

The Oregonian

Portland Water Bureau will once again serve Bull Run water

By Jessica Floum

March 14, 2017

Portland water customers will once again drink and bathe in the city's famed Bull Run water starting Wednesday after detections of parasites have gone down.

The Portland Water Bureau said Tuesday it will switch back to delivering customers water from the near-pristine Bull Run Watershed on Wednesday after serving only groundwater for about a month.

The office switched to serving 100 percent groundwater from the Columbia South Shore Well Field following about nine tests from early January to early March that found cryptosporidium in Bull Run water.

The rarity of cryptosporidium findings in the last month offers the city reprieve from the specter that it would have to build an [\\$89 million treatment plant](#).

Bureau officials wrote in a statement that they expect to continue to find isolated instances of cryptosporidium, but that the public health risk remains low.

"While it is likely that low-level detections of cryptosporidium from the Bull Run will continue, current evidence from public health data, monitoring results, and watershed investigations, as well as extensive consultation with public health officials, have provided confidence in the Portland Water Bureau's decision to resume delivering Bull Run water," the statement said.

The bureau last detected cryptosporidium March 8, after finding the parasite in nine samples this year. The utility office increased its weekly testing of drinking water on Jan 8. after it detected the parasite for the first time in five years. It found the microorganism five times within five weeks.

Unlike most cities, Portland doesn't treat its water for cryptosporidium. Instead, the water flows 26 miles from a 102-square-mile watershed that is off limits to humans and is subject to no filtration and little chemical treatment. The water bureau received an exemption to chemical treatment against cryptosporidium in 2012 from the Oregon Health Authority after it found zero particles of the parasite between 2002 and 2012. The [exemption](#) required the city to instead monitor for the parasite regularly.

Finding more than one cryptosporidium oocyst--a microscopic structure found in feces--per 13,300 liters of water in one year would cause the state to revoke Portland's exemption.

The water bureau will continue increased testing until next January.

Water and health officials said the public health risk remains low. Multnomah County Health officials told local clinicians on Feb. 1 to test for expected cases of cryptosporidium infection. Public health officials have reported fewer than expected cases of illness from the parasite in 2017, according to a report from the water bureau.

"Our top priority is to protect public health," Water Bureau Administrator Mike Stuhr said in a statement. "The evidence and data collected, along with input from our partners with the Multnomah County Health Department and regulators at the Oregon Health Authority, indicates the risk remains low."

Still, county health officials urged people with compromised immune systems to consult their physicians.

Willamette Week

Multnomah County Hopes to Build Granny Flats to House Hundreds of Homeless Families in Portland Backyards

By Rachel Monahan

March 14, 2017

Multnomah County is preparing to make Portland homeowners a remarkable offer: It will pay to build them a granny flat in their backyard, if they let a homeless family live there for five years.

The county project, called A Place for You, aims to build as many as 300 miniature, roughly 200-square-foot homes on residential properties across the metro area in the next year. County officials hope to build the first four houses, each costing up to \$75,000, by June 30.

Under the terms of the project, the county would build the granny flats and homeowners would get to keep them—a substantial property upgrade. In return, a homeowner would commit to a five-year lease of the backyard structure to a homeless family, without pocketing any rent. (The county may start requiring families to pay 30 percent of their earnings into a savings account to prepare them for moving into other housing.)

"The public is calling on us to try something new and something different," says County Chairwoman Deborah Kafoury. "The wait list for all of the [current] affordable housing units is ridiculously long."

The project marks the first foray into housing construction by the county-run Joint Office of Homeless Services. That office typically opens shelters and offers rental assistance to keep families from winding up on the streets.

County and city officials have long struggled to find locations for homeless shelters, rest stops and authorized camps. They've been repeatedly flummoxed by the vocal objections of local residents.

A Place for You offers an ingenious workaround to that obstacle. By offering to essentially pay homeowners to allow homeless families to live on their property, the county skirts getting the permission of neighborhoods. It also more closely resembles an affordable housing project, which tends to spark less controversy.

"This will be affordable housing scattered throughout our communities," says Marc Jolin, head of the Joint Office of Homeless Services. "I don't expect that this will cause any concern for neighbors."

But at least one neighborhood leader is skeptical. Robert McCullough, chairman of neighborhood coalition Southeast Uplift, says the only proven solution is housing that comes with social services.

"Little houses and ADUs are fine," McCullough says, adding that he was speaking for himself and not the neighborhood group. "But we need to find a location where we can bring services to the needy."

The granny flat—or, as it's technically known in Portland zoning code, the "accessory dwelling unit"—has been touted as the answer to Portland's growing pains, a solution for creating a denser, more affordable city where now only 17 percent of land is zoned for apartment buildings and roughly 45 percent is zoned only for single-family dwellings.

A Place for You is not the only effort underway to use small dwellings of various sorts to address the city's housing crisis (see sidebar below).

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler is enthusiastic.

"This is an innovative idea to provide non-shelter alternatives to homelessness," says Wheeler in a statement. "The challenges we face around homelessness are diverse, and so our approach to addressing them must include a diverse set of solutions. The same old approach won't do."

But it comes at a time when Portland is facing a 24,000-unit shortfall in affordable apartments and homes, and is desperately seeking innovative solutions for people living on the margins.

At least 338 people are staying in family shelters across the county. But that doesn't fully account for the number of homeless families, including those living on the streets or in domestic violence shelters, or the 60 people provided hotel vouchers each night by the county.

The joint office put up \$175,000 for the pilot project. It's matched by an equal amount from Meyer Memorial Trust. County commissioners approved the public-private partnership with Meyer earlier this month.

One drawback to the idea: It doesn't pencil out as very cost-efficient. Project organizers settled on spending \$60,000 to \$75,000 on each of the first four small homes—double what they originally hoped the units would cost.

That's a cost per month of up to \$1,250 per unit, since each unit will be used as affordable housing for five years.

That's less than the county pays for shelter beds, which for a family of three cost the county and city roughly \$2,000 a month. But it's also more than double what the city plans to spend per apartment under the housing bond—assuming those buildings last at least 30 years.

It's still unclear whether the project will try to meet the city zoning code for accessory dwelling units, or whether they'll technically be classified as something else. Also in the works: an effort to waive property taxes on the granny flats for the five years they are used by homeless families.

"We're taking risks," says Mary Li, director of the Multnomah Idea Lab, a county policy center. "My hope is, we prove this concept, and we do 300 of these in the next 12 months."

Tiny Solutions

If tents have become the symbol of Portland's housing crunch, tiny homes and accessory dwelling units, or ADUs, are turning into the emblem of new efforts to help.

Last week, the Kenton Neighborhood Association approved the opening of a homeless village that will house 14 women in enclosed "sleeping pods" that have no plumbing. The Portland Development Commission has also approved a 72-unit affordable housing project for the site.

Then-Mayor Charlie Hales helped secure a \$300,000 grant last year for the nonprofit Blanchet House for a project in which formerly homeless men will build 30 tiny homes for fellow homeless people. The group expects to begin building next month, though the city has not identified a location.

Portland State University's Institute for Sustainable Solutions is working on a project to make it easier, quicker and cheaper for homeowners to build ADUs. It aims to work with homeowners to build 200 ADUs in 2017-18.

Former PDC director Patrick Quinton has co-founded a company called Dweller that will build ADUs for homeowners, rent them out and manage maintenance. Homeowners would lease a spot in their backyard and collect a percentage of the rent. Dweller is starting with one ADU in June and hopes to build five to 10 by year's end.

City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly has launched an app for homeowners to screen whether their property meets basic criteria for an ADU; that is, lies in an area not at risk of flood or landslides.

The Portland Mercury

Hall Monitor: The Rush Is On

By Dirk VanderHart

March 15, 2017

A Portland City Council meeting was primed to blow up yet again on March 8, when Mayor Ted Wheeler hit the pause button.

After listening to an hour and a half of near-constant opposition to a policy that would allow 60-day exclusions of disruptive meeting attendees, the mayor announced he'd back off, convincing his colleagues to push a vote back a week.

"I was disappointed that we did not have more of an opportunity to engage with ACLU [of Oregon] on this," Wheeler said, referring to the civil liberties group's repeated objection to the new policy. His intent in holding off, he said, was to "see if we can work over the course of the next week with the ACLU and come up with a compromise that is more acceptable...."

Someone in the room yelled out "Fascist!" because that's what people at City Council meetings yell out these days. Another demanded that Wheeler hold a meeting with members of the public to listen to their concerns (he did two days later). Otherwise, all the pent-up protest that had been building in the room just sort of seeped out.

The next day, the mayor [repeated his intention](#) to work toward better policy on OPB's Think Out Loud, saying: "Frankly, I'm in no particular hurry. I'd rather get this right."

That's a goal we all should share. After all, the ordinance Wheeler's pushing would essentially re-instate a policy that a federal judge swatted down in 2015.

Mayor Charlie Hales used to wield broad powers that allowed him to exclude troublesome meeting attendees for a month or more. But when one of those attendees—council mainstay Joe Walsh—challenged an exclusion, Walsh handily defeated city attorneys. [\[PDF\]](#)

US District Judge Michael Simon found Hales and the city were infringing on peoples' First Amendment rights with the exclusions, and that officials couldn't simply ban someone from meetings because they expected there might be commotion.

Now Wheeler wants to bring the practice back. For months, his office has worked with city attorneys on a code change he feels will pass legal muster, and he's confident a City Council exasperated by repeated interruptions will back him up.

But given the likelihood the ordinance would be challenged in court, Wheeler's instinct to sit down with potential opponents was a good one. It's too bad it was also extremely fragile.

When an unexpected flight cancellation meant ACLU Legal Director Mat dos Santos couldn't attend a planned sit-down on Tuesday, Wheeler's office decided to push forward with a March 15 vote without the engagement the mayor had welcomed.

"We will bring the resolution up for a vote on Wednesday," Michael Cox, a spokesperson for Wheeler, said Monday. "I do not anticipate any significant amendments at this time."

What this strongly suggests is that Wheeler felt he'd "gotten it right" all along, and that not much would have changed after the planned tête-à-tête.

That's certainly possible. The ACLU plainly thinks the mayor's proposal is illegal. But for a man who's not in any hurry, Wheeler's certainly moving quickly.

Portland's New Exclusion Policy Wouldn't Be Able To Exclude Anyone—Yet

By Dirk VanderHart
March 14, 2017

If (and probably when) Portland City Council passes a new policy tomorrow enabling Mayor Ted Wheeler to exclude disruptive audience members for months, those exclusions aren't on the way any time soon.

In a glimpse of legal strategy larger than any we've seen around the controversial ordinance, Wheeler's office revealed today that the city's not 100 percent sure the ordinance will pass legal muster. Instead, it will have to put the matter before the same court that, in 2015, ruled the city can't exclude people from future council meetings for being disruptive [PDF].

"I want to be clear," reads a [message posted to Wheeler's Facebook page](#) this evening. "If the Council approves the ordinance tomorrow, the courts will decide its legality. I will not enforce the prospective exclusion elements of the ordinance until the courts provides an answer."

This is the first time we've heard as much from Wheeler, who had previously acknowledged that legal questions exist around the exclusion policy. Under the language of the ordinance and attached code changes, people who are ejected from City Council or other city meetings for being disruptive could be excluded for 30 days. If they're disruptive after the first exclusion is up, they could be bounced for 60 days.

On Twitter this evening, a spokesman for Wheeler suggested the city needs to put the matter back before US District Judge Michael Simon, who fairly forcefully ruled that it's illegal for the city to ban people from its City Council meetings for "prospective" disruptions.

In that ruling, Simon suggested the city had invited him to be "the first federal court in the nation to uphold such a broad prospective exclusion ordinance" and granted injunctive relief



Ted Wheeler

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Tomorrow, the City Council will take up an ordinance to establish a basic code of conduct for public meetings. Council meetings are meant to carry out the business of the City and provide for comment and testimony from the public. In the last year these sessions have devolved, with disruptive and abusive behavior becoming the norm. The result is that City business is delayed and City Hall has become a hostile environment for citizens and employees.

One basic question I've asked myself is why school kids don't tour City Hall the way they do the State Capitol? The reason is because City Hall doesn't feel safe. That needs to change.

There are questions about whether the ordinance we're considering adequately addresses the concerns raised by Judge Simon when he ruled against the previous mayor's attempts to maintain order. I take these concerns seriously. My office worked closely with our City Attorneys and believe the ordinance will pass legal muster.

I want to be clear. If the Council approves the ordinance tomorrow, the courts will decide its legality. I will not enforce the prospective exclusion elements of the ordinance until the courts provides an answer.

Further, I am working to finalize additional opportunities for the public to directly engage with me outside of regular council meetings. I believe these actions in combination have the potential to improve the Council's ability to conduct the City's business and enforce a basic code of conduct during public meetings.



banning the city from excluding attendees from future meetings (the mayor was still free to bounce people from meetings where they're being disruptive).

As we [reported yesterday](#), Wheeler had planned to meet with the ACLU of Oregon before tomorrow's vote, saying he hoped to hash out potential changes the organization felt would bolster the policy. But when the group's legal director couldn't make a meeting scheduled for today, Wheeler's office announced it would press forward with a vote anyway.

As of now, the proposal appears to have broad support in a City Council that's been beset by disruption of late. If it passes in its current form, it would not take effect for 30 days.