

The Oregonian

Portland not enforcing new parks permit volunteers feared would stop them from feeding homeless people

*By Everton Bailey Jr.
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A lawsuit challenging a Portland policy limiting the frequency quality of life services can be provided in city parks has caused the new rule to be put on hold indefinitely.

Portland Parks & Recreation's began requiring social service permits as of October and at least one organization has obtained one. But city officials said the parks bureau hasn't been enforcing the new requirement since then and will continue not enforcing the permit until a lawsuit filed in November is resolved.

The suit says the permit requirement is unconstitutional and unfairly targets services geared toward helping Portland's homeless population.

Sonia Schmanski, chief of staff for Commissioner Nick Fish, who oversees the Parks Bureau, said Fish's staff asked that the policy be referred back to his office for further review. "We've gotten a good amount of feedback on both sides thus far and it'll all be part of our thinking going forward," Schmanski said.

The Portland City Council on Wednesday approved the policy going to Commissioner Fish's office for review.

Commissioners Fish and Jo Ann Hardesty were absent.

Earlier this year, the city decided the social service permit would be required for organizers of gatherings in city parks who plan to distribute meals or provide showers, mobile medical and dental care and other outreach work. The policy limits gatherings to once a week per park and requires the person or group providing the service to have insurance and in some cases pay a \$137 application fee.

City officials have denied that the permit is designed to drive away homeless people. They say the permit is designed to give the Parks Bureau more control over planning for, coordinating and supervising park activities and to help spread social services to parks in several parts of the city.

Opponents said the policy particularly targets volunteer groups such as Free Hot Soup, which provides meals five times a week for about 100 mostly low-income and homeless people in downtown Portland's Director Park. The area is surrounded by high-end stores and boutique hotels.

Free Hot Soup volunteers are among the 12 people represented by the Oregon Justice Resource Center in the lawsuit, which names the city, Fish and parks director Adena Long as defendants.

Mark Ross, a parks bureau spokesperson, said Potluck in the Park, a group that provides meals in downtown Portland's north park blocks applied for and was issued a social service permit. Night Strike, another group that operates weekly under the Burnside Bridge, is finalizing their permit application, he said.

Ross said neither group was required to pay any fees.

The city council was scheduled to hear a citizen's appeal of the social service permit during its meeting Wednesday, but Southwest Portland resident Patrick Cashman was absent. City officials said it was the first appeal of a parks policy that they knew of.

City code allows anyone who "feels aggrieved" with Parks Bureau rules and regulations made by the commissioner in charge to appeal to the City Council for it to be amended or repealed.

In a letter to the city council and auditor, Cashman called the new policy "deficient in numerous serious ways." He said he believes the Parks Bureau's existing events permit system should be fixed rather than creating a new process, that the social service permit shows favoritism to some applicants' planned park activities over others and that he believed "non-park uses of parks" were banned by city code.

The Portland Tribune

Sources: Feds ignore City Council's G5 fears

*By Jim Redden
December 12, 2019*

Plus, climate strikers keep their promise and Hurwitz's plea deal falls through in California case.

The Federal Communications Commission has ignored the Portland City Council's request for more study into the health risks of 5G technology.

The council unanimously approved a resolution calling for such research on March 13. The resolution introduced by Commissioner Amanda Fritz said the FCC has not studied such risks, even though studies compiled and released by the European Union found cancer and other risks.

But, according to the Wall Street Journal, the FCC voted unanimously last week to allow the rollout of new 5G wireless networks without making changes to the federal safety limits for cellphone radiation exposure.

The Food and Drug Administration has said the weight of scientific research hadn't linked cellphones to health problems, the paper said.

Climate strikers keep promise

Area high schools kept their promise to repeatedly walk out of classes to demand action on climate change Friday, Dec. 6. The protest follows up on the first one, which happened Sept. 20.

That's more than right-wing protesters have done. During the Aug. 17 protest by Patriot Prayer and its supporters, leaders of the Proud Boys promised to return every month. But that didn't happen in September, October or November, and no protest has yet been announced for December.

One reason may be the arrest and prosecution of Patriot Prayer leader Joey Gibson and some of his followers for brawling outside the now-closed Cider Riot! tavern on Aug. 7. The felony riot charges they face are more serious than what most protesters caught breaking the law have faced in the past.

Hurwitz plea deal falls through

Convicted Portland murderer Larry Hurwitz apparently did not accept a plea bargain on his drug and illegal money charges in California on Thursday, Dec. 5.

Hurwitz is facing up to 15 years in prison. He has been in jail there since his arrest on June 27 in Huntington Beach, California.

Under California law, the Orange County Superior Court judge handling the case was expected to offer Hurwitz a plea bargain during the scheduled hearing. Instead of an offer being made in open court, Hurwitz's attorney and the deputy district attorney prosecuting the case met privately in the judge's chambers.

When they emerged, Hurwitz's attorney spoke quietly to Hurwitz, and then told the judge that his client agreed to what had been decided behind closed doors. That ended the hearing, and Hurwitz was returned to jail.

The next hearing is scheduled for Feb. 19.

Hurwitz was convicted of killing Tim Moreau in 1990 when Hurwitz owned the Starry Night rock club. Hurwitz was arrested again after being caught with 4.4 pounds of cocaine and \$328,000 in cash during a traffic stop. He initially was pulled over for talking on a cell phone while driving.

Affordable housing developer sells starter homes

By Jim Redden

December 12, 2019

Brunswick Crossing in Northeast Portland includes 20 family-size townhomes that start at \$255,000.

It is repeatedly said within the housing industry that no one is building starter homes anymore. Land, permitting, utility and construction costs are supposedly so high that first-time home buyers are routinely priced out of the market.

But a local nonprofit developer has proven that it's still possible to build and sell very affordable new homes. Family-size townhomes in the recently-completed Brunswick Commons in Northeast Portland start at \$255,000. The most expensive ones are priced at \$295,000 — well below the \$410,000 median sales price for homes in Portland.

Brunswick Commons homes come in four designs with an open floor plan and vary in size from 1,200 to 1,453 square feet.

"These aren't your typical affordable one-bedroom or studio cubby-holes. They are family-sized condominiums with three bedrooms, two and a half bathrooms, and plenty of storage space," said Dalton Sheppard, the assistant director at the National Urban Housing & Economic Community Development Corporation, which built and is selling the townhomes.

The units are for sale to everyone. But they are each discounted \$20,000 for households earning up to the median family income. That is \$81,400 a year for a family of four.

Qualifying households can also receive \$20,000 downpayment assistance grants, 10-year property tax abatements and other assistance.

"We're working with the Portland Housing Center. They have \$20,000 Neighborhood Lift down payment assistance grants. Teachers, those who have served in the military, and emergency responders can qualify for an additional \$2,500," Sheppard said.

The development corporation was created five years ago to provide job training to those facing barriers to employment and build affordable housing. Brunswick Commons is the organization's first large housing project. The organization is in the process of rebranding itself Building Our Community to better convey its mission.

"We believe that by moving folks from being renters to home buyers, there is an opportunity to build multi-generational wealth through growing equity. Home-ownership can provide monthly financial stability and predictability and may qualify people to take advantage of additional tax deductions and credits," Sheppard said.

Brunswick Commons consists of 20 three-story townhomes in five buildings. Two of the buildings have five units each, two of the buildings have four units each, and one of the buildings has two units. They were built by the Vic Construction Company. The \$5.1 million project was financed with private donations, grants and loans.

The project is located next to the MAX line at Northeast 109th and Burnside. Each townhome also has parking, however, for residents whose jobs are not along transit.

According to Sheppard, because the organization is a nonprofit, it can sell the townhomes at cost.

"There is no profit margin listed on top of these units," Sheppard said.

Brunswick Commons is not the kind of missing middle housing the City Council is hoping to encourage through the Residential Infill Project, which would allow up to four units on lots in single family neighborhoods. The buildings are larger than the maximum limits proposed in the plan, which will be first heard by the council in January.