

The Portland Tribune

Sources: Conservative Media Pushes Back at Wheeler

By Jim Redden

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Plus, Merkley calls for Kavanaugh perjury investigation and PSU professor fools academic journals.

Conservative media outlets doubled down on their coverage of political street violence in Portland after Mayor Ted Wheeler pushed back last Friday against a Fox News analysis that called him a "nutcase."

Wheeler defended the decision by the police to allow left-wing defenders to block streets and confront motorists during an Oct. 6 downtown demonstration. "Portland's mayor defends non-response to Antifa's anarchy," is how the Daily Caller website covered Wheeler's comments, referring to the anti-fascist activists at the demonstration. "Portland mayor stands by decision to allow Antifa to block traffic, hassle motorists," said The Washington Times.

Last Saturday's downtown fight between left- and right-wing activists generated similar coverage because police were not immediately able to break up the most violent confrontation, which made national news.

Merkley: Investigate Kavanaugh for perjury

Oregon U.S. Sen Jeff Merkley says the U.S. Department of Justice should investigate U.S. Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh for felony perjury for lying during his confirmation hearing.

Merkley made the comment as part of a panel on a recent "Deconstructed" podcast by The Intercept. The topic was whether Democrats are ready to get radical.

Asked what Democrats could do about Kavanaugh since they will not have the 67 votes necessary to impeach him in the U.S. Senate after the 2018 elections, Merkley said: "Let's start with the proposition that the Justice Department could, obviously under a different leader than President Trump, proceed to pursue felony charges against Brett Kavanaugh for perjury before the U.S. Senate."

Other panelists included CNN political commentator Symone Sanders, who was national press secretary for Bernie Sanders' 2016 presidential campaign, and Nina Turner, the founder of Our Revolution and a former Ohio state senator.

PSU professor admits hoax studies

A Portland State University professor may be in hot water for helping to write numerous hoax "grievance study" papers that were either published or seriously considered by academic journals.

Peter Boghossian, a PSU philosophy of education professor, admitted to the Wall Street Journal that he helped write and submit the papers to prove the journal's fields of research had no serious academic grounding. One supposedly was based on the sexual behavior of dogs in a Portland dog park that Boghossian frequents, although he insists no serious research was ever conducted there.

News of the hoaxes has caused an uproar in academia, with supporters claiming the expose was long overdue and critics saying they conspired to violate ethical guidelines. Even Boghossian seems unsure whether he still will be employed at PSU next year.

Left, Right or Middle? How City Council Might Swing

By Jim Redden

October 18, 2018

Whoever wins, some see either Hardesty or Smith as potential swing votes. Others disagree. The election may hinge on what most voters think.

Will the winner of the City Council race shift it far to the left or preserve the status quo?

Among political observers, activist Jo Ann Hardesty is widely seen as someone who will shake up City Hall, while Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith is regarded as more of an establishment figure. Because of that, many City Hall insiders are thinking Hardesty will consistently vote with the more liberal members of the council for new programs, commissioners Chloe Eudaly and Amanda Fritz. Conversely, Smith is expected to vote more often with Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Nick Fish to stick closer to the city's traditional policies.

"That's the way the offices are looking at it in City Hall," says one lobbyist who spoke on background.

Eudaly has heard the speculation and agrees the council would be more liberal if Hardesty is elected. But she rejects the notion that anyone can predict how they will vote on any specific issue.

"I have seen the process work behind the scenes. There are no nefarious alliances. I've changed my mind during meetings after hearing expert and public testimony," Eudaly says.

A case in point: Hardesty has been saying at campaign events that she would be the third vote to pull the Portland Police Bureau out of the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, suggesting that she has an agreement with Eudaly and Fritz to do so. But Eudaly says she's made no such agreement with Hardesty, although she supports a conversation about whether the participation of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement violates the city's sanctuary policy.

Fritz would only say that she's publicly expressed her desire to pull the police bureau out of the task force. She declined to comment further on the race.

Some veteran political observers say the idea of establishment and anti-establishment voting blocs is too simplistic. They say it is even wrong to think outgoing Commissioner Dan Saltzman was not liberal. He was the first of the current members to get city government more involved in sustainability and social service programs.

"The winner of the race will scramble the votes and test Mayor Ted Wheeler's leadership ability to get things done, there's no doubt about that. But assuming she will automatically be part of a voting bloc is a mistake," says Len Bergstein, a lobbyist and political commentator.

"Jo Ann Hardesty and Loretta Smith are two very independent women. They had to be to get as far as they have, as two women of color in politics," says political consultant Paige Richardson.

Council dynamics

Speculation about the relationships on the next council began five months ago when Hardesty and Smith finished first and second in the May primary election. Hardesty came close but failed to win more than 50 percent of the vote, setting up a Nov. 6 runoff election. Fish was easily reelected in the primary.

Bergstein admits it's easy to think of Hardesty consistently voting with Eudaly and Fritz against Wheeler and Fish on controversial issues. Eudaly and Fritz have endorsed Hardesty. All three women are considered political outsiders, compared to Wheeler and Fish. Hardesty is running with grassroots support, Eudaly upset incumbent Commissioner Steve Novick, and Fritz is the only council member elected with public campaign financing.

"It's easy to assume the men are the establishment and the women are insurgents, but people need to look more deeply," Bergstein says.

Smith is regarded as the more conservative candidate by some because she has been endorsed by the Portland Business Alliance and the Portland Police Association. Richardson says that's unfair, insisting that both she and Hardesty will make sure marginalized communities have a voice on the council if they are elected.

"In a city where 'conservative' is a dirty word, it doesn't apply to Loretta," Richardson says.

Both candidates have occasionally fueled such speculation, however. For example, during the Oct. 5 debate with Smith before the City Club of Portland, she said, "I am sure the men on the City Council will be proud to work with a strong group of women." One lobbyist says Smith suggested she would vote more consistently with Wheeler and Fish while seeking his (the lobbyist's) support. The Smith campaign says she is only talking about not immediately withdrawing Portland from the Joint Terrorism Task Force.

Hardesty denies that she would automatically form a voting bloc with Eudaly and Fritz, however, telling the Portland Tribune, "I will always strive for a unanimous consensus, and I expect there to be a significant number of 5-0 votes; however, sometimes the women will be the majority, while other times there will be a mixed majority, because we are not monolithic."

And the record shows it is wrong to assume Smith would automatically vote with Wheeler and Fish. As a county commissioner, Smith has repeatedly shown she does not automatically follow the wishes of the leadership — or even the majority. She has repeatedly clashed with Chair Deborah Kafoury and was the lone voice for opening the former Wapato Jail as a homeless shelter and service center.

Bergstein says it's a mistake to assume that either Eudaly or Fritz would automatically vote with Hardesty on controversial issues. Eudaly has already shown a willingness to work with Wheeler and Fish to pursue her priorities, including renter protection. And although Fritz was considered a neighborhood activist during her first council race in 2008, she also had served on the Portland Planning Commission, where she immersed herself in the formalities of the rule-making process. Fritz was the only council member to vote against increasing building heights in the RiverPlace area along the west bank of the Willamette River when the council updated the Central City Plan earlier this year.

"Fritz is a progressive who doesn't like change," says one City Hall lobbyist.

New programs?

The bigger question might be what new programs or policies Hardesty and Smith would seek to initiate.

Hardesty has repeatedly said that she will not limit her activities to the bureaus she is assigned to oversee.

She has already demonstrated a willingness to give the council new responsibilities by helping to put the Portland Clean Energy Fund measure on the Nov. 6 ballot. Although Smith supports the measure, during the campaign, she has talked about how much she has been able to accomplish working in the system, including creating a county youth jobs program.

She has also proposed expanding existing city programs, such as offering property tax breaks to existing apartment owners who make some of their units affordable.

Previous mayors have struggled against three of the five council members who had their own priorities. Most famously, former Mayor Tom Potter stormed out of a council meeting about renaming North Interstate Avenue after labor leader Cesar Chavez in October 2007, saying he was not a "voting member of the council anymore."

Although the hearing was about renaming a street, Potter had been frustrated by a series of previous votes where then-commissioners Sam Adams, Randy Leonard and Eric Sten seemed to be pursuing their own agendas. Potter eventually grew so frustrated with the council that he did not run for reelection.

Even Vera Katz, the former three-term mayor widely considered the most politically savvy city leader in living memory, found herself outmaneuvered from time to time.

For example, in late December 2000, then-Commissioner Charlie Hales led a charge to repeal a ban on skateboarding and in-line skates in downtown. Katz publicly opposed it. But, in spite of her lobbying to maintain the ban, she lost on a 3-2 vote.

"Over the past few months, Katz has lost a string of battles as City Council has defied her wishes and moved in the completely opposite direction," the Portland Mercury reported at the time.

Bergstein also notes that any coalition that forms after the election might not last long. Wheeler, Eudaly and Fritz are all up for reelection in 2020.

60-foot TriMet Buses Coming to Division Street, Gresham

*By Zane Sparling
October 18, 2018*

Platforms unveiled for Divison Transit Project connecting East Portland and Gresham by 2022.

Newly-debuted TriMet transit plans for Gresham and East Portland are packed with promises — including higher capacity, faster speeds and what authorities hope will be increased ridership.

But the 30 elevated platforms sited for Southeast Division Street east of 82nd Avenue will also establish a new relationship between cyclists and transit users: The bus stop is the bike lane.

"It is a new tool that we're considering for the region," said Jesse Stemmler, station lead for the Division Transit Project. "We're looking really at the details at this point, and really looking at view sheds."

Indeed, sightlines will be critical for cyclists transitioning from buffered bike lanes on Division to the 18-foot-wide elevated platforms. The platforms have a marked lane that allows bikers to

travel up, across and over, while passengers are instructed by signage to "WAIT BEHIND LINE."

When buses are docked at the station, officials say they expect pedalers, e-scooter users and others to halt while people scurry on and off the bus.

Media got a sneak peek at the new designs while touring a life-sized plywood mockup temporarily constructed at the 181st Avenue Park & Ride in Rockwood on Thursday, Oct. 18. TriMet employees play-acted as riders and bikers to put the new platform through its paces. Officials borrowed a C-TRAN bus from Clark County while they prep to purchase 32 similar 60-foot-long articulated vehicles for about \$1 million each.

With an estimated total cost of \$175 million, the 15-mile route between Southwest Portland and the end-of-the-line Cleveland Avenue MAX stop in Gresham is scheduled to be up and running no sooner than 2022.

"It's going to do so many great things," said Dylan Rivera, spokesman for the Portland Bureau of Transportation. "Our plan for accommodating growth is to increase transit service."

Rivera said the city has already invested \$3 million along Division Street, with another \$7 million in the pipeline.

Standard TriMet buses are 40 feet long, and officials say tacking on the extra 20 feet will allow for 60 percent more riders as well as space to stow bikes inside, rather than on a rack at the bow of the bus. The longer buses have three lighted entryways, which means fares will not be checked by the driver at the door.

A wheelchair ramp is attached to the front entrance. TriMet says giving the buses priority at traffic signals and faster boarding should boost route times by up to 20 percent. Buses will run every 15 minutes during peak periods.

For Jeff Moreland, president of lead contractor Raimore Construction, it's a \$60 million job that has allowed his certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) to hire 40 people, with another 60 to 100 hires planned.

"We've been able to employ a lot of people from the community," said Moreland, who played a transit rider during the mock-up. "The ultimate goal of this (DBE) program is to graduate out."

"These transit projects are huge in terms of creating economic capacity around the nation, and it's no different here in Oregon," added James Posey, a co-founder of the National Association of Minority Contractors and a one-time candidate for mayor in the Rose City.

Moreland said the new transit platforms are based off designs used in Toronto.

Previously-released renderings for the Division Transit Project showed bus stop islands separated from bike lanes, but TriMet ultimately nixed that idea because the size of the government's right-of-way is too small and leaders wanted to avoid displacing residents or businesses.

Plans to extend the transit line to Mount Hood Community College were canceled due to cost concerns as well.

The Skanner

Portland Reduces Fees for Cannabis Businesses

By Melanie Sevcenko

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Portland City Council recently passed a milestone in marijuana regulations when it voted to reduce fees for all cannabis businesses in the city.

Already in effect, the new rules decrease the annual license fees from \$4,975 to \$3,500, as well as lower the cost of both the initial and renewal application fees, and allow all license types to defer payment for up to six months.

Local licensing fees, in addition to those collected on the state-level by the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, can sometimes be a tipping point for small businesses trying to stay afloat in the budding cannabis industry.

“The fees are so high we literally had to stop ordering product, which is going to reduce our customer base and make us look like we’re not on the same tier as other dispensaries because we don’t have the financial backing,” said Tacarra Shaw, an employee of Green Hop dispensary and small business owner herself.

Shaw testified in favor of the reductions during the city council vote on Sept. 26, adding that the steep fees affected most aspects of running a business, from paying the electricity bill to scheduling employees.

Jeannette Ward Horton, who assisted in reviewing the language of the new reductions, told The Skanner that these changes were critical. “A lack of access to capital is the biggest barrier for businesses of color, but it’s a barrier for any small business,” she said. “And the licensing fees are just extra and really can break you as a business.”

Horton runs NuLeaf Project, a first-of-its-kind initiative that awards annual grants to cannabis businesses owned by people of color.

She recently worked with a cannabis business that had just become operational, but was struggling to pay its licensing fee for the following year. “Something as simple as renewing their license was about to cause them to shut their doors,” she said.

Marijuana businesses in Portland are regulated by the city’s cost-recovery cannabis program, which is solely funded by these very licensing and application fees paid by local cannabis proprietors.

Yet after some careful number crunching, the program found it could lower its fees and still absorb the costs of operating.

“The (new fees) were arrived at by looking at the number of licensees and applicants in the past, how many were renewed, and how many people we think will come through the door in the future,” said Bandon Goldner, program coordinator of the City of Portland Cannabis Program. “Using the numbers that we have, we made a conservative estimate to make sure we’re still taking in enough revenue to fund the program, but not taking in more than we need.”

Among other changes and reductions, the vote also established a Social Equity Program, which offers discounts on licensing fees for small businesses, those owned by women or minorities, and for businesses whose owners or staff were impacted by cannabis prohibition.

That support falls in line with recent city legislation which funnels tax revenue from marijuana sales into clearing records of those with past cannabis convictions.

Tacarra Shaw is someone who understands this on a personal level. More than 10 years ago, she was busted over what she called “a crumb” of marijuana in her purse. As a business owner, she would like her record expunged.

“I’m a professional and when my background is looked up, I don’t want anything that’s going to make me look less than what I am, or what I’m capable of,” Shaw said.

To ride the curve of an industry in flux, the city is currently commissioning an independent market study of Portland’s cannabis landscape, aimed at informing the next wave of regulation changes.

Moreover, Portland is compiling a Cannabis Policy Oversight Team, scheduled to meet in February 2019, which will advise the city on all cannabis-related public policies.

According to Shaw, it’s a call to communities of color to weigh in. “Having people of color being a part of these new boards and having a say-so in upcoming policy changes is going to be important for this path.”

Those interested in joining the oversight team can submit an application before Nov. 12 at www.portlandoregon.gov/cannabis/cpot.

City to Require Placards on Unreinforced Masonry

*By Christen McCurdy
October 18, 2018*

Last week Portland City Council passed an ordinance that requires owners of buildings with unreinforced masonry to place placards on those buildings and notify tenants and visitors the building could be unsafe in a major earthquake.

It’s part of an ongoing push to prepare older structures throughout the city for a major earthquake, including a 9.0 megquake scientists say may hit the Northwest region.

And while civil rights leaders say the need to ensure community safety is critical, they’re unhappy with how the city has approached seismic upgrades – leaving vulnerable voices out in a way that could replicate old patterns of displacement and exacerbate gentrification.

“The only way they can make this equitable and the only way to make this make any sense is for this entire process to be stopped is to bring everyone to the table,” said the Rev. E.D. Mondainé, president of the NAACP Portland branch and pastor of Celebration Tabernacle Church.

The cost of seismic upgrades can be “astronomical,” Mondainé said, telling The Skanner that his church recently paid \$65,000 to reinforce a small parapet on the building. For lower- or middle-income homeowners and small business owners, such expenses can be devastating.

A press release from the NAACP also noted that the city’s own documentation says its database of buildings with unreinforced masonry – which lists about 1,600 structures – is unreliable, and so far neither he nor other pastors or property owners polled have received any notification from the city that their building is up to code. He also likened the placard system to the city’s tagging sites in the Albina neighborhood as “blighted” in the 1960s and ‘70s, forcing hundreds of individuals in the neighborhood to relocate without any compensation or relocation expenses.

The process of marking the buildings is expected to begin in 2019, and the ordinance to require it passed with a 3-2 majority, with commissioners Nick Fish and Chloe Eudaly abstaining.

Mondainé is also concerned that given the likely scope of devastation of the predicted megaquake, the city should be considering prioritizing safe evacuation routes and food storage rather than these buildings. But he also said the communities that have opposed the measure intend to convene and talk about next steps together.

“It’s time for it to stop. It must be stopped. There is no other antidote. It gets more ridiculous as time goes on,” he said.

More information about the city’s seismic retrofit project can be found on the city’s website.