

The Oregonian

Scandal to delay NW Portland meters, city says

*By Brad Schmidt
July 14, 2015*

The long-delayed installation of parking meters in Northwest Portland will likely be postponed again – but for how long is unclear.

Portland's bribe-tainted meter contract is to blame.

City transportation officials said Monday they won't install hundreds of Cale America parking meters until more is known about the role that company leadership played in a now-infamous 2006 contract manipulated by former city parking manager Ellis McCoy.

"We may have to postpone installation," said Dylan Rivera, a transportation spokesman.

Meter installation had been scheduled to begin this month. But Rivera said officials will not move forward until Cale completes an outside investigation and city officials vet the findings.

"It could take weeks," he said. "It could take months."

Until recently, Portland officials thought they had largely moved past the fallout over the McCoy scandal, which peaked in 2011 when the FBI raided McCoy's office and home as part of a corruption investigation.

Federal prosecutors accused McCoy of taking bribes from George Levey, a Florida-based distributor of Cale meters. In response, Cale officials cut ties with Levey.

Despite the scandal, Commissioner Steve Novick in 2013 planned to keep buying Cale meters for Northwest Portland, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported at the time, arguing that the city got a good deal. But in the face of criticism, Novick backtracked and officials launched a competitive process in 2014.

Earlier this year, the City Council authorized an \$11.9 million contract with Cale America to buy up to 1,000 new meters. In May, the city ordered 400 machines.

But just a few weeks later, in conjunction with a judge sentencing McCoy to two years in prison, prosecutors released decade-old emails showing that top Cale leaders had been sent emails detailing some of McCoy's contract shenanigans intended to benefit Cale.

Some of those same leaders were still involved with the company.

"We have concerns about whether Cale negotiated in good faith with the city," Rivera said.

The emails did not indicate that Cale officials were told about the bribes. No company official was accused of wrongdoing, but Cale did put two officials on leave pending its investigation.

Cale hired three outside law firms to conduct an investigation, Rivera said. The firms are Portland-based Cable Huston, Sweden-based Vinge and Norton Rose Fulbright in Canada.

"We really need to see the results of their investigation and evaluate it ourselves," Rivera said.

Rivera said city officials had been willing to move forward on meter installation if Cale would agree to put the city's money in an escrow account, with distribution dependent on the outcome of the investigation. But Rivera said company officials wouldn't agree to the arrangement.

Transportation officials earlier this year had warned of meter installation delays, not because of Cale but out of concern of disrupting shopping for businesses along Northwest 21st and 23rd avenues.

Officials decided to move forward with some meters. They took out a full-page advertisement in the July edition of a Northwest Portland community newspaper announcing that meters just off the main drags would "go live in late July."

But on Monday Rivera said city officials want to get all the information about Cale before moving forward, even if that means another delay.

"To us," he said, "the important thing is public trust."

Kurt Creager named Portland Housing Bureau director

*By Brad Schmidt
July 14, 2015*

Kurt Creager, a longtime housing policy wonk and administrator, on Tuesday was named director of the Portland Housing Bureau.

Creager has strong northwest ties and spent 16 years at the Vancouver Housing Authority before eventually securing a gig in academia as executive director of the Stardust Center for Affordable Homes and the Family at Arizona State University.

Creager's been at his current job -- leading the Department of Housing and Community Development in Fairfax, Virginia -- for less than one year.

When Creager worked for the Vancouver Housing Authority, the agency produced more than 3,500 units. Creager is also an expert in workforce housing, which serves middle-income renters.

"Kurt Creager is a proven leader in both the private and public sector in the field of affordable housing," Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who oversees the Housing Bureau, said in a statement. "He brings substantial policy and resource development experience, as well as a proven track record of the development of thousands of units of affordable housing."

Creager, who will replace Traci Manning, begins Aug. 10.

"I am honored to be leading the Portland Housing Bureau," Creager said in a statement. "I look forward to aiding community stakeholders, affordable housing developers and policy makers in the creation and preservation of affordable housing throughout the City."

The Oregonian/OregonLive spoke with Creager in 2011, when he worked for Arizona State, about the city-owned Headwaters apartments. The workforce housing is exempt from property taxes despite serving individuals who earned up to \$97,200 a year, setting off a battle between city and county leaders over taxes.

Portland needs to devote attention to police reforms and trust, not legal quibbles: Editorial Agenda 2015

*By The Oregonian Editorial Board
July 13, 2015*

It's hard to tell what the city of Portland actually won by challenging a federal judge's order last fall regarding its police reforms settlement.

Sure, there's more "clarity" and specificity in the new order signed last week by U.S. District Judge Michael Simon – the product of mediation between the city, federal government, the Portland police union and a community activist group. Now, city officials must appear only once a year before Simon to brief him on progress in police training, policy updates and other changes mandated by the settlement with the U.S. Department of Justice over allegations of excessive force by Portland Police. The city also won't be asked to produce any "evidence" of progress or other issues, as Simon's order initially seemed to suggest, sending city lawyers into a tizzy.

But there's little else in the new order that shows the city's decision to appeal the judge's authority was worth the cost to public trust that many had warned would result from an appeal. With this dispute now over, Portland leaders need to focus their full attention on rebuilding their credibility for real, this time.

To be fair, the city has not postponed its commitments under the settlement, even after filing its appeal. The city has made significant progress including setting up a Behavioral Health Unit within Portland Police; hiring a team to monitor the city's progress and serve as Portland's compliance officer and community liaison; and assembling a group of citizens to serve as a community oversight advisory board. In addition, the city is committing \$500,000 to an effort spearheaded by Legacy Health Systems and other area hospitals to create a psychiatric emergency center, an initiative similar to an aspirational goal in the DOJ settlement.

But the legal challenge siphoned time and resources from what should be priority number one – meeting the terms of this agreement and showing the public its work. In fact, it's important to note that the reason Simon proposed these "periodic hearings" in the first place was to ensure that he and the public heard regular updates on progress by the city. Simon had said he did not want to run the risk that a lack of compliance could go unchecked for years.

It's also unclear whether the city really needed to file an appeal. City attorneys said they feared Simon would issue subpoenas or require witnesses and procedures following the rules of evidence. They pointed to his order, which briefly mentions that he could ask the parties to "present evidence" relating to the issues under discussion.

But Simon had clearly stated previously that he was not envisioning formal evidentiary hearings with cross-examination of witnesses. Instead of simply asking for clarification from Simon, the city appealed. The 30-day window for filing an appeal did not give them much time for delay, they said.

In one way, the amended order is an improvement, by more clearly cementing public participation in the process. The order calls for a member of the Citizens Oversight Advisory Board to appear at the annual hearings and specifies a role for the Albina Ministerial Alliance Coalition for Justice and Police Reform, a longtime police watchdog group, to offer its views on Portland's progress in working with the community.

But it's time for the city to show just how much progress it is making toward police reform. That opportunity comes with the city's first court-ordered appearance under the new order on September 14.

The Portland Tribune

Portland hires new housing director

*By Steve Law
July 14, 2015*

After a national recruiting drive, Portland City Commissioner Dan Saltzman hired Kurt Creager to return to the Portland area as new director of the Portland Housing Bureau.

Creager is the former director of housing and community development in Fairfax County, Va., but also has extensive experience locally. He previously was director of housing and community development for OTAK, a Lake Oswego consulting company that relocated to Portland; and chief executive officer of the Vancouver Housing Authority across the Columbia River from Portland. Creager also held similar positions with Arizona State University and Metro King County.

Creager replaces Traci Manning, who resigned in April, saying she wanted to spend more time traveling with her husband. Manning had worked for the bureau for 25 years, starting as a receptionist and ultimately director in 2011.

"Kurt brings a creative approach and skill-set Portland needs to increase our supply of affordable housing," Saltzman said in a news release announcing the hire.

Creager will start his new post on August 10.

"I look forward to aiding community stakeholders, affordable housing developers and policy makers in the creation and preservation of affordable housing throughout the city," Creager stated in the release.

City Council poised to resolve wrangling over reservoirs

*By Jim Redden
July 14, 2015*

The City Council has a chance to make peace with some of its critics in the long-running battle over the three Mount Tabor open reservoirs.

The council will consider a resolution Wednesday about the future of the reservoirs drafted by the Water Bureau and the Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association. The ordinance calls for the council to commit \$5.5

million to the restoration and preservation of the reservoirs if they are disconnected from the water distribution system. The MTNA has agreed to stop fighting the disconnection if the council approves the resolution.

"We are very optimistic that this is the right solution that the water bureau can live with," says MTNA member John Laursen, who served on the association's negotiation team.

Of the five council members, only commissioners Amanda Fritz and Dan Saltzman responded to a request for comment. Both said they will not decide how to vote until after hearing the testimony on Wednesday. But Saltzman added, "If this represents an agreement that is supported by both the Water Bureau and the neighbors, I am excited about that."

Other critics may continue the fight, however. Anyone who testifies during the hearings process can challenge the approval at the state Land Use Board of Appeals. The grassroots Friends of the Reservoirs group is considering such an appeal. And lawyers representing ratepayers in an ongoing lawsuit over water and sewer spending filed a motion last week that argues ratepayer funds cannot be spent for aesthetic purposes, such as maintaining the historic appearance of nonfunctioning reservoirs.

But approving the resolution still would be a major step toward resolving a controversy that has surrounded the reservoirs for years. The council has promised the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency it will disconnect the reservoirs by the end of the year to comply with rules intended to prevent the spread of waterborne illnesses. The council has approved building underground storage tanks in Washington Park and at Kelley and Powell buttes to replace the lost capacity.

Although the MTNA has long argued the open reservoirs are safe, it has agreed to focus on restoring and maintaining the historic appearance of the reservoirs because that is the focus of the current process. But Laursen notes if the resolution is followed, the reservoirs will be preserved enough that a future council could decide to reconnect them to the water distribution system if circumstances change.

"If it turns out water is less healthy in closed tanks or the EPA changes its mind, then reservoirs will still be around in good enough condition to be used again," Laursen says.

The issue is before the council because the water bureau needs a land-use change at Mount Tabor to disconnect the reservoirs. Because both the reservoirs and Mount Tabor Park itself were both listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2004, the application was first considered by the city's Historic Landmarks Commission. It approved the permit on the condition the bureau maintain water in the reservoirs on most days and fund restoration work recommended in a 2009 Mount Tabor Reservoirs Historic Structures Report.

Both the bureau and the MTNA appealed the approval to the council. The bureau said it could not commit to the conditions and the MTNA did not trust the bureau to fulfill them. At the first hearing on May 28, the council requested the bureau and MTNA meet and negotiate a settlement. The resolution sets the terms of the agreement, and it says they are "binding City policy."

Among other things, the resolution says \$4.4 million must be spent over the next four years on the maintenance, repair and preservation work identified in the 2009 report. And it says an additional \$1.5 million also must be spent to replace non historic lighting with aesthetically appropriate lighting at two of the reservoirs.

The \$5.5 million is roughly half of what the bureau previously has said would be required to complete all the work in the report. Laursen calls it a compromise figure, but says the resolution calls for the MTNA to work with the bureau to prioritize the work that will be done.

"Neighbors can be reassured that the most important work will be done first," Laursen says.

The resolution does not say the water bureau must pay for the work and ongoing operations with ratepayers funds. If the council approves the resolution, it will have to decide where the money will come from. In theory, that allows the council to use discretionary general fund dollars if the courts agree ratepayer funds cannot be used for aesthetic purposes.

Daily Journal of Commerce

Portland council approves zone change guidelines

*By Beverly Corbell
July 13, 2015*

The Portland City Council last week approved guidelines for new zoning codes that will give developers more incentives to include affordable housing in their projects.

The code changes mean developers will be able to either include affordable housing in their multifamily developments or pay into a fund to create more low-income housing.

Under the direction of Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who oversees the Portland Housing Bureau, that agency and the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability conducted a study on incentives for affordable housing in the city's center. The results were shared with the City Council July 9. The council then voted unanimously to accept a resolution directing city staff to work with other stakeholders on proposed changes to the city zoning code for the Central City using guidelines spelled out in the resolution.

Saltzman said the new rules will be presented to the council next July.

"It's a good solid step," he said. "And for everyone who's got concerns, there is still time to work through those concerns and still not lose the direction of making affordable housing the predominant bonus for additional height or density in the Central City."

Portland's city center is expected to gain about 30,000 new households over the next 20 years, according to estimates by the Portland Housing Bureau, with more than 8,300 of these households earning below 80 percent of the median family income.

Based on average levels of development, according to a statement from the housing bureau, the bonuses could result in about 60 new units each year – or between \$120 million and \$200 million for affordable housing and rehabilitation.

Portland Business Journal

Under Armour commits to fixing up two Portland city parks

*By Matthew Kish
July 19, 2015*

Under Armour Inc. plans to fix up two city parks as part of its big Portland expansion.

The Baltimore-based sportswear company in April announced plans to move in part of its footwear division into the former YMCA building just south of downtown. On Friday, the city said Under Armour also will fix up two city parks, likely including Duniway Park, which is adjacent to the company's new building.

Lents Park also likely will get an upgrade.

The Oregonian reported Friday that Under Armour will pay for synthetic playing fields at the parks in exchange for the right to put a logo on each field, similar to what Nike has done elsewhere in the city.

"Great neighborhood parks are part of what makes Portland such a fantastic place," said Portland Mayor Charlie Hales, in a news release. "And the participation of Under Armour, with its philanthropic contributions, fits perfectly with the values of our community. We're excited about working with this great company now and in the future."

Details are still being finalized, the city said in a news release, but Under Armour has signed a memorandum of understanding. The work will be done through Under Armour's charitable arm, known as its Win Initiative.

"Through our Win Initiative, we are excited to work in collaboration with Portland Parks & Recreation to provide an enhanced athletic experience for the citizens of Portland, with a particular focus on young athletes," said Stacey Ullrich, director of global philanthropy for Under Armour, in a news release.

“We look forward to engaging the community as we work towards our common goal of providing first-class athletic experiences, while maintaining the opportunity for all to engage in this public space.”

Under Armour also plans significant renovations to the former YMCA building. The moves mark a significant turning point in the company's Portland's operations.

The Business Journal first reported in 2013 that the Nike rival planned to open a Portland footwear design office. It kept news of the office quiet. Source said the company didn't want to be seen as following too close in Nike's footsteps.

The YMCA building, on the other hand, is in a highly visible location at 2815 S.W. Barbur Blvd. And the Duniway Track is made with recycled Nike shoes.