

## **The Portland Tribune**

# **Portland Rebutts Claims of Serial Homeless Camp Arsonist**

*By Jim Redden*

*March 15, 2018*

**Portland Fire & Rescue says there is no information to support accusations the city is ignoring an arsonist targeting homeless camps.**

Portland officials are pushing back against recent accusations that the city is ignoring a serial arsonist targeting homeless camps.

The accusations were first made in a March 12 email from a group calling itself the Direct Action Network. In response to a request for more information by the Portland Tribune, the group said there had been six suspicious fires in the past two weeks that the city was not seriously investigating.

"Because of this serious threat to our houseless neighbors and due to the incompetence and unwillingness of our police force to address this very real danger to our communities, regular citizens from across the metro area have formed a coalition for community defense — to patrol, respond to and defend our neighbors whose lives are being threatened," the group said in its email.

But in a Thursday statement, Portland Fire & Rescue said there is no information to support such accusations.

"The fire tracking database is updated and evaluated daily for patterns in fire incidents throughout the city. The fires mentioned in the release are in this database along with many others. There are currently no indications of a serial arsonist targeting the houseless community within the City of Portland" PF&R said on March 15.

In the statement, PF&R also said it can only track reports that it is aware of, however.

"If any person has information relating to any fires within the City of Portland we strongly encourage them to contact investigators through the fire tip line at 503-823-INFO. Reports to the tip line can be provided anonymously," PF&R said.

Fires at homeless camps are not unusual and have been well reported over the year.

Portland fire and police officials both reaffirmed their commitment to protecting all residents.

"Portland Fire and Rescue is committed to the goals of zero fire deaths, and zero communities neglected. This can only be achieved with a diligent emergency fire response, accurate investigations, and effective public education, all of which Portland Fire and Rescue is committed to," said Fire Chief Mike Myers

"The Police Bureau wants all people to feel safe in our community, but understands that some may not feel comfortable reporting crimes. I have directed officers to reach out to members of our houseless community during their daily patrols to continue to build trust and discuss methods for reporting crime and why it is important. While Portland Fire and Rescue is the lead investigating agency for arson investigations, the Police Bureau will continue to provide any assistance needed to them during their investigations," said Police Chief Danielle Outlaw.

## Willamette Week

# Portland City Commissioner Nick Fish Doubles Down on His Argument That More High-End Housing Supply Doesn't Ease Demand

*By Rachel Monahan*

*March 15, 2018*

**Portland City Council has for two years declared a housing emergency, but there's still a question of whether commissioners have the will to address it.**

On March 7, Commissioner Nick Fish led the Portland City Council in its unanimous vote to block a development project.

It was the first time in 12 years the City Council had completely overturned an approval from Design Commission, an all-volunteer panel that signs off on big projects.

Fish, who is up for reelection, sided with a chorus of Portlanders who argue that the city need not foster private-sector development to address the city's rent increases. (For some of the neighbors, that's a self-serving argument in favor of views from their own condos.)

And yesterday, in the midst of Council deliberations about extending a tax break to private developers in exchange for affordable housing, Fish took a moment to double down on the argument against fostering private-sector development—that building high-end apartments doesn't help those most impacted by Portland's rent increase.

"There is a view that is getting some traction in the media," says Fish. "I call it 'trickle down housing,' and the idea is that ... if we continue to have 95 percent or more of our housing at the luxury level, that we will over time be a benefit to those people shut out of the market."

City Commissioner Nick Fish (at right). City Commissioner Nick Fish (at right).

Fish told the Oregonian that in his remarks, which were flagged on Twitter by the O's housing reporter Elliot Njus, he wasn't specifically referring to coverage of his vote to block the Fremont Place Apartments, the 17-story, 275-unit building.

Regardless of his precise inspiration, Fish made the wider case for why that vote against private-sector development wasn't important, even as economists and business leaders express alarm. (One architect told WW that developers are weighing canceling local projects.)

"If you take the logic of what some economists have said," Fish said. "what they're really saying is the person who can't find a luxury apartments to live in, is going to go out to 158th and Powell and displace someone who is a low-income unit run by Joe Weston. That is so preposterous on its face, that it is not worthy of our discussion."

Fish, a consummate public speaker, is erecting a bit of a straw man here.

WW hasn't found anyone who argues that the Portland resident who is seeking to live in the most expensive housing (say, the Pearl, where the Fremont Place Apartment might be built if Council doesn't continue block the project) would next choose to move to the least expensive neighborhoods (the sections of East Portland commonly called the Numbers) if that person couldn't find any apartment.

Instead, economists argue that shrinking high-end supply creates a domino effect.

Economist Joe Cortright puts it bluntly.

"In my opinion, Commissioner Fish is just wrong about how housing markets like Portland's work," Cortright emails. "All the parts of the the housing market are connected. If there isn't enough supply at the top end of the market, those people don't go away, they bid for other housing. Folks that would have gone to Fremont Place bid up other Pearl and NW Portland units, and probably bid up stuff on the close-in East Side as well, that pushes down vacancies and pushes up rents there. People that would have been in Sunnyside or Hosford or Sellwood or Kenton move further out. Eventually, that even shows up in the rents on older apartments in outer Southeast."

"That's exactly what happened between 2010 and 2015, when the number of new apartments completed fell dramatically because of the recession, while at the same time, more and more people moved here," Cortright adds.

"That's why Commissioner Fish heard all about rent increases and no-fault evictions."

When WW asked Cortright to respond to Fish's criticism of economists, he responded with a detailed case. We've excerpted it below, for those readers looking to understand economists' arguments about supply and demand.

Most notably, Cortright estimates that according to one economic study, Fish will need come up with 130 units of affordable housing to make up for the economic impact of blocking 275 units of housing on less well-off Portlanders.

**Here's the rest of Cortright's email:**

The past five years wasn't some random epidemic of greed; it was because we had a shortage of new housing, and in the face of rising demand, higher income people outbid lower income people for a slowly growing housing stock. We've lived through history that simply proves [Fish] wrong.

Also: Virtually everyone agrees that more market rate housing reduces rent increases and reduces displacement. Don't take my word for it: Even the most liberal academics agree. Miriam Zuk and Karen Chapple run the Urban Displacement Project at the University of California, Berkeley: Their estimates show that adding two market rate apartments have about the same effect on displacement rates as building one unit of public housing. See discussion here:

<http://cityobservatory.org/the-end-of-the-housing-supply-debate-maybe/>

Based on that estimate, to make up for the displacement effect of NOT building Fremont Place, Commissioner Fish is going to have to come up with something like 130 units of affordable housing. Those are currently running in the range of \$300K (and up), so that's like \$40 million worth of affordable housing you would have to build to offset the displacement from not building Fremont Place.

Rent increases in Portland have dropped from double digits a year and a half ago to negative today. The reason that has happened is because so much more market rate housing has become available in the past 12 months. And that's producing vacancies all over town, and not just in high income properties, but in the existing older apartment housing stock.

<http://cityobservatory.org/signs-of-the-times/>

In fact, the process of filtering in the housing market is how nearly all affordable housing gets built. Most housing gets built, at least initially, for middle and upper income households. As it

ages, it becomes less desirable, and the original tenants move on, and the newer tenants typically are lower in the income spectrum.

<http://cityobservatory.org/how-luxury-housing-becomes-affordable/>

In effect, the housing market works like a game of musical chairs: If there aren't enough chairs, then some people get pushed out. In musical chairs, it's the slow. In housing, it's the poor. For a non-technical explanation of how this works, [see this great infographic from Sightline Institute](#).

But this process of filtering doesn't happen when you block the construction of new housing. If there aren't enough new chairs added to the game, rich people end up in smaller, older chairs (houses) and the poor face shortages, rising rents and eviction. That's why in some places the 1950s era ranch home is the affordable housing stock in a metro area, and why in other places (like the Bay Area and LA), tiny, aging ranch houses can command \$1 million or more.

<http://cityobservatory.org/back-at-the-ranch/>

If you care at all about affordability, you have to build all kinds of housing, including for upper income households. If you don't, the ones who will pay the price will be the ones that Commissioner Fish says he cares about.

## **Activist Group Claims a Serial Arsonist is Targeting Portland's Homeless, But the Police and Fire Bureaus Disagree**

*By Elise Herron*

*March 15, 2018*

**An organizer with Direct Action Alliance reports seeing seven burned tents in two weeks. After investigating, Portland police say the pattern doesn't point to a serial arsonist.**

On Monday, Direct Action Alliance—a Portland anti-fascism group that, among other things, objects to how police handle homelessness—issued a press release warning of a serial arsonist in Portland.

"Over the last two weeks, multiple arson attacks have been reported by Portland's houseless community to neighbors and advocates," the statement reads. "These attacks are taking place across the Portland metro area and are not isolated incidents."

That's an assertion that the police and fire departments say isn't supported by evidence.

A DAA organizer, Jacob Bureros, tells WW he's seen seven tents burned in various parts of Portland and says that some houseless people his organization interacts with are not reporting the crimes to the police for fear that their belongings will be swept.

(Direct Action Alliance is best known for its confrontations with right-wing extremist groups in Portland's streets.)

In response, Portland Fire & Rescue issued a statement today saying that there is not sufficient data to support the claim that there is an arsonist at large in the city.

"Portland Fire and Rescue takes the charge of a serial arsonist targeting Portland's houseless population very seriously," the statement reads. "The fires mentioned in the [DAA] release are in

[our] database along with many others. There are currently no indications of a serial arsonist targeting the houseless community within the City of Portland."

However, the statement continues, investigators can only track fires that are reported. That means it is possible they do not know about some of the incidents shared with DAA.

That's why Portland Fire and Rescue and Portland Police are urging anyone with information about fires within the city call an anonymous tip line.

"The Police Bureau wants all people to feel safe in our community, but understands that some may not feel comfortable reporting crimes," Police Chief Danielle Outlaw says. "I have directed officers to reach out to members of our houseless community during their daily patrols to continue to build trust and discuss methods for reporting crime and why it is important. While Portland Fire and Rescue is the lead investigating agency for arson investigations, the Police Bureau will continue to provide any assistance needed to them during their investigations."

Bureros says his organization is not interested in collaborating with police officers, and that DAA members will be patrolling neighborhoods independently, "collecting data on the arson attacks, establishing a pattern and response map, and collecting supplies such as rape whistles and fire extinguishers to pass out to those under threat."

## **The Daily Journal of Commerce**

### **Calculated, Coordinated, Convincing**

*By Chuck Slothower*  
*March 15, 2018*

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler seemed to believe the City Council was in for a long day at a public hearing in early February.

Thirty-six residents, mostly members of the same neighborhood association, had signed up to testify in support of an appeal of approval given to a subdivision proposal.

"You don't have to use your full three minutes," Wheeler told people who were signed up to testify. "You are of course entitled to your three minutes. I just want to suggest alternatives if people would prefer."

For the next three hours, Wheeler and his fellow city commissioners saw something extraordinary. One neighbor after another testified against the Macadam Ridge subdivision proposal. But unlike other groups, their testimony was professionalized, coordinated and synchronized with a PowerPoint presentation illustrating their main points.

The property owners, the Griffith family, were pushing to build 21 homes on a 14-acre lot off of Taylor's Ferry Road. The South Burlingame Neighborhood Association appealed a hearing officer's decision approving the development, citing landslide risks and other issues.

Carol Hazzard went first, introducing herself as a 52-year resident of Portland. She focused on the landslide risk to existing homes built uphill from the Macadam Ridge property.

"It is my opinion this development would put hundreds of people and their homes at risk," she said.

Then Mary Lee Carr, wearing a reflective safety vest in council chambers, testified as leader of the Neighborhood Emergency Team – volunteer first responders who are trained by Portland Fire & Rescue.

“As I assess hazards around my neighborhood, I look at houses set upon slide-prone ground as coffins,” Carr told commissioners.

By the end of the presentation, commissioners had been persuaded. They voted unanimously to uphold the neighborhood association’s appeal.

“I don’t remember a more thoughtful set of presentations,” Commissioner Nick Fish said.

In recent weeks, the City Council has proved receptive to appeals from development opponents. In addition to Macadam Ridge, commissioners upheld an appeal challenging approval of the Fremont Apartments project in the Pearl District and declined to consider a proposal from NBP Capital for a series of downtown towers.

Macadam Ridge was lower stakes: a small subdivision planned by family landowners best known for running the Riverview Abbey Mausoleum. Yet the neighborhood association’s well-organized presentation, aided by local professionals, could offer a template for other groups fighting developments.

“We conveyed the message,” said Robert Lennox, president of the neighborhood association.

The presentation was assembled with the help of Shannon Hiller-Webb, a neighborhood association member who has professional experience in marketing and advertising. She worked with other neighbors and an environmental legal group, Crag Law Center, to hone the message. They also hired Carrie Richter, a Portland land-use attorney.

The neighbors divided their presentation into storyboards, much like a film. With only three minutes allotted per speaker, they realized they could be more effective coordinating topics into a cohesive presentation.

“We realized we needed to tell a story in a narrative arc,” Hiller-Webb said. “By changing our kind of approach so we didn’t duplicate our efforts and told one story as a collective voice, we came to find that impactful.”

South Burlingame Neighborhood Association members have shared their experiences with representatives of Friends of Overlook Bluff, which is fighting to save a historic tree in its North Portland neighborhood, and the Southwest Hills Residential League, which is weighing in on plans to develop the ex-Strohecker’s grocery store property for housing.

“Every neighborhood association is having to pretty much to start from scratch, so we were hoping to inform of what we’ve learned in four years of doing this,” Hiller-Webb said.

The Macadam Ridge fight is far from over. The Riverview Abbey operators, the Griffiths, have appealed the City Council’s decision to the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals. LUBA could override the City Council and allow the development to proceed.

The Griffiths also have filed a grievance with the South Burlingame Neighborhood Association, objecting to an emergency board meeting the association held.

“They’re required to follow the rules, and the grievance basically says they didn’t follow the rules,” Stephen Griffith said. He filmed the proceedings of a recent neighborhood association meeting with his cellphone.

Lennox said the Griffith family’s grievance has little merit.

“Our feeling is they’re just looking for a thread to pull to void the City Council decision,” he said.

## **The Portland Business Journal**

### **A legal site in Portland to inject heroin? Elected officials, advocates explore the idea**

*By Elizabeth Hayes*

*March 15, 2018*

No city in the U.S. offers a designated site, at least legally, for heroin users to safely inject.

Seattle is moving in that direction, as are San Francisco, Philadelphia, New York and Boston.

Could Portland, where hundreds of people have died of overdoses in recent years, join that list?

That’s the hope of several public health advocates and at least one state legislator. Mayor Ted Wheeler is also open to the idea, having once tweeted, “I would look at a safe injection site in Portland — whatever is backed by data, we should pursue.”

Oregon Health & Science University’s School of Public Health held a standing-room-only-forum at Lucky Lab in Northwest Portland dedicated to the topic last November. Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, a Beaverton Democrat, stood up and said safe consumption sites are “one of the factors we need to include” in addressing opioid misuse.

“There’s a lot of appetite for this,” she said. “I have colleagues in the Legislature who are absolutely on board.”

The road from idea to reality is riddled with challenges, from legal to real estate to insurance to public opposition to funding. Advocates are taking it slow, building support and keeping a sharp watch on other cities further along in the process.

“The county uses the term ‘overdose prevention site,’ and our agencies believe the model could be one — small — component of a comprehensive approach to combating substance misuse,” said Tri-County Health Officer Dr. Paul Lewis. He added that the county has no plans to operate such a site, which “mitigates, rather than solves, the larger problem. The most critical work remains prevention and treatment.”

Portland has a history of being out front in the harm reduction aspect of the opioid crisis. The Rose City was the third to open a legal syringe exchange in 1989 and the first to publicly fund it. Portland was the first city in Oregon to implement training in the overdose antidote naloxone.

One question advocates of safe consumption spaces will have to address revolves around moral hazard — won’t this just encourage risky behavior? Haven Wheelock, program coordinator for Portland-based Outside In’s needle exchange program, has some thoughts on that.

“People are using drugs every day in very risky ways,” she said. “They are using in places without access to clean water, like freeway overpasses, under bridges and in public bathrooms. They are hiding, so people don’t see them. By giving people a place to use, they are able to take fewer risks. They have clean new equipment that they then dispose of safely, and, most importantly, they are not alone and hidden if they were to overdose so they would be likely to survive.”

Studies have shown that safe consumption sites, which are staffed by health care professionals, save lives and save money. Such spaces have been up and running for three decades in Canada, Europe and Australia. They decrease public use and needle litter and allow users to obtain sterile supplies. If they overdose, a trained professional can respond.

“No one has ever died in a supervised consumption room,” Shannon Riley, regional project manager for the Overdose Emergency Response in Vancouver, told attendees at OHSU’s forum.

Powerful fentanyl drugs are killing scores of people, primarily on the East Coast, and it’s a matter of time before they appear here, said Sam Chapman, advocacy director for Safer Spaces Portland. A safe injection space, primarily serving those living outside, would allow users to test the purity of their drugs.

Already, the death toll is mounting. In 2016, 160 people died from opioids in the Portland metro area, with another 130 through the first three quarters of 2017, according to preliminary data. That doesn’t count the people who die from viral hepatitis, skin infections, heart infections and other ailments that can result from opioid use.

As far as next steps, a tour of safe consumption spaces in Vancouver, B.C., by state and local officials is in the works, though no date has been set, Chapman said. He said he’s not seeking public funding, at least at first.

“I’m confident we can find private funding,” he said. “I’m not at liberty to disclose where it would come from.”

There’s also federal “crackhouse” laws to work around. Attorney General Jeff Sessions already threatened to squelch a safe consumption proposal in Vermont.

Wheelock said strong political support is essential before any public agency will take on such a controversial project. The needle exchange received a lot of pushback when Outside In first started it, she noted.

“With the amount of people dying regularly, we’re seeing more acceptance of creative solutions,” Wheelock said. “The science is clear that they’re helpful in keeping people alive. Drug user stigma is still very, very, very present in our society. It’s going to be about having the political will.”

## **OPB**

# **Portland Earthquake Study Estimates Wide Variation In Impact**

*By Tom Banse  
March 15, 2018*

No one can say when exactly the next Cascadia megaquake will strike other than there’s a fair chance it’ll happen in our lifetimes. A new study of likely earthquake impacts in the Greater Portland region finds the exact timing and season make a big difference when it comes to casualties and damage.

Oregon’s Department of Geology and Mineral Industries modeled the impacts of a magnitude 9.0 offshore quake and a magnitude 6.8 rupture of the Portland Hills fault. There’s good news and bad news when applying the latest science.



The total damage is worse than previously estimated. But still, more than 99 percent of the population in the Portland metro area should survive. Lead study author John Bauer said the time of day the catastrophe strikes changes the death and injury toll by thousands.

“The best case would be say, summertime,” he said. “Folks are outside enjoying themselves. They’re not in buildings. Worst case is we’re in schools and our workplaces and it has been quite wet.”

In the rainy season there would be more landslides and building collapses. If the quake happens at night, more people survive because they’re sleeping in wooden homes that flex during the shaking.

The estimated number of injured people in the Greater Portland area after a Cascadia subduction zone earthquake ranges from about 4,000 if the magnitude 9.0 temblor strikes at night during the dry season to around 27,000 if it happens on a workday afternoon in the wet season.

Bauer expects most of the injuries would not require hospitalization in any case. The total population of the study area is 1.64 million.

“Hopefully people will see this is not doomsday, but it is something we can and should prepare for,” said DOGAMI Communications Director Ali Ryan Hansen in an interview. “This is an extremely survivable disaster ... but what about the ‘after’? What about the next day? Where are we going to live? What are we going to drink?”

The study estimates between 17,000 and 85,000 people would be displaced long-term because their homes would be red-tagged — in other words, deemed unsafe to live in.

The study predicts 1,609 buildings would collapse if The Big One happens when soils in the metro area are saturated. Fewer than half as many buildings would collapse — an estimated 668 — if the Cascadia megaquake strikes during the summer because the risk of soil liquefaction would be minimized.

“Accurate estimates of injuries and people in need of shelter helps us plan to care for injured people, and to meet the needs of people whose houses or apartments won’t be safe to live in,” said Jay Raskin, chairperson of the Oregon Seismic Safety Policy Commission, in a news release.

A five-county consortium of local governments called the Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization commissioned this study. Published online Thursday, it covers Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas counties — Oregon’s three most populous counties. The rest of RDPO’s territory — Columbia County, Oregon, and Clark County, Washington — will be folded into a follow-up report due in about one year.

The study combined layers of updated data on population and building construction types, refined earthquake science, the underlying geology down to the census block and the latest modeling techniques.

RDPO Manager Denise Barrett said the level of detail provided in this study can be used in practical ways right away.

She said the estimates of disaster debris volume and geography will inform planning currently underway for where to site temporary debris collection and storage depots. Separate planning of emergency transportation routes to move disaster relief into the area and evacuate the displaced and injured may need amendment to account for roads now judged likely to be severed.

In advance of an earthquake response exercise in 2016, the Federal Emergency Management Agency estimated the impacts of a magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami across the whole Cascadia region from northern California to British Columbia. The worst case injury totals in the more recent Greater Portland study nearly equal the numbers FEMA calculated for all of Oregon and Washington a couple of years before.

FEMA told exercise participants the earthquake could injure over 20,000 people across the region. Minutes later, the tsunami would injure “several thousand more in the coastal region.” When combined with further injuries from aftershocks, hazardous material releases and contaminated water supplies, FEMA’s scenario projected as many as 30,000 injured survivors could seek medical treatment regionwide.

A team at the University of Washington called the M9 Project is now doing its own modeling of the impact of a Cascadia earthquake on Seattle and the wider region, which could provide more detail and nuance. For Seattle, the simulations shows significant variations in the intensity of shaking and results depending on where on the Cascadia fault the big quake originates.

## **Further Reading (Linked Below)**

### **Facade of Michael Graves' Postmodernist Portland Building Dismantled in Preparation for Recladding**

*By Patrick Lynch*

### **The iconic Portland Building's postmodern, multicolored facade is dismantled**

*By Mackenzie Goldberg*