

The Oregonian

Portland Building's temporary shelter likely to close Monday as temperatures relent

By Fedor Zarkhin

January 8, 2017

The Portland Building's doors will likely close to the homeless Monday, with an unknown path for the dozens who've come and gone since the city opened the temporary space Wednesday.

About 50 people slept, ate, or rested on the second floor of the city's main administrative building at 11 a.m. Sunday as the freezing rain drizzled on the sleet- and snow-covered city outside. Just hours earlier, a fire at a Central Eastside encampment displaced three homeless men. On Saturday, a woman died of exposure in a garage on Southwest 10th Avenue.

Different volumes and styles of snoring filled the otherwise quiet Meeting Room C, as people lay in or on sleeping bags, moving around to get more comfortable or playing on their phones. A wood model of Portland stood at one end of the room, next to a seated volunteer from Multnomah County. Whispering, Tash Shatz said the room had been packed the night before, with about 80 people on the plastic-covered floor.

In one of his first acts as Portland's new mayor, Ted Wheeler opened the Portland Building to the homeless due to severe weather conditions. Initially doors were to be open for one night only, until Thursday.

Unless temperatures take an unexpected dip on Monday or Wheeler says otherwise, the homeless will have to leave the Portland Building by 7 a.m. Monday, city spokeswoman Jen Clodius said.

Multnomah County's day and night warming centers are open, some with expanded hours through Monday. Anybody looking for shelter should call 211, and a full list of shelters can be found on 211info.org. The county said donations are still needed, especially sleeping bags, tents, blankets and tarps. For more information on the shelters, including how to donate, visit this county website.

Back at the Portland Building, Robert Redner, 35, said this is the worst winter he's seen in the last five years that he's been homeless in the city. He doesn't like staying in shelters because of the restrictions on his freedom, but the last two nights were an exception.

"I've never seen it like this before," Redner said, sitting at a table in the entryway before the meeting room, charging his phone and eating chips.

Volunteers in bright vests gave out snack bars, blankets and sleeping bags. People donated food, with someone bringing in a tub of chili.

The mayor's spokesman said the building will no longer be a shelter if the county's criteria for conditions that pose a danger to "exposed vulnerable people" are no longer met, which is expected to happen by Monday morning. Highs will be in the 40s on Monday, according to the National Weather Service.

Asked where else he has to sleep, Fred Lee, 62, said he has a secret, dry spot that he doesn't want disclosed.

As for his thoughts on Wheeler's call to open the building to the homeless: "Thumbs up," he said.

Ted Wheeler's smart start at City Hall: Editorial Agenda 2017

*By The Oregonian Editorial Board
January 7, 2017*

The work of Portland city government spans water, police, fire, sewer, environmental controls, transportation, housing, economic development, parks, to name a few core functions. Most fall to their own large, expensive divisions of the government overseen by individual elected commissioners.

The result is a City Hall that can act like a collection of Balkan republics, each operating as its own mini-government. Portland governance can be splintered, with the proverbial right hand unaware of what the left is doing, leaving inefficiency and division in its wake. How is it, for example, that the city will find more than \$190 million to overhaul the defective but decorative Portland Building but fall behind so badly on unglamorous street maintenance?

Caught in-between is the mayor, who can choose to ignore the scattershot or do what taxpayers and ratepayers expect: Make the government beast walk straight.

In reality, the mayor can't do it alone. But the mayor sets the tone at City Hall and coaches all divisions for the best coordinated result. He also gets one vote among five on the commission for major decisions brought forward by all bureaus.

Portland's new mayor, Ted Wheeler, wastes no time. In his first week in office, he boldly took a step toward aiming City Hall in one direction. He made temporary bureau assignments to the elected commissioners, aligning appetites and strengths with actual work to be done. He followed that with the proviso that come April, during budget-making season, he may shuffle the deck to ensure commissioners are working efficiently and as a team. No more silos. No more surprises few could see coming. Walking straight will be required. Memo unnecessary.

Separately, on Friday, Wheeler, in a joint statement issued with Commissioner Nick Fish, made clear that City Hall will work to promote and facilitate the cleanup of Portland Harbor. This as the \$1 billion Superfund plan was released by the federal Environmental Protection Agency and worries about cost allocation among responsible parties, the city among them, loom. It was a clear marker that city views the harbor cleanup, 16 years in the making, as necessary: for public health and recreation, for Portland's economy, for species calling the river home.

It's called being awake at the wheel. And it is a promising sign of things to come from a City Hall craving leadership. It comes, too, as national governance under President-elect Donald Trump could potentially affect things in Portland, among them EPA's determinations under Superfund.

Wheeler's most telling bureau assignment was to recognize commission newcomer Chloe Eudaly not merely as Steve Novick's rookie replacement but a professional worthy of a grownup's work. A bookstore owner with no government experience, Eudaly will helm not only the city's Bureau of Development Services, a detail-dense operation issuing all manner of permits for fees, but the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, which recently came under criticism from the city auditor for lacking accountability. Eudaly will find allies on the commission, among them a happy NickFish, who will keep his oversight of the water and environmental services bureaus. And she will have every opportunity to show that her advocacies for Portlanders extend beyond rent control, her lone campaign issue.

On that last count, Eudaly will find herself directly engaging Wheeler, who roped away from Dan Saltzman the Housing Bureau. The challenge facing Portland is that as it grows prosperity among the prosperous, folks left in the middle and below - Eudaly's core constituency - are

pinched hard to make ends meet. In overseeing the Housing Bureau, Wheeler stakes a claim on his campaign promise to tackle homelessness and affordable housing head-on. But he must do so in a way that limits the blow to businesses and developers who pay a large share of the city's bills. Eudaly, suddenly in the deep end of the City Hall pool, must build alliances with Wheeler and commissioners if she is to be effective and avoid obstructionism.

It doesn't seem, judging by Week One, that Wheeler would allow it. It does seem, however, that teamwork and accountability by all commissioners will be forefront at City Hall. And that could foretell some very good things in these uncertain times.

The marvelous legacy of Charlie Hales, according to Charlie Hales: Editorial Agenda 2017

*By The Oregonian Editorial Board
January 7, 2017*

Former Mayor Charlie Hales apparently decided to give himself and Portland a going-away present: A brochure that tells all of us how lucky we were to have him as our mayor.

Under the headline "We all live here together," the brochure, which was printed at taxpayers' expense and directs people to Hales' personal website, highlights statistics from Hales' just-ended mayoral term. Among other things, the brochure boasts that during Hales' term, \$800 million was diverted from urban renewal programs to fund public safety, parks and other services; that annual street repaving went from 35 miles a year to more than 100 miles a year; and that Portland voters passed a gas tax for the first time.

What's missing is accuracy. And context. And credit. Consider the urban renewal claim. That "\$800 million" refers to the property value that was returned to tax rolls - not, as he claims, the amount "diverted" to fund police, firefighters and other city services. In fact, as The Oregonian/OregonLive's Brad Schmidt reported at the time, the changes to the urban renewal program were projected to deliver only another \$61 million more to the city's general fund, with nearly all of it coming after 2030.

And then take a second look at that repaving statistic. The city's not "repaving" 100 miles of road a year, as the brochure claims. It's maintaining 100 miles, most of which comes through less durable fog and crack sealing.

And the gas tax? Credit for that hard-fought win belongs more with Commissioner Steve Novick, who headed the transportation bureau, than with Hales. Voters' approval also came in spite of all that Hales and Novick had done in the preceding two years to torch the community's patience and goodwill with a series of severely flawed street-fee proposals.

Hales even attempts to market his term as one of police reform breakthroughs. He notes that use of force incidents by police dropped in half from 2010 to 2015, even though he did not become mayor until 2013. His crowing also ignores the many ways in which Hales bombed as a police commissioner. He failed to put his chief of police on leave after the chief accidentally shot his friend and was the target of a criminal investigation. He failed to notify anyone about the shooting accident or initiate a personnel review as police procedures call for. And he failed to show interest or leadership when conflicts jeopardized progress in achieving key police reforms demanded by the federal settlement. Instead, he spent his time challenging the

authority of the federal judge overseeing the settlement - twice - in a move that can only be chalked up to ego.

The brochure is just more preening and it glosses over the reality of Portland's ongoing homelessness crisis, the affordable housing shortage, deep mistrust of the police and concern over the sustainability of the city's spending. While Hales' name and website adorn the brochure's cover, he relegates acknowledgments to his fellow city commissioners and his staff on the back. Never mind that several of the initiatives noted in the brochure were championed by his colleagues, not him.

It's still unclear how much the brochures cost taxpayers. Brian Worley, who was Hales' spokesman, said the office authorized the expenditure as it has for other "citizen outreach information material." A spokeswoman for the Office of Management and Finance said the city does not appear to have received the bills yet. Meanwhile, Hales posted the digital version for downloading off his website and had been handing out the brochures before leaving on an extended sailing trip.

This isn't the first time Hales tapped city funds to pay for his own self-aggrandizement. Back in 2015 shortly before Hales announced he was running for re-election - until reality hit and he dropped out - Hales used \$4,293 of taxpayer money to produce a 20-page pamphlet that purports to summarize Hales' accomplishments.

Despite the exaggerations and inaccuracies, we did find one data point in the brochure that appropriately sums up Hales' legacy. It's right on the cover in red letters: "Charlie Hales, Mayor of Portland

2013-2016."

One term and out.

The Portland Tribune

Evictions, sanctuary city protections on list of city's federal-state legislative priorities

*By Jim Redden
January 8, 2017*

Portland's City Council will consider adopting its priorities for the new sessions of Congress and the Oregon Legislature on Thursday, Jan. 11.

Among the most controversial are calls for the Legislature to establish a just-cause eviction standard and allow local governments to enact rent control policies. Both are in response to the increasing number of people being priced out of housing in Portland. They are expected to be opposed by rental property owners.

Reduced federal spending to sanctuary cities is also opposed. President-elect Donald Trump has proposed cutting back the federal funds to cities that do not cooperate with the federal government on enforcing immigration laws, like Portland.

Many of the proposed priorities are requests for additional federal and state funds for a variety of programs. They include affordable housing, housing assistance, mental health services,

infrastructure, reinforcing the Columbia River levees, and the Vision Zero Action Plan intended to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries crashes by 2025.

Proposals also include opposing attempts to limit the city's ability to collect revenue from a variety of sources. They include system development charges, franchise fees, right of way management charges, utility license fees, urban renewal taxes, transportation taxes and fees, public contracting, local improvement districts, and alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis taxes.

Limitations on civil rights ordinances, worker protections and public contracting would also be opposed.

The proposed priorities were developed by the city Office of Government Relations, in partnership with the Office of Neighborhood Involvement. Both hosted the Dec. 1 community event called "Advocacy 101" to help community members become effective advocates at both the state and federal levels. It was attended by more than 70 members of the public and featured a panel of state legislators, advocates, gubernatorial staff, Commissioner Amanda Fritz, and Commissioner-Elect Chloe Eudaly. ONI conducted broad outreach to a diverse set of community groups and all neighborhood associations in advance of the event.

Read the city's proposed priorities at www.portlandoregon.gov/auditor/26997.

Willamette Week

After Woman Dies During Portland Snowfall, Mayor Ted Wheeler Expands Hours of Cold-Weather Shelter

*By Aaron Mesh
January 7, 2017*

Hours after a woman was found dead in a downtown Portland parking garage during Portland's weekend snowfall, Mayor Ted Wheeler announced he'll keep a city building open day and night as a cold-weather shelter.

Wheeler announced this afternoon that the Portland Building, the government office tower a block north of City Hall, will be open from 7 pm tonight until at least 7 am Monday to provide a warm location for homeless people and anyone else needing shelter from the snow and cold.

The mayor's announcement came shortly after 5 pm. Three hours earlier, Portland Police found a 52-year-old woman dead in a parking garage on Southwest 10th Avenue.

Police said the woman, who lived downtown, was seen taking off her clothes in the garage around 2 pm, and may have died from the cold. Snow fell intermittently throughout the afternoon today, with a high of 28 degrees.

Wheeler's spokesman Michael Cox says the death expedited the mayor's decision to open the shelter at all hours.

"Conversations about the possibility predated the news of today's tragedy," Cox tells WW. "Certainly the news reinforced our decision to move forward."

Today's fatality is the second outdoor death in Portland since a cold front hit the city early this week. Mark Elliot Johnson, a 51-year-old homeless man, died of hypothermia on an East Portland sidewalk Monday night.

Wheeler opened the Portland Building as a cold-weather overnight shelter on Thursday, asking city employees to volunteer in staffing it. The building is located at 1120 SW 5th Ave., next to City Hall.

UPDATE, 11:56 am Monday, Jan. 9: The woman who died Saturday has been identified as Karen Lee Batts. Portland police say she died of hypothermia due to exposure.

The Oregonian reports that Batts was evicted from low-income senior housing in October, and appeared to be homeless at the time of her death.

Daily Journal of Commerce

Wheeler advocates for speedy affordable housing permitting

*By Chuck Slothower
January 6, 2017*

Mayor Ted Wheeler said Friday he wants to accelerate the processing of building permits for affordable housing.

“I’d like to see affordable housing go to the front of the line,” he said.

Wheeler said he wants the bureaus involved with development, including agencies such as the Portland Bureau of Transportation and Portland Fire & Rescue, to work more closely together to ease the process.

Wheeler’s remarks came in his first news conference as mayor. He held forth for about 25 minutes at City Hall.

Wheeler also addressed his decision to assign the Office of Neighborhood Involvement to newly elected Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, an East Portland bookstore owner who campaigned on housing issues.

“I assigned it to her because she understands that bureau could be a tremendous asset in terms of public engagement,” he said. “I’m convinced that she is the right commissioner among all of us to tackle that assignment.”

Wheeler also assigned the Bureau of Development Services to Eudaly.

Portland needs to move forward with regulations on short-term rentals, Wheeler said.

“It’s important to me that we get that right,” he said.

Wheeler said he’s looking to other cities for their approaches.

“I’m more enamored with models elsewhere than I am with the model here,” he said.

He also said he’s interested in moving forward with cleanup of Portland Harbor. The Environmental Protection Agency issued its final record of decision on Friday. The Superfund cleanup could cost more than \$1 billion and take 13 years, the agency said.

“The time to move on is now,” Wheeler said. “We want polluters to be held accountable, but we also want to move on to the next phase.”

Wheeler said he spent his first week as mayor meeting with community groups and city staff. He attended police roll call his first morning in office, giving him a chance to meet line officers.

Wheeler said he’ll embark on a national search for a police chief in earnest in February.

The Portland Business Journal

Judge OK's Portland's use of sewer funds for Superfund costs

*By Pete Danko
January 6, 2017*

While Portland Harbor Superfund players await a Record of Decision from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, a Multnomah County Circuit Court judge has OK'd — with a caveat — how the city has paid for costs it has already incurred.

Judge Stephen K. Bushong on Thursday sided with the city in a challenge to its use of principally sewer ratepayer funds to pay for Superfund expenditures: \$50.6 million out of \$58.2 million spent so far.

At the same time, Bushong said the city would need to take another look at who exactly is liable for those expenditures as the Superfund process moves forward.

“At this juncture, the court rules in favor of the City on the challenged Portland Harbor Superfund expenditures to date, subject to a future reallocation of all Portland Harbor Superfund costs among responsible city bureaus, agencies and funds and further consideration by the City Council on the extent to which the Portland Harbor Superfund costs should be borne by taxpayers and not sewer ratepayers,” Bushong wrote.

The city was challenged in 2011 by a group of ratepayers who claimed the City Council exceeded its authority in paying for Superfund-related costs through water and sewer funds.

In an earlier ruling, Bushong said that expenditures would need to meet a standard of being “reasonably related to the water and sewer services provided by the city.”

Thursday's ruling was welcomed by new Mayor Ted Wheeler, who faced the prospect of finding money to reimburse ratepayers had it gone the other way.

“I am pleased that the Court agrees that Council has acted appropriately in its use of ratepayer funds,” Wheeler said in a statement.