

The Oregonian

Portland's homeless need a short-term shelter plan that sticks: Editorial Agenda 2016

*By The Oregonian Editorial Board
September 3, 2016*

Portland's entrenched homelessness problem grew gnarlier last week. On Thursday, about 100 individuals were booted from their makeshift camps along the Springwater Corridor with no place to go. The "sweeps," as they're called, continued Friday, despite an inability by officials to discuss consequence, which could include a displacement of some of the ejected into residential neighborhoods.

On Tuesday a state land use board told Portland leaders they were errant in deciding they could move the homeless tent camp Right 2 Dream Too, now situated downtown at the gate to Chinatown, to a site across the river near the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry. In a sharp rebuke to the city, the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals cited zoning codes that clearly prohibit mass shelters on land zoned for industrial use. Meanwhile, Portland officials drained more than \$600,000 from set-aside funds in the doomed effort, Brad Schmidt of The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

Separately, a temporary shelter aimed for the city's Terminal 1 property on the Willamette River may be sinking. A coalition comprising industrial property owners along the river filed a land-use appeal challenging the use at the industrial site. It's uncertain now whether the Terminal 1 project, in which the city transferred ownership of the terminal between bureaus so it could pay rent to itself for the temporary shelter, will survive the opposition and provide accommodations for about 100 people, recently downscaled from 400.

Yet more than 1,800 people in the metropolitan Portland region continue to sleep out every night. That's not okay. The city's and county's comprehensive Home For Everyone plan maps the creation of shelters and affordable housing and already shows solid success. But it will take time – years, perhaps – before Portland's homeless are dramatically reduced in number. That's not okay, either.

In just three months, rain and cold will set in. The homeless situation will be more acute than it already is. Portland's recent stumbles are understandable, if unfortunate. But that does little to blunt the reality Portland is back to square one, palms to the sky about what to do in the short term.

Two people can make a difference now: Deborah Kafoury, chair of the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners; and Ted Wheeler, Portland's mayor elect who will take office in January. Kafoury is widely known and respected for her dedications to ending homelessness. Wheeler, the state's treasurer and former chair of the county commission, knows the territory and what it takes to get things done.

Kafoury endorsed Wheeler's unsuccessful opponent in the mayoral race. But that's no reason the pair couldn't overlook differences, sit down and decide: Homelessness in Portland is a longterm emergency demanding short-term, temporary fixes. Read: Today.

An uncomfortable proposition for Kafoury has involved the use of the county's empty jail, Wapato, situated 11 miles northwest of downtown. Kafoury has insisted its permanent

conversion to a homeless shelter would be too expensive and drain the county's resources from other proven approaches to shelter creation. Kafoury may be right – in the long term. But Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith last week reignited the debate about Wapato's accommodation of more than 500 homeless people, demanding it be opened immediately, even temporarily. She may be right, too.

Kafoury and Wheeler should launch a detailed cost analysis of readying Wapato for temporary use – through the coming winter season only, with busing from downtown provided. Only then could the Multnomah County Commission make a rational, defensible choice about opening a modern facility that has sat empty since its completion and served sporadically as a set for television and movie crews.

If Kafoury and Wheeler would wish to open up the conversation about short-term fixes to others, great. But whether they confer only with each other or as a team leading others, the temporary homelessness solutions they craft would need to be legally defensible, affordable and deliverable soon, certainly before winter.

This is not a throw-spaghetti-at-the-wall-and-see-what-sticks challenge anymore. It is instead a call for informed, strategic thinking that can help buy time as the city and county jointly and slowly push forward in eliminating homelessness.

The Portland Tribune

R2DToo ruling might not apply to Terminal 1

By Jim Redden

September 6, 2016

Last week, the state Land Use Board of Appeals blocked the City Council from moving a homeless camp to industrial land in Southeast Portland. The ruling said camps like Right 2 Dream Too are prohibited on industrial lands.

Despite the similar issues involved, the ruling does not directly apply to the proposed homeless shelter at Terminal 1. Although the council approved allowing homeless people to reside on industrial property in both cases, the details and rationales are different. That means an upcoming LUBA challenge to the Terminal 1 shelter will likely go all the way through the process, which will take several months to reach a decision.

Portland land use plans and zoning policies prohibit mass shelters on industrial land. When the council decided to move the R2DToo camp from Old Town to a piece of city-owned industrial land in Southeast Portland, it argued the relocated camp would not be a mass shelter. Instead, it classified it as rest area, and said that qualified under policies that allow for “community services” on industrial land.

Area businesses challenged that explanation before LUBA, arguing the relocated camp would house dozens of people at a time. LUBA agreed and rejected the council’s plan outright, saying the proposed camp was clearly a form of mass shelter prohibited on industrial property.

“Now there needs to be a lot of discussions about what to do with Right 2 Dream Too,” Commissioner Amanda Fritz said during the City Council’s Thursday hearing on extending the Housing State of Emergency for a year.

But with the Terminal 1 proposal, a majority of the council approved an ordinance which temporarily suspended city code provisions under the housing state of emergency the council approved last October. The ordinance said this suspension allows a shelter to be opened in the vacant warehouse there, provided it is temporary. That is why the ordinance says the shelter can operate only for up to 18 months. At the same time, Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who sponsored the ordinance, says a permanent homeless multi-service center could be built on the property if developer Homer Williams raises enough private money to fund it.

A coalition of industrial harbor businesses and others have served notice they will challenge the Terminal 1 proposal before LUBA. Although the detailed appeal has not yet been filed, it will have to address the housing state of emergency. But those behind the challenge can take comfort in LUBA's strong defense of preserving industrial property in its R2DToo ruling.

"In our view, it cannot possibly be consistent with the purpose and policy of protecting industrial sanctuaries from residential and similar uses incompatible with those sanctuaries, to categorize as an outright permitted use a use that is functionally similar, if not functionally identical, to a use that is prohibited outright in the city's industrial zones because of its quasi-residential character. Accordingly, we conclude that the City Council's interpretation to that effect is inconsistent with the purpose and policy underlying the prohibition on mass shelters in industrial zones, and the protection of industrial areas from quasi-residential uses such as mass shelters," the ruling said in part.

In the meantime, negotiations over the lease for the shelter are on hold. Although the council authorized the Portland Housing Bureau to lease Terminal 1 from the Bureau of Environmental Services, the housing bureau has yet to tell BES how much of the property it wants or what it is willing to pay for it. The shelter may now start with just 100 residents instead of the 400 originally approved on a 3-2 vote.

Meanwhile, Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith now says she and Chair Deborah Kafoury are talking about having a public briefing Sept. 22 on the costs of opening the unused Wapato Jail to the homeless. Both Smith and Commissioner Diane McKeel support using Wapato for the homeless, while Kafoury opposes the idea.

Council to extend housing emergency day after Springwater Corridor sweep resumes

By Jim Redden

September 5, 2016

The City Council is poised to extend the Housing State of Emergency it declared last October for another year on Wednesday.

The council unanimously amended an extension ordinance submitted by Mayor Charlie Hales from three years to one year at last Wednesday's hearing on it.

The council also added a requirement that the director of the city-county Joint Office of Homeless Services and the director of the Portland Housing Bureau report every six months to the council on the progress made to address the housing emergency, and discuss whether there is a further need for the emergency, while the emergency remains in effect.

The vote is scheduled the day after city agencies and social service providers are expected to resume clearing hundred of homeless campers from the Springwater Corridor between Portland and Gresham. Hales ordered the sweep to begin on Sept. 1, but it was suspended over the three-day Labor Day weekend.

Residents and businesses have been complaining about problems related to the campers for months. The homeless say there are not enough shelter beds to accomodate them, however, and Hales agrees.

There was general agreement that the declaration has been helpful in focusing city and council efforts on the housing crisis. Among other things, it suspends zoning codes for homeless camps and shelters, and has been used to help open approximately 475 new shelter beds, the council was told.

Hales said the city faces an unprecedented housing crisis caused by a limited supply of available homes and approximately 1,000 more people moving to town every month.

“It’s a national crisis, but particularly acute on the West Coast and in our city,” Hales said, testifying by phone from vacation.

The hearing occurred as new reports showed Portland continues to have some of the highest housing costs in the country.

Portland had the biggest home sale price increase in the nation in June — 12.6 percent compared to the previous year, according to the Standard & Poor’s CoreLogic Case-Shiller 20-city home price index released last Tuesday. That is more than twice as fast as the 5.1 percent for all 20 cities. The closest city was Seattle, with an 11 percent increase.

And according to the Zumper apartment service firm, Portland had the 15th highest apartment rents in the country in August. While the national median rent for one- and two-bedroom apartments fell last month, the median rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Portland held steady at \$1,400 and the median rent for a two-bedroom apartment increased 0.06 percent to \$1,670.

You can read the amended ordinance to extend the declaration at www.portlandoregon.gov/auditor/article/588534.

Fritz to propose new public campaign finance program

By Jim Redden

September 4, 2016

Six years after Portland voters repealed the city’s public campaign finance program by a narrow margin, Commissioner Amanda Fritz is preparing to ask the City Council to enact another one she is calling the Open and Accountable Elections.

For participating candidates, the new program would include a city matching fund for \$50 campaign contributions from individuals, and maximum contribution and spending limits. The city match would be 6-to-1, meaning a \$50 contribution would become a \$350 contribution. Maximum contributions would be limited to \$250, and in-kind contributions would be capped at \$20,000 in each of the primary and general election campaigns. Total spending in City Council races would be capped at \$250,000 in the primary election and \$300,000 in the general

election. Total spending in the mayor's race would be limited to \$380,000 in the primary election and \$570,000 in the general election.

Fritz will present other details when she unveils her proposal at a public forum to gather community comment from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 8, at the Matt Dishman Community Center, 77 NE Knott St, Portland. Her office says it is intended to accomplish several campaign reform goals, including: removing the perceived or real influence of big money; amplifying the voices of small-dollar contributors; increasing transparency and accountability; allowing candidates from diverse background the opportunity to run; allowing candidates to be competitive by engaging with a broader pool of small donors; utilizing public dollars responsibly by providing safeguards to abuse and fraud; and assist in making the cost of campaigns affordable and accessible.

The proposal was developed with the help of several organizations that favor campaign reform, including Common Cause Oregon, Unite Oregon, and Color PAC.

"Common Cause works to reform our elections so that everyday voters — and not powerful donors — are front and center in our democracy. We met with Commissioner Fritz's office to examine the proposal, to ensure that it works for Portland and includes elements that have been successful in other locations. This reform will help make sure that everyone's voice is heard in our democracy, regardless of their wallet size," says Daniel Lewkow, the political director of Common Cause Oregon.

Color PAC board member Jesse Beason says the proposal could help elect minority, female and lower income candidates to the council.

"There have been just two people of color and seven women on Portland's City Council — ever. Currently our entire city commission lives in the wealthiest part of Portland, and only two commissioners ever have come from east of 47th Avenue. Yet half of Portland are women, one out of three residents are people of color and six out of ten live east of 47th," says Beason.

The proposal is likely to face opposition from the Portland Business Alliance, which opposed the first program and helped fund the campaign that rejected it.

"Portland voters have already said no to the concept of using tax dollars to pay for political campaigns. Commissioner Fritz seems interested in reversing the decision of the voters, which seems contrary to democratic principles," says PBA President and CEO Sandra McDonough.

Fritz in the only non-incumbent elected to the council with money from Portland's previous public campaign financing program, officials called Voter Owned Elections. The other candidate was former Commissioner Eric Sten, who was re-elected while participating in the program.

The first program was introduced by Sten and then-City Auditor Gary Blackmer. It was approved by the council in May 2005 with a requirement that it be submitted to the voters to be continued after five years. The program required candidates for council and auditor to collect 1,000 five-dollar contributions from qualified voters, and candidates for mayor to collect 1,500 five-dollar contributions to receive \$145,000 and \$195,000 for the primary elections, and \$195,000 \$245,000 respectively for the general election. It was financed with a small percent of all city bureau budgets.

The program was controversial from the start. The Portland Business Alliance backed a referral drive that obtained enough signatures to refer it to the voters, but a Multnomah County Circuit Court judge invalidated them because city election officials — who worked for the auditor —

provided outdated petition collection sheets. During the first election cycle, novice candidate Emily Boyles received public funds before it was revealed her campaign consultant forged some of her qualifying signatures. She also misspent some of the money and did not pay it all back after she lost. After Sten was reelected in the second cycle with public funds, he resigned halfway through his term. That same cycle, mayoral candidate Sho Dozona was disqualified from receiving public funds after he collected enough signatures because he received too much in-kind contributions in advance. And in the final primary election cycle before going to the voters, first-time council candidate Jesse Cornett received and spent \$145,000 in public funds, only to finish third behind a candidate who raised a mere \$23,000 in private contributions.

When Portland voters finally had a say on the program at the November 2010 general election, they rejected it by 50.38 to 49.62 percent, or 1600 votes.

Fritz has talked about reintroducing such a program since then. She is now in her third term after being re-elected twice with voluntary campaign contribution limits.

For a Willamette Law Review article on the history of the Voter Owned Election program, see tinyurl.com/hgsoacx.

The Portland Business Journal

Nonprofit raises \$250K for Terminal 1 homeless shelter

By Jon Bell

September 6, 2016

Despite pending legal action and an appeal with the state land use board, the nonprofit organization looking to turn the city's Terminal 1 site into a homeless shelter is plowing ahead with plans to have a temporary shelter open by Nov. 1.

Known as Oregon Harbor of Hope, the nonprofit is the group backed by developers Homer Williams and Dike Dame, who envision a hub of social services and a temporary shelter much like the Haven for Hope campus in San Antonio.

According to a status update from the nonprofit, it has already established a board of directors, hired a leadership team and raised \$250,000 in seed money. The organization is also conducting studies and connecting with other nonprofits, faith-based groups and private sector leaders for support.

On its web site, Harbor of Hope lists Williams, Dame, former Portland Development executive director Don Mazziotti, incoming mayor Ted Wheeler, City Commissioner Steve Novick and Matt Brown, a business partner of Williams', among its "team and community supporters."

The status update lays out Harbor of Hope's two-phase plan for the Terminal 1 site. The first phase would include building out a warehouse on site into a temporary shelter with services for between 200 and 400 people that would be available by Nov. 1. The warehouse is the same one that Nike used to build an indoor track in earlier this year.

The nonprofit is in the process of raising close to \$1.5 million that it says would be needed to run the facility for the first 18 months.

Phase Two of Harbor of Hope's plan would be to build what it is calling a "restoration center campus," which would offer mental health, medical and dental services, drug and alcohol recovery programs, job training, affordable housing and other resources. The nonprofit is aiming for private and public support that could lead to the campus opening in 2018.

Some estimates have suggested that it could take between \$60 million and \$100 million to establish the larger campus.

Harbor of Hope is moving forward with its plans despite the fact that the city is facing a legal challenge over the use of Terminal 1 as a homeless shelter. Several developers and other stakeholders in the area have also filed an appeal with the state Land Use Board of Appeals to head off the plan.

Harbor of Hope has also planned two public meetings to provide information and accept feedback on the shelter proposal. They will run from noon to 2 p.m. and from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 14, in the Ecotrust Building in Northwest Portland.

The meetings will be facilitated in part by Ann Meyers, former co-CEO at Haven for Hope in San Antonio, and Shaun Lee, Haven for Hope's former COO.