

## The Oregonian

### Oregon needs better planning for the homeless (Opinion)

*By Guest Columnist Brad Perkins*

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I question why Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury is considering selling the Wapato Jail for \$9 million when the public has invested \$90 million to build, finance and maintain the building. Investing another \$1 million to make changes necessary to temporarily house over 500 people is an incredible bargain compared to a recent downtown affordable housing renovation project by REACH which cost \$514 per square foot and another project by Central City Concern which costs over \$1,000 per square foot, which is three to six times the normal cost to renovate buildings.

Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith and candidate Eric Zimmerman's attempt to open the mothballed Wapato facility makes economic sense and quickly addresses a great need. They wish to take a more sensitive approach to temporarily shelter people at Wapato and provide medical assistance to those who want help so that they can be properly evaluated for longer term placement and assistance elsewhere.

A more permanent solution to the homeless crisis will take multifaceted resources and focused, hard work by those willing to evaluate all state, county and city properties for diverse uses. As a society we must work to put together a multifaceted program to adequately address the worsening homeless situation in a humanitarian way.

Once a Portland housing commissioner, I had the opportunity to meet many good people and nonprofit groups who are sincere about helping people in need. Political leaders need to gather experts in related fields, meet weekly and strategize a plan to use our human, monetary and physical resources to address the problem head on and not worry about political correctness.

City and county leaders should look to the successful plan that worked well west of Troutdale more than 100 years ago: Multnomah County's Poor Farm, now McMenamins' beautifully renovated Edgefield. The former tenants there maintained the property, prepared food, raised livestock and tended fields for themselves and other public institutions. In return, tenants had stability with access to food, shelter and medical care.

Leaders should also consider building sustainable communities as they plan long-term, multi-service approaches to provide shelter. There's no reason why we cannot build inexpensive, affordable housing that satisfies the needs of homeless singles and families in the same quad-style complexes built for university students across the United States since the 1970s. Each quad is an efficiently designed four-bedroom space sharing a kitchen and bathroom. These housing communities could be built on cheaper land outside the central city with nearby or incorporated medical and job training facilities. This humanitarian approach to helping those in need should allow police and counselors the power once again to enforce vagrancy laws on those who refuse help and continue to violate the law.

Building self-confidence through counseling, proper medication, work training and stable, long-term living solutions provide the greatest return on investment for society. Insensitive short-

term fixes when police try to force the homeless to "move on" is not a good use of public resources and only serves as a Band-Aid on thousands of cuts.

## The Portland Mercury

### Hall Monitor: The Mayor's Last Big Loss?

*By Dirk VanderHart*

*October 19, 2016*

Viewed a certain way, the riot cops who mobilized around Portland City Hall on Wednesday, October 12, had been pre-ordained for weeks.

Their clash with activists was set in motion before Don't Shoot Portland protestors camped outside of the building to protest looming passage of a new contract with Portland's largest police union; before #bridgecrane became a universal symbol for the officials' refusal to listen; and even before protestors and local organizations railed against the contract for hours during a public hearing September 28.

An argument can be made, in fact, that the riot police had been on their way to last week's hectic—at times violent—confrontation nearly a month before, on September 13.

That's the day Mayor Charlie Hales snatched an unlikely victory: After months of closed-door bargaining and failed attempts at swaying his colleagues, he'd finally secured council ascent to sign onto the new police contract.

I wrote about it in this very column, wondering aloud whether it was the "last big win" of Hales' dwindling mayoral tenure.

And it is a win in the mayor's mind. Again and again, he's argued that the increases in police staffing brought on by the pay bumps in the contract will salve gashes in Portland's public safety system, and allow cops to better form meaningful relationships with the communities they patrol.

But what we're left with, a week after council formally ratified the contract, is the opposite. Community relations feel as raw as any in the last two years.

Don't Shoot Portland is demanding Hales' resignation—even camping out in front of his house for a night to press the point—and wants to recall Commissioner Nick Fish because of his support of the contract.

More than that, activists have a new incident to reference when arguing (as they often do) that Portland cops are bullies. They can point to countless photos of protestors hacking up phlegm as they try to shake off pepper spray; or videos showing activists being flung off City Hall steps by burly officers; or to coverage of the skirmish by national outlets like the Los Angeles Times.

Last week's confrontation was prominent enough that Constantin Severe, director of the city's Independent Police Review, says his office has fielded complaints about cops' conduct from other states.

Which isn't to say that perspective is completely correct. There were bad actors in last Wednesday's protest, as there are in most crowds. The clash was not the one-sided affair some have sought to paint.

But it also was probably avoidable, if Hales could have set aside that political victory for a moment to really address a public that is desperately calling for more accountability for its cops.

Instead, the mayor put together an FAQ document, inserted a clarifying amendment that didn't change all that much, and closed off testimony, claiming this was the best deal the city was likely to get.

Maybe he's right, and perhaps in time the contract will show itself to be the "win" Hales has celebrated.

It's just that right now, the outcome looks like anything but.