

The Oregonian

Portland Bureau of Transportation Director to Resign

By Gordon Friedman

May 14, 2018

Leah Treat, the Portland Bureau of Transportation director, will resign to take a job in the private sector, she confirmed Monday. Treat's resignation makes her the second bureau head in one week to announce their resignation, and the 10th overall during Mayor Ted Wheeler's term.

Treat, 47, said she has accepted a job as managing director of Nelson/Nygaard, a transportation consultancy with offices in ten cities and Washington, D.C. She said she began employment discussions with the company last year. A Bureau of Transportation Spokesman said Treat will not receive a severance payment from the city.

"It's super hard for me to leave," Treat said in a phone interview. She also tweeted that she has "been standing on the shoulders of giants in PDX."

"My heartfelt thanks to all my amazing people," she wrote. "I'll be bringing the PDX ethos to the national level."

Treat's bureau has paid Nelson/Nygaard more than \$516,000 for consulting work since 2015. It's not uncommon for high-level bureaucrats leave government jobs for work with companies their agency contracted with.

Treat oversaw several major initiatives during her tenure atop the bureau, which has a staff of 850 and annual budget of \$430 million: voters' approval of a local gas tax, a bike-share partnership with Nike, and a plan to eliminate traffic deaths called Vision Zero. Treat also dealt with fallout from a failed push for a \$50 million street fee and a scandal over contract manipulation by a city parking meter vendor.

Treat said she'll spend her remaining weeks at the Bureau of Transportation on a final push for Vision Zero, budgeting and preparing work crews for summer. Treat leaves just as the city is readying dozens of construction projects paid, in part, by the gas tax or state transportation package.

Commissioner Dan Saltzman, the city commissioner in charge of the Bureau of Transportation, praised Treat as "a transformational leader of the bureau of transportation and for the people of Portland." Mayor Ted Wheeler said Treat has "helped our city to become the global exemplar of urban mobility and the gold standard for transportation innovation."

Former Commissioner Steve Novick, who hired Treat when he was transportation commissioner, praised her tenure Monday, saying she gets "huge credit" for working with politicians and taxpayers to move bureau projects forward. Novick added that Treat "should get none of the blame for the stumbles" that befell the Bureau of Transportation when he and Mayor Charlie Hales were in office.

Chris Warner, Treat's top deputy and Novick's former chief of staff, will become interim director of the Bureau of Transportation, Treat said. Saltzman said the bureau will conduct an international search for Treat's replacement.

Treat's resignation follows that of Mike Abbaté, the Portland Parks & Recreation director, who announced May 7 that he is stepping down. Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who oversees the bureau, began efforts to push out Abbaté in April for reasons still unclear.

Since Wheeler took office in January 2017, bureau directors have left -- often under pressure -- from the Police Bureau, Housing Bureau, Bureau of Human Resources, Bureau of Internal Business Services, Bureau of Emergency Communications, Office of Neighborhood Involvement, Bureau of Development Services and Office of Equity and Human Rights.

The Portland Tribune

Sources Say: Mayor's Revised City Budget Set for Vote

*By Jim Redden
May 15, 2018*

Plus, grand jury clears police officers and deputy in shooting and Beam chosen for redevelopment project

Mayor Ted Wheeler filed a revised proposed budget last Wednesday that reduced the number of requested new police officers and restored recommended cuts in a number of other bureaus, including Portland Parks & Recreation.

Wheeler's revised budget requests 55 additional officers, including 49 patrol officers and six sworn support positions. He previously requested 58 officers, including the six support positions. They would be funded by an increase in the city business income tax from 2.2 to 2.6 percent that is supported by the Portland Business Alliance.

The revised budget also restores funding for four Parks & Rec community centers that had been threatened with closure. It was negotiated with the other members of the City Council. The vote is set for Wednesday, May 16. It will take effect July 1.

Grand jury clears police officers, deputy

A Multnomah County grand jury on Wednesday found no criminal wrongdoing by Portland police officers and a Multnomah County Sheriff's deputy in the shooting death of a man with a knife in a Southeast Portland homeless shelter.

The Portland Police Bureau is still conducting a use of force investigation into the April 7 incident, where John Elifritz, 48, died of multiple gunshot wounds.

The officers and deputies responded to the shelter after Elifritz reportedly had been involved in an escalating series of violent incidents, including a carjacking in which he crashed a stolen vehicle near the shelter. Witnesses said he was cutting himself with a knife but refused orders to drop it and lunged at the officers and deputy before he was shot.

Beam chosen for redevelopment project

Beam Development has been chosen to redevelop three city-owned blocks in inner Southeast Portland by Prosper Portland, formerly known as the Portland Development Commission.

The Wednesday announcement said the development company proposes to buy or lease the three blocks west of Southwest Water Avenue between Taylor and Madison streets and build more than 300,000 square feet of industrial and office space. The project will include parking garages that generate revenue for Prosper Portland.

After a development agreement is approved by Prosper Portland, construction could begin in 2019.

New Men's Shelter Will Help Offset Closure

By Jim Redden

May 14, 2018

Multnomah County tries to plug holes as homeless numbers keep rising in Portland and the rest of the county.

Multnomah County's homeless shelter shuffle is continuing.

The Joint Office of Homeless Services announced Monday, May 14, it will open a permanent 125-bed shelter for men on the county's Department of Community Justice East Campus at 1415 S.E. 122nd Ave.

In addition, the office announced that the existing 75-bed shelter in the county's Mead Building at 421 S.W. Fifth Ave. will remain open instead of closing this month, as planned. The office also said 50 beds have been converted from winter-only to permanent — 35 beds at the Salvation Army Female Emergency Shelter in Old Town and 15 at the Do Good veterans shelter in the Hollywood neighborhood.

Together, the planned opening and conversions will more than offset the loss of 200 beds when the shelter in the county's Hansen Building at 12240 N.E. Glisan St. closes as scheduled in June, after two years of operation.

Three shelters have closed since the beginning of the year, however. They include the largest family shelter at 16015 S.E. Stark St., which shut down in early February because of a leaky roof and collapsing ceiling. It was purchased and renovated by the nonprofit Homeless Solutions with \$700,000 in county funds. No decision has been made on whether it is feasible to reopen the shelter.

All families staying at the shelter were moved to motels.

Closing more recently were the temporary shelter for men in the Shleifer Furniture building in inner Southeast Portland and a winter shelter hosted by Congregation Beth Israel in Northwest Portland.

Those staying at the shelters were moved to other shelters, motels or permanent housing when they closed.

The county also dropped plans to open a 200-bed homeless shelter in an empty warehouse in the Old Town/Chinatown neighborhoods because of the high renovation costs.

Despite the closures, the office says the number of permanent shelter beds has doubled to 1,300 in recent years. And it is continuing work to open a permanent 120-bed shelter at 6144 S.E. Foster Road before next winter.

Two more shelters are being planned by nonprofit organizations.

Portland Family Homeless Solutions is raising money to purchase a closed youth activity center at 6102 and 6220 S.E. 92nd Ave. The cost of converting it to a family shelter is \$3.3 million. The City Council will consider loaning the organization \$500,000 for the project at its meeting this Wednesday, May 16. The money would come from the Lents Urban Renewal Area through the Portland Housing Bureau.

And Oregon Harbor of Hope has announced it will construct and operate a 120-bed shelter and navigation center near the Broadway Bridge in the Pearl District. The organization, founded by developer Homer Williams, also is considering a homeless shelter and service center in the Wapato Jail, which was formerly owned by the county (see related story, page A8).

The office says the increase in permanent beds contributed to a drop in the number of unsheltered homeless people in the count in the most recent Point-in-Time homeless count, conducted in early 2017. That number fell to 1,668 from 1,887 in 2015, even though the total number of homeless increased from 3,801 to 4,177 during the same time.

It is unclear what has happened since then because the count is only conducted every two years. Polls show most residents believe the crisis is increasing.

Willamette Week

Dozens of Democratic Socialists Pack Portland City Hall in Attempt to Sway Final Budget Discussion With “Tax the Rich” Plan

By Elise Herron

May 11, 2018

“I’m definitely interested in the tax plan you are suggesting,” Eudaly said. “Come to my office and let’s start talking.”

Dozens of red-shirt clad Democratic Socialists of America packed into Portland City Hall on Thursday evening at the city’s final budget forum to protest Mayor Ted Wheeler’s spending proposal.

Since the beginning of April, the group has been showing up at forums in attempts to influence discussions with their Tax the Rich plan—a tiered tax on the incomes of Portland’s wealthiest residents.

The plan starts at a 2 percent tax on incomes above \$250,000, and goes up to an 8 percent tax on individual incomes that exceed \$1 million.

Portland DSA—which has grown from five members in 2016 to 800 today—played a part in the historic unionization of a Burgerville restaurant, and is aiming for bigger policy victories.

At the May 10 forum, DSA members also objected Wheeler’s proposal to use city funds to increase the Portland police force. (On May 9, Wheeler reduced the proposal for new police force hires from 58 to 49 while carving out additional Parks & Recreation funding.)

“We insist on a budget that actually takes into consideration the hundreds of people who attended the city budget forums,” Abigail Lopez-Gay, the chair of Portland State University’s Young Democratic Socialists of America group said at the forum.

Portland DSA member Keith Guthrie added, “We demand a local income tax on the wealthiest residents of the city. Corporations will pay as much as we the people demand they pay.”

The Tax the Rich plan does not have the support of the Mayor, or any other city commissioners.

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly—who at an April 17 forum noted, “we may be precluded from establishing a city tax at the state level”—tried to appease to the young, socialist-heavy crowd

by underscoring her support of the Portland Clean Energy Fund, a tax that could appear on the November ballot.

PCEF is a gross receipts tax on large corporations, like Walmart and Starbucks, that do business in Portland which would go toward funding renewable energy projects.

"I'm absolutely committed to fighting for everyone to pay their fair share," Eudaly said. "We certainly know that large corporations and many wealthy people in our community aren't. That is why I support the Portland Clean Energy Fund, despite threats from big business that they are going to mobilize against me at my next election.

"I'm definitely interested in the tax that you are suggesting," she added, "so set up a meeting with my office and let's start talking."

Currently, DSA is preparing mobilize its roughly 370 active volunteers to gather signatures for PCEF—which needs 34,156 voter signatures to make it on the November ballot.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Pearl District Project's Revised Design Wins Approval

*By Chuck Slothower
May 11, 2018*

Fremont Place won preliminary approval after design changes satisfied earlier objections from Pearl District residents and the Portland City Council.

The council voted 4-0 Thursday to reject an appeal from the Pearl District Neighborhood Association of prior Design Commission approval.

In response to earlier council opposition, TVA Architects and the developer, Lincoln Property Co. of Dallas, reworked the design of the 275-unit mixed-use building. The redesign pushes back the building façade an additional 15 feet from the seawall, to 32 feet, 9 inches away.

The additional space allows for a wider (now 20 feet) Willamette River Greenway between the building and the river. The revised design reduces bike parking from 206 spaces to 140. It does not change the number of residential units.

The 17-story building reaches 175 feet in height, includes 305,936 square feet and uses 84 percent of the allowable floor area ratio. Designers worked to preserve neighbors' views as much as possible, said Tim Wybenga, principal at TVA Architects.

"Although the council has made it quite clear that views are not a consideration, they were a design factor," he said. "And so a lot of the massing of this building and the way it's pushed has to do with consideration of views and sight lines of Pearl District neighbors."

Fremont Place will not include any affordable apartments; the project entered into the city's approval process before inclusionary housing rules took effect.

Commissioners praised the redesign.

Fremont Place will include two 400-square-foot "creative studio" art spaces to meet city guidelines for providing a public benefit. (TVA Architects)

Fremont Place will include two 400-square-foot "creative studio" art spaces to meet city guidelines for providing a public benefit. (TVA Architects)

“The revised plan feels less cramped,” Nick Fish said. “It’s more open, more airy.”

The changes “have satisfactorily addressed the concerns of the Pearl District Neighborhood Association,” said Stanley Penkin, president of the group.

“The applicant has made significant improvements to the greenway, which now better serves the neighborhood and the city,” he said.

Commissioners, responding to criticism from one Pearl District resident, defended their role providing a final check on the Design Commission’s decisions.

“I don’t think this is the right forum to constantly second-guess the Design Commission,” Fish said. “But in the rare instances we’ve done that, I actually think those conversations were quite principled.”

Fish suggested the City Council should raise the bar for appeals of Design Commission decisions. The council could change city rules to choose which appeals to take up, much like the U.S. Supreme Court does, instead of automatically taking each appeal, he said.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz objected to that idea.

“If we narrow who gets to appeal, or how those appeals happen, that means that some people are left out, and the whole process here in Portland is about having people have their say to their elected officials,” Fritz said.

Thursday’s vote was preliminary; a final vote is scheduled for May 31. Commissioner Dan Saltzman was absent from Thursday’s hearing.

The Portland Business Journal

Portland's Transportation Director Leaves for Consultancy

*By Andy Giegerich
May 15, 2018*

Portland's transportation chief is leaving her post.

Leah Treat said in a Twitter post she'll assume the top job at Nelson/Nygaard, a consultant that's working on, among other projects, work along Southeast Foster Road to make the stretch more pedestrian and bike-friendly.

Treat oversaw the rollout of Biketown, the city's bicycle share program, in 2016. Nike gave the city \$10 million, over five years, for the program.

As KGW, a news partner of the Portland Business Journal, noted, Treat "also pushed for a gas tax that was approved by Portland voters, and sought to drastically reduce traffic deaths."

Treat further encouraged autonomous vehicle testing in the city as well as car-sharing efforts.

She joined the city in June 2013. Treat leaves a week after Parks Department Director Mike Abbate stepped down in a move that may not have been of his own volition.