

## The Oregonian

### Portland will pay up to \$500 million to clean its drinking water

By Jessica Floum

August 2, 2017

Portlanders will pay more for their water after the City Council on Wednesday chose the most expensive option for a new treatment plant needed to meet state and federal rules.

Homeowners are expected to pay an average of \$10.38 more per month over the next 16 years for the filtration treatment plant approved unanimously by the council. The total cost is forecast at \$350 million to \$500 million. Construction will take at least a decade.

State health officials previously exempted the city from a federal requirement to treat its water for the parasite cryptosporidium. But the exemption ended after the city detected high amounts of the organism in the Bull Run watershed this winter. The reservoir near Mount Hood supplies most of Portland's drinking water, historically with almost no treatment.

The city considered building a facility that would use ultraviolet light to kill parasites. That would have cost \$105 million and kept rate increases smaller in the short run.

But UV treatment doesn't protect water against other pollutants such as lead. And the Portland Water Bureau predicted two factors could require more cleaning of Bull Run water in coming decades. First, regulations could tighten. Second, climate change could create landslides that dump mud into Bull Run, fires that drop ash on the watershed, as well as algae blooms.

Finally, water bureau officials said a UV plant would need to be updated or replaced in 25 years.

Those factors could force the city to build a filtration plant eventually, after already having spent money on the UV plant.

But a water bureau risk analysis presented to the council Wednesday brought a consensus among the council and stakeholders who testified that filtration would be the more responsible long-term approach for public health, city budgeting and mitigating future risks.

The water bureau attached probabilities to all those risks, and the city's chief financial officer said the results suggested filtration "may be the most cost effective option."

Mayor Ted Wheeler agreed.

"We've settled on the most challenging solution, but it's also the most responsible solution," Wheeler said.

But some members of the public testified in opposition. Public testimony largely opposed the city treating the Bull Run water at all. Some criticized the Environmental Protection Agency rule concerning cryptosporidium as out of date. They noted that animal-borne strains of the bacteria are not harmful to humans, and critics have said it's unlikely the Bull Run contamination was human-caused.

Others said the city was moving too fast.

"Our chief concern is decisions with long-term impacts on the people of Portland are being made in a rush based on fear," said Theodora Tsongas, a former environmental epidemiologist with the Oregon Health Division.

The Portland Business Alliance also spoke against the plan, asking the city to build an ultraviolet plant for now and replace it with a filtration system later. That would save ratepayers money in the near term.

In 2006, federal rules required cities with unfiltered water systems to treat for cryptosporidium, but the Oregon Health Authority permitted Portland an exemption so long as its water bureau regularly tested for cryptosporidium and found none.

The water bureau fell out of compliance with the state variance after it found excessive amounts of the cryptosporidium parasite from January to March. It found a total of 19 of the parasite's microscopic structures called oocysts in 14 tests, which meant it surpassed the state's limit of finding one oocyst per 13,300 liters of water in one year.

The council originally planned to pursue a combination of treatment options in order to quickly comply with state rules and limit near-term rate increases.

"I came at this conversation with an open mind," Water Commissioner Nick Fish said. "We need to think 100 years and not 20 years forward."

Commissioners voted on a treatment option, despite requests from members of the public who asked that the council plead for more time from the Oregon Health Authority to consider the long-term health and financial impacts of their decision.

The Oregon Citizens' Utility Board and the Portland Utility Board, local ratepayer advocacy groups, had proposed a delay until June 2018 -- although they also said they would support filtration if the council was unable to win a delay.

"The city should not be rushed into a decision and should attempt to minimize both uncertainty and risk," Portland Utility Board co-chair Colleen Johnson said.

The state health authority originally gave the city an August 11 deadline to come up with a plan when it told the water bureau in a May 19 letter that it would revoke the city's exemption from federally-mandated water treatment.

The Oregon Health Authority on Tuesday granted the city a 60-day extension for when water bureau officials had to submit a plan to comply.

One rationale for building an ultraviolet treatment plant was speed. It would have taken only five years, whereas a filtration system will take 10 to 12 years to build.

But Multnomah County Public Health Officer Paul Lewis said the city can afford to take its time. He noted that the county saw fewer cases of cryptosporidium-related illnesses than average this year, which suggested the immediate risk to public health is limited.

"We shouldn't rush to do UV, which is really just a one-trick pony," Lewis said.

Council members said they were persuaded by the water bureau's forecast of the risks that the city faces if it doesn't build a filtration plant that can treat a wide variety of pollutants.

"I'm at the point where filtration makes the most sense to me because it actually will solve problems that are very likely to come in the future," Commissioner Chloe Eudaly said.

Eudaly did not support filtration initially, she said. As a native Portlander, she said she "doesn't relish the thought of the taste or quality of our water changing."

She agreed with some members of the public who said cryptosporidium isn't necessarily a health problem. But she said exposing the city to daily \$1,000 fines and future injunctions by failing to comply with the federal rule would be irresponsible.

Eudaly expressed serious concern for low-income ratepayers, but Fish assured her and the public that the water bureau would do everything it could to mitigate costs for them. Fish took to Commissioner Amanda Fritz's suggestion to look for projects that could be delayed to help ease cost increases.

"You have my complete commitment," Fish told Eudaly.

Fritz supported the treatment decision only after Fish assured her the water bureau would engage robustly with both utility boards and the public as they put together their treatment plan for the state.

In his closing remarks, Wheeler acknowledged a tension in the room felt by opponents and proponents of treatment.

"There is a sadness that goes along with this decision," Wheeler said. "We're leaving part of our hard-fought past behind. It is the right decision, it is the responsible decision, and it is the best decision for this community."

## **The Portland Tribune**

### **Portland offers grants to track hate crimes**

*By Olivia Sanchez*

*August 3, 2017*

#### **Community groups enlisted to spend \$350,000 in city funds to document incidents and seek responses**

Portland aims to curb hate crimes, which have surged since Donald Trump's campaign, by kickstarting a local hate crime documentation and response system.

A new city initiative called Portland United Against Hate is now accepting applications for \$350,000 in city grant money, which will be divided among 10 winning organizations by late September. The groups will be expected to design and pilot recommendations for a hate crime documentation and response system.

Earlier, the city doled out a total of \$40,000 to Africa House, Asian Family Center, Coalitions of Communities of Color, Latino Network, Resolutions Northwest, Unite Oregon, Urban League of Portland and Q Center to survey a wide variety of Portlanders this summer on hate and aggression and begin community outreach.

Having city support is very promising for groups that already have been doing this work, says Shweta Moorthy, a research analyst for the Coalition of Communities of Color.

"This isn't really due to Trump's election in November — we've worked so long just fighting institutional hate and reports of violence on an everyday basis for a long time," Moorthy says.

Not reinventing the wheel

The Southern Poverty Law Center and ProPublica document hate crimes nationally, and local officials are keenly aware of that. This is not an attempt to replicate their work, says Michelle Rodriguez, management analyst for the city Office of Neighborhood Involvement.

Collecting data locally may yield more information and increase the ability of community organizations to respond to incidents of hate, she says.

Moorthy hopes a Portland-specific hate-crime documentation and response system could work well to complement the national documentation systems, and maybe eventually even inform them.

Linda Castillo, immigrant and refugee integration program coordinator of the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, says the city hopes some of the pilot projects will be adapted and become ongoing practices of the city.

Ultimately, Castillo hopes this will reduce and eventually eliminate acts of hate, from racial slights and microaggressions to severe, violent behavior, which are a constant reality for many Portlanders.

"The city cares about the very diverse community that we have. We want to send a message that we're trying to build an inclusive, safe community where everybody can live and thrive," Castillo says.

Moorthy says the grants and pilot projects will allow communities to expand their attention from short-term, emergent needs, to longer-term advocacy work. Incidents of hate like the recent MAX stabbings aren't isolated, she says, but are part of a larger pattern.

The competition between local organizations that hope to win grant money will be tough. There was standing room only at a recent information session at City Hall, and representatives of a wide variety of groups were present and asking questions.

Rania Ayoub, director of public relations at the Muslim Educational Trust, says the trust may apply for a portion of the grant money. This hate crime documentation project is much needed and very timely for her community, she says.

Data kept confidential

Although the pilot project is being funded by grant money from the city of Portland, the city will not collect or control the data yielded from the documentation and tracking systems. Rodriguez thinks this added layer of privacy will make people more likely to thoroughly report instances of hate and aggression.

"Considering the climate right now, we're really concerned that people won't answer," Rodriguez says.

Assuring people that the government isn't collecting their data may encourage them to report, she says.

Portland United Against Hate is still ironing out the details of how this will work, Castillo says, but officials intend to remove personal identifying details from incident reports, before making other information available to members of impacted community groups.

Officials from Portland United Against Hate are adamant about ensuring representation of as many marginalized communities as possible.

"We're not going to fund nine organizations that all serve the same community," Rodriguez says. A tenth organization will be selected to analyze the data.

Portland United Against Hate officials want to select organizations that are going to work for the representation and protection of all communities affected by hate crimes.

"It's OK to be narrowly focused. If your organization only works with the Latino community, don't pretend you work with everyone else. Focus on that strength," Rodriguez says. "But you

will be working with other organizations. You can't have blinders on. The strength will be around the coalition and the collaboration."

For more: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/brfs/71081>

## **Bad air adds to region's weather woes**

*By Jim Redden*

*August 3, 2017*

### **Smoke from wildfires prompts warnings as record-breaking temperatures are forecast to continue through Friday**

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has issued an Air Quality Alert for the Portland area because of smoke and ozone levels that have increased in the extreme heat.

The DEQ said some of the smoke is coming from fires burning east of the Portland metro area, like the Sheep Springs fire at Mt. Jefferson and one in British Columbia.

Although the air quality levels aren't in the danger zone yet for most of the population, the Oregon Health Authority is warning people with health problems, young children or seniors to take precautions.

"The key for helping to avoid health problems in people who are at risk, if they can just leave town for a while, leave the area for a while and go to the coast, that's a good solution," public health physical Richard Leman said.

The warning was issued as an Excessive Heat Warning continued in the region. It was issued by the National Weather Service because of a record-breaking heat wave expected to continue through Friday. Wednesday's temperature of 103 degrees set a record and Thursday is forecast to reach 105 degrees, another record.

Wind is expected to blow the smoke away eventually, but small particles could stick around through next week.

*KOIN 6 News is a news partner of the Portland Tribune and contributed to this story.*

## **Sources Say: City utility advisers say they're being snubbed**

### **Plus, Mayor Ted Wheeler promotes the Willamette River and Republican U.S. Sen. John McCain steals the show**

*By Jim Redden*

*August 3, 2017*

The Portland Utility Board is complaining that it is not being allowed to do its job.

The City Council created the 11-member citizen advisory board in 2015 to increase independent oversight of the Portland Water Bureau and the Bureau of Environmental Services, which operates the city's sewer system and stormwater management program. But in a July 27 letter to the council, the PUB complains it was not given enough time or information to adequately inform the council on four big issues: treating Bull Run water for cryptosporidium; expanding

biogas production at the main sewage treatment plant; contracting out the operation of the city's hydroelectric plant; and improving water quality.

"For the PUB to continue to be of value to the City Council, we must be included in future processes much sooner and have access to quicker and better information," the letter states. "At times, we have not received requested information until the day of our meetings, making it difficult, at best, to provide meaningful feedback. The Council created a board of willing and able volunteers to help vet difficult policy issues, but we must be given adequate opportunity to deliberate in order to provide valuable input and aid Council's decision-making."

### **Wheeler prioritizes Willamette River**

Several years after the City Council did away with the Office of Healthy Working Rivers, Mayor Ted Wheeler is making a personal crusade out of encouraging more and more people to take advantage of the Willamette River.

The office was created in 2009 to improve the health and increase the use of Portland rivers. It was financed with sewer funds, however, and the council pulled the plug after a lawsuit was filed accusing the city of mispending both sewer and water funds.

Wheeler swam across the Willamette River during his 2016 election campaign, in an event organized by the Human Access Project. He has participated in at least two other well-publicized swims since then, including the second Mayoral Swim held last Thursday.

All of the events are intended to prove the river is now safe for swimming since the completion of the \$1.4 billion Big Pipe project by the sewer bureau, which has greatly reduced combined sewage overflows into the river, especially during the summer.

### **Merkley upstaged by McCain**

Democratic Oregon U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley was prepared to offer 120 amendments to slow down the repeal of ObamaCare, but he was upstaged by a single Republican during last week's floor debate — John McCain of Arizona. McCain cast the deciding no vote against his party's last hope to undo much of the Affordable Care Act.

Merkley was planning to force Republicans to vote on whether veterans, pregnant women and people with pre-existing conditions should pay higher premiums or even lose their insurance coverage. But he admitted being stunned by McCain's decision to kill the so-called "skinny repeal" and end the debate McCain previously had voted to start.

"We didn't really believe that that was going to happen, and then it did," Merkley told CNN, noting there was an audible gasp from Democrats when McCain cast his no vote.

## **Portland will defend fossil fuel ordinance before Oregon Court of Appeals**

*By Steve Law*

*August 2, 2017*

**City Council voted Wednesday to appeal a recent LUBA decision that had overturned the city's ordinance sharply restricting new and expanded oil and gas terminals**

The Portland City Council voted unanimously on Wednesday to appeal an Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals decision that had overturned the city's fossil fuel terminal ordinance.

The case will now move to the Oregon Court of Appeals.

Portland's ordinance barred significant new fossil fuel storage facilities and sharply restricted expansion of existing facilities. About 11 large oil and gas terminals in the Northwest Portland industrial district supply an estimated 90 percent of the oil and gas consumed in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

On July 19, LUBA ruled that the city ordinance violates the commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution, which grants Congress the power to regulate interstate commerce.

The Western States Petroleum Association, Portland Business Alliance and Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council had appealed the ordinance to LUBA.

A coalition of environmental groups are parties to the new appeal in support of the city's position. They include Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, Portland Audubon Society, Columbia Riverkeeper, and the Center for Sustainable Economy. All are represented by the Crag Law Center, a nonprofit public interest law practice focusing on environmental issues.

## **Council unanimously supports filtration plant to fight crypto**

*By Jim Redden  
August 2, 2017*

### **Mayor and commissioners unanimously agree Wednesday to pursue the most expensive treatment option despite being granted a last-minute extension by the Oregon Health Authority**

Despite being granted an additional 60 days to submit a plan for fighting a potentially deadly parasite in the Bull Run watershed, the City Council went ahead and preliminarily approved the most expensive option at Wednesday's scheduled hearing.

The unanimous 5-0 vote directs the Portland Water Bureau to plan for a filtration plant to remove cryptosporidium from the Bull Run Reservoir, the primary source of water for the city and many suburban customers. It is currently estimated to cost up to \$500 million to build and would raise water rates by as much as \$18.14 a month in 2030.

The exact type of filtration will be determined before the plan is submitted to the Oregon Health Authority within the next two months.

"We don't have 60 days to do something and then we sit down and figure it out. We have to have a roadmap to OHA in 60 days," Fish said before the vote.

The OHA had originally given the council until Aug. 11 to approve a plan. It granted the extension late Tuesday at the request of Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Nick Fish, who is in charge of the Portland Water Bureau. They wanted to give the public, shareholders and advisory groups more time to weigh in.

But after more than three hours of testimony on Aug. 2, the council unanimously agreed that doing nothing was not an option and they had enough information to choose between a filtration plan and one that killed crypto — as the parasite is commonly called — with ultraviolet light. A filtration plant could remove many more contaminants from water than just crypto, although a UV plant would only cost \$105 million to build.

Crypto is found in animal and human feces. Although some strains can sicken people and even kill those with a weakened immune system, they have never been documented in the watershed.

But the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which adopted the rule the OHA is enforcing, doesn't distinguish between those strains that threaten people and those that don't.

Most public witnesses testified against doing anything to fight crypto, arguing Portland's water has been historically safe and either option will raise water rates and potentially change the quality of the water. But the council agreed that noncompliance was not an option and filtration was the best choice.

You can read a previous Portland Tribune story on the issue [here](#).

## **Willamette Week**

### **Adviser to Portland Mayor Mulls Bid for Senate Seat, Calls on Sen. Rod Monroe to Drop Out of Race**

Andrea Valderrama, who works in the mayor's office as a senior policy adviser and serves on the David Douglas school board, is weighing a run.

*By Rachel Monahan  
August 2, 2017*

A policy adviser to Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler says she's mulling a run for state Senate and today called on Sen. Rod Monroe (D-East Portland) to drop his reelection bid, saying renters needed better leadership in Oregon's housing crisis.

Monroe already faces a significant challenger: former Rep. Shemia Fagan, a fellow Democrat, who has positioned herself to the left of Monroe for the May 2018 primary.

Now Andrea Valderrama says she may run too, but only if Monroe steps aside.

Primary challenges for an incumbent are uncommon, but Monroe opposed Democrat-backed legislation to restrict "no-cause" evictions and end the state's ban on rent control during the legislative session this year.

Fagan, who cited Monroe's record on the housing vote, has lined up a Democratic establishment endorsements for her campaign, including County Chair Deborah Kafoury and Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer.

Multiple sources told *WW* that Valderrama was also considering a run, but she says she won't enter the race unless Monroe drops out.

"There is a housing crisis in our community and we need strong and representative leadership who will stand up for renters and those struggling with housing instability," says Valderrama, who has also served on the David Douglas School Board.

"As a constituent of Sen. Monroe and a locally elected leader, I urge him to not seek reelection and allow for new leadership," she adds. "I am considering running if the seat becomes an open primary."

Monroe did not respond to requests for comment. On July 31, he told *The Oregonian* he would mount a "well-run, well-funded campaign" to rebuff Fagan.

The next day, a former tenant of an apartment complex Monroe owns in East Portland sued him and the property management company for \$3 million in Multnomah County Circuit Court, saying she was injured by slipping in a puddle caused by a leaky roof Monroe failed to fix.

Wheeler is not endorsing in the race, but offered praise for Valderrama's work.

"Andrea is a trusted member of my team, a dedicated member of the David Douglas School Board, and would bring an important and necessary perspective to this campaign," Wheeler said.

## **The Portland Mercury**

### **Portland Is Going to Build a Massive Filtration Plant for Its Oft-Lauded Water Supply**

*By Dirk VanderHart*

*August 2, 2017*

The humble ultraviolet wave, it seems, never had much of a chance.

From the first moments of a lengthy hearing Wednesday afternoon on what type of federally mandated water treatment Portland would choose, the cheapest option—a \$105 million plant that would use UV rays to eliminate a parasite found rarely in Portland's water—was painted as inadequate.

Instead, the big-ticket option won out: A 30-acre filtration plant that's estimated to cost between \$350 and \$500 million. After a series of invited guests unfolded as an infomercial for a filtration plant, council voted unanimously to move forward, the first step in a lengthy process that will see Portlanders' water rates rise to pay for the facility.

The decision is a weighty and fairly abrupt about-face for a city that's long preened in its relatively pristine water supply. And it came even though officials had extra time to think things through. The Oregon Health Authority, which in May gave notice that Portland would need to treat its water supply for the parasite cryptosporidium, offered a 60 day extension to a September 11 decision deadline late yesterday.

But it didn't matter.

A litany of testimony persuaded commissioners—along with the Multnomah County public health officer, and two bodies that scrutinize water rates—that filtration was the best option.

"It sounds like thus far people have made a much stronger case for a filtration strategy," Mayor Ted Wheeler said early on in the hearing. Nothing much changed from there.

The decision was rooted, oddly, in the fact that Portland doesn't currently have a problem with its water.

Since 2012, the city has had the lone water system in America not required under federal rule to treat for cryptosporidium, a parasite that lives in human and animal waste and in some forms can cause sickness. The "variance" to the rule was granted for a simple reason: Portland's Bull Run watershed doesn't carry much crypto.

But during this winter's intense rains, that changed. From January to March, officials believe those rains washed more animal waste—and therefore crypto—into the watershed. The city turned up 19 instances of the parasite, and the Oregon Health Authority has said Portland now

has to treat its water.

The city hasn't detected cryptosporidium since March, and Public Health Officer Paul Lewis told commissioners today there's no proof that the type of crypto Portland found was even a risk to human health (plenty of detractors make the same point).

"Enough time has now gone by since the winter months when there were frequent detections... to know there were actually slightly fewer cases reported during that time period," Lewis said.

But the city's locked by the state into additional water treatment. The question city council took up today was what kind.

A UV plant would address crypto, and nothing else. The filtration plant, officials told council, would address a litany of issues that might pop up in coming decades—things like forest fires that could damage water quality, and additional government regulation. There was also a "hybrid" plan that would have seen Portland building a UV plant in the near future and socking away cash to perhaps build a filtration plant down the line.

By the time council took up the matter, only those last two options seemed to have support, and they were the only proposals that the water bureau analyzed in terms of **water rate increases in coming years**.

And the bureau saved its most robust arguments for filtration. While moving forward with a more expensive project means higher costs in the near term, officials **submitted an analysis** that suggested the plant would offer enough positives—fewer worries about summer algae and sediment, higher water quality, and more—to equate to a roughly \$5.4 million benefit per year.

The bureau also suggested that, given risks to the water system and potential new federal regulations, there's a 50/50 chance Portland will have to build a filtration plant anyway in 27 years—and a more than 70 percent chance by nearly 50 years out.

And as Lewis noted, there is no sign cryptosporidium is a problem, so why pick a UV option?

"Our [water system] is pretty special, and as far as we can tell the risk is very low," Lewis said. "We shouldn't rush to do UV, which is really just a one-trick pony."

Plenty of people pushed back.

Floy Jones, a member of the group Friends of the Reservoirs who tirelessly advocates against changes to the water system, argued against any treatment, saying there's no evidence of a health problem.

"The goal [of federal rules] is to reduce the level of disease in the community," Jones said. "We don't have disease in the community." She told commissioners there was no sign additional federal regulations are on the horizon, and called the water bureau's probability and cost analyses "rushed."

Others wanted council to slow down.

"Our chief concern is that decisions with long-term impacts... are being made in a rush based on fear without adequate scientific consideration of the alternatives," said Theodora Tsongas, of the group Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility. Adding to water rates "with no public health purpose or benefit," she said, would only exacerbate the city's skyrocketing cost of living.

Tsongas and other testifiers urged the city to push for a delay until next June until a decision be made.

They found one commissioner who was open to at least some delay. Commissioner Amanda Fritz was the lone council member who voiced misgivings about making a decision today.

"This is a huge amount of public money," said Fritz. "And you did go and get those 60 days."

But the writing, at that point, was on the wall. Wheeler and city commissioners Nick Fish, Dan Saltzman, and Chloe Eudaly were all happy to move forward with a resolution moving forward on a filtration plant.

"I think we need to think 100 years and not 20 years forward," said Fish, indicating his preference for filtration.

Wheeler called a filtration plant "the only reasonable option left on the table."

Eudaly said: "I don't relish the thought of the taste or any quality of our water changing. I would prefer not to do filtration. The fact is that we have lost our variance."

And Fritz didn't hold out. After being assured that the city would address the questions of two oversight bodies, the Portland Utility Board and the Oregon Citizens' Utility Board, she indicated she'd vote for filtration.

"You have won my trust," Fritz told Fish, the commissioner who oversees the water bureau. "I'll be willing to support your resolution."

"That means the world to me," he replied.

The city now needs to provide a schedule for coming into compliance with federal rules by late November. There's much still in the air about precisely what kind of plant ratepayers will pay for.

## **East Portland Advocates Are Trying to Fill a Sudden Gap in Homeless Assistance**

### **But Their Meal Services Are Angering Neighbors**

*By Dirk VanderHart  
August 2, 2017*

When flames engulfed a corner of the Clackamas Service Center (CSC) on July 3, the consequences for the surrounding neighborhood reached beyond blaring sirens disrupting the morning quiet.

Located just beyond Portland's southern limits—a short walk from the Springwater Corridor—the CSC plays a crucial and somewhat unique role in an area where Portland's homeless crisis is being felt most distinctly. As the houseless population swells, the CSC serves 10 hot meals a week, hands out boxes of groceries, offers showers and haircuts, and works to connect its visitors with social services and public benefits.

Or it did, anyway.

Most of those services went up in the flames that gnawed at the small white building's exterior, and the CSC can't say when it will be fully operational again. (Authorities are still unsure whether or not the fire was set intentionally.)

"There isn't anyone else doing what we're doing," says Debra Mason, the center's executive director. "The concern while we're closed is, where are these people going?"

But as a collection of disparate groups work to fill the void left by the center's closing, they're stirring up resentments.

Since the fire, at least four separate outfits have provided meal service to homeless Portlanders who might have formerly relied on the CSC. Some of those efforts were in place before the center burned, and some have sprung up since. But the new activity has ramped up pressure from nearby residents, who think the freelance meals are making the area's problems worse.

Advocates say Portland police have begun taking notice, too, threatening to issue citations to people serving meals, and scattering people seeking food.

The confrontation centers largely on a small East Portland cul-de-sac, just off the MAX Green Line stop at Southeast Flavel.

Since well before the fire, the outreach group Operation Nightwatch (ONW) has hosted small "feeds" for homeless Portlanders at the site on Fridays. When the CSC closed, the group expanded that service to Saturdays, bringing in an RV and setting up tents to serve sandwiches and beverages, hand out blankets, and chat with people living nearby.

"We believe in social interaction for people who are marginalized or homeless," says Paul Underwood, ONW's executive director. "We serve food, but food is more an avenue to engage in a conversation."

Others have taken to ONW's model.

A group calling itself Emergency Clackamas Meals began serving food in the cul-de-sac on Thursdays and Sundays. Combined with food offerings at other sites in the area, advocates say, homeless Portlanders in and around the Lents neighborhood had options nearly every day of the week.

Steve Kimes, a local pastor and member of the group, says that after the closing of the CSC, deep Southeast Portland has a "huge lack" of resources. "It was an important service for people who are houseless and people who are desperately poor, and just—boom—all of the sudden it's gone," he says.

The CSC isn't the only missing resource. A Gresham shelter called the Red Barn operated by Kimes' Anawim Christian Community recently **shut its doors**. And the East Portland day center operated by homeless outreach organization **JOIN** is temporarily closed for "mold remediation and repairs." Both JOIN and CSC are offering a very limited slate of services while they renovate.

But for Lents residents—who saw the Springwater Corridor teeming with large camps last year, and who've lately witnessed **a surge of people living in RVs** in the area—the efforts to fill that gap are problematic.

"They're coming into Lents and they're increasing heavily the frequency at which they're doing these feeds in the neighborhood," says Cora Potter, a board member with the Lents Neighborhood Association. "It's really impacting our ability to keep the large camps from forming."

In the eyes of Potter and other East Portland residents the *Mercury* spoke with, the meals allow homeless campers to live comfortably along the I-205 path or in other hotspots, without seeking services or having incentive to move along. A common refrain is one offered by Lents resident Thomas Legg, who says he walks the Springwater Corridor daily, speaking with people and cleaning up.

“In the Lents Neighborhood, it’s a different demographic of homeless people,” he says. “What we’re dealing with are the more chronically addicted and criminal elements.”

People like Legg have begun urging police to crack down on meal services, raising objections that include food safety and people clogging roads. It’s worked.

Several weeks ago, Portland police told Operation Nightwatch that its operation near the Flavel Street MAX station was potentially illegal, and that cops might begin issuing tickets.

“The police were letting us know they would be looking at potential violations for blocking roads,” says Underwood.

Sgt. Randy Teig, who heads up the Neighborhood Response Team in the police bureau’s East Precinct, confirmed the interaction, saying police would help the group find another location.

An East Portland resident named Janet Taylor, who’s been distributing meals for the homeless on her own for more than a year, had a similar experience.

These days, Taylor hands out food twice a week in the parking lot of Mt. Scott Market, at the corner of Southeast Foster and 101st. Since the CSC shuttered, she says, demand for food increased rapidly.

“There’s minimal cussing,” Taylor says. “There’s nothing but politeness.” The owner of the market, JR Korin, tells the *Mercury* he’s given Taylor permission to set up shop.

But last week, Taylor says, a police cruiser pulled up and an officer demanded to know what she was doing. When she explained she had the business’ permission to use the lot, “He kind of called me a liar,” Taylor says. “He said, ‘You can’t have your picnic here. Have it at your house.’”

When the officer threatened to begin running the names of people in attendance, the gathering quickly disbanded, Taylor says.

Taylor is undeterred. She planned to set up shop in the market’s parking lot this past Monday night as usual. Korin, the market owner, backed her up.

“I love what she do,” he told the *Mercury*. “Whoever gave her a hard time, they’re not humans.”

Operation Nightwatch, too, has continued to operate in its cul-de-sac, albeit on a smaller scale. Last Saturday, the group set up a table on the side of the road, distributing sandwiches and drinks to a steady stream of people who made their way from the Springwater Corridor.

It’s not that the group doesn’t understand neighbors’ concerns—every advocate the *Mercury* spoke with on this topic agreed that Lents residents have valid points.

“We all have concerns around homelessness, we just differ on the approach,” says Underwood, who adds it’s not uncommon for angry residents to pull up and film their meal services. “We’re not confrontational. We just want to serve sandwiches.”

# Hall Monitor: Slap Yourselves, Portland

## Proposed Police Oversight Changes Are Hugely Important. So Wake Up!

*By Dirk VanderHart*

*August 2, 2017*

It's understandable you might get heavy-lidded when the jargon of Portland's police reform gets bandied about.

Resist that urge, though. **Slap yourself** if you need to.

Because on Thursday, August 3, Portland City Council will take up a **series of tweaks** to the city's ongoing settlement agreement with the US Department of Justice over police abuses, and the specifics deserve attention.

Yes, those specifics are full of dull acronyms. One key and controversial change in the agreement would replace the Community Oversight Advisory Board, or COAB, with a brand new Portland Commission on Community-Engaged Policing, or PCCEP.

Bear with me.

The COAB was supposed to be a first-of-its-kind, Portland-style success story. Cities around the country have agreements with the feds around police reform, but only Portland was folding in a diverse group of citizen volunteers.

The board, made up of experts, advocates, and police, was given authority to assess the city's progress under the agreement, offer input on reports that would be released to the public, and help police improve their citizen outreach.

And it **failed fairly spectacularly**—for a whole host of reasons.

For starters, the city forgot to adequately train members on their responsibilities. The group also frequently bristled at the authority of a group of Chicago academics who are watching the settlement. There was **infighting and fiery disagreements** between police and various board members. People dropped out. And last year, city council finally pulled the plug on the whole thing, allowing board members' terms to lapse without selecting replacements.

The problem: The COAB is built into the settlement agreement the city signed. Not having one puts Portland **out of compliance**.

Which is where these changes come in. For months, Mayor Ted Wheeler's emissaries have been knocking heads with the DOJ about how to reformulate the citizen oversight group. The two parties arrived at the PCCEP, and some police accountability advocates aren't happy.

"AMAC cannot support the PCCEP Plan the City currently proposes," the Albina Ministerial Alliance Coalition for Justice and Police Reform said in a news release issued over the weekend.

The coalition objects partly because provisions that granted the COAB power to "independently assess" the settlement agreement are scrubbed under the current PCCEP plan, along with the COAB's duty to "provide the community with information on the agreement."

Instead, the PCCEP would be appointed by, and report to, the mayor, with a goal of improving police outreach. There's **not even a guarantee** any of the group's meetings would be public.

When I suggested that all amounted to “less power,” mayoral spokesperson Michael Cox disagreed. “The PCCEP will not have less influence than the COAB,” he said. “It will have more, because it will report directly to the mayor. Their recommendations will be heard and responded to in a timely fashion.”

I’m not saying Cox is lying or wrong, but the assurances of a mayor’s office and the **locked-down legalese** of a settlement agreement are two different things.

If you prefer one to the other, you can slap yourself once more and show up to council on Thursday at 3 pm.

## OPB

# Portland City Council Moves Forward With Water Filtration Plant

*By Ericka Cruz Guevarra  
August 2, 2017*

Portland City Council voted unanimously on a resolution Wednesday to move toward building a water filtration plant that could cost the city up to \$500 million.

It would be used to treat the city’s drinking water for the parasite cryptosporidium.

Earlier this year, Environmental Protection Agency officials revoked a variance that allowed the city to serve untreated water. That was after several detections of cryptosporidium in the Bull Run watershed, which serves around 1 million people in the Portland area.

Without the variance, the Oregon Health Authority required the city to come up with a plan to treat its water.

On Monday, OHA granted the city a 60-day deadline extension, essentially giving the city until October to reach a decision on how it would treat the water. That came after the city’s Public Utility Board urged the council to ask for more time before making a decision. In a letter to the council, the oversight board said they needed more time, information and public insight to make an informed recommendation.

But city leaders decided Wednesday to proceed with a plan to design and construct a filtration plant.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz expressed hesitation on moving forward with the plan initially, mirroring the sentiments of the PUB over rushing such a costly decision.

The council was asked to decide between a \$105 million ultraviolet light treatment plant or a water treatment facility that could cost anywhere between \$350 million and \$500 million.

The ultraviolet option carried the risk of possibly needing to be replaced in the future by the costlier filtration facility.

The original version of the resolution passed by council recommended UV treatment. But by the end of the meeting, the commissioner in charge of the Water Bureau, Nick Fish, had shifted his opinion to favor a water filtration system, saying the city should move toward long-term solutions, not short-term fixes.

Fish said the next 60 days will be used to map out a plan for how to move forward with public oversight committees for the plant.

“We don’t have 60 days to do something and then we sit down and figure it out,” Fish said. “We have to have a roadmap to [Oregon Health Authority] in 60 days.”

Before issuing the final vote, Mayor Ted Wheeler said a water filtration plant was the right decision, but that the vote comes with a certain sadness. Before the variance was revoked, the Portland Water Bureau was the only surface water system in the country that did not have to treat for cryptosporidium.

“We’re leaving part of our hard-fought past behind,” said Wheeler.