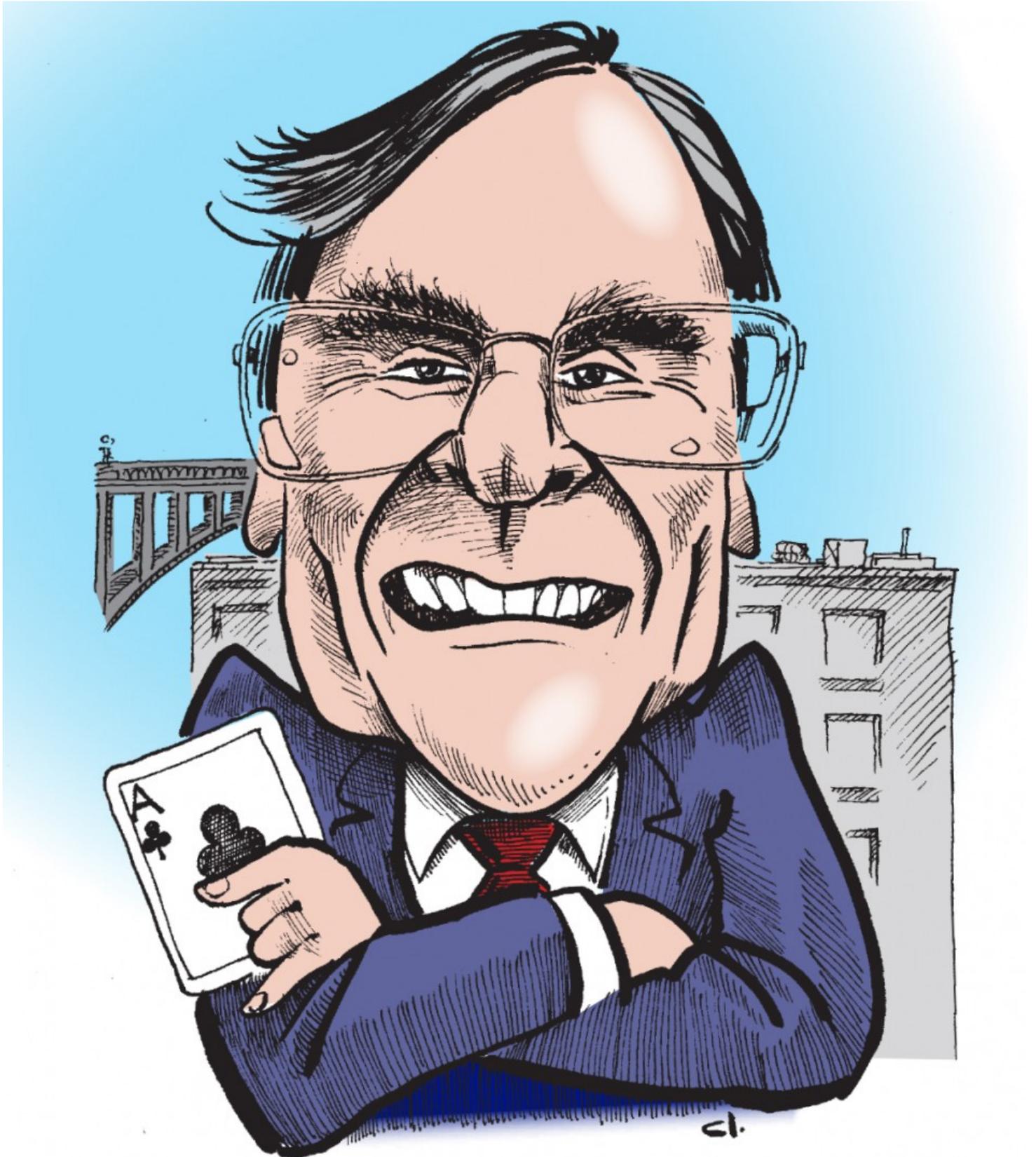


Stakeholder gets juicy height bonus

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View-blocking potential given to Dan Petrusich, who still resists required disclosure

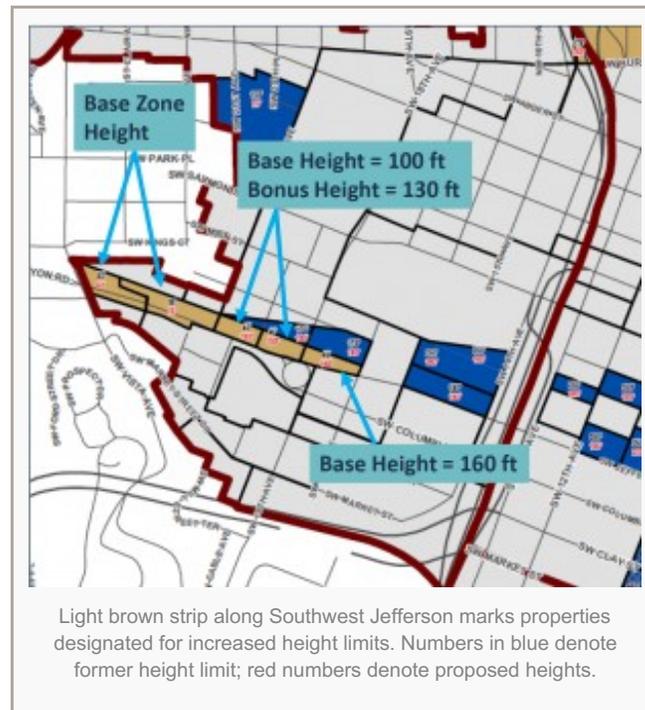
Goose Hollow neighborhood activists presented a slideshow in March featuring a hypothetical high-rise dramatically blocking the view of the Vista Bridge

The image was persuasive in causing city Bureau of Planning and Sustainability staff to reconsider draft plans to relax View Corridor protections along Southwest Jefferson Street. It also drew broad derision from NW Examiner readers, who saw the picture on Page 1 of the April edition.

What has not been reported is that the property on which the fictitious tower was sited belongs to a man with a checkered history in the Goose Hollow area.

Dan Petrusich is the president and owner of Melvin Mark Development Co., the development arm of Melvin Mark Cos. He was also president of the Goose Hollow Foothills League in 2012 and was instrumental in bringing a pro-development slant to the association—a slant repudiated in 2014 as residential candidates swept the board election.

Petrusich has also been singled out for his role on the West Quadrant Plan Stakeholders Advisory Committee in an ethics complaint ruled valid by City Ombudsman Margie Sollinger last fall. Based on her recommendations, BPS required Petrusich and the 32 other members of the committee to disclose their financial and professional interests related to the area covered by the plan, which includes much of Goose Hollow.



Had Petrusich revealed his holdings, they would have included 1853 SW Jefferson St., a 100×100-foot parcel with a car repair garage that has been vacant since 2012 and the parking lot next to it. Portlandmaps.com lists these properties to Jefferson Holdings LLC, which Oregon Secretary of State records show is registered to Petrusich and five others. It uses his home address.

Allowable building height on this land and a few contiguous properties would rise from 45 to 130 feet if draft plan revisions are adopted by City Council.

Is Petrusich the innocent beneficiary of a windfall, or did he use his connections and role to seek custom-made zoning provisions?

Mindy Brooks, project manager of the Scenic Resources Protection Plan for BPS, confirmed that Petrusich contacted her about the plan.

“I spoke with Dan Petrusich about the property located at Salmon and 16th and more generally about Jefferson Street,” Brooks wrote in a March email. “When we spoke, I was still doing the scenic analysis. I gave him an update on the project and timeline and told him that the proposal for height changes would be available with the CC2035 draft.

“Ultimately ... there are proposals for height changes on Jefferson Street – some heights are increased and others are decreased.”

Petrusich did not accept an invitation to comment on this story.

Petrusich’s credibility on matters of ethics and conflict of interest, however, is clouded by his behavior on the Stakeholders Advisory Committee and his attitude toward public accountability.

Although BPS directed all 33 SAC members to complete disclosure forms as a matter of law, Petrusich sent an argumentative email message instead.

“This reply will serve as my disclosure,” he wrote. “Over the years, I have had an ownership interest in a variety of properties located in the central city, including office buildings, warehouses, apartments and parking.”

The revelations are useless in determining if particular recommendations Petrusich made as a stakeholder impacted properties he owned or controlled. No one reading his general list of holdings would learn whether his property was affected in a particular way not applying to all properties in the central city.



Dan Petrusich and partners own the parcel between Southwest 18th and 19th on the north side of Jefferson Street, where maximum height limits are proposed to rise from 45 feet to 130 feet.

“At the beginning of the WQ SAC process, the city staff made it clear that our role was strictly advisory and that we had no decision-making authority. The name of the committee, West Quadrant Stakeholders ‘Advisory’ Committee, clearly represents our advisory role,” his email continued.

The distinction between decision-making and advising is addressed by city and state ethics law. Ombudsman Sollinger said members of advisory bodies are not subject to charges of “actual” conflict of interest because they do not make binding decisions. Public officials having actual conflicts may be prohibited from participation in deliberation or voting. Those with potential conflicts need only declare their connections before participating.

“The anonymous complaint [to the City Ombudsman] included many false claims,” Petrusich continued. “The Ombudsman did not follow a judicial or administrative process recognized under law. I received no opportunity to participate or provide input on the claims.”

By Allan Classen. NW Examiner. May 2016, Volume 29, No. 9.
<http://nwexaminer.com/stakeholder-gets-juicy-height-bonus>