

The Oregonian

Portland to Sue Man Who Collected Dead Parents' Pension

By Gordon Friedman

September 5, 2018

The city of Portland intends to take a man to court after he collected nearly \$70,000 of firefighters' pension payments the city says he was not entitled to because the beneficiaries were dead.

Monthly pension benefits were to be paid to Joan Souders, the widow of a firefighter, as long as she lived, a city document says. Souders died in 2013, but the city did not learn that until 2016. Meanwhile, her son, Matt Souders, kept collecting pension benefits deposited in a bank account shared with his deceased mother.

Officials stopped the payments to Souders once the mistake was discovered and asked him to give back the \$69,630.70 that should not have been paid. But he never did, said Sam Hutchison, director of the city police and firefighters' pension system.

"You can almost call it fraudulent or borderline criminal," Hutchison said. "Now we've said enough is enough."

Souders could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

Relatives usually contact the city to tell officials a pensioner has died, Hutchison said. If they do not, the city usually learns of a pensioners' death quickly from a contractor that monitors death records, he said.

In this case, neither happened. Meanwhile, Souder kept accepting money he knew was not meant for him, Hutchison said.

"Unfortunately, it took them a few years to find it," Hutchison said of the city contractor.

The City Council on Wednesday approved a resolution to sue Souder to recover unearned benefits. The vote was 4-0, with Mayor Ted Wheeler away at a conference in California.

The Portland Tribune

Sources: Mayor Crosses Fingers on Measure 102

By Jim Redden

September 13, 2018

Plus, no more election politics as usual and some campaign contributions are unexpected.

Mayor Ted Wheeler is banking that the proposed amendment to the Oregon Constitution to enhance bond-funded affordable housing spending will pass at the November general election. Under his administration, the Portland Housing Bureau has postponed issuing any new city affordable housing bonds until voters decide whether to approve Measure 102.

The Oregon Constitution currently prevents governments from partnering with private businesses on bond-funded affordable housing projects. That is why the City Council only promised to create or preserve 1,300 unit if voters approved the \$258 million Portland affordable housing bond at the November 2016 general election. The bureau would have had much more flexible

under traditional financing methods, which include partnering with private businesses and nonprofits on projects funded by urban renewal supported-revenue bonds.

The bureau issued \$37 million in affordable housing bonds to help buy the existing Ellington Apartments in Northeast Portland before the 2018 Oregon Legislature referred the proposed amendment to the ballot. Although the council subsequently purchased one recently completed apartment building and two properties for future affordable housing projects, it used interim financing, not affordable housing bond funds, for the acquisitions. Expect Wheeler to announce a much higher number of future bond-funded units should Measure 102 pass.

No more politics as usual

By now Oregon voters have realized how much political campaigns have changed in the state.

Traditionally, Labor Day was considered the unofficial public start of the campaign season. But TV ads in the Oregon governor's race have been running for months, including attack ads funded by political action committees that are supposed to operate independently of the candidates.

It is impossible to know how much money has been spent for and against Democratic Oregon Gov. Kate Brown and Republican state Rep. Knute Buehler since they were nominated in the May primary election. All of the independent committees route their funds through consulting and advertising firms, which are not required to identify where it goes. But anyone who watches TV knows a lot of money on both sides was spent before Monday, Sept. 3.

Unexpected campaign financing

As the 2018 elections enter their final stages, some officeholders who are not running for reelection are also receiving contributions — and making some of their own.

Although Mayor Ted Wheeler is not up for reelection until 2020, his political action committee received \$10,000 from the Local 48 Electricians PAC on Aug. 8 and \$2,500 from Stevens Water Monitoring Systems President Scott South on Aug. 31. Commissioner Nick Fish, who was reelected in the May primary election, received \$500 from Beam Development on Aug. 2.

Some of the contributions helped fund subsequent donations by the officials' PACs. Wheeler gave \$500 each to the PACs supporting Democrats in the Oregon House and Senate on Sept. 4. Fish gave \$1,000 to the Oregon House Democrats on Aug. 14.

E-scooter Safety Event Set for Thursday Morning

*By Jim Redden
September 12, 2018*

Up to 500 free helmets will be given away by the three companies participating in the Portland Bureau of Transportation pilot program.

The Portland Bureau of Transportation will host an electric scooter safety event on Thursday.

The three companies participating in the current e-scooter pilot program will give away up to 500 free helmets during the event, which is scheduled from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Sept. 13 at the intersection of Southwest Broadway and Oak.

Numerous news reports on the program have documented that many riders are not obeying legal requirements to wear helmets, not ride on sidewalks, and not ride in parks. PBOT recently began attaching "rules of the road" to the short-term renter e-scooters found throughout town.

The Shared Scooter Pilot Program is a 120-day pilot program which runs until Nov. 20. Through the pilot program, PBOT created a temporary scooter permit to allow companies to offer scooters for rent. Three scooter companies — Bird, Lime and Skip — have been issued permits to participate in the program.

Both during and after the pilot, PBOT will conduct an evaluation of the program, including surveying Portlanders, to determine whether e-scooters are compatible with the safe, efficient and equitable operation of Portland's transportation system.

According to PBOT, by state law, e-scooter riders must wear a helmet and cannot ride on sidewalks. According to the city code, the scooters cannot be used in city parks. Riders are required to park scooters on the sidewalk close to the curb, so that scooters do not interfere with pedestrians.

As a condition of receiving a permit, companies are required to educate riders about safe riding and proper parking behavior. More information about PBOT's Shared Electric Scooter Pilot Program can be found at www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/e-scooter.