

The Portland Tribune

Police contract protesters dig in their heels

By Nick Budnick

October 18, 2016

Under a steady drizzle on Friday, protesters erected two strings of tents facing Mayor Charlie Hales' front lawn in Eastmoreland. The message was hard to miss: While the Portland police contract was approved earlier last week amid protests at City Hall, the political backlash may not be going away anytime soon.

"If we can't be comfortable, you can't be comfortable," Greg McKelvey, organizer with the group Don't Shoot Portland, said into a bullhorn directed at Hales' empty house. The crowd began chanting "Charlie, resign now!"

On Oct. 12, the Portland City Council approved a police contract in the hope of addressing a staffing crisis at the Portland Police Bureau that has sapped special units, contributed to longer response times, and left gaping holes in police coverage on certain shifts.

But in exchange for the hefty 9 percent raises officers received, police critics — including some under the banner of Black Lives Matter — were hoping to extract bigger concessions in police oversight. The officers' union did settle grievances that could give police managers more leeway to issue discipline in the future, but the biggest concession was a change that some cops say is largely symbolic — elimination of the 48-hour rule limiting when officers can be interviewed about incidents.

Perhaps even more controversial was how the city handled the protests of the contract. For the second week in a row, the City Council had to exclude the public from its vote — a move that likely violates state law. And the police actions in ejecting protesters from City Hall on Oct. 12 are now under federal Department of Justice review, as first reported by The Oregonian.

The protesters, mainly affiliated with Don't Shoot Portland, now hope to build on the week's events, through a combination of lawsuits and more protests.

The Hales' encampment started out as a march Friday on Southeast Milwaukie Avenue that had a secret destination. It lasted until Saturday afternoon when protesters became unnerved at the prospect of the weekend's stormy weather knocking a tree onto their tents.

The goal was not just to get Hales' attention. It was intended to channel the energy created by the Oct. 12 clash at City Hall, said Teresa Raiford of Don't Shoot Portland. "Part of bringing everybody together is giving them the follow-up on what happened (Wednesday)," she said.

Specifically, she and other organizers told protesters that the group is working with lawyers and may try to file a class-action lawsuit on behalf of protesters injured. Meanwhile, other groups are exploring filing a lawsuit to overturn the council vote on the police contract.

They are trying to launch a recall effort against City Commissioner Nick Fish, one of two votes Hales needed to pass the contract.

Meanwhile, the protests will continue. McKelvey said the group will camp out once again at Hales' house this Friday, and possibly for many Fridays to come.

Hales' term will be up in January. McKelvey said despite the location, the protest isn't just aimed at him. It's also aimed at his replacement, Mayor-elect Ted Wheeler, and others.

"We want to send a message to Wheeler and all politicians, that it doesn't matter when your term is up, (that) doesn't mean that you can do whatever you want without the people noticing it and fighting against it," he said.

Some among the protesters have used tactics of disruption to interrupt council meetings, swearing, yelling and heckling, leading to the council's recent decisions to meet away from the public.

But while city officials cite the protesters' actions as justification for moving behind close doors, Dan Handelman of Portland Copwatch says the city had the option to exclude all of those disrupting the meetings, but didn't.

He says the real problem is that the city stopped taking public comment on the contract, a move he blames for the disruptions.

"Until the city starts coming to its senses, I think it's going to continue," he said of the protests. "I think it's going to get worse because they've shown they don't have a commitment to listen to the community."

Some officials say they have listened, however. Commissioner Amanda Fritz had solicited input from the protesters and was considered a possible swing vote on the contract. On Wednesday, while voting in favor of the deal, she said she had investigated many of their concerns, only to find many of them unfounded.

Of the concern that the contract allows officers to delay being interviewed in order to review body-camera footage, she said, "That is simply not true."

As for one provision under the contract allowing the police chief to hire back retirees, Fritz rejected activists' critique that retired and older officers are more likely to be out of touch with the community.

"I find it unbelievable that any chief ... would invite criticism by hiring back officers who are not trusted by the community," she said.

Wheeler, Novick tour Texas model for homeless center

By Edmond Ortiz

October 18, 2016

Portland Mayor-elect Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Steve Novick are just two local leaders who feel a renowned public-private partnership 2,000 miles away could be a model toward helping the city's homeless population.

Wheeler and Novick led a small contingent from Portland on Saturday to San Antonio's Haven for Hope, a 22-acre campus just west of the city's downtown. Similar delegations from many other cities have visited the Texas facility, as well.

Following talks and a tour with Haven for Hope officials, Wheeler and Novick felt optimistic many parts of it could serve as a starting point for Portland.

“It’s pretty much what I expected to see, but I have to say I’m impressed,” Wheeler told reporters. “They’ve done a great job of providing a safe, humane place for people who are homeless. (Homeless people) have access to water, toilets, showers, laundry, but maybe the most important part of it, they have access to services to get them off the streets.”

Haven for Hope’s mission has been to provide a safe place to sleep for homeless people in immediate need, and to help the same individuals address the root causes of their plight — all in one spot. Since it opened in 2010, more than 3,100 people served there have moved into permanent housing.

The 93 partner agencies and organizations provide more than 150 different social “transformational” services, from counseling, education programs and job training to life skills, legal services and identification recovery. Thirty-three of those provider groups are based on site, paying into a campus-area maintenance fee.

Haven for Hope has become a model for communities nationwide that are struggling to address a variety of local homelessness issues. Meanwhile, although Portland faces an increasingly visible homeless problem, city efforts to relocate and open camps and shelters have run into opposition. The state Land Use Board of Appeals upheld a challenge from Southeast Portland businesses and others to relocate the Right 2 Dream Too homeless camp from Old Town to Southeast. Harbor businesses and others are preparing to challenge using Terminal 1 in Northwest Portland for a temporary shelter and perhaps permanent center modeled after the Haven for Hope, an idea proposed by developer Homer Williams.

The proposed Oregon Harbor of Hope prompted the elected officials’ trip to San Antonio. In addition to Wheeler and Novick, the contingent included Brendan Finn, chief of staff for Commissioner Dan Saltzman, Wheeler’s newly named chief of staff Maurice Henderson, and Don Mazziotti, a consultant serving as director of Williams’ project.

After the tour, Novick said he was struck by how philanthropic organizations and individual donors have helped to fund Haven for Hope, along with city, state and federal sources.

The campus’ current \$16 million budget includes \$3.4 million in private contributions — the biggest share at 21 percent, \$1.5 million from the United Way, \$3 million from the city, and \$2.6 million from the state.

Another \$3 million is coming from the NuStar Foundation, a nonprofit begun by Bill Greehey, board chairman of San Antonio-based NuStar Energy. Greehey, who chairs Haven for Hope’s board, was instrumental in helping to identify initial private-sector funding for the campus.

“Let’s show that to the philanthropic community in Portland, and some folks will step up and say not only will we help pay you to build a homeless facility, but we’ll pay to operate it,” said Novick, who voted for the temporary shelter but has not taken a public stand on the permanent center at Terminal 1.

One-stop shop of services

More than 35,000 people have received sobering and detoxification services at the campus’ Restoration Center since it was first launched by Haven for Hope in 2008.

This has resulted in a total savings of \$96 million for San Antonio-area jails, emergency rooms and courtrooms. The campus offers basic on-site medical, dental and vision care service to the homeless and to nearby residents. San Antonio's near west side is one of the city's poorest areas.

Haven for Hope has an in-house drug and alcohol recovery program, and separate programs that treat men and women with mental illness issues.

There's also a courtyard, a safe sleeping area for those who are unwilling, unable or waiting to take part in the transformational programs.

A person can stay in the courtyard as long as she or he is experiencing homelessness and needs basic assistance, but Haven for Hope's goal is to help — not force — individuals to care for themselves and do what is necessary to obtain more permanent housing.

More than 5,100 people have moved from the courtyard into higher levels of campus residential care, including supportive and/or permanent housing since 2010. There are two separate residential areas — one for men, one for women and families.

The campus has full-time in-house security, but also contracts with the city to have uniformed police officers providing extra security at night. No drugs, alcohol or weapons are allowed anywhere on campus.

Art Vela, director of life safety, said full-time in-house security officers are more suitable because they would have more time to adapt to the transformative culture Haven for Hope advocates.

There's also a small kennel for cats and dogs. Haven for Hope officials said, in some cases, having a pet kennel is vital to some homeless individuals deciding whether to take shelter there. Some people see their dog or cat as a family member, even as personal security, in this situation.

Wheeler said given all that Haven for Hope offers, he acknowledged it is not an inexpensive facility, but "looks like an effective model." He also liked the relative calm and quiet at the facility.

Additionally, Wheeler said he likes the centralization of critical services, which even Haven for Hope officials said they hope to improve in terms of urgent and integrated medical care.

"There's definitely a very positive aspect to the model in that it consolidates the services," Wheeler added.

Outside-the-box thinking

Despite successes, President/CEO Kenny Wilson said Haven for Hope is still learning from how to be an efficient, modern facility addressing short- and long-term homelessness.

Wilson complimented the Portland officials, saying they are doing their best to aggressively address local homelessness issues.

"Of all the cities we talk to, we enjoy working with you the most because it seems like you've got more energy about this than anybody we've seen," he added. Even so, the facility's reputation is known around the country, as other cities' leaders ask how they could replicate it.

Scott Ackerson, Haven for Hope's vice president of strategic relationships, recalled as long as 10 years ago when Bill Greehey, then-board chairman of Valero Energy Corp., viewed a documentary about the local homeless population.

Pre-Haven for Hope, homeless people huddled beneath downtown-area freeway underpasses or went to a dilapidated emergency shelter.

Ackerson described conditions as undesirable, as homeless people — if they wanted it — had a substandard overnight place to sleep, but many still likely continued their drug or alcohol habits overnight, then returned to the streets the next day.

“(Greehey) called the mayor and said we need to do something about this,” Ackerson said. San Antonio officials and civic leaders formed a task force, and researched dozens of other U.S. cities. Outside-the-box thinking was critical.

“A lesson learned in retrospect was that we were really looking at a paradigm shift in which people were experiencing homelessness,” Ackerson said.

“I think the mistake we made then was that we were looking at the existing paradigm.” That's where the idea for a centralized campus for homelessness services and shelter was born.

Portland location is a sticking point

Wheeler asked how difficult it was to organize service providers to work together toward the same cause, in the same location. Wilson said most providers were eager to join because they were local and so was the campus, and because the idea was unique.

“I am amazed at the number of people who say they're thankful to be here and for access to services they wouldn't have otherwise,” Wilson said.

Finn explained Portland's homeless challenge has reached critical mass due mostly to a high influx of new residents and lack of affordable and market-rate housing.

“There's been a big squeeze, and there's been relaxed rules to try and create safe places to sleep around the city,” he added.

“That has created weird dynamics in all sections of the city. Everyone's seen it, so I think there's a huge will right now to do something important.”

Finn said an unconventional approach could benefit Portland's homeless population, in the long run, and that — while not easy — a boost in more traditional affordable housing also could help.

The challenge there, Finn added, is a rising amount of gentrification, or longtime residents being priced out of their neighborhoods.

For its part, San Antonio is countering a similar problem by proposing \$20 million bonds, as part of its planned May 2017 bond election, toward encouraging developers to transform select underused and vacant properties for affordable housing.

Wheeler and Novick though said location may be a major sticking point for a Haven for Hope-like complex in Portland, adding there is currently not a singular similarly sized property for it. Terminal 1 is only 14 acres and Williams already has pushed back the opening of the temporary shelter there approved by the City Council to the end of November, at the earliest.

But Wheeler said some of Haven for Hope's elements, such as connections to mental health services and transitional programs, and a housing-first approach, are a good start.

"I don't think we need to take this model and move it lock, stock and barrel, but I do think parts of this model bear further investigation," he added. "I will be leaving this fairly inspired."

Plan would rezone 2/3rds of single-family neighborhoods for more density

By Jim Redden

October 18, 2016

Portland would rezone nearly two-thirds of its existing single-family neighborhoods to increase residential density, under a proposal to be considered the Planning and Sustainability Commission next Tuesday.

The proposed Housing Opportunity Overlay Zone covers most of the city except the David Douglas School District in East Portland, because the district doesn't have enough capacity for the additional students such new housing would generate.

The proposal is intended to fulfill a new policy approved by the City Council to encourage relatively smaller, less expensive housing units within a quarter-mile of designated urban centers, transportation corridors with frequent transit, high capacity transit (MAX) stations, and within neighborhoods around the downtown core. The so-called missing middle housing will include duplexes, triplexes, four-plexes, small apartments and accessory dwelling units.

The policy directive was included in the update of the Comprehensive Plan approved by the council earlier this year. It is a state-required document governing how the city will grow over the next 20 years. The plan anticipates the city will add 123,000 new housing units by 2035, with about 20 percent of the growth in neighborhoods currently zoned for single-family homes.

The proposal was developed by the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability as part of its work on the Residential Infill Project. It will be considered by the project's Advisory Committee at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 18, in Suite 2500A of the 1900 Building, located at 1900 S.W. 4th Ave.

The proposal was controversial even before it was finalized. It was supported by land use watchdogs and developers as a way to increase more affordable housing without expanding the urban growth boundary designed to preserve farm and forest land. But it was opposed by some neighborhood organizations and activists who complained it would harm the character of existing neighborhoods without guaranteeing most Portlanders can afford the new homes.

The proposal also calls for limiting the scale of all new homes to ensure they fit into existing neighborhoods better. Limits would be placed on the size and location of new homes on their lots, although some exceptions could be granted by city planners.

The Planning and Sustainability Commission will consider the proposal at 4 p.m. on Oct. 25 in Suite 2500A of the 1900 Building, located at 1900 S.W. 4th Ave. The council is scheduled to consider it on Nov. 9 and 16.

To read the proposal, visit tinyurl.com/jj4dovd.

Willamette Week

Steve Novick Builds His Fundraising Advantage Over Chloe Eudaly

The incumbent on the Portland City Council has raised \$368,093.15 this year.

By Beth Slovic

October 18, 2016

Portland City Commissioner Steve Novick has raised four times as much money as other incumbents in past elections as he prepares to face challenger Chloe Eudaly in the November election.

State records show Novick has so far raised \$368,093.15 in 2016. (And that's not including the \$161,000 he raised in 2015.)

By comparison, Commissioner Dan Saltzman raised \$94,370 and Commissioner Nick Fish raised \$102,687 when they each ran for re-election in 2014. While Fish faced only nominal challengers, Saltzman faced housing activist Nick Caleb, who ended up winning about 17 percent of the vote in the May primary.

Both Saltzman and Fish won their May primaries outright, avoiding a November runoff.

Novick didn't.

But his fundraising swamps that of Eudaly, a first-time candidate who's raised just over \$75,000 this year. (That includes a recent \$500 check from Modest Mouse frontman Isaac Brock.) Eudaly raised no money in 2015.

As of this week, Novick reports he has \$81,230 on hand, compared with Eudaly's \$6,777.

Eudaly's campaign manager, Marshall Runkel, says Monday her campaign has enough money to send out 50,000 copies of its Joe Sacco cartoon on Portland's housing crisis, with more to come.

The Skanner

Protesters Set up Tents at Home of Portland Mayor Charlie Hales

By Andrew Selsky

October 15, 2016

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Dozens of protesters chanting "Black Lives Matter" and other slogans marched for several miles through Portland neighborhoods, briefly stopping traffic before finally ending outside the mayor's house and setting up tents.

The protesters, who set up more than a half-dozen tents Friday evening, were angry that Mayor Charlie Hales worked with the City Council this week to approve a new police contract that includes more pay for officers.

Some motorists who were blocked during the evening's commute were upset - a cacophony of horns sounded at one intersection the protest march blocked.

On Wednesday police used pepper spray and arrested 10 people as demonstrators stormed City Hall to object to the action on the police contract. Protesters said they were disappointed Hales was bringing the matter to a vote now instead of letting his successor, Mayor-Elect Ted Wheeler, take up the issue in January so there would be more time for public input.

Police watchdog groups grew concerned earlier this month when an initial version of the contract guaranteed officers the right to view body camera footage before writing up any non-fatal encounters with civilians.

That language led to several smaller protests and sit-ins in the weeks leading up to Wednesday's vote.

Commissioner Nick Fish has said the contract did not include any language on body camera policy and the issue will be addressed later.

In a blog post Tuesday, Police Chief Mike Marshman said the contract was urgently needed to help the city recruit new officers. By the end of the month, the 880-member Portland Police Bureau will have nearly 90 vacancies due to retirements and another 385 officers are projected to retire in the next five years.

Better pay will help the city entice new hires and could deter current officers from leaving to work elsewhere, he said.