

The Oregonian

Updated Agreement Would Permanently Prevent Portland Timbers Fans from Lining Up Too Early for Games

*By Jamie Goldberg
April 17, 2019*

Portland Timbers fans would no longer be allowed to line up more than 24 hours before games at Providence Park when the stadium reopens in June if the Portland City Council votes to approve an updated agreement between the Timbers and the neighborhood associations around the stadium.

The updated Good Neighbor Agreement, which was considered during the City Council's meeting Wednesday, includes a new rule that would prohibit fans from lining up for games more than 24 hours before kickoff moving forward. With stadium construction underway at Providence Park, the Timbers instituted a similar rule last season. The new agreement would make that rule permanent.

Jerry Powell, a representative from the Goose Hollow neighborhood, also asked the city and the Timbers Wednesday to enforce laws that prohibit camping on public property and public rights of way.

Timbers fans have been known for camping out before games in the past. Fans that already have tickets have camped out before matches to receive numbered wristbands. After getting their wristbands, fans return to the stadium and regroup in numbered order before being allowed inside the stadium two hours prior to kickoff. The fans that enter the stadium first presumably have their choice of seating in the general admission Timbers Army section.

According to the City Code and Charter, "it is unlawful for any person to camp in or upon any public property or public right of way, unless otherwise specifically authorized by this Code or by declaration by the Mayor in emergency circumstances."

Under their current wristband policies, the Timbers state on their website that "fans seeking wristbands will not be allowed to line up more than 24 hours prior to a Timbers match and camping will be prohibited."

The total number of wristbands distributed to fans dropped from 1000 to 600 last year.

Kenton Tiny Home Village for Homeless Women Gets Permanent Home

*By Molly Harbarger
April 17, 2019*

The city's first sanctioned community for homeless people has become a permanent part of the Kenton neighborhood after an early April move to a new location.

The Kenton Women's Village started in 2017 as an experiment where 14 women who had experienced trauma that made them reluctant to go to homeless shelters would live in 8-by-12-foot "pods" -- essentially just large enough for a bed and some belongings.

It attracted national attention because of its backing by the city-county Joint Office of Homeless Services. It also drew ire early in its test phase from some residents.

But after more than a year, the project has been considered a success and the city has invested in expanding the village to 23 women in a long-term location with more amenities. Seven pods from the original village were moved to a new site blocks away with 21 new ones built and donated by local contractors and construction companies.

The Joint Office of Homeless Services spent about \$19,000 on the move. The city has spent almost \$350,000 on the village since its inception. Multnomah County pays for operational expenses, including a contract with Catholic Charities to manage the village and provide social services for the residents.

The new village has sewer service, water and electricity -- a huge upgrade to the quality of life from the last one. The first homes didn't have heat in the winter, and the women weren't allowed to use space heaters, a safety precaution that sometimes made the cold nights miserable. But each newly built home has a radiant heating panel, and the row of port-a-potties will soon be swapped for flush toilets.

So far, 24 women have used their tiny home to find work, organize their life and find a permanent place to live. Some women have not made the step to permanent housing, according to Catholic Charities development project manager Deborah Kamprath.

Those who have been able to transition are still in the same housing -- a striking fact despite the small sample size.

Kamprath said that an average woman who comes to the village has been living on the street for five years -- long past the one year needed to be considered "chronically homeless." People who are chronically homeless tend to have the hardest time keeping a room long-term once placed in housing.

She attributes the success rate to the intensive support the women receive once in the village. Each resident gets her own space in one of the pods. She can lock the door and decorate to make it her own. But she also must participate in a process to become financially self-sufficient, such as finding a job, getting medical and dental care, obtaining new identification documents and other work that can help her move on from the village.

Women who opt out of the services side get asked to leave the village. But that has been the minority, said Kamprath.

Most women are like Charm Lauritzen, who moved into the village when it first opened on the new site.

Lauritzen likely wouldn't have gone to a large homeless shelter. She didn't really consider herself homeless, just between opportunities.

She had come back from a stint in Kosovo with PeaceCorps and couldn't find a room to rent in Portland or a job to pay the rent. Most of her family is out of state, and her daughter was in college.

So she parked her car at night in the Mount Tabor neighborhood where she used to live before going overseas and snuck showers at the Catholic Charities' day center or the Oregon Tradeswomen program where she was enrolled to become a carpenter. Still, she struggled with the cold January nights cramped into a tiny vehicle with all her belongings.

She embraced the women's village because of the tiny house aspect and because it gave her a place to regroup while she figured out her next path.

“When you're sleep deprived, that makes life that much more stressful,” Lauritzen said. “When you don't have your own place to go to everything's that much more stressful.”

Lauritzen completed the eight-week course and then enrolled in a three-week Pacific Northwest Carpenters Institute program and is now looking for jobs in her new field. She hopes to stay at the village for a year -- the average length of stay for women at the village -- while she starts a new job, saves money and prepares a plan to buy her own land where she can build her own house.

In the meantime, her own home, which she repainted beige, teal and yellow once she moved in, can serve as inspiration.

The 21 new pods were all built and donated by local contractors and construction firms in a friendly competition to see how each would improve on one of three designs created by Portland State University School of Architecture students, SRG Partnership and Scott Edwards Architecture.

The designs come from insulation and durability tests and interviews with the women who lived in the 14 original pods about what they liked and didn't. Those homes were designed and donated in an architecture competition, so the styles varied.

But most women appreciated natural light, porches, recessed storage space that made the space feel bigger and frames that didn't appear like they were trapped in a box.

Andersen Construction, which helped prepare the new village site, won as the “best in show” pod with its use of heavy cross-laminated timber panels on the floor and for a bench outside that give the home a warm, rustic feel. A vertical window runs the length of one side to draw the eye up toward the tall ceilings and make the tiny space feel roomy. High shelves, a pull-down shelf and Murphy bed make the pod more useful for someone who can easily stand and reach and have the benefit of allowing the resident to keep more belongings without it being in the way.

Other homes emphasized storage, outside space, ambient lighting or other effects to customize the space. So many firms participated that there are eight extra pods waiting for the next village project.

Todd Ferry, a PSU architecture professor and co-founder of the university's new Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative, said that there isn't an immediate project yet, but the Kenton village has generated high interest around the country.

His students also helped with the tiny homes for Clackamas County's homeless veterans village, and he hopes that their work continues to expand. Many of the students got to see their designs in action for the first time at the Kenton village opening after a year of preparation. Ferry said the experience of working within the confines of the assignment and using input from the people who live in the pods forced the students to think specifically about the needs of the people who will live in the pods, but also broadly about what homeless women will need to feel safe.

“It's transformative for them and makes them, I think, much better designers,” Ferry said.

As more women move in to the new pods, the city and Ferry's students will be working to beautify the city-owned triangle lot and install a larger kitchen and hygiene facility, which are currently in bright yellow shipping containers only suited for about 14 people.

City officials have moved away from endorsing more of these tiny house villages other than the relocation of North Portland's self-governed homeless community Hazelnut Grove. But Ferry and others are enthusiastic that the micro-homes are a good option for certain demographics of people who are living on the street.

"It's not the silver bullet solution to homelessness," Ferry said. "What it seems extremely good at is a place to heal."

City of Portland Sought Immediate Liquor License Suspensions of 5 Clubs - 2 Owned by Black Businessmen, Suit Reveals

*By Maxine Bernstein
April 17, 2019*

In the last decade, the city of Portland has pressed the state to immediately suspend the liquor licenses of five clubs.

Two of the five were owned by black businessmen, including Northeast Portland's Fontaine Bleau, where a triple-shooting outside left one man dead and two wounded in November 2013.

But the city didn't seek the same emergency sanction from the state when 25 other shootings occurred either inside, outside or near other nightclubs from 2009 through 2017, according to recently filed court documents.

The owner of Fontaine Bleau and his lawyers contend the discrepancies, uncovered through depositions in their long-standing discrimination case against the city and state, reveal disparate enforcement.

They say the emergency suspension of Fontaine Bleau's alcohol license was racially motivated. The club shuttered its doors for good shortly after.

If there had been a shooting anywhere else, the city would have treated the property owner as a "victim of a crime," argued attorney Jesse Merrithew, representing Rodney DeWalt, former owner of the Fontaine Bleau.

"But when it happens outside a black club, then it's a very different response by the city," he said. "That racial animus lies at the heart of this difference in treatment."

Attorneys for the city and the Oregon Liquor Control Commission's executive director, Steven Marks, vigorously dispute the characterization. They've defended the suspension of the Fontaine Bleau's liquor license and this month urged a federal judge to throw out the suit.

The chaotic shooting erupted after a fight inside the Fontaine Bleau on Northeast Broadway and triggered a citywide police response because of the number of victims involved and fear of potential gang-related retaliation, they said.

The violence, coupled with the owner's failure to take steps to protect his club patrons or neighbors, demanded an immediate public safety response and justified the emergency suspension, lawyers for the city and state said.

"The simple fact is there was a dead boy 15 feet from the Fontaine Bleau," Marc Abrams, state Justice Department lawyer, told U.S. Magistrate Judge John V. Acosta. "The fight started in the club."

Marks became executive director of the state liquor control commission just three weeks before the shooting and didn't know DeWalt, his lawyer said. He was following recommendations from Portland police and then-Mayor Charlie Hales, Abrams said.

Lawyers for DeWalt, the city and state now await a ruling from the judge on whether the alleged discrimination case can move forward.

IMMEDIATE LICENSE SUSPENSION vs. NUISANCE VIOLATION

Fontaine Bleau was among 3,000 liquor license holders in Portland and one of three black-owned clubs in Portland at the time. The three clubs held .01% of liquor licenses in the city, according to DeWalt's lawyer.

DeWalt and his lawyers argue that the city, working with the state, discriminated against him and his club based on his race, and the club's musical preference through "inordinate" police attention and regulatory action based on unsubstantiated complaints.

The two black-owned clubs represented 40 percent of the five that had their liquor licenses suspended. Of the others, two were white-owned and one was Asian-owned, city records show.

Portland's black population is about 6 percent.

Fontaine Bleau and Seznin's, the other black-owned club with a suspended license, catered to a predominantly black clientele, but none of the other clubs that faced emergency license suspensions catered to a particular race or ethnicity, lawyers for the city and state say.

City officials said no evidence exists of a "gross statistical disparity" between treatment of Fontaine Bleau and other liquor-license holders. City staff addressed complaints at clubs by applying the same tools and standards, the city's attorneys said.

To request an emergency liquor license suspension, the city's liquor licensing team in its Office of Neighborhood Involvement would attempt to show a history of problems at a club and that an owner had been unwilling to work with the city in solving them. Further, there had to be some type of "catalyst" posing an "imminent public safety risk," evidence of an owner's "lack of control" over the premises, and a nexus between the problems and the club's patrons or its sale or service of alcohol, city officials say. The city would submit a written request to the state Liquor Control Commission within 24 hours of an incident.

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission, at the city of Portland's request and after evaluating all available material, ordered emergency suspensions of liquor licenses for five clubs in the city between 2009 and 2013: Club 915, on Jan. 7, 2011; Seznin's on June 28, 2011; Don's Dugout on Sept. 13, 2012; Grand Café on Dec. 4, 2012; and Fontaine Bleau on Nov. 9, 2013.

City officials said other shootings at or near other clubs didn't lead to emergency liquor license suspensions because Portland police sometimes weren't able to alert the city's licensing staff within the required 24 hours. That was because most of the shootings occurred on weekends when city staffers weren't at work, according to the city.

Sometimes the city seeks an alternative, less onerous penalty under the city's nuisance ordinance, essentially forcing the owner into an improvement plan to address complaints such as gunshots, excessive noise or drinking in public – similar to complaints leveled against Fontaine Bleau.

But that wasn't feasible for Fontaine Bleau, city attorneys wrote in court documents, because Theresa Marchetti, the city's liquor license coordinator, "had no faith DeWalt would work collaboratively to make the process work."

Merrithew said the city's explanations ring hollow and argued that a jury should get to decide whether the city's actions, and the state liquor control commission license suspensions, were "race neutral."

Merrithew pointed to two fatal shootings at the Mystic Gentleman's Club in two years – one in the parking lot in 2012 and another in 2014, when a masked gunman shot a bouncer and then was killed by another security worker as he walked out of the strip club. The city didn't seek to suspend the club's liquor license.

The city said it didn't because neither shooting was "connected to patrons or service of alcohol."

Merrithew also discounted the city's explanation for not taking immediate action to yank the liquor license of the Roseland Theater in downtown Portland after a shooting outside the music venue in 2016. The city's liquor control team said it wasn't aware of the shooting within 24 hours, though it occurred about 10:35 p.m. on a Thursday night.

How could city officials contend they were unaware of the Roseland shooting when attorneys for this case were in court the very next day, Merrithew asked. "It defies logic," he said.

DeWalt's federal suit is one of several lawsuits that Merrithew and his colleagues have brought on behalf of black-owned businesses. It's the furthest along in the court process of the three.

Sam Thompson, the owner of Seeznin's Bar & Lounge, the other black club sanctioned with a suspended liquor license after a shooting across the street, has filed his own discrimination suit against another club called "Dirty." He says he was denied access to "Dirty," because he was wearing matching red sneakers and a red sweatshirt. His case is set for trial in June in Multnomah County. This month, Thompson's complaint was allowed to be amended to seek \$1 million in punitive damages

SET UP TO FAIL

DeWalt said the city set his club up to fail.

He opened it in January 2013 on Northeast Broadway, investing \$400,000. He imposed a dress code, employed security guards who checked customers with a metal-detector wand to prevent them from bringing in guns or knives and searched handbags, according to his lawyers.

When a neighbor began complaining of noise from the club, the security guards would walk outside every 30 minutes to listen for noise and signal the DJ to turn the amplifier down if they heard anything, DeWalt said.

DeWalt and his lawyers contend the neighbor's noise complaints were unfounded and that the city and police used them to harass his club.

In August 2013, DeWalt said, 10 to 15 officers stopped by when the club featured hip-hop music and told him the city "was not going to tolerate these types of events without notice and unless the city approved them." City officials dispute any such message was shared. Fire inspectors issued a warning to DeWalt for not keeping a count of occupants as they entered.

Before the triple shooting, police got an anonymous phone call saying a party at Fontaine Bleau would attract a crowd of Blood gang members, but DeWalt said officers didn't warn him as they had with similar alerts to non-black-owned clubs.

Less than an hour before the shooting, officers dropped by, identified several gang members outside the club and talked to a security guard, who told the officers some people were sneaking in through a side door. Police didn't warn DeWalt or check out what was going on, and instead they went to dinner at a local taqueria, according to Merrithew.

A short time later, DeWalt found three men arguing in the bathroom and stepped between them, he said. A fourth man walked in and threw a beer at the wall. Dewalt told his bartender to stop serving and decided to shut down for the night. A security guard called police. As club patrons streamed out, gunshots rang out outside the club's doors.

Police found three people who had been shot, one fatally. One person wounded was shot while tending to the man killed. More than 100 people remained in the street, still fighting and throwing punches. Paramedics were fearful of entering the scene. The crowd was hostile, and police had to take cover from additional gunshots flying in the area. A sergeant called for a rare citywide Code 3 response, summoning every available officer to the location.

A few hours later, the city liquor control coordinator Theresa Marchetti and Officer David Jackson, an investigator, pursued an emergency liquor license suspension. The city pressed for the state to order an emergency liquor license suspension, saying DeWalt intended to reopen the club that night. DeWalt said no one from the city, police or state talked to him about his plans that night.

The city contends it "took discrete enforcement actions against the Fontaine Bleau that were supported by legitimate public safety concerns rather than an unspoken agreement to shut down Mr. DeWalt's business."

On New Year's Eve 2013, DeWalt's landlord sent him a notice, ordering him to leave the premises and turn over the keys to the club, partly because the lack of a liquor license violated the terms of his lease.

The Portland Tribune

Sources: Hardesty Challenges Wheeler on Budget

*By Jim Redden
April 18, 2019*

Plus, Metro and Portland angle for ODOT I-5 project funding and unreinforced masonry standards claim a building.

First-term Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty is challenging Mayor Ted Wheeler by publicly proposing her own budget priorities for the next fiscal year, based on input from a forum she hosted last Saturday.

Although Wheeler will not release his recommended budget until May 1, Hardesty sent out an email on Monday, April 15, saying she supports creating a Portland Street Response mental health program, restoring a rapid response vehicle at Fire & Rescue and emphasizing resiliency planning to help ensure resident safety during major public safety events.

"Budgets are moral documents that reflect the values of a city. Community member input in planning, not just responding, is an important building block," Hardesty said following the April 13 forum at Ventura Park Elementary School.

Commissioners traditionally defer to the mayor before proposing changes to his recommended budget.

City Council races heating up

Even though the May 2020 primary election is more than a year away, speculation has already started about who will run for the two City Council seats that are up.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz has announced that she will not seek reelection next year.

Potential candidates mentioned in media accounts include Latino Network Executive Director Carmen Rubio and Sarah Iannarone, who ran for mayor in 2016 and who has stayed politically active.

Meanwhile, The Oregonian has reported that first-term Multnomah County Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson is thinking of running for mayor, even though Ted Wheeler has not yet said whether he will run for a second term. Police reform activist Teressa Raiford is the only declared candidate so far.

State Rep. Diego Hernandez (D-East Portland) has also expressed interest in serving on the council.

Is Metro for or against the Rose Quarter freeway project?

Although Metro staff was critical of the Oregon Department of Transportation's plan for easing the bottleneck caused by the intersections of Interstate 5 and Interstate 84 in the Rose Quarter area, President Lynn Peterson struck a much more conciliatory tone in a joint letter with Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler to the Oregon Transportation Commission.

The lengthy staff analysis of the project criticized many aspects and all but accused ODOT of lying when it said the additional on and off ramps were not a "freeway expansion." But in their April 4 letter, Peterson and Wheeler said "Interstate 5 is a critical economic artery for the Portland region and the entire West Coast" that needs improvements in the Rose Quarter area.

The estimated \$500 million project is intended to reduce congestion and to improve safety in the Rose Quarter area and to encourage redevelopment by capping the freeways and creating bike and pedestrian connections over them. Peterson and Wheeler urge ODOT to provide stronger connections over the freeway that can accommodate redevelopment projects. They cite the truss-hung retail space on the Interstate 80 cap in Reno and Margaret Hance Park above Interstate 10 in Phoenix as two examples.

Masonry Standards Claim a Building

The high cost of bringing unreinforced masonry buildings up to current earthquake standards is a factor in a controversial redevelopment project in Southeast Portland.

As reported by our sister publication the Business Tribune, the owner of the building that houses The Joinery furniture manufacturing business has sold it to a private developer for a five story, 178-unit apartment building. Jon Blumenauer said the owner of The Joinery previously had declined to buy the building from him, citing expensive earthquake preparedness standards.

"He pointed out that the current Joinery building is unreinforced masonry and likely would be very expensive to remodel to the city's new earthquake preparedness standards," the Business Tribune reported Blumenauer as saying.

The council has postponed requiring the owners of unreinforced masonry buildings to post earthquake warning signs while it researches financial incentives to help them pay to upgrade them.

Feds: Risk of Levee Failure Highest in North Portland

*By Zane Sparling
April 17, 2019*

Columbia River waterline could swell to 37 feet, Geological Survey and Army Corps of Engineers say.

Oregon's future as a warmer and wetter climate raises the risk of flooding along the 27-mile levee system stretching between Portland and Troutdale, according to a new federal study.

Hydrologists say the greatest risk is posed to the embankments in North Portland — where "extreme but plausible" models show historic floodwaters swamping the same land where the lost city of Vanport once stood.

The joint research report, released by the U.S. Geological Survey and Army Corps of Engineers in March, may help make the case to elected leaders and the public that another stream of funding is necessary to safeguard the levees, perhaps in the form of a new tri-county taxing district.

"Not all projects are going to be accomplished by the Army Corps of Engineers, or even cost shared, so we will still need to do significant capital investment at the local regional level," explained Colin Rowan, program director of Levee Ready Columbia.

The organization — backed by 20 local governments, drainage districts and other partners — is guiding the recertification of the levees by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and studying whether to increase the height of the floodwalls. The man-made barriers are all but invisible to most residents, because Marine Drive is built over them.

But that illusion of security could come crashing down during a worst-case scenario. The federal assessment found that the Columbia River waterline could rise to new heights — 37 feet — during a rain-on-snow winter flood.

For context, the floods that ravaged parts of the Willamette Valley in February, 1996 were triggered by a water level of 32.5 feet. The average winter height of the Columbia in this area is 13.3 feet.

The eastern levees in Troutdale rise 50 feet, but the vulnerable North Portland levees only reach 37 feet. "There is that potential for overtopping," according to Rowan.

Rowan said the Vanport flood began after a swollen Willamette River began to "back up" into the Columbia, pressing water through Smith and Bybee wetlands and up against the railroad embankment around Vanport. Water never crested the earthen wall — it saturated and gave way, destroying about 18,000 homes, drowning 15 and shutting down the airport for months.

The study says Oregon's changing climate will trigger more winter rain and snowmelt, potentially boosting river levels by as much as 40 percent during major floods over the next 50 years. Higher flows will saturate the levees for longer periods than the system's original designers expected.

"We have to understand and plan for the ways climate change will impact conditions on the lower Columbia River," noted Jules Bailey, convener of Levee Ready Columbia.

Willamette Week

After Portland's Withdrawal from Joint Terrorism Task Force, Community Groups Push City Hall to Outline Rules of Engagement

By Rachel Monahan

April 17, 2019

Resolution for withdrawing called for setting up rules. Council hasn't acted.

In an email sent today, community groups—including the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon, Unite Oregon and the Albina Ministerial Alliance—are pushing Portland City Council to finish the work of withdrawing city government from the Joint Terrorism Task Force.

City Council had specified in the decision to withdraw that they'd pass a policy for future interactions with federal law enforcement in 55 days.

The community groups note they sent their letter after the deadline had passed and called for a policy that would limit the Portland Police Bureau's involvement in terrorism investigations.

They also wrote they want a policy that "requires annual reports which include how often the PPB is asked to, and how many times PPB agrees to, work with the JTTF; and calls for the Bureau to draft a Directive (policy) outlining how such investigations will be handled, to be reviewed and approved by Council, with no changes allowed without public and Council review."

City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, who led the effort to withdraw from the JTTF, released a statement supporting the community groups' effort.

"When city council voted to remove Portland from the Joint Terrorism Task Force Portlanders believed we would do so fully," says Hardesty in a statement. "I echo the community's concerns and wholeheartedly support their recommendations. Any policy that erodes the spirit of the resolution violates the community's trust in us to deliver on that promise."

Full letter below.

Mayor Wheeler and members of City Council:

Tuesday, April 9 marked 55 days since the passage of the Resolution to pull Portland Police officers out of the Joint Terrorism Task Force.

That day was set as a deadline under binding City policy for the Mayor's office and Chief to work with Commissioner Hardesty on language describing how the PPB will interact with the FBI's JTTF in the future.*

We are hoping to see a second resolution which:

- limits the ways in which the PPB can get involved with FBI terrorism investigations, as defined by federal law and the JTTF's mission statement, including strict adherence to Oregon law and City policy and the requirement for a criminal nexus;
- addresses the concerns that the City cannot tell the FBI what to do;
- requires annual reports which include how often the PPB is asked to, and how many times PPB agrees to work with the JTTF;

and

—calls for the Bureau to draft a Directive (policy) outlining how such investigations will be handled, to be reviewed and approved by Council, with no changes allowed without public and Council review.

All of this seems to be in line with the Resolution that was passed after overwhelming testimony in favor on February 13. Please do not delay the implementation of the withdrawal any further. The organizations representing labor, faith, social justice, immigrant rights, environmental, African American, Asian American, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, business and other communities who urged Council to take responsibility for the actions of our police are counting on you to follow through with the promises made for a just and accountable Bureau.

Sincerely,

ACLU of Oregon

Unite Oregon

Albina Ministerial Alliance

Coalition for Justice and Police Reform

Brandon Mayfield

NAACP Portland Branch

Peace and Justice Works

Portland Copwatch

League of Women

Voters of Portland

Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility

Portland Jobs with Justice

Portland Democratic Socialists of America

Veterans For Peace Chapter 72

Portland Interfaith Clergy Resistance

Portland's Resistance

Jewish Voice for Peace-Portland

Portland Immigrant Rights Coalition

Freedom to Thrive

Portland Peace Action Group of the First Unitarian Church

Network Against Racism and Islamophobia

Pacific Green Party

St. Luke Lutheran Peace & Justice Group

Individuals For Justice

Kafoury & McDougal

In Irreligious Portland, a Church Comes to the Aid of the Homeless With a Tiny House Village

*By Allison Place
April 17, 2019*

This site, called Agape Village, is the first and largest effort by a faith-based organization to provide car camping and cottages.

Last year, Matt Huff walked the hillside behind the Southeast Portland church he pastors and found a couple living in a tent.

Instead of calling the cops, he built the homeless couple a cottage. In fact, he and the parishioners at Portland Central Church of the Nazarene decided to build 15 wooden tiny homes on 11 acres of church property beneath Kelly Butte.

For at least two mayoral terms, Portland city officials have talked about churches providing car camping and cottages for people living on the streets.

This site, called Agape Village, is the first and largest effort by a faith-based organization in this famously irreligious city. Already, more people have applied for spaces than the church can provide, and Huff has stopped taking applications.

"It started with just trying to figure out what it looks like for us to love God and love our neighbor," he says. "Our neighbors are sleeping in tents, very literally."

The church has 13 of the tiny homes built and expects to finish the other two by mid-June. The structures, each 96 square feet, meet the typical definition of a tiny home, except they don't have plumbing or running water. (Residents will share portable toilets and a shower.) Organizers call the structures "pods"—and say they're not designed as permanent housing but as temporary shelter.

But Huff isn't kidding himself—in a city where 110 homeless camps are reported to government officials every week, some of the pods' residents will be staying. "There's one gentleman we're working with that I full-on expect, if he moves in, it will probably be his forever home," says Huff.

The pods are relatively easy to build. The materials cost about \$5,000 per unit. The labor at Agape is mostly volunteer. What was tricky: finding an exemption from the city's system development charges—fees levied on any construction project.

"I didn't get taught in seminary how to go through permit stuff with Portland," Huff says. The permit process and the cost, he adds, "could be a deal breaker for a lot of churches if they wanted to do that."

Sandra Comstock, a founder of Neighbor2Neighbor, a data and policy group, thinks it's time the city fixes its zoning policies to encourage churches to follow Huff's example.

"I think it's time we did a zoning overhaul and made space for these kinds of projects," says Comstock. "There is a huge obstacle in which city and state laws make it very difficult to create villages like Agape."

In December 2018, Mayor Ted Wheeler's office pushed successfully to begin waiving the development charges for all shelters and short-term housing in cases where groups are working with the Joint Office of Homeless Services.

That office is working with the city to make the process easier to navigate. "We are working to create a simpler process for helping community partners create waivers," says spokesman Denis Theriault.

But the problem isn't going away. The number of public complaints about street camping has risen to more than 600 a week, up from about 90 a week when Neighbor2Neighbor started tracking data in March 2017.

Not everyone welcomes the village. Timothy Crawley, president of the Powellhurst-Gilbert Neighborhood Association, says he doesn't think his neighborhood is equipped to handle the arrival of marginalized people who need social services as well as shelter.

"Should we really be housing more folks at this point when there is a significant inequity in the city? East Portland neighborhoods have faced this kind of discrimination for a long time," says Crawley. He'd rather see Powellhurst-Gilbert receive more policing: "The police should be central in this process. We need to understand and recognize the need for our police officers to do what they have to do in order to keep our families safe."

Huff hopes to see other churches in the city take their cue from the Church of the Nazarene, because he's not optimistic government can address homelessness.

"The problem with the city trying to address the issue," Huff says, "is the bureaucracy that exists within the city government, which is probably why the church, as a private entity, is going to have better success and an easier time doing it."

The Portland Mercury

Portland Detective Who Shared Sexual Abuse Victim's Text Messages Costs City \$50,000

*By Alex Zielinski
April 17, 2019*

Portland City Council has approved a \$50,000 settlement agreement with a former Washington County deputy who's accused a city employee of violating her privacy in a sexual discrimination case.

Commissioners opted to pay off the deputy instead of getting involved in a trial by jury, a case that city attorneys say the city could lose.

Angela Branford, who worked at the Washington County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) deputy until last June, sued her employer in 2017 for retaliating against her for pointing out rampant workplace sexual harassment and reporting sexual abuse by her training officer at WCSO in 2015. That officer, Jonathan Christensen, was fired and sentenced to two years of probation later in 2015, after the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) investigated Branford's allegations.

It was during that investigation that Jeffrey Myers, the PPB detective assigned to Branford's case, asked her for access to her cell phone files—including text messages, nude photos, and voicemails, many of them unrelated to Christensen. Branford only allowed Myers to take her

phone after he explicitly promised not to share the files with anyone else. Myers has confirmed that he made this promise.

Regardless, Myers ended up sharing her cell phone files with Lieutenant John Black, the head of WCSO's internal affairs office. Black went on to share the files with other WCSO employees and an outside private investigator.

In her legal complaint against the City of Portland filed in January 2018, Bradford accused Myers of breaching his "duty of confidentiality" by sharing this information with the very individuals he knew she was planning to sue for tolerating sexual harassment and retaliation.

"As a result of the City's breach of its duty toward Deputy Branford, she suffered physical personal injuries and emotional distress," the lawsuit reads. Branford requested a jury trial and a total of \$550,000 from the city to pay for her damages. City council approved a \$50,000 payout in an ordinance passed Wednesday morning.

"The lawsuit has been investigated by Risk Management Services," reads the city ordinance. "The investigation indicates there is risk of exposure to the City. In order to avoid the risk of an adverse jury award, we feel it is prudent to compromise the lawsuit at this time."

Branford's attorneys declined to comment on the settlement.

Branford was fired in June 2018 for using an internal database to get information about a friend's domestic violence case. In December 2018, Branford sued the union that represents WCSO for refusing to challenge her firing, citing discrimination. Her lawyers said that the union defends its male members who've been fired far more frequently than its female members, despite being terminated for similar issues.

Branford's federal case against WCSO for retaliation and harassment is slated to go to trial in 2020.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Affordable Housing Developer Gets a Lift from Brownfield Program

*By Josh Kulla
April 17, 2019*

Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services has awarded a \$200,000 grant to help pay for environmental cleanup of a property that formerly housed a battery manufacturing plant.

The money came out of the city's Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund, which in 2011 was established via \$1 million awarded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The grant dollars will aid remediation at 2140 N. Williams Ave., where Wagstaff Battery Manufacturing Co. formerly operated.

BRIDGE Housing, a nonprofit, plans to redevelop the property by building a four-story, 61-unit affordable housing complex. The Portland Housing Bureau and Multnomah County will help pay for the project, which under a city policy will include 10 units with priority given to displaced former residents.

“This grant is an investment in our community, helping to create healthy neighborhoods, while providing deeply affordable housing in a historically underserved neighborhood,” Commissioner Nick Fish said. “It’s a win-win-win.”

The Portland Brownfield Program has so far helped address environmental concerns on more than 100 acres, according to the city.