

The Oregonian

Tiny Houses, Big Decisions: Editorial

By The Oregonian Editorial Board

May 9, 2018

After years of temporary waivers, Portland City Council voted recently to permanently nix fees that homeowners had faced if they built a "tiny home" or "accessory dwelling unit" in their backyard.

The fees, which can total as much as \$15,000, are intended to cover the additional pressure on local parks, roads and utilities that additional housing can bring. And as city leaders had hoped, waiving the fees has fueled an ADU construction boom in recent years. As Commissioner Chloe Eudaly shared last week, 50 tiny homes were built in 2012 when the waiver began compared to 500 built annually in recent years.

But apparently, that incentive isn't enough. City commissioners are frustrated that since they opened the floodgates, they can't control where the water's going. So last week they voted 4-1 to mandate exactly who can stay in those reduced-cost homes. And it won't be anyone booking through Airbnb or other short-term rental companies.

Instead of simply lowering the hefty fee for everyone interested in building ADUs, city leaders are requiring Portlanders to make a choice.

If they want the full range of rental options for their tiny home, they must pay the full fee. If they want the five-figure break, they'll have to rent the home to a long-term tenant. And don't get any ideas. If homeowners get caught offering up short-term rentals over the next decade, they could face the full fee plus an additional 50 percent as punishment.

It's tough to imagine another scenario in which the city would mandate which customers a local business owner can serve. And yet that's exactly what they've done. Someone who builds an ADU and seeks to rent it - either for short-term visitors or long-term tenants -- becomes a landlord. They're running a business and it's reasonable that a business owner should seek to recoup their costs for construction, insurance and maintenance.

ADU builders say the new rule likely will slow business a bit, as short-term rentals have allowed some owners to pay down the cost of construction, which can range from \$50,000 to \$100,000. Kol Peterson, an ADU consultant, told the Portland Tribune last week that may be the case, ultimately the permanent waiver brings more certainty that will help.

But in a city with a housing crisis, can we afford this practice of taking three steps forward and two steps back? Public officials here like to say some version of "we can't build ourselves out of this mess." To some extent, that's true. Across the state, leaders must seek solutions on a variety of fronts, from providing rental assistance that keeps people in their homes to creating full-service permanent housing for our chronically homeless.

But there is no way Portland can make a dent in this crisis without construction. We need private developers building. We need the city spending the housing bond dollars to build deeply affordable housing. And yes, we do need citizens willing to help out, perhaps by building an ADU in their backyard.

In fact, Multnomah County tried in recent years to encourage that with a pilot program that could provide housing for homeless families. About 800 Portlanders signed up to help. But as county officials looked for potential sites, they found that restrictions with some of Portland's zoning

and construction policies, such as a fee associated with cutting down backyard trees, made those sites too complicated for the pilot.

Perhaps, as city leaders look for ways to encourage Portlanders to help solve our housing crisis, they can focus on lifting some restrictions - even temporarily -- instead of creating more.

Citizen Panel Wants Different Standard of Review on Police Misconduct Cases

*By Maxine Bernstein
May 9, 2018*

A committee that hears citizen appeals of Portland police findings on officer misconduct complaints is seeking public support for a proposed change governing how it does its work.

The Citizen Review Committee is pressing to change the standard of review that its members must consider when evaluating whether to sustain a police bureau finding on alleged officer misconduct.

Currently, the committee must ask if the findings by an officer's supervisor was "reasonable" or not.

The committee has found that standard confusing and frustrating, and instead wants to evaluate a finding by determining if there's a "preponderance of evidence" to support it or not.

"Why have a bunch of community members there to consider how would a reasonable sergeant look at this? We're not there to be a reasonable sergeant," said committee chair Kristin Malone.

The 11-member committee of volunteers is sending its proposal to Portland community groups, and seeking feedback by June 1.

The committee then plans to vote on a proposed change at its June 6 meeting. The proposal would be sent to City Council for a vote. A council vote is required to change city code governing the committee.

Committee member Neil Simon is hoping the council adopts this change, which committee members have sought for several years.

"Any individual and any organization that cares about police oversight should care about strengthening the oversight tools that we already have," Simon said.

"The reasonableness standard on its face encourages community members to air on the side of agreeing with police bureau leadership," Simon said.

The change would ensure the committee doesn't have to be "overly deferential" to what a commanding officer ruled, he said.

The proposed change had been recommended by the committee numerous times in the past but was never adopted.

"It's been lost in a sea of recommendations. Other things were more pressing or more catchy," Malone said. "Hopefully this is a time we can get community support behind it."

The Citizen Review Committee asks the public to send its comments to the committee at this email by 5 p.m. June 1: crc@portlandoregon.gov.

Easing Earthquake Mandate for Old Brick Buildings Might Just Delay Inevitable, Experts Say

By Elliot Njus

May 9, 2018

Owners of Portland's vintage stock of brick buildings have been worrying about a looming threat: an earthquake retrofit mandate that could cost them hundreds of thousands of dollars.

But earthquake experts point to another threat: the ever-increasing chance that a large earthquake will hit the Portland area, sending many of those buildings crumbling.

As the mandate goes before the Portland City Council on Wednesday, Mayor Ted Wheeler has proposed softening it for most buildings and extending the deadline to 20 years from the 10 to 15 proposed by an advisory committee, concessions that his staff said would ease the burden on "mom and pop" building owners.

Earthquake experts say putting any requirements on the books is a step in the right direction, but they also say it's a half-measure that will only delay the inevitable. And extending the deadline means a greater chance an earthquake catches those unreinforced masonry buildings unprepared. (Schools, critical buildings and large gathering places would still be held to higher standards.)

"This particular mandate is giving some options to owners, which is OK to start," said Franz Rad, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at Portland State University. "But what we really need to do down the line is retrofit all of them to at least a minimum level and/or eliminate the ones that are too expensive to retrofit.

"They are indeed death traps for the big earthquake we're expecting."

Wheeler's proposal would require owners of most unreinforced brick buildings to bolt the building's roof to its walls and reinforce the parapet, the short wall that extends around the roof of most brick buildings. That's intended to prevent the wall from peeling away during a quake, damage that can occur in even light shaking, posing danger to people inside and outside the building.

But Wheeler has proposed to remove a requirement that floors be bolted to walls. Unsecured floors can push against brittle brick walls in a quake, so bolting them can help prevent multistory buildings from collapsing — but the fix is far more invasive and expensive.

"That piece is where it gets very messy," said Kathy Rogers, who owns an unreinforced brick apartment building in Southeast Portland and is an organizer of Save Portland Buildings, a group that has opposed the mandate.

Rogers said most owners of unreinforced masonry buildings welcomed the 20-year timeline and that the requirement to fasten floors to walls has, at least for now, been taken off the table. Those upgrades would require the ouster of businesses and apartment residents while the work is underway, likely closing businesses and forcing residents to find a new place to live.

The remaining roof-retrofit requirements, while still a hefty financial lift, are easier to take on — and more worth the money, Rogers said.

"If you can brace the parapets and sturdy up the frame, you get 80 percent of the benefit for about 20 percent of the overall cost," she said.

Meanwhile, the city will seek statewide funding to help finance the retrofit work, and the city will also develop a property tax exemption to further offset the cost.

The city is also taking a page from California's book to shame building owners into completing the retrofits. That state requires owners of unreinforced masonry buildings to post signs warning that they "may be unsafe in the event of a major earthquake." The Portland City Council is considering asking its staff to write such an ordinance.

Portland has a stock of 1,600 unreinforced brick buildings in part because it's suffered few even minor earthquakes over the years, said Christopher Higgins, a structural engineering professor at Oregon State University. California cities, on the other hand, have had numerous smaller quakes that have winnowed those most susceptible to quakes.

Unreinforced brick buildings are just one type of construction at risk. San Francisco is trying to address the risk of so-called "soft-story" wood-framed buildings, built with relatively weak ground floors, and it also has a stock of brittle concrete buildings that could collapse in a quake.

Portland also likely has other building types to worry about, along with fragile bridges and utility lines.

"Our problem with unreinforced masonry is just the beginning," Higgins said. "We have very fragile infrastructure in this state for seismic."

Oregon sits about 70 miles from the Cascadia subduction zone, an offshore fault line that's overdue for a big quake. When it hits, Portland potentially faces \$80 billion in building damage, tens of thousands of people wounded or killed, and more than 250,000 residents facing long-term displacement, according to a state report released earlier this year.

The odds of a quake with a magnitude of 8 or greater that affects Portland is about 22 to 26 percent in the next 50 years, said Chris Goldfinger, an Oregon State University professor of geology and geophysics and a leading expert in the Cascadia subduction zone.

But there are other faults near Portland about which little is known. They could increase the odds of a significant quake at any time.

That could mean an unexpected wake-up call for Portlanders before the "Big One" hits.

"In the future, especially if we get a 5.8 in or near Portland area before the Cascadia Quake, people will be more inclined to retrofit weaker structures," Rad said, adding: "The ones that still remain."

Push to Remove Portland Parks Director Began Weeks Ago

*By Gordon Friedman
May 8, 2018*

Commissioner Amanda Fritz began efforts to push out Portland's parks and recreation director, Mike Abbaté, weeks before he announced his resignation on Monday, The Oregonian/OregonLive has learned.

Mayor Ted Wheeler, in a May 1 memo to Commissioner Amanda Fritz, said Fritz had decided by April 24 that she wished to "transition the Parks Bureau leadership." The mayor wrote that he would "support" Fritz's decision and favored a national search for the next director.

Fritz told The Oregonian/OregonLive on Tuesday that the mayor's memo is accurate and that she began discussions of removing Abbaté because she believes Parks & Recreation "needs to go in a new direction." Asked about how the bureau ought to change, Fritz said she hopes to secure additional funding for parks in the city's long-term planning agreements.

Pressed about whether she requested Abbaté's resignation or he offered it himself, Fritz said the two "had a discussion about his leaving" that involved "how he would like to handle my request."

Abbaté announced Monday that he intends to resign effective May 15 to "pursue other opportunities." Abbaté was hired into the bureau's top job in 2011 after working as a bureau division director, along with holding other public and private sector parks and planning jobs.

Abbaté's salary is \$186,576. Fritz said he will receive a severance payout worth approximately \$100,000.

A Portland Parks & Recreation spokesman said Tuesday that Abbaté is traveling in Washington, D.C. and "does not wish to grant interviews" about his resignation.

Fritz has been the commissioner in charge of Parks & Recreation for most of the last five years. Wheeler, who as mayor has the power to give or take back bureau assignments, took back all city bureaus -- including Parks & Recreation -- April 27 to have control of them during bureau budgeting.

Asked Tuesday about the reason for changing Parks & Recreation leadership, Wheeler deferred to Fritz, saying he believes she and Abbaté had a "philosophical difference."

Minutes later, Wheeler gave a reporter for The Oregonian/OregonLive a handwritten note stating in part, "I should be clear. I do not know the circumstances of Mike's leaving."

In the past, Fritz has praised Abbaté's performance, and did so again Monday in an email to city officials when she said he displayed exemplary leadership qualities. On Tuesday, Fritz said he is "leaving on good terms with me and the city" and again praised his work at Parks & Recreation.

Abbaté's departure brings to at least nine the number of bureau directors who have departed, mostly after being ousted, since Wheeler took office.

The Portland Tribune

Parks Director to be Paid Around \$100,000 to Resign

*By Jim Redden
May 8, 2018*

Commissioner Amanda Fritz's officer confirms severance payment to Portland Parks & Recreation Director Mike Abbate.

Portland Parks & Recreation Director Mike Abbate will receive a severance package of around \$100,000 when he resigns on May 15, according to Commissioner Amanda's Fritz's office.

The payment confirms speculation first reported by the Oregonian that Fritz, who oversees the parks bureau, has negotiated with Abbate for weeks over his departure.

Abbate and Fritz announced Abbate's pending resignation on Monday. At the time, they both released statements saying the decision was amiable. But the Oregonian obtained a May 1 memo

from Mayor Ted Wheeler to Fritz that said she initiated the bureau's leadership transition on April 24. The memo did not give any reason for Fritz wanting Abbate to leave.

In response to a question from the Portland Tribune, Tim Crail, Fritz's chief of staff, said, "Mike Abbate is receiving targeted severance" of around \$100,000 on Tuesday afternoon.

Abbate will also leave before the City Council approves the bureau's next budget. Mayor Ted Wheeler has proposed a budget that includes a 5 percent cut of \$10 million cut, including the closure of two small community centers. Fritz and other council members are negotiating with Wheeler over the budget, which could ultimately differ from what he proposed.

To read a previous story about Abbate's resignation, go to <https://tinyurl.com/y8jgvn4u>.

Willamette Week

Portland's Affordable Housing Includes 2,090 Units in Buildings That Would Crumble in a Big Earthquake

*By Rachel Monahan
May 9, 2018*

It appears that new safety requirements pose a problem for the city's own finances.

The city of Portland is preparing to ask private building owners to do something the city itself has not done—seismically upgrade buildings that would collapse in an earthquake. And the buildings for which the city is responsible include low-income apartments housing many of Portland's most vulnerable citizens.

On May 9, the City Council will hear a resolution to eventually require seismic upgrades to the largest inventory of unreinforced masonry buildings in the Pacific Northwest.

Upgrading the 1,650 URM buildings scattered across Portland could cost private property owners hundreds of millions of dollars. But WW has learned the city also faces a sizable budget hole if it's required to upgrade URM buildings it financed to serve as affordable housing.

The URM resolution is four years in the making. Starting in 2014, city officials and a panel of outside experts prepared an inventory of properties, categorized them according to risk and developed new safety codes to address that risk.

The issue: In a catastrophic earthquake—which scientists say could occur at any time in the Cascadia Subduction Zone off the Oregon Coast—such buildings would crumble, resulting in widespread injuries and death.

But as the May 9 hearing approached last week, Mayor Ted Wheeler tapped the brakes.

Now, Wheeler wants to give owners of smaller buildings 20 years to comply, The Oregonian reported last week, rather than the 10 the city panel recommended. And he has proposed relaxing the requirements for securing floors to walls. The delay applies to all buildings with housing.

That helps ease the pressures on the city, too. As City Hall works through next year's budget, it appears the new safety requirements pose a problem for the city's own finances.

A Portland Housing Bureau memo obtained by WW identifies 34 URM buildings containing 2,090 residential units, all but 218 of which the city has either financed or owns.

Just to bring those buildings up to the new code would cost an estimated \$20 million. And completing that seismic work, city officials determined, would trigger other, even more costly work.

"The seismic work cannot be done in isolation," says the Housing Bureau memo, dated Feb. 12, 2018. "As soon as seismic work begins, it will trigger additional rehab needs. Staff estimates at least \$60 million will be needed to address the seismic and rehab needs of the buildings."

Most of the affordable housing units are owned and operated by nonprofit providers of low-income housing, such as Central City Concern, Home Forward and Reach Community Development. These organizations depend on the city to help them buy buildings, and they are unlikely to be able to afford seismic upgrades without additional public subsidies.

Former City Commissioner Steve Novick, who championed the push for unreinforced masonry upgrades, says the city should think of upgrading those buildings as a good investment.

"One way of looking at it is with the housing bond, we expect to build 1,300 units for \$258 million," says Novick. "Being able to take 2,090 units that now aren't safe to live in and for \$60 million make them safe to live in sounds like a comparative bargain."

The debate at City Hall will turn to how to pay for upgrading the affordable units.

News of the cost analysis comes little more than a month after the city approved its first round of bond sales for infrastructure upgrades. The program, championed by the mayor, is called "Build Portland." City Hall aims to use the money for park and street improvements.

City Commissioner Nick Fish is eyeing that money as a way to upgrade housing by creating grants or loans to "prevent displacement."

"Some of our most vulnerable community members are in affordable housing that we helped build," says Sonia Schmanski, Fish's chief of staff. "Commissioner Fish believes we have an obligation to protect these tenants. He wants to look at ways to prioritize affordable housing for early action."

The mayor's office has not ruled it out—at least for city-owned buildings.

The mayor's delay of the requirement comes after significant pushback from building owners, who put up an elaborate website, saveportlandbuildings.com, and began lobbying against the changes.

"You think the last 10 years of cherished old Portland businesses closing and beautiful old buildings being demolished has been bad?" reads an email circulated by the site's organizers to URM building owners. "You ain't seen nothing yet."

Of the 1,650 URM buildings the city has identified, about 85 percent are in commercial use, according to city figures.

Wheeler's spokesman Michael Cox says the mayor is putting together a committee of experts, building owners and tenants to figure out how to address the need for upgrades to the city's affordable housing.

"The amendment was introduced with consideration to small building owners and in the interest of preserving housing, avoiding displacement, and maintaining affordability," says Cox.

Over the next year, the Portland Housing Bureau will figure out how to address the requirement for affordable housing, Cox says. "PHB always said that they needed to know what the standard was in order to develop a realistic financial plan to meet it," he adds.

Portland City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly Plans Reforms of Renter Screening Criteria

*By Rachel Monahan
May 8, 2018*

Eudaly is seeking to standardize the way renters screen tenants for housing.

Portland City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, who championed last year's landmark renter protections, is preparing for another round of reforms.

The new effort, which would regulate the screening criteria landlords use determine who gets housing, is in draft form and expected to go to City Council in August. Eudaly's office is pushing a requirements for landlords to take tenants on a first come, first served approach, standardizing their approach.

"There is so much subjectivity; housing access relies exclusively on landlords' feelings about a tenant," says Eudaly policy director Jamey Duhamel. "The goal is to create clear channels to access housing of choice for all renters that are consistent, fair and equitable."

But the policy goes much further than simply holding people's place in line.

Landlords will continue to be allowed to set a minimum credit score as well as to turn away anyone for whom the rent would account for more than 50 percent of income.

But for other criteria, related to three categories—credit, criminal and housing history—landlords would have to score the tenant on one of three standardized metrics if they plan to deny housing. They would also be required to provide tenants with 24 hours to document offsetting considerations.

Eudaly's office is calling it an "individualized assessment." The policy in draft form explores two versions: landlords ranking potential tenants either high, low and medium risk or using a 10-point scale for each of the categories.

Under the 10-point scale approach, any tenant who falls at 5 or above could not be denied housing on the basis of that category, under the proposal.

In the housing category, for example, a judge-ordered eviction in the last year would knock 6 points off the 10 point scale. But that could be offset with proof of 12 months of on-time rental payments in the last year, which the current draft proposes would add 2 points.

Eudaly's office plans to workshop the proposal to a swath of community and real-estate groups, including 15 presentations in May.

"This policy needs the input of the community at large, and I'm willing to spend as much time as needed with any organization that wants to engage on this policy and provide direct and honest feedback about how it would work in real life," says Duhamel.

Setting up strict screening criteria will be closely paired with an effort to reform security deposits, laying out clearly what landlords can and cannot charge to tenants for damaged apartments and appliances.

Eudaly's office elected to link the security-deposit policy and the standardized screening criteria. Her office was concerned that unless the two policies were tied together, restricting landlords on security deposits would make it harder for vulnerable tenants to find housing.

The Portland Mercury

Case Against Portland Protester Goes to Trial

By Alex Zielinski

May 8, 2018

A Multnomah County judge is hearing the state's case against a Portland protester this week, in a trial that could impact the way Portland police handle large protests.

The case involves Jeremy Ibarra, one of the nearly 200 people corralled and detained by Portland riot police during a June 4, 2017 protest. This protest was held in opposition to another protest, one held by far-right group called Patriot Prayer at Terry Schunk Plaza. The counter-protesters came to memorialize the two men killed on a MAX train just a week before.

Ibarra was one of the 14 people arrested during this police round-up (a tactic called "kettling"), charged with disorderly conduct, a misdemeanor, for creating a "risk of public inconvenience... by engaging in fighting and violent, tumultuous and threatening behavior."

What makes this case particularly interesting is its rarity.

According to lawyers familiar with protester cases, defendants facing a misdemeanor charge usually accept a plea deal for the District Attorney's office and are redirected to Community Court—where defendants are required to seek public restitution for their crime through community service, or they can agree to enroll in social services to correct personal "underlying issues" that led them to commit their crime in the first place.

Ibarra, however, rejected District Attorney Rod Underhill's plea deal, forcing the case to go to trial.

Ibarra's case, which is still in the midst of jury selection, has potential to clarify crowd control rules within the Portland Police Bureau. In a pre-trial hearing, Ibarra's lawyer Crystal Maloney tiptoed around an argument that could derail the entire case: That Ibarra's arrest was unlawful in the first place.

Maloney argued that Ibarra was simply arrested for being in the wrong place at the wrong time—in the middle of a police officer kettle. His arrest was not "based on an evaluation of his individual behavior, but on his presence in a crowd of people," Maloney writes in a court filing. While some in the crowd created barricades and threw objects at the police, she claims Ibarra was not one of them. Maloney argues that Ibarra is being unfairly charged for their actions.

The Multnomah County District Attorney's office disagrees. Deputy District Attorney Katherine Martinez, representing the state in this case, argues that Ibarra charged at a line of police officers, an act worthy of his charge. There's unclear evidence if this ever happened.

Judge Andrew Lavin ultimately rejected Maloney's pre-trial motion—but noted that, if the state wins this case, Maloney's argument could help flesh out an solid appeal.

This isn't the only case involving the legality of PPB's June 4 arrest tactics. The ACLU of Oregon has also sued PPB in federal court, accusing the bureau of detaining people without cause and violating their right to be "free from unreasonable seizure."

The jury trial is expected to begin either later today or tomorrow.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

City Still Developing Seismic Retrofit Policy

By Chuck Slothower

May 8, 2018

After years of discussion and study, the Portland City Council appears on the verge of again delaying seismic retrofit requirements for owners of unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings.

On Wednesday, the City Council will discuss a proposal that would tread lightly on the vast majority of URM building owners. Earlier versions of the policy, prompted by safety concerns that a sizable earthquake could devastate old buildings in the Portland area, generated strong pushback from property owners.

Wednesday's agenda item directs city staff to develop "implementation steps" for mandatory seismic retrofits and return before the City Council within a year.

If enacted within a year, the draft policy from Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Chloe Eudaly would give most URM building owners 20 years to complete renovations. It also would not require walls to be tied to floors.

"Mom-and-pop owners have raised legitimate concerns about how the previous ordinance (proposal) may affect their financial stability," Wheeler stated in a news release. "I take those concerns seriously, and my amended resolution accounts for those concerns while still increasing seismic safety in the (most) vulnerable populations in our community."

Wheeler's and Eudaly's policy would allow owners of class 3 and 4 buildings 20 years to complete seismic upgrades. Class 3 buildings are noncritical buildings with more than 10 occupants, while class 4 buildings are noncritical buildings with zero to 10 occupants. Together, they comprise 94 percent of all URM buildings in Portland.

The exceptions are class 1 and 2 buildings, which include schools, utility buildings and other critical infrastructure. Those two categories encompass only 98 buildings in Portland.

It's unclear what requirements could be placed on class 1 and 2 buildings. Wheeler's policy would require city staff to develop code language for a mandatory seismic retrofit program and return to City Council for adoption within a year.

Oregon State University professor Chris Goldfinger will be among those speaking at Wednesday's council meeting. Goldfinger, a geologist, is a leading expert on the Cascadia subduction zone.

"It's great that it's happening, because if we do this, I think we'll be only the third city in the country to tackle something like this," he said.

Los Angeles and San Francisco have already tackled seismic retrofit requirements.

It would be "disappointing" if Portland's seismic retrofit requirements were watered down, Goldfinger said. Governments should mount "as strong a response as possible as soon as possible," he added.

"It's a gamble," he said. "We're kind of gambling with people's lives."

The existence of an earthquake hazard is well established, but the timing is uncertain, Goldfinger said. That makes it a sticky problem for politicians, who have to weigh certain, near-term costs.

“We may not have 20 years,” he said. “No one knows.”

Seismic retrofits can cost millions of dollars. In some cases, the projects simply aren’t financially feasible. The cost to retrofit a building can exceed its existing value, or amount to many times the annual revenue drawn from rents.

Commercial buildings are often given seismic upgrades amid a broader repositioning and later sold. The Towne Storage building, at 17 S.E. Third Ave., underwent a major seismic upgrade in 2016-17 that included installation of concrete shear walls, steel brace frames and new building supports. The building, which dates to 1916, later attracted Autodesk as a tenant and sold last month for \$62.75 million, or \$630 per square foot – a record for a Portland office property.

The Beaverton School District is planning a seismic upgrade to Aloha High School that includes roof work to the auditoriums and gymnasium. The total project cost for the buildings totaling 260,000 square feet is estimated at \$8.2 million, said Aaron Boyle, construction operations supervisor for the school district.

District officials announced last week they had received from Business Oregon a \$2.5 million seismic rehabilitation grant that will help pay for the project.

“A lot of the work is in the gymnasium and auditoriums,” Boyle said. “There will be a lot of structural steel in those big-volume spaces.”

The work will go out to bid in the next “couple of months,” he said.

Amid growing concern about seismic hazards, the city of Portland began studying the issues years ago.

Officials held a “kickoff meeting” to study incentives for an unreinforced masonry program on Dec. 10, 2014. In April 2015, the Retrofit Standards Committee issued its report. In December 2015, the city’s Seismic Retrofit Support Committee issued its final report.

Then in October 2017, the city formed a URM policy committee that included developers, building owners, construction executives and others. The group issued its 39-page report in December.

Yet more study is needed, according to Wheeler’s and Eudaly’s proposal.

Wheeler’s resolution calls for formation of a “working group” of URM building owners, tenants and others who will be charged with “further evaluating reasonable seismic retrofit requirements, support, incentives and timelines, for Class 3 and Class 4 URM buildings, and return to Council within a year to report on their findings.”

While the political outcome is uncertain, the geologic hazards are not.

The Cascadia subduction zone has experienced about 46 major earthquakes in the past 10,000 years, according to Goldfinger. Of those, about 20 were 8.8 magnitude or larger, he said.

“The Cascadia fault (line) has gone from completely unknown in 1985 to one of the best-known faults in the world,” he said. “The scientific evidence is about as solid as it could get.”

He added, “We have the hazard part of it pretty well on hand. That turns the camera back to the response side. You know, what are we going to do about it?”

The Portland Business Journal

Petition Drive Set for Tax on Portland Retailers to Fund Green Programs

By Pete Danko

May 9, 2018

Proponents of a new Portland tax on big retailers that would finance green programs, especially for underserved communities, are set to kick off their initiative drive Wednesday evening.

Social justice and environmental organizations are behind the Portland Clean Energy Fund. They need to collect 34,156 valid signatures by July 6 to get on the November ballot.

Under the measure, a 1 percent business license surcharge would apply to the Portland sales of retailers who have U.S. revenue over \$1 billion and Portland revenue over \$500,000, excluding groceries, medicines and health care services.

The city estimated that 116 companies would be subject to the tax, though it could not legally disclose the names of the companies, backers said. In their materials, the backers say the tax will bring in around \$30 million, which a spokesman said "is the middle of a handful of ranges given to us by the City Revenue Office."

The initiative drive comes as Mayor Ted Wheeler pushes to increase the business tax from 2.2 to 2.6 percent to help address homelessness. That would raise around \$15 million and has the backing of the Portland Business Alliance, but the group said in a statement that it doesn't want to see the Wheeler increase and the green tax both enacted.

And the mayor agrees, putting in his budget request: "(I)f new local taxes are imposed on businesses, significantly changing the tax environment in Portland, the Mayor commits to present a budget proposal that rolls back the business license tax to its current level."

According to the Oregonian, Wheeler is trying to convince Energy Trust of Oregon to "redirect" some of its efforts to meet the Portland Clean Energy Fund goals. Energy Trust is funded by ratepayers of several investor-owned utility companies, including Portland General Electric, Pacific Power and NW Natural, through a 3 percent bill surcharge.

The Portland Clean Energy Fund wants about half of the money its tax would raise to go to grants for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, with at least half of that money going to projects that "specifically benefit low-income residents and communities of color."

Investments would also be made in clean energy jobs training and sustainable local agriculture.

Overall, 20 percent of the funds would have to go to nonprofits "with a stated mission and track-record of programs that benefit economically disadvantaged community members, including people of color, women, people with disabilities, and the chronically unemployed."

The steering committee behind the Portland Clean Energy Fund includes the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon, Coalition of Communities of Color, NAACP Portland Branch, Native American Youth and Family Center, 350PDX, Columbia Riverkeeper, Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, Portland Audubon and Verde.