

The Oregonian

Right 2 Dream Too: Portland City Council approves \$846,000 to help homeless community; Dan Saltzman walks out

By Andrew Theen

Right 2 Dream Too is here to stay.

The Portland City Council approved a complex settlement deal on Wednesday, which ultimately directs to help find a new and more permanent home.

But before the City Council took a vote on the deal, originally introduced earlier this month, Commissioner Dan Saltzman quietly excused himself from council chambers.

Saltzman's remaining four colleagues voted unanimously to approve the emergency ordinance, heaping praise on the plan to sell a city-owned parking lot to Pearl District developers for \$142,000, while simultaneously funneling \$846,000 to R2D2.

"I think that this is a great day," said Commissioner Steve Novick, who thanked developers Homer Williams and Dike Dame for their "participation" in the arrangement. Novick called R2D2 "an extraordinary organization."

Commissioner Nick Fish said the deal wasn't perfect, but he lauded Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Amanda Fritz for doing something different and innovative despite the chance it may not be successful. "I think that's part of our job description from time to time," Fish said.

Hales thanked members of R2D2 for their patience throughout the more than five months of evolving efforts to find a new home, away from the current residence at the corner of Northwest Fourth Avenue and West Burnside Street. Hales, too, thanked Williams and Dame. "Instead of spending money on lawyers," Hales said the developers chose, "spending money on a solution."

Meanwhile, Saltzman was outside the chambers, awaiting the press conference minutes later to promote Portland's push to bring Google Fiber high speed network to town.

His opposition wasn't a new development.

Last week, Saltzman said both during the council meeting and afterward that he didn't support the R2D2 plan. On Wednesday, the longest-tenured current city council member said he avoided a vote on the emergency measure partly for procedural reasons.

Emergency ordinances need unanimous votes from the members of council physically in attendance. "I felt there was no point in delaying the implementation of the settlement agreement," Saltzman said after the meeting.

Saltzman, who oversees the Housing Bureau, remains concerned about how the city oversees the money earmarked for R2D2. "My scrutiny of how this deal goes forward, or goes south, will remain," he said.

His reservations about the deal, Saltzman said, have grown in recent days. "What are we going to say to the next neighborhood where Right 2 Dream Too wants to locate," Saltzman asked.

"When they [the next neighborhood] say, 'Well, gee, the Pearl neighborhood bought their way out of this for a million dollars.' What are we going to say at the next three-hour hearing we have on that?" Saltzman asked, citing a heated October hearing where Williams and Dame successfully delayed the plan to relocate the homeless to the Pearl parking lot.

Saltzman said he notified Hales of his plan to avoid the vote, saying he "just couldn't support it."

Fritz said Saltzman's decision not to delay the implementation of the deal was "very gracious."

"This allows the money and the transfers to happen right away," she said.

Fritz said the city continue to work with Cushman & Wakefield, the broker hired to search for potential properties, to identify potential homes for R2D2.

The Portland Tribune

State launches elections investigation into Hales' office

By Jim Redden

The Oregon Secretary of State's Office has initiated an investigation into Mayor Charlie Hales' office over a press release it issued attacking the supports of the Portland Public Water District measure on the May 20 Primary Election ballot.

The release was emailed to the press by Hales' spokesman Dana Haynes on Feb. 11. It included statements from both Hales and Commissioner Nick Fish questioning the motives of the supporters. The co-petitioners of the initiative petition that placed the measure on the ballot filed a elections complaint with the Secretary of State's office three days later.

In a Feb. 19 email letter to Haynes, elections Compliance Specialist Alana Cox asks a number of question about how the release was written and authorized for distribution. Among other things, Cox asks whether Haynes and another other office employees prepared it on official time, how they obtained one of the quotes from Hales, and who directed its preparation.

"Portland's embattled Mayor has developed a pattern of abusing his office, from covering up an attempt to illegally divert water and sewer funds to retaliating against the whistleblower, to now using public resource for political purposes, and it's encouraging to see someone in authority finally saying 'enough,'" co-petitioner Kent Craford said in a press release that included Cox's letter.

Haynes issued the following statement in response:

"We did a press release from Mayor Hales and Commissioner Fish regarding a summary judgment hearing by Judge Bushong. The issue is the water law suit.

"Our city attorneys vetted the press release.

"The press release proposes that neither the facts, nor the law, are on the side of the law suit plaintiffs.

"They responded by complaining about the manner in which the press release was distributed.

"I am no lawyer and offer no comment on the legal validity of the claim. I offer no comment on their defense of the law and the facts in their case, since they offered no such defense."

Haynes was previously investigated for violating elections law when he was a spokesman for Portland Community College. At that time, the Oregon Secretary of State's Office found he advocated for a PCC ballot measure on public time and fined him \$75.

Willamette Week

Hales Says New Taxes for Walking Safety Could Be on November Ballot

By Aaron Mesh

Mayor Charlie Hales has responded to calls for increased walking safety in East Portland by saying he's focused on finding new taxes and fees to fund streets and sidewalks.

His office says a new fee plan, pushed by Hales and City Commissioner Steve Novick, could be on the November ballot.

"That's likely to go to voters this year," says Hales spokesman Dana Haynes. "And that's a real, long-term effort to make streets safer."

As WW reported in this morning's Murmurs, two pedestrian deaths last weekend—Yan Huang, 78, along Southeast Division Street and Douglas Norman Miller, 60, on Southeast Powell Boulevard—have sparked renewed calls for City Hall to commit funds to walking safety.

Pedestrian advocates Oregon Walks are asking Hales and other city officials to support "Vision Zero"—a policy of street-safety investments designed to eliminate pedestrian fatalities. Novick says he'll back the policy.

But Hales' office won't yet commit to Vision Zero or Novick's request for \$1 million to install 15 sets of flashing beacons at crosswalks at the city's most dangerous intersections—two in Southwest Portland and 13 in East Portland.

"He hasn't been able to analyze Vision Zero to find out what it'll cost right now," Haynes says. "And what it'll cost in the future. And whether that funding will be the most effective possible plan."

Haynes says that Hales will keep focusing on finding new revenue for the cash-strapped Portland Bureau of Transportation. The mayor is also talking to the Oregon Department of Transportation about safety improvements.

Haynes says Hales wants to pull sidewalk funding from the rubble of the Columbia River Crossing.

"And once CRC is really, truly dead, that's the opportunity to begin engaging the state of Oregon in a discussion of street safety," Haynes says. "Any discussion of safe streets must, and will, include a conversation with ODOT, since a lot of this last year's fatalities happened on state-owned streets."

The Mercury

Hall Monitor

The "Target on My Back"

By Denis C. Theriault

IT'S AMONG the sweetest perks of office when you're Portland's independently elected auditor.

If someone powerful like, say, Mayor Charlie Hales does something that enrages you or disappoints you or both, you can puncture the usual norms of city hall decorum by calling him out very publicly and rather frankly. It's part of your job description.

And, best of all, you can do that without worrying about little things like payback or the political cost of sore feelings.

All of which explains why City Auditor LaVonne Griffin-Valade felt extraordinarily comfortable when she sat in front of the City Club of Portland last Friday, February 14, and aired a months-old grievance about the mayor—and his seemingly slow embrace of common-sense police oversight reforms finally approved early this year.

"I was a little bit stunned this last go-round," Griffin-Valade told the grandees, advocates, police brass, and others who'd gathered at a luncheon to hear her address police accountability alongside Police Chief Mike Reese and Independent Police Review Director Constantin Severe.

Remembering 2010, the last time she put forward a package of reforms, she said, "We had a very aware mayor and council members who were supportive of us and our partners."

That was an unsubtle shoutout to former Mayor Sam Adams, presiding over the proceedings in the back of the room as part of his new job as City Club's executive director. It was an even less subtle jab at Hales and his colleagues, none of whom were in attendance.

Griffin-Valade then made sure no one would mistake her point.

She felt like she had a "target on my back"—a pretty unjust reward for her answer to a federal investigation that looked at how Portland officers treat people with mental illness and found fault with the city's "byzantine" mechanisms for oversight and accountability.

"That's exactly what this felt like," she said. "And it was out of whack."

Griffin-Valade and Severe (and former IPR Director Mary-Beth Baptista before him) started beating the drum for reforms almost a year ago. What they wanted was modest: expanding a citizen appeal board, requiring the chief of police to reveal discipline in certain cases and better explain his decisions, and letting civilian investigators directly interview cops.

But when they finally sat before city council to present their ideas in the fall, Hales invited Reese to lay out his gripes and then held off on scheduling a final vote for weeks. A few compromises were made in the interim. But Griffin-Valade wondered why those discussions couldn't have been had sooner. Or why Hales and the council hadn't backed her more strongly.

"It was difficult to get the council engaged in that discussion," she said at City Club.

Hales, later that day, received word of Griffin-Valade's comments. The mayor, through his spokesman, Dana Haynes, decided not to hit back. At least not without a smile.

"The mayor continues to be very, very strongly in favor of having an independently elected auditor," Haynes says, "which means they independently say things they independently believe."

In Other News

By Denis C. Theriault

A MILLION-DOLLAR DEAL meant to keep Right 2 Dream Too from moving to a city-owned lot near the Pearl District was pushed off at least another week after Commissioner Dan Saltzman raised pointed questions on Wednesday, February 12.

Under the proposed deal, developers Homer Williams and Dike Dame would buy the lot from the Portland Development Commission (PDC) for \$142,000—then give an additional \$846,000 to Right 2 Dream Too to buy or lease another lot, hopefully near downtown. The PDC's board unanimously approved its piece of the transaction. But now the PDC is waiting for city council to do its part.

Saltzman, the city's housing commissioner, told the Mercury he's especially worried the city might kick in extra money to help R2DToo move—and sources confirm he came close to pitching amendments that would have banned such a subsidy. Later, he told the Oregonian's editorial board he's afraid other neighborhoods will complain the city is letting the Pearl District buy its way out of having a homeless community in its midst.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Public comment period open for Washington Park reservoir designs

By Inka Bajandas

The Portland Water Bureau this month is hosting a virtual open house to gather public feedback on designs for a nature area and water feature to cover a planned underground drinking water reservoir in Washington Park.

Input on the \$67 million project to replace the park's two historic, open-air reservoirs can be submitted at the Water Bureau's website until Feb. 28. The feedback will supplement information gathered at face-to-face open houses, bureau spokesman Tim Hall said.

City officials announced last year that they would proceed with the project after receiving a mandate from the Oregon Health Authority to follow a federal regulation that outlaws the use of uncovered reservoirs to store finished drinking water. The rule is intended to reduce the risk of exposure to contaminants.

The bureau is especially interested to learn what people think about plans to create a tranquil setting with a nature area and a fountain consisting of a series of tiered pools over a new 15 million gallon underground reservoir, Hall said.

"We wanted to look at other opportunities to use that space," he said. "The concepts that you see in the (virtual) open house come from what we've heard from Portlanders about what they want. We wanted to take advantage of the fact that we were giving people in Washington Park a destination."

Washington Park's other reservoir would be decommissioned and used for overflow, dechlorination and stormwater management. The Water Bureau also is considering transforming it into a wetland area.

Project designs are scheduled to go before the Portland City Council for approval this spring, Hall said.

The project is being designed and engineered by AECOM, which has a Portland office. Construction is scheduled to start in summer 2016 and wrap up in late 2020.