

The Oregonian

2 candidates file to run for late Portland Commissioner Nick Fish's council seat

By Everton Bailey Jr.

January 13, 2020

Two candidates submitted applications Monday to run to complete the term of late Portland Commissioner Nick Fish.

Robin Castro and Diana Gutman, both community activists, are the first to officially file notice with the city auditor's office of their intent to appear on the May 19 special election ballot. Both must also submit signatures from 100 valid Portland voters and go through other checks in order to appear on the ballot, said City Elections Officer Deborah Scroggins.

Castro, a Portland State University student, wrote on her Facebook page last Thursday that she is seeking to becoming the commissioner in charge of Portland Parks and Recreation and the Bureau of Environmental Services, which were overseen by Fish before he died of abdominal cancer Jan. 2.

Castro said she believes she'd be suited for the position because of her background in science.

"I'm an environmental scientist running to adequately address the climate crisis based on scientific consensus," Castro wrote last Thursday. "I am running as a working class individual who knows what living paycheck to paycheck is truly like and the importance of centering policies around your needs. Lastly, I am running to represent a new generation of women entering politics - we are the majority and we will no longer be marginalized by our age or gender."

Gutman, an Army veteran who advocates for victims of domestic violence, testified before the City Council last Wednesday as it weighed moving forward with the special election in May. She encouraged the public to elect the person they believe would best fill the seat. She did not say then that she was considering applying.

"Commissioner Fish was a wonderful public servant," Gutman testified. "He helped so many people. He cared about the people of Portland and that's something anyone who takes this seat should be aware of."

Monday marked the first day interested candidates could file with the city for Fish's position. The special election will occur the same day as the primary election.

The seat of Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who has been on the council since 2009, will also be open because she plans to retire. Commissioner Chloe Eudaly and Mayor Ted Wheeler are both seeking second four-year terms in office.

March 10 is the last day to file as a candidate.

If no candidate in the special election receives the majority of the vote, a run-off election of the top two candidates will occur Aug. 11. General elections in any of the other three races will occur Nov. 3, if necessary.

Extra homeless shelters open for anticipated cold, snow

*By Molly Harbarger
January 13, 2020*

Anyone who needs shelter can get it Monday night as Multnomah County opens its severe weather shelters for the first time in 2020.

The predicted overnight snow and temperatures dipping to near-freezing have spurred Multnomah County to open about 350 extra beds for homeless people who need to get out of the elements.

If those fill up, officials will continue to expand so everyone who wants it has shelter.

The severe weather shelters are located at:

Bud Clark Commons, 650 N.W. Irving St. in Portland

Imago Dei, 1320 S.E. Ankeny St. in Portland

Sunrise Center, 18901 E. Burnside in Gresham

Call 211 for yourself or someone who wants shelter to find space and transportation a warm, dry place.

If you need shelter:

Visit 211info.org online or call 211 for information about which shelters are open. You can also request to be picked up and transported to shelter if needed.

You can also just show up to any of the three severe weather shelters within the listed time frame.

Families with children are especially encouraged to call 211. No family will be turned away.

Portland mayor Ted Wheeler, city office candidates deny violating local campaign finance laws

*By Everton Bailey Jr.
January 13, 2020*

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler, one of his primary election opponents and a city commissioner candidate all denied complaints to the city auditor's office that they've violated a voter-approved \$500 campaign contribution limit.

In written responses to the auditor's office, Wheeler, mayoral candidate Ozzie Gonzalez and city commissioner candidate Jack Kerfoot said the donor limit approved by voters in November 2018 isn't enforceable because it's been deemed unconstitutional by a Multnomah County circuit judge since June 2019.

The responses address campaign finance complaints filed last month by Ronald Buel, a member of political action committee Honest Elections Oregon. Buel and other PAC members said they believe the city policy as a whole is still enforceable because the judge only deemed parts of it unconstitutional.

Buel has also filed a similar campaign finance complaint with the Multnomah County director of elections against County Commissioner Lori Stegmann.

Buel is asking that all four campaigns be fined and that the Portland city auditor conduct an audit of all contributions of \$100 or less received by Wheeler's campaign.

The city auditor's office has to make a determination about the complaints by Jan. 23.

Portland voters in 2018 approved Measure 26-200, which amended the city charter to limit individual or political committee donations to \$500 per election cycle in city races, limit campaign spending and require campaigns to disclose advertising funders and as well as impose other restrictions.

Multnomah County voters approved a similar measure in 2016. Honest Elections Oregon organized both measures.

Multnomah County Circuit Judge Eric Bloch struck down the county rule in 2017 and did the same to parts of the Portland rule in June, saying they violated the Oregon Constitution's prohibition on limiting free speech.

The circuit court's decision on the county measure was appealed to the Oregon Supreme Court, which heard oral arguments regarding the matter in November 2019, Kafoury said. A ruling in the case is expected sometime this year and will likely impact the Portland measure.

The city appealed Bloch's ruling in the Portland limits case to the Oregon Supreme Court, which said it's putting that appeal on hold until it rules in the Multnomah County case.

Buel's complaint against Wheeler takes issue with more than \$40,000 contributed in 15 cash and in-kind donations. Buel also claimed Gonzalez, a TriMet board member, and Kerfoot, a retired renewable energy consultant campaigning for incumbent Commissioner Chloe Eudaly's seat on the council, each have accepted four donations over \$500. The complaint claims \$14,000 in cash contributions to Gonzalez exceeded the limit and \$106,000 for Kerfoot.

Wheeler announced in November that he would limit contributions he'd accept from individuals to \$5,000 and from organizations to \$10,000. Amy Rathfelder, Wheeler's reelection campaign manager, said they plan to stick to their self-imposed limit "while we await the outcome of appellate court consideration."

"We are proud of our campaign and the support we have earned from Portlanders from all walks of life," Rathfelder said in a Jan. 8 statement to the city elections officer.

Gonzalez's campaign held a press conference Jan. 6. to denounce Buel's complaint. John Vinje, Gonzalez's campaign manager wrote to the elections officer the same day describing the complaint as "defective and void on its face."

C. Robert Steringer, an attorney representing Kerfoot, noted in a Dec. 30 letter that the contributions flagged by Buel, between \$1,000 and \$40,000, were all donations Kerfoot made to his own campaign. Steringer said the city commissioner candidate has limited outside contributions to \$100.

Wheeler's campaign reports having raised more than \$216,000 as of Monday, most of which he collected in 2018, according to state records. Gonzalez has raised \$54,500 and Kerfoot has raised \$106,000.

Wheeler and Kerfoot haven't reported accepting any donations since the complaints was filed on Dec. 19, state records show. Gonzalez has reported accepting one more cash contribution over \$500 since then — a \$2,500 donation.

Willamette Week

Three Severe Weather Shelters Will Open in Portland Tonight

*By Camille Soleil
January 13, 2020*

Reports of cold temperatures and potential snow could put many at risk in Portland's houseless population

With three nights of possible snow and dismal weather looming, the Joint Office of Homeless Services is opening at least three no-turn-away shelters in Portland tonight.

The Joint Office says its contractor, Transition Projects will make around 2,000 total beds available tonight, including 1,400 that are already open throughout the year. The beds are publicly funded.

The extra shelters tonight are dispersed throughout the Portland metro area:

- Bud Clark Commons (650 NW Irving)
- Imago Dei (1302 SE Ankeny)
- Sunrise Center (18901 E Burnside)

Denis Theriault, a spokesman for the Joint Office, said this is the second weather event this season that has prompted the need for extra shelter space, the first being around the Thanksgiving holiday. He said if for some reason all of the above sites get filled, more community centers are on standby.

Theriault said the elements can pose a big threat to the city's houseless population each winter season.

"The reality is people can die of exposure even when it's not freezing outside, even when it's 50 degrees out and someone's damp or not well for other reasons," Theriault said. "That's why we don't turn anyone away from the shelters."

According to a Multnomah County Domicile Unknown report, 92 houseless people died in 2018. This is the highest figure the county has seen since they started producing the report.

If someone is inquiring about a shelter or needs help with transportation, they can call 211. To learn more about how to donate, citizens can visit 211info.org/donations.

Sam Adams' Attorney Releases Report on 2017 Harassment Allegations Against Adams

*By Nigel Jaquiss
January 13, 2020*

A retired state court judge and current employment lawyer reviewed the case against the former Portland mayor and found it wanting.

An attorney for former Portland Mayor Sam Adams today released an 18-page investigative report regarding 2017 harassment allegations against Adams by a former mayoral aide named Cevero Gonzales.

The report found "insufficient evidence exists to establish a claim of sexual harassment."

Last October, Adams hired the Portland lawyer Michael Fuller to look into Gonzales' accusations, which came in the form of a six-page letter to members of Portland City Council more than four years after Adams, who served as mayor from 2009 to 2013, left office.

Because neither Adams nor Gonzales still worked for the city of Portland when Gonzales submitted his letter on Nov. 3, 2017, the city attorney's office declined to investigate and there was no criminal investigation either.

The complaint appeared to have immediate impact, however. Adams, then working in Washington, D.C. for the World Resources Institute, a large non-profit focused on climate change, lost his job. (Adams and WRI have declined to comment on the reason for his departure.)

Adams moved back to Portland last year, seeking to rebuild a career that saw him rise through legislative and Portland city politics to become the first openly gay mayor of a major U.S. city before his tenure was crippled by scandal over his relationship with a young former legislative intern named Beau Breedlove.

Last October, Adams hired Fuller, who regularly represents whistleblowers and victims of harassment, to review Gonzales' allegations against him, which lingered without resolution. Fuller explained why he was taking the case in an op-ed he wrote for *The Oregonian*.

"As a fierce advocate for victims, I understand that our system of justice must ensure basic integrity and fairness for everyone, including the accused," Fuller wrote. "Without a fact-based review process, many innocent people could have their lives ruined."

Fuller gathered about 1,000 pages of documents, including emails and the results of investigations into previous harassment claims Gonzales made against another supervisor.

Fuller then redacted all names from those documents and presented them and Gonzales' letter, also redacted so readers would not know the names of any of those involved, to retired Oregon Judge Lyle Velure and Rebecca Cambreleng, a Portland employment lawyer.

Fuller asked both to review the accusations against Adams and determine whether they would have constituted a legally actionable case.

"The judge essentially conducted a bench trial based on the witness statements and the evidence we gathered," Fuller writes. "We also hired an employment lawyer to provide their opinion about the legal viability of the claims." (Fuller says he did not contact Gonzales because he'd already told WW that he did not have documents or witnesses that could corroborate his allegations.)

"After a thorough review of the facts, with the parties' identities redacted, two independent and impartial legal experts release the first-ever legal opinions about the still- unresolved harassment allegations made against former Portland Mayor Sam Adams in 2017," Fuller wrote. "Their conclusions: (1) a retired Oregon judge finds no actionable evidence exists; and (2) a renowned employment attorney determines the claim is without legal viability."

The report comes at an opportune time for Adams. As WW reported recently, he is among several candidates considering running for a City Council seat made vacant when incumbent Commissioner Nick Fish died Jan. 2.

The Portland Business Journal

Homeless shelter at Wapato could open later this year

By Jonathan Bach

January 13, 2020

Proponents of a plan to transform the former Wapato Detention Facility into a homeless services center are aiming to have the 228-bed operation open by the end of this year.

Fundraising efforts began in earnest Saturday, with proponents seeking \$4 million for the proposed Bybee Lakes Hope Center. Politicians, business leaders, community members and others attended Saturday's event to jump start the "I Believe" campaign for Bybee Lakes, according to nonprofit representatives with Helping Hands Reentry Outreach Centers.

The proposal marks the latest turn in Jordan Schnitzer's efforts to transform Wapato into a homeless services center after he purchased the site for \$5 million. Schnitzer came close to demolishing the 155,000 square-foot facility in favor of a 320,000-square-foot industrial warehouse, but he has since supported the latest idea.

More than 100 people attended Saturday's event, Schnitzer said. The president of Harsch Investment Properties has committed \$1 million to the Bybee Lakes proposal on the condition the nonprofit raises the remaining balance.

Schnitzer told the Portland Business Journal he didn't know whether Helping Hands can pull off the plan. "We'll give it a chance," he said.

He bet on turning Wapato into a homeless services center because professionals have roundly told him repurposing the facility can work.

"When people I respect tell me this can be repurposed, that inspires me," Schnitzer said.

Still, Schnitzer hasn't taken the plan to turn Wapato into a warehouse off the table. Holding costs for the site run about \$50,000 a month.

"It's not like I'm making a profit every month," he said.

A demolition permit expires early March 3 and it's unclear if it can be extended, Schnitzer said. If the dream project goes unrealized, Wapato will be torn down, he said.

To pull off the transformation into a homeless services center, Helping Hands officials predict they will need about \$1 million for startup and renovation costs, plus about \$1.5 million per year for the first two years of operation.

“We’re going to reach our goal,” said Alan Evans, founder and chief executive of Helping Hands. “There was not one naysayer in that room,” said Evans of Saturday’s event. “Not one.”

Helping Hands has so far seen approximately \$1.4 million committed toward the Bybee Lakes project. Some people have reached out since they kicked off Saturday, said Raven Russell, director of data and major projects with Helping Hands.

The center would ideally open in September or October of this year, though the timeline depends on money and renovations, Russell said. She pointed to Helping Hands’ success in flipping a historic coastal property in a matter of months.

Bybee Lakes would effectively double the bed capacity of Helping Hands, which operates more than 220 beds in 11 facilities across Clatsop, Tillamook, Lincoln and Yamhill counties. Helping Hands aims to open at least 228 beds at Bybee Lakes in the first year.

The Portland facility in year one would have 10.5 full-time equivalent staff positions, including for facility management, volunteer coordination, case management and crisis management, Russell said. So far three dormitories are expected to open: one for single men, one for single women and one for families.

Bybee Lakes aims to offer case management services, mental health and substance abuse treatments, and more. The goal is to create an atmosphere where service providers will be right by the people they want to serve, Russell said.

An open house for the Bybee Lakes project is scheduled for Jan. 25 beginning at 11 at the Wapato Detention Facility.

OPB

Advocates Press Portland Leaders To Expand Affordable Housing Options In Infill Project

*By Rebecca Ellis
January 14, 2020*

For over four years, city planners have been hammering out a mammoth overhaul of Portland’s zoning rules to increase density in residential neighborhoods. That plan would effectively end single-family zoning in Portland, freeing up developers to build two- three- and four-unit homes across most of the city.

Having moved through multiple council work sessions and advisory committees, that plan – officially called the Residential Infill Project (RIP) – is headed for public hearings at the end of this week.

The contentious proposal is expected to draw a big crowd. The Portland City Council has set aside a total of five hours on Wednesday and Thursday to hear from residents, who will each be given two minutes to testify.

Based on the written testimony that has poured in, commissioners will likely be hearing many of the arguments that have been simmering since the project began. Opponents say such a code update would encourage developers to demolish old homes, irreversibly changing the neighborhoods’ character and causing overcrowding. Others worry that RIP’s passage would displace low-income residents, as developers start buying up the cheap land they’re living on.

Commissioners will also hear from supporters who see RIP as a desperately-needed antidote to the city's housing shortage.

Some of these housing advocates are expected to ask the Portland City Council to go even further Wednesday in creating affordable housing options. They argue that while the current project will fuel the creation of homes for middle-class Portlanders, it offers little to low-income residents.

To that end, advocates from groups including Proud Ground, Habitat For Humanity, Portland Community Reinvestment Initiative, Rose CDC and Portland Neighborhood Welcome are drafting an amendment to present to the City Council that would allow for six-plexes and eight-plexes, reserved for the city's poorest residents.

"If people are concerned about affordability when it comes to residential infill, then we should be talking about ways we can get there, practical ways we can get there," said Diane Linn, who leads affordable housing non-profit Proud Ground. "And this is what we think may be a path forward."

Linn said that while private developers were unlikely to build these smaller units, affordable housing developers would be eager for the opportunity.

The city's on the clock to get RIP passed. Last year, the state passed House Bill 2001, which ended single-family zoning in most Oregon cities. Portland has until June 2022 to comply.

Linn said she didn't want to speculate on whether broadening the scope of RIP could delay an already slow-moving process.

"I don't know that anybody knows for sure," she said. "We're just doing our best to make sure that public policy is as thoughtful and ambitious as we think it can be."

Severe Weather Shelters Opening Around Multnomah County Ahead of Inclement Weather

*By Donald Orr
January 13, 2020*

Severe weather shelters are opening their doors in Multnomah County Monday evening ahead of forecasts that bring the risk of significant freezing rain and snow.

Multnomah County has issued a Severe Weather Alert, and is urging anyone who needs a bed or a ride to shelter to call 211. People can also call 211 for others who may need shelter.

Severe weather shelters do not require identification or any other documentation, and officials say rides will be provided to whomever needs them to escape the winter weather. During severe weather, no one seeking shelter will be turned away, and the county plans to open more severe weather sites as needed. Outreach workers will turn to the streets to provide cold weather gear and inform people about emergency shelters.

Beginning Monday evening, close to 2,000 publicly funded beds will be available, including 350 severe weather beds opening tonight – more than 200 beds that are open all winter and more than 1,400 beds that are open year-round. Multnomah County says the nonprofit Transition Projects will open emergency shelters at:

- Bud Clark Commons (650 NW Irving, in Portland)

- Imago Dei (1302 SE Ankeny, in Portland)
- Sunrise Center (18901 E Burnside, in Gresham)

All three sites will start expanded operations 8:30 p.m. Monday until 6:30 a.m. Tuesday, with pets allowed.

“It’s a good time to remind ourselves how vulnerable people experiencing homelessness are, especially during these severe weather times,” said Matt Olguin, director of shelter services at Transition Projects.

Olguin said Transition Projects has volunteer opportunities for those who want to help people find shelter.

Service providers and the Joint Office of Homeless Services in Multnomah County are calling for community donations of critical winter gear, including waterproof hats, gloves, blankets, tarps, sleeping bags and coats. Denis Theriault with Multnomah County says people can donate to shelters’ specific donation needs online through 211.

Other seasonal shelters in Multnomah County are operating daily through the winter:

- North Portland Winter Shelter (Portsmouth Union Church, 4775 N Lombard Avenue, in Portland)
- 5th Avenue Winter Shelter (421 SW 5th Avenue, in Portland)
- Union Gospel Mission Winter Shelter (15 NW 3rd Avenue, in Portland)

“People who live on the street are tremendously resourceful — they’re survivors,” said Andy Goebel, manager of North Portland Winter Shelter. “My hope is that folks take that step to be indoors and to be warm and safe for the night.”

More information on shelters and warming centers can be found through 211.