

The Oregonian

Council gets a pitch for city Rooney Rule on hiring

By Kevin L. Harden
February 23, 2015

If the NFL can do it, and the state of Oregon can do it, couldn't the city of Portland do it too?

That's the question Sam Sachs is going to ask Portland's City Council Wednesday morning, when he proposes a new city rule requiring that a qualified minority candidate be interviewed for each open high-level city position.

It's a proposal similar to the "Rooney Rule," that NFL teams have used it for 12 years to interview — and hire — top minority candidates for head coaching jobs. State lawmakers adopted a version of the rule in 2009, requiring qualified minority candidates to be interviewed for head coaching and athletic director positions at state-funded institutions.

Portland's city government doesn't have that kind of rule, and Sachs thinks it's time to add it to the human resources requirements.

"It doesn't discriminate, because you're already interviewing white candidates," Sachs said last week. "It challenges the city and any bureaus to create a diverse hiring committee and seek out qualified candidates."

Sachs and Portland Human Resources Director Anna Kanwit will speak to the City Council about a possible citywide Rooney Rule at the beginning of the Feb. 25 meeting, which starts at 9:30 a.m. in City Hall's Council Chambers, 1221 S.W. Fourth Ave.

Kanwit said she isn't advocating for the rule on Wednesday, but will discuss with the council steps the city has taken to implement diverse interview panels for high-level job openings, like bureau directors. "These processes help to increase diversity hiring," Kanwit said last week.

During the same meeting, city commissioners could establish a seven-member committee to help local minority and women-owned businesses get more city contracts. If adopted by the council, an ordinance will create a panel appointed by the mayor to review city procurement procedures and recommend ways to increase business with minority and women-owned companies.

'In their court'

Sachs is a city park ranger responsible for off-leash enforcement. He also is chairman of the Community and Police Relations Committee and a member of the city's Human Rights Commission.

Six years ago, Sachs was one of the driving forces behind the state's new mini-Rooney Rule for Oregon university coaches and athletic directors. He asked state Rep. Mitch Greenlick of Northwest Portland to sponsor House Bill 3118 that created the requirement. Greenlick was joined by Reps. Tobias Read of Beaverton, Peter Buckley of Ashland and Chip Shields of Portland as the bill's co-sponsors. State Sens. Suzanne Bonamici of Washington County and Margaret Carter of Portland also joined as co-sponsors of the bill.

The proposal was meant to remedy a situation in which, at the time, less than 10 percent of all NCAA head coaching and athletic director jobs were held by minorities. Since then, more minorities have been hired for top coaching and athletic director positions.

The Rooney Rule was named for Pittsburgh Steelers' owner Dan Rooney, chairman of the NFL's diversity committee. Since its implementation in 2003, NFL franchises have increased the hiring of minority coaches and team officials.

Sachs said he took the proposal for a city Rooney Rule to the staff of then-Mayor Sam Adams a few years ago, but "it never got off the ground."

He also hopes to talk with city commissioners early this week to clear the way for his proposal, which would require a change in city hiring procedures.

"We can start that conversation around the possibility of adopting this rule and how it's going to work out and how we're going to do it," Sachs said. "I thought I'd put the ball in their court."

Willamette Week

VIDEO: Will Uber Share Its Rider and Driver Data with Portland City Hall?

*By Aaron mesh
February 20, 2015*

With less than two months until the clock strikes midnight on Mayor Charlie Hales' deal with ride-app company Uber, Portland city officials still have lots of questions unanswered. One of the biggest: What data will Uber give City Hall on its riders and drivers?

Hales cut a bargain with Uber in December after the San Francisco company invaded the Portland taxi market. The deal says Uber and its competitor Lyft can return to Portland by April 9, when the city will begin an experiment in lifting some of the rules currently regulating the cab industry.

The task force assigned with crafting new rules for the so-called "ride-sharing" companies met Thursday evening to hear presentations from Uber and Lyft—the first time these companies have appeared before city regulators in more than a year.

The Oregonian reported after the meeting that some officials doubt the task force will have new regulations ready by the April 9 deadline—the start of a period City Commissioner Steve Novick has described as "Taxis Gone Wild."

Another question the task force faces: Can it trust Uber and Lyft to turn over data on its drivers and riders, to see how the company is upending the taxi market?

That information will be crucial if taxi companies have any hope of competing—and it's also important for seeing if Uber and Lyft are serving poorer areas of town, people with disabilities, and customers making short trips. These are the least lucrative fares, and city regulators are supposed to protect them.

Getting "sharing economy" companies to share data has turned into one of City Hall's most thorny challenges. Portland regulators are struggling to get addresses from Airbnb, even as some of that company's clients are demonstrably breaking city rules.

At last night's hearing, Chris Bebo of the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association asked representatives from Uber and Lyft if they would be more forthcoming with data. Watch the reply from Caitlin O'Neill and Brooke Steger of Uber, and Annabel Chang of Lyft.

Daily Journal of Commerce

Public comments sought on reservoirs

*By Inka Bajandas
February 20, 2015*

City planners are seeking public comments on plans to demolish a historic building and reservoirs in Portland's Washington Park.

Bureau of Development Services staffers issued a request for response last week, opening the public comment period for the first of two land use review applications that Portland Water Bureau officials submitted in December. The applications are for a \$76 million project to build a new underground reservoir in place of the park's existing open-air reservoirs.

A copy of the first application is posted on the PWB website. Comments sent to city planner Hillary Adam by March 9 will be included in the official record, and a staff report will be presented at a Historic Landmarks Commission public hearing scheduled for March 23 at 1:30 p.m. in Room 2500A, 1900 S.W. Fourth Ave.

A second public hearing before the Portland City Council is scheduled for April 23 at 2 p.m. at Portland City Hall, 1221 S.W. Fourth Ave.

With the PWB's first land use application, officials are seeking the City Council's OK to demolish the historic Weir Building and remove portions of two reservoir basins to make way for the proposed Washington Park Reservoir Improvements Project.

Project plans call for a fountain consisting of a series of tiered pools and a nature area atop a planned 15-million-gallon underground drinking water reservoir in the footprint of one of the existing reservoirs. Washington Park's other reservoir would be decommissioned and a lowland habitat area and reflecting pool would replace it.

PWB officials plan this spring to submit a second land use review application for construction of the new covered reservoir, reflecting pools, lowland habitat area and walkways as well as rehabilitation of historic structures nearby.

Officials announced last year that they plan to 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.

Hoffman Construction crews are scheduled to start work on the project on July 1, 2016 and wrap up in late 2020.

Public comments on the initial land use review application for the project can be emailed before March 9 to hillary.adam@portlandoregon.gov, faxed to 503-823-5630, or mailed to Hillary Adam, Land Use Services, Bureau of Development Services, RE: LU 14-249689, 1900 S.W. Fourth Ave., Suite 4500, Portland, OR 97201.

Comments submitted after March 9 can be faxed to 503-823-5630, or mailed to the Historic Landmarks Commission at 1900 S.W. Fourth Ave., Suite 4500, Portland, OR 97201.