

The Oregonian

Sisters of the Road urges City Council to approve \$846,000 Right 2 Dream Too deal: Portland City Hall Roundup

By Andrew Theen

Sisters Of The Road, the nonprofit social service organization in Portland's Old Town/Chinatown neighborhood, urged the City Council to approve a complex deal that would present Right 2 Dream too with nearly \$850,000 to find a new home.

The organization, founded in 1979, sent an impassioned letter in support of R2D2 last week.

The City Council is expected to take a vote Wednesday that would direct \$846,000 to the homeless community to help buy, rent or lease a long-term home. R2D2 set up shop on the corner of Northwest Fourth Avenue and West Burnside Street in Oct. 2011.

Last week the Portland Development Commission authorized selling a Pearl District parking lot to developers Homer Williams and Dike Dame for \$142,000, the same lot earmarked last fall as an alternative home for the homeless community.

As part of the complex deal, the developers will pay the city \$896,000, with \$50,000 going to REACH Community Development. The arrangement eliminates a 2011 parking agreement between the developers and the PDC, which would've awarded an estimated \$1.5 million to the city in parking revenue once Williams and Dame open a new hotel near Lot 7 in the Pearl.

Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who oversees the Housing Bureau, delayed what had been an emergency vote last week. Saltzman said he wanted more information about how the city and R2D2 plans to spend that money.

As far as Sisters Of The Road is concerned, R2D2 has been a productive neighbor and a resourceful one too that has proven itself despite the surroundings. The group has given thousands of homeless people a place to sleep at night, or during the day, on "a noisy corner of a busy intersection" in the city's entertainment district.

"Especially on the weekends," the letter reads, "Right 2 Dream Too has to deal with drunken club patrons who use the Chinatown Gate as a urinal, the relentless beats from clubs and cruisers that prowl the area, and bar fights that spill over into the street."

The City Council's decision Wednesday could essentially serve to ratify R2D2 as a long-term presence in the city.

Sisters Of The Road says its support and enthusiasm for R2D2 "has never wavered."

"Right 2 Dream Too has created a unique model for a self-managed rest area that offers a more dignified option than covering in a doorway or under a bush, with minimal resources and at no cost to Portland taxpayers. In many quarters at City Hall and in our neighborhood," the letter reads, "the initial skepticism and fear that greeted its arrival has given way to respect and event admiration, sometimes begrudging, sometimes enthusiastic."

Here's the full letter. The City Council will vote to approve the funding deal Wednesday.