

## **The Oregonian**

### **The Eastbank Esplanade Will Reopen to Bikes and Pedestrians on Friday, March 29**

*By Rosemarie Stein  
March 26, 2019*

The Eastbank Esplanade will reopen on Friday, March 29, 2019 by 3 p.m., after eight weeks of repair and maintenance work - and a few days before the planned reopening of “early April.”

Portland Parks & Recreation, the Portland Bureau of Transportation, the Bureau of Environmental Services, and the Regional Arts and Culture Council partnered to spruce up the Vera Katz Eastbank Esplanade and make needed safety repairs. The path had been closed between the Steel and the Hawthorne bridges since Feb. 1, 2019.

The route sees some 2,400 daily bike commuters during summer months, and about 1,200 pedestrians daily. Those numbers fall about 50 percent during the winter months according to officials. During the closure some of that traffic used the “Better Naito” route along the northbound lanes of Southwest Naito Parkway.

The city will celebrate the reopening on 12:30-1:30 p.m. Friday, April 5, 2019 with a party at the Southeast Salmon Street Plaza.

Portland Parks and Recreation had a laundry list of items that needed replacing or upgrades including:

- repairing concrete
- repairing lights
- removing graffiti and trash
- planting native plants
- power-washing hard surfaces and repairing irrigation
- BES removed dead trees and invasive plant species
- RACC restored art installations along the route.

## **The Portland Tribune**

### **Ax Cuts Deep Into Parks Budget**

*By Jim Redden  
March 27, 2019*

**Portlanders loves parks but the City Council faces tough time paying for them because of rising costs.**

Protests against potential cuts to the Portland Parks & Recreation budget are growing.

But no one should be surprised the bureau has proposed laying off around 50 employees and closing facilities, including the Sellwood Community Center and Columbia Pool. Budget officials have been warning that parks spending has exceeded available revenue for years.

That does not mean parks users or workers are ready to accept the cuts. When rumors first surfaced that the Sellwood center was on the chopping block, longtime parks booster Gail Hoffnagle pushed back.

"Many programs at the center have long waiting lists, showing a desperate need for more services, not fewer. As our neighborhood has steadily increased in density — we're becoming increasingly jam-packed like sardines — we need more indoor places to gather, to stay connected with each other," said Hoffnagle, a former parks employee.

North Portland residents and neighborhood associations are opposing the potential closure of the Columbia Pool. Among other things, they have launched a Save Columbia Pool page on Facebook. It is the only public pool in that part of town.

Also proposed to be closed — either outright or if funding partners cannot be found — are the Community Music Center, the Laurelhurst Dance Center, the Multnomah Arts Center and the Fulton and Hillside community centers.

About 9 percent of the bureau's staff would be laid off if the proposed cuts are approved, although the largest share is concentrated in the Recreation Division that staffs the community centers. There, more than 20 percent of employees could be let go.

"These are the people that interact with the public every day. Highly skilled, passionate employees that teach our children, provide space for our gatherings, and create a conduit for us to be our best selves," said Christina Harris, an organizer for Laborers' Local 483, which represents most frontline bureau workers.

Parks employees who spoke to the Portland Tribune say they were blindsided by the proposed cuts. The employees — who asked that their names not be used for fear of retaliation — admit the bureau has had budget problems for many years. But they do not understand why the bureau is looking at laying off so many employees, especially considering the Portland economy is booming and bringing in more general fund revenue than ever before.

"Parks & Recreation deserves to be fully funded. The community deserves these services, and the employees that run it deserve to keep their living-wage jobs," Harris said.

Surprisingly, the workers who spoke to the Portland Tribune are not complaining that newly hired Parks Director Adena Long is being paid \$29,000 more than her predecessor. They believe she deserves the money, arguing the parks director has historically been paid less than other bureau heads.

### **No word from Wheeler**

The proposed cuts are included in the budget the parks bureau has requested for the fiscal year that begins July 1. The City Council was briefed on it on Tuesday, March 19. After all bureau briefings are finished, Mayor Ted Wheeler will submit his recommended city budget to the council on May 1.

He has not yet said whether it will include any of the proposed cuts.

Wheeler assigned the bureau to Commissioner Nick Fish earlier this year. It had been overseen by Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who convinced the council to approve temporary fixes to the growing problem over the past few years.

"I want to acknowledge that there's no easy fix here — every implication of this proposal is painful — especially with layoffs, program cuts and closures," Fish said at the start of the council briefing.

At the same time, Fish admitted, "The bureau has been running at a deficit for years, as costs have risen faster than revenues. ... The independent City Budget Office has confirmed this, and advised that the previous practice of patching the hole with one-time strategies is not sustainable."

The budget office analysis said the current shortfall has been predicted for years. Specifically, the analysis cited the 2015 settlement of a labor grievance by Laborers Local 483, which represents most of the bureau's rank-and-file workers. The union charged the bureau had been using more than 100 temporary workers to do work that its contact with the city required be done by union employees. The conversion added nearly \$4.4 million to the fiscal 2016-17 parks budget, a cost that has carried forward each year.

"Previously, recreation staff could reduce or increase seasonal hours in response to demands for classes and programming, but after the transition to permanent positions, there was less flexibility to decrease costs if revenue targets fell short," the analysis reads.

But that is not the only factor. So is a minimum wage increase approved by the council at the same time, along with previous and estimated cost increases for health care coverage and Public Employee Retirement System benefits.

Although the total parks request is \$265 million, most of that is fixed costs. Instead, the council is focusing on \$93 million in discretionary funds over which it has the most control, including fee-generated revenues. The projected \$6.3 million shortfall is a significant portion of that money, requiring cuts, fee increases or both to achieve the balanced budget required by Oregon law.

Even after approving the settlement, the bureau was reluctant to significantly increase fees for parks programs to generate more revenue. The goal was to keep programs as affordable as possible, especially in historically underserved communities in East, North and Northeast Portland. But that contributed to the ongoing shortfall, which Fish insists the council must finally address this year.

The cuts also are being proposed after several years of the council directing an increasing amount of general fund dollars to homeless services. Wheeler is expected to request more than \$20 million for such programs in next year's budget.

### **Partnership, private fundraising could help**

If the council approves the cuts, some could be offset by private fundraising, according to the bureau. For example, the Community Music Center is supported by a nonprofit partner that could raise more money to support its operation. Such additional support also could be found for some of the other centers targeted for cuts.

An existing example is the successful partnership at the St. Johns Racquet Center. It is operated under a lease with nonprofit Portland Tennis and Education organization. The center manages the building for public tennis, and offers one-on-one tutoring, group tennis instruction, life skills instruction, and parent advocacy and training to school-age participants in a year-round program.

A team within the bureau's Recreation Division is studying which fees to increase and by how much. The council does not need to approve such increases. They have not been significant in the past, averaging between 3 percent and 5 percent per year to remain affordable. Any increases will be announced by the bureau before they take effect.

The park workers who spoke to the Portland Tribune do not believe such moves will come close to making up for the service cuts, however. They presented bureau-prepared budget documents

that suggest entire programs at community centers will be eliminated because there will not be enough employees to staff them.

"How the City of Portland spends our money is a choice, and we are urging the public to let their priorities be known and contact their commissioners in regards to these potential losses," Harris said.

### **Public budget forums**

The first public forum on next year's budget is a town hall budget forum scheduled from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 2, at the IRCO Main Office Gym, 10301 N.E. Glisan St., Portland.

Information on additional future public budget forums can be found at [www.portlandoregon.gov/cbo](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/cbo).

## **Home Buying Opportunities for N and NE Portland Residents**

*By Jim Redden  
March 26, 2019*

### **Forty units in a condominium project scheduled to open in 2021 are being offered at discounted prices to qualified applicants.**

Longtime current and former residents of North and Northeast Portland will soon be able to apply to buy family-size condominiums at a discount.

The units will be priced between \$121,000 and \$275,400 and located in 5020 Condos, an affordable housing project at 5020 N. Interstate Ave., scheduled to be completed in 2021.

The Portland Housing Bureau will accept applications to purchase the units between April 22 and May 3 as part of the city's North/Northeast Neighborhood Housing Strategy. The preference policy is intended to compensate current and former residents for the harmful effects of gentrification, including housing cost increases and the demolition of existing homes for redevelopment projects.

Forty of the two- and three-bedroom units in 5020 Condos will offered to qualified applicants at the discounted prices.

According to the bureau, "The N/NE Preference Policy gives priority to housing applicants who have generational ties to N/NE Portland. Applicants receive preference points based on their current or past residency within the areas most heavily impacted by urban renewal, as well as the current or past residency of a parent, guardian, or grandparent ... Those with the highest points will have the first opportunity to purchase one of the 40 available homes."

Preference does not guarantee housing, the bureau adds. Among other things, applicants must still meet income criteria and qualify for a mortgage loan.

5020 Condos is being developed by Proud Ground in partnership with Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East. To ensure permanent affordability, purchasers who decide to sell their units in the future will receive a fair return on their initial investment, but must agree to maintain affordability for the next income-qualified homebuyer based on a Community Land Trust model.

You can learn more, including details about applying, [here](#).

## Willamette Week

# A Developer Promised Union Jobs in Exchange to Build Tall. The Construction Happened. The Jobs Didn't.

By Rachel Monahan

March 27, 2019

### Portland City Hall cut a lousy deal: "The rule and agreement were not written well."

In 2014, real estate developer Vanessa Sturgeon inked a deal with City Hall to build a 30-story downtown residential and office tower, the fourth tallest on the Portland skyline.

That tower, Park Avenue West, was a win for city officials, who had watched the property sit fallow for so many years it had earned a nickname: "the Moyer Hole," after owner Tom Moyer, Sturgeon's grandfather. It was a win for Sturgeon, whose building would be allowed to soar 30 stories—because the city agreed to let her build higher than zoning codes would usually allow.

And it was supposed to be a win for organized labor: In exchange for permission to build higher, Sturgeon agreed to contract with a company that hired union cleaners and security guards in the commercial parts of the building. (She also paid the city \$100,000.)

But Sturgeon hired no contractors for cleaning.

Instead, she found a way to wiggle out of the deal: Commercial tenants at Park Avenue West would hire their own non-union cleaners and the agreement did not explicitly prohibit that.

"The intent was to require cleaning staff to be represented [by a union]," says Marshall Runkel, chief of staff to City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly. "Everyone agrees that is not happening." Runkel concedes City Hall cut a lousy deal: "The rule and agreement were not written well."

Service Employees International Union Local 49 says the deal is clear enough—the city just isn't enforcing it. Sturgeon, through an assistant, declined to comment. Her attorney, in letters to the city, contends she is abiding by the agreement.

"I thought we agreed to fair treatment—and fair wages—for janitors providing services to Park Avenue West, and I'm disappointed we haven't had a better partner" in Sturgeon's company, TMT Development, says City Commissioner Nick Fish. "I certainly didn't expect we'd spin our wheels for this long arguing over the letter and spirit of the deal."

The case of Park Avenue West is important because it demonstrates how the city gives away millions of dollars worth of value to developers—without ensuring they keep their end of the deal.

City zoning rules limit how high a building may be built on a property, by calculating the square footage allowed on each floor. This measurement is called floor-area ratio, or FAR.

When developers want to build higher, they may buy development privileges from other property owners to build more. (In the case of Park Avenue West, City Hall granted the development permission that would have belonged to a building erected above city-owned plaza Director Park.)

The city is now studying how to sell more development privileges on city-owned land through FAR transfers to developers looking to build higher and more densely in the central city.

An executive summary by consulting firm EcoNorthwest estimates the sale of such privileges could bring in nearly \$63 million for the city by 2035. But what happened at Director Park raises a red flag whether the city can enforce the rules it places on such trades—including a requirement to build affordable housing.

"If we can't hold them accountable at least one time, why would they ever believe they have to be accountable?" says Felisa Hagins, political director of SEIU Local 49.

Over the past three years, City Hall and Sturgeon's company, TMT Development, have exchanged a series of letters through their attorneys without resolution.

Union members hope companies that pay union wages and provide benefits will get the jobs.

Nonunion minimum wage jobs pay \$12 an hour in Portland. Union wages are at least \$14 an hour after a probationary period, SEIU says, with roughly another \$6 an hour in benefits.

"I'm hoping they change to a union company," said Renato Quintero, 52, a janitor and union vice president who cleans at Intel, at a protest earlier this month. "They charge a lot of money for wealthy people, but those who clean it hardly can make it to pay the rent every month."

In a statement to WW, the mayor's office appeared to give up.

"The city has gone as far as they legally are able to," says Mayor Ted Wheeler's spokeswoman Eileen Park. "We reiterate our values. The mayor believes in the importance of unions and the critical role they play in ensuring livable wages and benefits for employees."

## **Portland Mayor Splits With Political Consultant**

*By Rachel Monahan  
March 26, 2019*

**The split is the latest development to raise questions about the mayor's prospects for re-election.**

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler and his political consultant Jake Weigler have parted ways.

The split is the latest development to raise questions about the mayor's prospects for re-election.

"They simply had different visions," says mayoral spokeswoman Eileen Park in a statement. "It was a mutual decision."

Weigler, who works for the firm Hilltop Public Solutions, ran Wheeler's 2016 mayoral campaign, a landslide victory. "We appreciated the opportunity to work with the mayor," he says.

Wheeler has said he'll consult his family before deciding later this year whether to mount a re-election bid.

### **Further Reading (linked below)**

## **Crude Awakenings: Fossil Fuel Projects Ramp Up Along the Columbia**