

The Oregonian

Woman who says she was assaulted by Jeremy Christian day before MAX stabbings to speak out

*By Maxine Bernstein
August 17, 2017*

Demetria Hester, who reported to police that she was the target of Jeremy Christian's racial taunts on a MAX train the day before he's accused of stabbing three men on another MAX train, will speak out about the encounter Friday with support from local pastors and community leaders.

Hester and the Rev. E.D. Mondainé, who leads Celebration Tabernacle Church in North Portland and is vice president of the NAACP of Portland, expressed anger and dismay after Christian's last court appearance that Christian wasn't arrested after he had confronted Hester.

"This tragedy actually began 24 hours earlier, on Thursday, May 25th," Mondaine said. "That day, a hate crime – an act of racially motivated, physical violence – was perpetrated against a woman of color in our community; a woman who was verbally and physically assaulted by Jeremy Joseph Christian. A man who not only threatened to take the lives of innocent people, but who police allowed to walk free to do so."

Christian confronted Hester on the train while she was on her way home, according to an indictment. Christian is accused of throwing a plastic bottle at her at the Rose Quarter Station.

In response, "I sprayed him" with mace and called police, she said last month in an interview with The Oregonian/OregonLive. TriMet police responded, they questioned Christian and let him go, Mondainé said. During the encounter, Christian also was caught on cellphone video yelling derogatory comments at the driver of the train and repeatedly making threats about stabbing someone, police said.

Mondainé contends that a TriMet MAX operator and other witnesses didn't come to Hester's aid.

A coalition of interfaith leaders will argue that the stabbings of three MAX passengers the next day "were not only preventable but were the direct result of ineffectual, racially biased policing by Portland police," according to a news release from Mondainé's church.

They'll ask Portland police leaders and the mayor to examine their claims and hold officers accountable, according to the release. Portland police spokesman Sgt. Chris Burley and Interim Chief Chris Uehara did not respond to requests for comment Thursday.

The day after the confrontation with Hester, Christian is accused of fatally stabbing two men and wounding another as they interceded as Christian directed racial and anti-Muslim slurs at two teenage girls aboard the train, police and witnesses said. One girl was African American and her friend was wearing a hijab, a traditional Muslim headdress. The girls got up and walked away from Christian, witnesses said.

Christian is accused of pulling a knife and attacking the three men as the MAX train pulled into the Hollywood transit station about 4:30 p.m. May 26 in Northeast Portland.

Christian has pleaded not guilty to a 15-count indictment, charging him with two counts of aggravated murder, one count of attempted aggravated murder, one count of first-degree assault,

one count of second-degree assault, five counts of unlawful use of a weapon, three counts of second-degree intimidation and two counts of menacing.

Eleven of the charges stem from the stabbing of Micah Fletcher, 21, who survived, and the two men who were killed, Ricky Best, 53, of Happy Valley, and Taliesin Myrddin Namkai-Meche, 23, of Southeast Portland. Best died on the train. Namkai-Meche was pronounced dead at a hospital a short time later.

Four of the charges – intimidation, second-degree assault, unlawful use of a weapon and menacing -- stem from the encounter with Hester.

The pastors and other community leaders plan to call on the local African American community to take a stand, particularly in the wake of the violence last weekend in Charlottesville, Virginia.

"As our nation and community come face to face with bold and increasing acts of domestic terrorism, the events we will review carry acute relevance," Mondainé said in his prepared statements.

"We call the collective community to rise up. We call all peaceable peoples to rise up. We call the black community to rise up. Rise up and stand. Demand justice and just acts."

The news conference is scheduled at 10 a.m. Friday at Billy Webb Elks Lodge, 6 N. Tillamook St.

Portlanders offer support for Commissioner Nick Fish after cancer diagnosis

*By Jessica Floum
August 17, 2017*

Hundreds of local leaders and residents took to social media to send support, healing energy, good vibes and prayers to Portland Commissioner Nick Fish Thursday after he announced that he was diagnosed with cancer.

Mayor Ted Wheeler Tweeted his support for Fish.

"Nick Fish is my friend," Wheeler wrote. "He has a tough road ahead, but I know he'll walk it with the same effort and determination he demonstrates in all aspects of his life."

"I will be with him every step of the way," Wheeler said.

City Commissioner Amanda Fritz told The Oregonian in a text: "Nick is meeting this challenge with his usual transparency, determination and courage."

"Nick, you have a lot of courage," Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith wrote on Facebook. "You are a fighter. You and your family will be in my prayers."

Former long-time Fish aide Jim Blackwood Jr. commented: "Time to get into campaign mode. Just a different kind of campaign."

Portland's Office of Equity and Human Rights Director Dante James also sent "positive thoughts and prayers" on Facebook.

Several called Fish a champion for Portland, including Nick Hardigg, executive director of the Audubon Society of Portland, and Elisa Harrigan, who works on affordable housing initiatives at the Meyer Memorial Trust.

Others shared their experiences with cancer, some saying he has "a tough road ahead." Some offered encouragement by praising OHSU's Knight Cancer Institute, where Fish is being treated.

"You have many people in your corner in this fight," wrote John Trasviña, dean of the University of San Francisco's law school.

Some commended his openness about the diagnosis, saying it "speaks volumes" about him.

Fish responded to one of the more than 350 Facebook comments as of 12:50 p.m. Thursday. He wrote to Happy Valley resident Lori Amato, who offered condolences on behalf of her and her husband.

"Thanks to both of you," Fish wrote. "I may need another nutrition consultation!"

Fish thanked everyone for sharing their stories and thoughts and expressed gratitude for his "good health insurance" in a Facebook post Thursday afternoon.

"I am overwhelmed by the love and support we have received today," Fish wrote.

Portland police try hands-off approach as more protests planned

By Molly Harbarger

August 17, 2017

Up to 1,500 people are expected to descend Friday on the downtown Portland waterfront for a rally and march in solidarity with the people attacked by white supremacists and neo-Nazis in Charlottesville last week.

Gregory McKelvey, one of the leaders of organizing group Portland's Resistance, said he expects to see the biggest crowd since thousands swarmed the city after President Donald Trump's inauguration.

"Like Charlottesville, Portland has recently been a victim of right-wing hate and white supremacy crimes," McKelvey said. "We feel that pain, too, and so we want to show that city we stand with them."

The number of people who are planning to attend once again shifts attention to how Portland police will respond.

Since the election, police have tried various tactics to deal with large crowds of protesters, and, increasingly, counter-protesters.

Sgt. Jeff Niyya, who has been studying how to handle group protests since Occupy Portland, said each event presents case-by-case variables. The police presence will be minimal Friday, he said, despite past marches and rallies where police in riot gear heavily patrolled the crowds and used tear gas, rubber bullets and pepper spray to subdue violence.

"I'm giving a lot of trust to them because they say they are going to handle it," Niyya said. "I told them I hope we can leave the past in the past and have a successful march."

Niyya spends his time surveying social media to gauge the intent of protest organizers and how many people might show up. He reaches out to leaders on all sides -- counter-protesters, too -- to talk about what they're expecting and what they hope to achieve.

He said he wants to make sure Portland police take into account marchers' safety concerns as well as city residents' worries.

Niyya is also conscious of how past enforcement strategies have looked to protesters and the outside.

Some members of anti-fascist groups have been arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and interfering with police and often are dispersed by police because officers say they throw bricks, bottles and other objects.

During an especially large "Patriot Prayer" rally June 4, a wall of police cleared downtown's Chapman Square of hundreds of anti-fascist demonstrators after water bottles and other things flew.

The police response then wasn't about picking sides, Niyya said, it was about officer safety.

"If you hadn't been focusing on us and instead been focusing on the Patriots, you could have stood there all day long and yelled and screamed at them," Niyya said.

A spokesperson from Rose City Antifa, one of the largest antifa groups in Portland, didn't respond to requests for comment.

For Friday, McKelvey said he thinks that the protest will be peaceful if left alone by city officials. The march will start at 5:30 p.m. and last until 7 p.m. -- McKelvey said vandalism and other trouble starts after dark.

But he also wants clarity about what's allowed and what isn't. In the past, his group has marched across bridges and in the streets. At subsequent marches, they weren't allowed to do either. He said he's willing to follow the rules, if he knows what they are, because it's a matter of safety for his supporters.

"We need to know what we can and can't do and what will elicit a violent response," McKelvey said.

McKelvey and anti-fascist group members have complained that police often push them back, arrest them or hold them back from marching when far-right events are largely uninterrupted. Niyya knows this and is now trying to hold police back as much as possible from feeding the narrative that they're backing groups that advocate white supremacy, oppose immigrants and deride feminism.

"We don't take sides in these conflicts," Niyya said. "I don't like us standing between the two groups and, if there's a march, I don't like us marching alongside them."

But that light touch led several physical altercations to go on unabated at an Aug. 6 march led by far-right organizer Joey Gibson of Vancouver and his Patriot Prayer group.

The violence between anti-fascist counter-protesters and people from various groups who unite under a shared extreme conservative ideology lasted more than half an hour, with several scuffles escalating from punches thrown and flags burned to extended brawls.

Gibson said he tried to use his bullhorn to break up the fights, but he thinks a lot of people come from both sides with the express purpose of throwing fists. In the future, he plans to ask people who don't want to fight to ring the group, so that the clashes are contained within the rally.

Police were also unhappy with the violence that day and Niyya said he's planning to rethink police strategy before Gibson's next rally.

Gibson has set a Sept. 10 event where the featured speakers are people who want to preserve standing Confederate monuments -- the issue that sparked the Virginia conflict and less violent ones across the South. He expects the largest crowd yet, with far-right supporters flying in from across the country.

Gibson said he expects to take "extra precautions," wouldn't say what those may be.

"I'm in a really hard spot because Patriot Prayer promotes peace and love but at the same time it's about standing up for what you believe in and you don't stand down," Gibson said. "If you're not going to stand down, antifa is going to come and be violent. How do we stop that without being violent ourselves, without brawling in the streets?"

Niyya has monitored the news reports of Gibson's protests in other cities including Seattle and San Francisco, but also factors in how Gibson's message will play in Portland, where he expects people won't welcome the presence of Confederate flags.

Niyya said he talks with the groups about how they can deal with that. He wants leaders to police themselves as much as possible, but if police see people breaking the law, they will intervene.

"We're doing a lot of this work on the back end to make sure it's safe and people have their constitutional rights to protest and communicate and do all the things we love about this country," Niyya said. "And do it safely."

But Gibson blamed counter-protesters for the majority of the incidents. His comments echo Trump's remarks Tuesday that the violence in Charlottesville, where one woman was killed and dozens more injured, was as much a fault of anti-fascist and anti-racist groups as it was the white supremacists who acted violently.

Gibson said he denounces violence in his videos and in person during the speech-making time at rallies, but he said he can't control the responses of his supporters to counter-protesters.

"It takes real discipline and it takes real strength to get people to see the bigger picture and to not use violence," he said.

The Portland Tribune

Fish says cancer diagnosis 'biggest challenge I have ever faced'

*By Pamplin Media Group
August 17, 2017*

City Commissioner being treated through OHSU for adenocarcinoma after months of abdominal pain and weight loss.

In an Aug. 17 statement, Fish said he had been experiencing weight loss, poor appetite, indigestion and abdominal pain during the past few months. A CT scan, followed by a laparoscopy confirmed that he had adenocarcinoma of the abdomen, according to the statement.

He is being treated at the Oregon Health & Science University's Knight Cancer Institute and his doctors have prescribed regular outpatient chemotherapy treatments.

Although the treatments will physically weaken him, Fish will continue to serve on the City Council. He is in charge of the Portland Water Bureau and the Bureau of Environmental Services, in addition to serving as council liaison to Elders in Action, Venture Portland, the Regional Arts & Culture Council, and the Portland Rose Festival Foundation.

"This is the biggest challenge I have ever faced," Fish said in his statement. "I intend to fight this disease with every fiber of my body.

"I am incredibly grateful to my family for their love and support. Please keep us in your prayers."

Taking over water bureau

Former Mayor Charlie Hales assigned Fish the water bureau when a citizen initiative threatened to remove it from council control and place it under the authority of a separate board. Fish led the campaign against the ballot measure, which was overwhelmingly defeated.

More recently, Fish led the council deliberations that resulted in a unanimous decision to build a filtration plant to remove a potentially deadly parasite from Bull Run water, the city's primary water source.

Although it will be more expensive than building an ultraviolet plant to kill cryptosporium, the council agreed to spend up to \$500 million on the filtration plant because it will remove other contaminants from the water, too, including silt from landslides and ash from wildfires in the watershed.

No decision on re-election

Fish recently told the Portland Tribune he intends to seek re-election in 2018. He has not yet decided whether to stay in the race following the diagnosis.

Although Fish has not reported raising any campaign funds so far this year, he has retained Hilltop Public Solutions. Even though he was not on the ballot last year, Fish raised more than \$20,000 which he donated to other campaigns and advocacy organizations.

A non-practicing lawyer, Fish was elected to fill the unexpired term of Commissioner Erik Sten, who resigned mid-term, with 61.4 percent of the vote in 2008. He was re-elected to a full four-year term at the May 2010 primary election with just under 80 percent of the vote. He was re-elected at the May 2014 primary election with 73 percent of the vote.

So far, affordable housing advocate Margo Black and environmental advocate Julia DeGraw have announced against Fish. They cannot officially file for another month.

Here is the statement Nick Fish's office issued Thursday:

To my family, friends and co-workers: I have some bad news to share with you.

I have been diagnosed with cancer.

Over the past few months, I experienced weight loss, poor appetite, indigestion, and abdominal pain.

A recent CT scan rang a number of alarm bells. A follow-up laparoscopy this week confirmed our worst fears: adenocarcinoma of the abdomen.

I am in good hands at the OHSU Knight Cancer Institute. My doctors have prescribed regular outpatient chemotherapy treatments. The medicine will weaken my immune system, but should not prevent me from continuing to serve on the City Council.

This is the biggest challenge I have ever faced. I intend to fight this disease with every fiber of my body.

I am incredibly grateful to my family for their love and support. Please keep us in your prayers.

Thank you,

Nick

Who makes Portland better? City asks for Spirit Award nominations

By Lyndsey Hewitt

August 17, 2017

33rd annual event will celebrate local leaders and organizers who have helped make the city better.

Awards are given to up to 20 people or groups in three different categories, including Outstanding Individual Leadership, Outstanding Organization Leadership, and Outstanding Individual or Organization Leadership.

Potential recipients include community leaders, city employees, businesses, neighborhood associations, business district associations, young leaders under age 24 and leaders over 65.

Starting in 1985, the awards are for people or groups that have "helped make Portland a better place to live, work, study or play."

Among some of the 2016 honorees, Outstanding Community Leader awards were given to Tony Deface, a coordinator with the anti-poverty group Living Cully, and Candi Brings Plenty, a local activist.

The August Wilson Red Door Project won a Spirit award for Community Group or Organization, while the Foster-Powell Neighborhood Association was named Neighborhood Association of the Year.

Developer Jordan Menashe was given the Mayor's Award from former Mayor Charlie Hales for responsiveness to the housing and homelessness state of emergency. The Menashes, a prominent real estate family in Portland, twice opened up downtown locations for temporary homeless shelters.

"This annual awards ceremony formally recognizes and honors some of Portland's most active and engaged community members for their outstanding contributions and hard work in the areas of arts and culture, environmental, equity and social justice issues," Commissioner Chloe Eudaly said in a news release.

Nomination forms are online at www.portlandonline.com/onispiritofportland or by contacting Marco Mejia at 503-823-3093, or spiritofportland@portlandoregon.gov.

The deadline to apply ends Monday, Aug. 28. An awards ceremony is planned for 6-8:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 14, at a location to be announced.

Wheeler letter blasting former chief O'Dea is largely symbolic

*By Nick Budnick
August 16, 2017*

Mayor Ted Wheeler's recent notice to Larry O'Dea that he committed a firing offense won't impact ex-chief's retirement

If Larry O'Dea had not retired, he'd be fired, Mayor Ted Wheeler told the former police chief in a letter last month.

The July 6 letter summarized the findings of a city investigation of the circumstances around O'Dea's accidental shooting of a friend, and the lack of follow-up by O'Dea and top commanders at the Portland Police Bureau. The city concluded that O'Dea was not truthful with investigators, and Wheeler also summarized an unrelated investigation with similar results.

The city findings wrap up — for the city, at least — the fallout from the incident on while O'Dea was off-duty and on a camping trip in Harney County with friends in April 2016. News of the shooting did not leak out until well after the incident, and it turned out the bureau had done nothing to investigate it. A prosecution of him for negligent wounding was dropped after his friend and victim said he'd been compensated fully — an apparent reference to an insurance payment.

So what does the recent finding of policy violations — first reported in the Portland Mercury - mean to an officer who's already retired?

Not much, materially.

When an officer retires in mid-investigation, "the findings would then go in the person's personnel file and they would remain there," said Portland Police spokesman Sgt. Chris Burley. "We keep custody of the personnel file for 30 years."

So there's no impact on retirement payouts or anything else.

That said, the city investigation won't help O'Dea's reputation and standing in the police circles he's run in for decades.

An ongoing investigation by the state Department of Public Safety Standards and Practices, reported by The Oregonian, could in theory strip O'Dea of his law enforcement certification. The new city findings would provide the state with fodder for such a finding.

O'Dea has not responded publicly to the letter, and his attorney, Derek Ashton, declined to comment for now.

But O'Dea already shown his reputation matters to him. Soon after the criminal case against him was thrown out he successfully petitioned a Harney County judge to seal the case and set it aside, as if the prosecution never happened.

And before that, O'Dea threatened a lawsuit over a Harney deputy's suggestion that O'Dea was drinking at the time of the shooting.

Overlook Neighborhood sinks into turmoil over Hazelnut Grove

By Lyndsey Hewitt
August 17, 2017

Controversial bylaw excluding homeless abandoned, but neighborhood leader not optimistic about Good Neighborhood Agreement.

The controversial bylaw revision that the Overlook Neighborhood Association proposed to exclude homeless people from being members ultimately won't be adopted.

Board members met ahead of a neighborhood meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 15, to discuss the revision, when they decided to abandon the idea.

"It was a reaction to the threats from (Commissioner Chloe) Eudaly," said Chris Trejbal, Overlook Neighborhood Association chair. He says that the association is being bullied by the city. Eudaly oversees the Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI), which threatened to stop recognizing Overlook as a neighborhood association if it adopted the bylaw revision, saying that it was discriminatory to those without a home.

That neighborhood is where the tiny home village of Hazelnut Grove is located, and for two years since its establishment has been at odds with the neighborhood association.

The groups are in the midst of mediation facilitated by the city to work on establishing a Good Neighborhood Agreement.

However, later in the Tuesday meeting, after some had already left when the bylaw revision was abandoned, another resolution was brought up to vote in what advocates are calling a sneak attack.

Four members of the association put forth a different agenda item for a vote that had to do with the Good Neighborhood Agreement. It called for a vote that if no agreement was made between the two groups by Oct. 1, then Hazelnut Grove would need to be relocated by Nov. 15.

However, the vote didn't pass, with 49 against and 38 in favor.

"We won, but narrowly, and wouldn't have if the Grove residents had been disenfranchised," Vahid Brown, long-time homeless advocate wrote on a public Facebook post. Brown helped establish Hazelnut Grove.

Eudaly commented on the post calling the move a "total abuse of the process."

Trejbal then spoke on Oregon Public Broadcasting's "Think Out Loud" for an interview after the vote and advocates claimed on a separate public Facebook post by Brown that Trejbal wasn't speaking truthfully on the air.

OPB then commented that they were asking Brown to come onto the show after being criticized for only presenting one viewpoint.

Meanwhile, Trejbal believes Hazelnut Grove residents and advocates aren't taking everything into account.

"I think Hazelnut Grove wants to try and wash the history of what went on there. There's two years of history and it's not good history. It's the history of the city making promises and

breaking them ... that all created a toxic environment that's been really hard to overcome as neighbors," Trejbal said.

He's not optimistic that the groups will reach an agreement soon, and still wants the city to issue an official permit for the grove.

The city has said that they're looking to Dignity Village, which operates on a contract with the city, as a potential long-term model for the grove, but are waiting for the groups to come to an agreement before moving forward.

The Portland Mercury

City Commissioner Nick Fish Has Been Diagnosed With Cancer

*By Dirk VanderHart
Aug 17, 2017*

Portland Commissioner Nick Fish has been diagnosed with abdominal cancer, he announced in a statement this morning.

"Over the past few months, I experienced weight loss, poor appetite, indigestion, and abdominal pain," Fish said in a statement. "A recent CT scan rang a number of alarm bells. A follow-up laparoscopy this week confirmed our worst fears: adenocarcinoma of the abdomen."

It's disheartening news, obviously, for the active city commissioner, who each week puts out a list of accomplishments and notable happenings on Facebook, and who's deft at brokering policy compromises with fellow commissioners (most recently, Fish was a key figure in forcing the continuation of a policy in which cops are interviewed by internal investigators shortly after shootings).

That activity is expected to continue largely unabated. While little is known about next steps, Fish's chief of staff, Sonia Schmanski, says the commissioner will keep a full schedule, except for necessary treatments.

"I am in good hands at the OHSU Knight Cancer Institute," Fish said in this morning's statement. "My doctors have prescribed regular outpatient chemotherapy treatments. The medicine will weaken my immune system, but should not prevent me from continuing to serve on the City Council."

One question that has yet to be answered: Whether Fish will press on with re-election plans next year. The news is too new for any of that to be worked out, Schmanski says, though Fish will reach a decision in coming days.

"This is the biggest challenge I have ever faced," Fish's statement says. "I intend to fight this disease with every fiber of my body."

The Portland Business Journal

Portland council set to approve deals to keep hydropower flowing

By Pete Danko

Aug 17, 2017

Portland is set to approve a package of agreements that will allow it to continue generating power at two city-owned Bull Run hydroelectric plants.

Mayor Ted Wheeler and commissioners Nick Fish and Amanda Fritz all voiced strong support Wednesday for going forward with the deals, needed to replace an expiring contract under which Portland General Electric operated the Portland Hydroelectric Project and bought its output.

“I think overall, the package is a very solid one,” Wheeler said. “There’s nothing we do here that doesn’t come with commensurate risk, but I think it’s been clearly identified and I’m certainly satisfied that we’ve got a good solution here.

The council set Aug. 30 — the penultimate day of a 35-year agreement with PGE that has been profitable to the city — to finalize the package.

PGE has said it no longer has the staff to operate and maintain the Portland plants as it did under the expiring contract. The council last month reached a five-year, \$8 million agreement with power services agency Energy Northwest to operate and maintain the plants.

That deal was one of four parts to the overall package for keeping the dams generating power and revenue. The additional agreements include a \$1 million, five-year deal with PGE for transmission line maintenance; a \$420,000, five-year deal with Eugene Water & Electric Board for power scheduling services; and a 15-year agreement to sell the power to Portland General Electric.

The price PGE will pay for that power is confidential. The Citizens’ Utility Board’s Janice Thompson testified Wednesday that confidentially in power purchase agreements is common.

The council on Wednesday also adopted an amendment intended to address concerns that the new package could leave other city operations vulnerable if the hydroelectric operations fell into the red.

A risk analysis presented to the council on Wednesday said there was a 99 percent chance the city would make money over the next 15 years under the new arrangements, with revenues projected to exceed expenditures by \$5.8 million by the end of the period.

However, three consecutive dry years, particularly in the early going, could turn a current \$1.8 million Bureau of Hydroelectric Power fund surplus into a \$200,000 deficit. That prompted the amendment passed Wednesday that requires a determination that the fund is safely out of danger before surplus money can go to the general fund.

The Portland Hydroelectric Project consists of two dams with powerhouses, one that can generate 24 megawatts, the other 12 megawatts. The project's average annual output over the past 20 years — 85,716 megawatt-hours — has been equal to the energy used by about 8,770 Portland General Electric residential customers. The city says it has invested \$55 million in the project, which is now debt free, generating net revenue of \$14 million for the general fund.

OPB

Portland Commissioner Nick Fish Says He Has Stomach Cancer

By Amelia Templeton

Aug. 17, 2017

Portland Commissioner Nick Fish announced Thursday he has stomach cancer.

Fish says he is receiving outpatient treatment at the OHSU Knight Cancer Institute.

“The medicine will weaken my immune system, but should not prevent me from continuing to serve on the City Council,” he wrote in a press release and a Facebook post.

“This is the biggest challenge I have ever faced. I intend to fight this disease with every fiber of my body.”

The commissioner’s staff said they expect only minor adjustments to his schedule, and that he will continue to meet with constituents and attend council hearings.

Fish’s chief of staff, Sonia Schmanski, says making the diagnosis public was a natural decision for the commissioner.

“He’s open. He’s transparent. He’s a people person. And he wanted to bring the community, so many of whom he knows personally, in on this news,” she said. “I’m not surprised at all.”

Fish is the commissioner in charge of the Portland Water Bureau and the Bureau of Environmental Services. He’s served on the city council for nine years.

He is up for re-election next May. Though Fish told the Portland Tribune in July he would seek re-election, Schmanski says Fish only recently learned of his illness and has not yet decided whether to seek another term.

She said she expects that conversation will happen “in the near future.”