

The Oregonian

39th Avenue signs removed from Portland's Cesar E. Chavez Boulevard, opponent feels 'slap in the face'

*By Melissa Binder
August 4, 2014*

Jon Coney ran outside when he saw city workers removing a 39th Avenue sign near his Northeast Portland home earlier this month. The 12-year Beaumont-Wilshire resident wanted to know why the sign was coming down.

It's time, they told him.

Five years after the Portland City Council unanimously voted to change 39th Avenue to César E. Chávez Boulevard, crews are removing the old numbered street signs. Both names have been on display during the transition period.

This final step is reviving an issue that fractured the city and pitted Latino activists against the street's residents and business owners.

"It felt like one final slap in the face to the residents," Coney said.

Coney was one of nearly 800 residents on 39th Avenue to respond to a 2009 survey from the city auditor gauging support for the name change.

He was one of nearly 700 to vote "no."

To at least one of the name-change advocates, the removal of 39th Avenue signs brings satisfaction.

"I'm glad that it's happening, because I know there are some folks out there in the community who have not grown to accept it," said Martin Gonzalez. "But it is the reality. Things do need to change to reflect the growing diversity of Portland."

The City Council provided for a five-year transition period when commissioners approved the name change. Diane Dulken, a spokesperson for the transportation bureau, said the change gave residents and businesses time to deal with the necessary paperwork.

Crews are working from north to south on the street, Dulken said, removing one 39th Avenue sign at a time when they're in the area for other projects.

All signs north of Sandy Boulevard should have been removed, she said. Every 39th Avenue sign will be down by the end of the year.

Residents have expressed interest in taking the signs home, she said, but the bureau can't give away public property – or donate the signs to neighborhood associations along César Chávez, as one neighbor suggested.

The push to name a Portland street for Chavez, a civil rights activist and labor union leader, started with a bitter fight in 2007 to rename Interstate Avenue in North Portland. Gonzalez, one of the founders of the Latino Network, said people made "very racist comments" at neighborhood meetings.

The debate briefly shifted to renaming downtown's Fourth Avenue, but quickly thereafter came to a halt.

Activists renewed their efforts several months later with new options: Grand Avenue, 39th Avenue and Broadway. The fight again was hurtful and heated.

"The basic message we got was: Not in our back yard," Gonzalez said. "It rocked the perspective that people have here that the city is 'progressive.' It showed its true colors."

Laurelhurst resident Eric Fruits said what angered him most was the process. The City Council went through the motions of following the legal procedure, he said, but he felt commissioners had already made up their minds. It's over now, he said, and it's time for the old signs to come down.

Removing the 39th Avenue signs is important, said Maria Lisa Johnson, who did her best to broker peace during the debate several years ago. But the act doesn't bring closure.

"I acknowledge it probably will bring up some more tensions, but it's also part of the healing of moving forward in a changing community," she said.

"It's a symbol of a long struggle and my hope is that it is also a symbol of acceptance and going forward, not going backward."

The Portland Tribune

Council to consider socially responsible investing

*By Jim Redden
August 4, 2014*

The City Council will be asked to create a committee to decide which companies it should not invest in on Wednesday.

The recommendation is a response to a resolution passed last October to create a temporary Socially Responsible Investing Committee to study the city's current investment policies and processes, and to recommend how the council can change the policies to reflect environmental, labor, ethical, social and extreme tax avoidance concerns.

The resolution listed only company that the city should not invest in, Wal-Mart. Commission Steve Novick, who introduced the resolution, held a press conference in May to announce one of the city's five Wal-Mart bonds had expired. He said the city will not buy any more Wal-Mart bonds until the company changes its labor practices.

"From what I can tell, no other U.S. city has looked at socially responsible investing in quite the same way as Portland," Novick said at the press conference. "I'm hopeful other cities and states take note and adopt similar investment principles to hold companies accountable and align our investment policies with our values."

According to the city, Portland's entire investment portfolio ranges from \$940 million to \$1.29 billion and averages about \$1.08 billion during the year. In Fiscal Year 2013, the City's investment portfolio generated about \$4.3 million in earnings, which were distributed to all city funds.

Before the Wal-Mart bond expired, the city's investment in the company was \$36 million, or roughly 3 percent of its investment portfolio.

The five-member Socially Responsible Investing Committee did not name any other companies the city should avoid supporting with its investment funds. Instead, it recommended that a permanent committee be established to draw up specific criteria for making such decisions in the future.

The committee also recommended the city bore a firm with expertise in such issues to advise it on managing its corporate investments.

In a memo to the council, Fred Miller, the city's chief administrative officer, said, "Council should establish a standing permanent committee of public members with various areas of expertise to take public input and recommend eligible issuers for inclusion on, or removal from, a do-not-buy list. The City should contract with an outside data research vendor to provide reports about eligible issuers. These reports should evaluate each eligible issuer based on principles established by the Council. The committee should use these reports to develop its recommendations to Council."

A fiscal analysis accompanying the request says creating the standing committee will not cost the city anything, but its recommendations could have an impact on future investment decisions.

The Mercury

Police Union President Touts Concession on Investigation Interviews

*By Denis C. Theriault
August 1, 2014*

A pointed complaint by the president of the Portland Police Association—accusing the city's Independent Police Review office of violating labor agreements and city code when casually contacting cops about investigations—has apparently had its intended effect.

Daryl Turner, in an email yesterday to his nearly 1,000 members, said he sat down with the director of IPR, Constantin Severe, and claimed an essential concession: No matter the situation at hand, Turner writes, IPR investigators will direct all communication through the police bureau's internal affairs division and "will no longer have any informal, direct communications with PPA members without the PPA's and the member's prior consent."

The Mercury first reported Turner's complaint earlier this month and also reported that the complaint was germane enough that Turner and Severe had agreed to meet. The IPR, which is overseen by the city auditor's office, is separate from the police bureau.

When asked initially about Turner's charge that IPR investigators were contacting cops during investigations, Severe had told that Mercury that wasn't the case—and that the only time that happened was when someone arrested was having a hard time getting back property that had been convicted as evidence.

But after being told the Mercury had seen emails in which an IPR investigator contacted a cop and that cop's supervisor in a traffic case, Severe walked back his previous denial. He said he hadn't thought of one other circumstance: investigations that might lead to a non-disciplinary finding against officers. He also allowed that information obtained in those lower-level contacts might possibly fuel a more serious investigation, although he says it hasn't happened yet.

Turner was among the loudest opponents of a push last fall and winter to formally expand IPR's power, under city code, to conduct independent misconduct investigations, beyond just serving as an intake point for citizen complaints. Turner views an expansion of IPR's powers—something called for in a federal settlement agreement with the police answering accusations our officers have used excessive force against people with mental illness—as a civilian encroachment in what he believes should be a police discipline process.

IPR doesn't issue discipline recommendations or mete out actual discipline, but it does review discipline decisions by police officials and can send them to the bureau's Police Review Board if it chooses. But a strong IPR has decided benefits, even for cops. Most infamously, IPR received a tip from a police official that the bureau had planned to squelch a retaliation claim filed against Captain Mark Kruger without doing a real investigation. IPR decided to investigate on its own and because of that investigation, both the Police Review Board and the city's human resources bureau agreed Kruger had violated policy.

A message left with IPR's deputy director seeking comment on Turner's email has not been returned. Turner declined to comment beyond what he wrote in the email. Here's his full statement:

This week, I met with the IPR Director Constantin Severe to discuss issues related to IPR investigators directly contacting PPA members regarding investigations without following the procedures set forth in Articles 61 and 62 of the PPA collective bargaining agreement. As a result of this meeting, IPR has reaffirmed its commitment to honor our collective bargaining agreement and City Code.

Whether the scope of IPR's inquiry with a PPA member is an intake interview, a formal investigatory interview, or a property release issue, IPR will provide compelled, advance notice to the PPA member through IAD consistent with Article 61.2.1, along with an interview consistent with Article 61.2.2. IPR will not have any informal, direct communications with PPA members without the PPA's and the member's prior consent.

It's important for all of our members to understand and exercise their rights. If you're contacted by IPR, please contact me or your PPA representative immediately.

Daryl Turner
President
Portland Police Association

The Portland Business Journal

Portland looks to overhaul city's finance department

*By Andy Giegerich
August 4, 2014*

Portland's City Council will consider changing the way its finance bureau operates and is managed.

The Council will tackle two items regarding the department's structure on Wednesday afternoon. At 2 p.m., the lawmakers will look at amending the code "to reflect changes to the organizational structure, positions and responsibilities of the Office of Management and Finance."

After that, the Council will consider a motion to "reate a new Nonrepresented classification of Revenue and Financial Services Director and establish a compensation rate for the new classification."

The city fired its chief administrator, Jack Graham, late last year.