

The Oregonian

Leaked calendar from fire station featuring Portland's homeless camps urges: 'Get your reservations early!'

By Maxine Bernstein
February 18, 2020

The bright, colorful cover reads like a camp brochure: "Experience the Great Outdoors," it blares, showing a pitched tent before a campfire on a bucolic grassy expanse.

But flipping to the calendar's inside pages reveals photos of tattered tents and tarps clustered in a series of homeless campsites along sidewalks, roads and fields in East Portland.

Beside each photo is commentary, urging readers to "get your reservations early!" or promising "expansive views of a cinder-block wall" with a caution that "sanitation facilities are quite limited."

The Oregonian/OregonLive obtained a copy of the calendar that previously had been only briefly described. The Portland Fire & Rescue Bureau announced an internal investigation last month after the calendar was found hanging inside Station No. 7.

On one page titled "Cherry Blossom Park," photos capture tents pitched near Southeast 96th Avenue and Main Street and a caption notes: "Rules? What rules? This secondary campground is nestled against a mature greenspace (i.e. bioswale) with tons of room for all your friends and their junk!" It shows a campsite beyond a sign that says, "No Trespassing."

Another page highlights a campground called "Safeway Park" and touts it as a "year-round favorite" with "constantly changing scenery." It says: "parking abounds," with "single and group sites" available in the lot of the former supermarket on Northeast 122nd Avenue, between Glisan and Stark streets.

Investigators are trying to determine who created the calendar and are expected to complete their inquiry by mid-March, said Fire Lt. Rich Chatman, bureau spokesman.

Fire Chief Sara Boone said the calendar "is not reflective of who we are or what we stand for."

"Working at Portland Fire & Rescue is about service, community, and sacrifice," she said in a statement last week to The Oregonian/OregonLive. "As fire chief, I will address any issues that get in the way of those three pillars of commitment that I know our firefighters take extremely seriously during every hour of every shift."

Fire officials haven't publicly identified the firefighter who made the calendar. It surfaced at one of the city's busiest stations, in the Mill Park neighborhood at 1500 S.E. 122nd Ave. Twenty-four firefighters are assigned to Station 7.

Firefighters from other stations apparently expressed interest in having one of their own, according to Fire Bureau members.

City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, who oversees the Fire Bureau, has denounced the calendar for disparaging homeless people, while Alan Ferschweiler, president of the Portland Fire Fighters Association, said the calendar may be insensitive but highlights friction between firefighters and homeless people as well as an "overstressed work force."

Firefighters usually deal with low-level medical calls at homeless camps or put out fires at the camps. Because Portland police don't respond as often to those calls, firefighters often feel unsafe or face aggression from people who are abusing drugs or alcohol, Ferschweiler said.

In 2018-19, the Fire Bureau responded to 7,810 homeless-related calls, up from 5,783 the prior fiscal year, according to bureau records. The majority were fire rescue and emergency medical calls.

Shortly after The Oregonian/OregonLive first wrote about the calendar in January, Street Roots, an advocacy group for homeless people that publishes a weekly newspaper, and the fire chief agreed to organize a sit-down between representatives of the homeless community and firefighters.

Three Street Roots vendors, homeless people who sell the paper on street corners, talked with firefighters Tremaine Clayton, Lisa Reslock and Brett Zimmerman, at Street Roots' office on Northwest Davis Street, said Kaia Sand, executive director of Street Roots.

"Some of the folks who are unhoused talked about a need for compassion from first responders, and also an understanding that in crises, it's not always easy," Sand said.

The firefighters shared how it can be discouraging to encounter systemic poverty because they can't do much about it while at the same they're geared toward finding solutions, according to Sand.

"When firefighters respond to calls at the homeless camps and they don't see a fix to the problems they witness, that can be heavy and that can be frustrating because we want to help and we want to solve things," Zimmerman told the group, according to a column Sand wrote in the Street Roots paper. "And I think that frustration can make you feel pretty helpless, and there's positive ways to deal with that, and there's less positive ways. Humor can be both."

The calendar, Zimmerman said, was "more harmful than constructive."

Clayton told the group most of the photos captured public property. He's manager of the bureau's Community Health Assessment Team, which reaches out to people who overuse 911 to reduce their reliance on first-responder services.

"We're here to provide a service but we don't have the resources because (the resources) just don't exist in our system," he said, according to the column. "It's a bigger systemic issue. So I can see where they might be looking at that as 'let's make light of this situation to ease our tension.' That's not an excuse at all. There's a lot of people that encounter these high stress situations and find other ways to cope with them."

Reslock said the calendar hurt the Fire Bureau. "One of the things we want everyone to know first off is that our organization is made up of people similar to the community, and so when stuff like this happens, it hurts us as an organization when we have 750 people that really love our jobs, we love being in the community," she said, according to the column.

Street Roots vendor Gary Barker told the group that when "you are staying in a tent, you've really got a lack of feeling of value" and urged greater communication between people who are homeless and those who aren't.

The fire chief credited Hardesty's office and Street Roots for making the meeting possible, "for providing a safe place so that all parties can heal."

"I'm hopeful that Portland Fire & Rescue can turn this calendar incident into a springboard for changes in training and expectations" with an emphasis on showing compassion, Sand said.

‘It was his joy’: Hundreds gather to celebrate life of Portland Commissioner Nick Fish

*By Brad Schmidt
February 16, 2020*

It had been 45 days since his death, but for one last afternoon Portland Commissioner Nick Fish found his way back to the people in the city he loved.

There was Fish grinning with his wife, daughter and son in one of the photographs displayed Sunday. Cutting a ribbon and visiting a park in another one. Enjoying the company of political dignitaries, schoolchildren and people in the community who could use his help.

The Portland City Council’s veteran political figure and longtime affordable-housing champion died Jan. 2 from stomach cancer at age 61, becoming the first commissioner in 50 years to die in office.

Several hundred people gathered in downtown Portland for a touching ceremony to celebrate his life -- one Fish organized himself.

“He selected every speaker himself, he loved to plan events, and he left clear instructions,” said Stephen Percy, interim president of Portland State University.

George Hocker, a pastor and former political aide to Fish, remembered the private prayers they would share in Fish’s office at City Hall in the years after he won election in 2008.

“We usually prayed for wisdom,” he said, “and for strength.”

Former Gov. Barbara Roberts, who mentored Fish, found the legacy and loss of her friend difficult to put into words.

“You could sense his compassion and empathy in a single handshake,” she said, later adding: “He left all of us kinder, wiser and more deeply connected.”

Tina Kotek, speaker of the Oregon House, recalled that Fish always believed problems could be solved and justice should be served. Their final conversation, she said, was about police accountability and Oregon’s growing housing crisis.

“Being a public servant wasn’t just a job for Nick,” she said. “It was his joy.”

A Harvard graduate and labor lawyer by training, Nicholas Stuyvesant Fish grew up in New York and Washington, D.C., carrying the bloodline of an American political dynasty. His great-great-grandfather, Hamilton Fish, governed New York and became secretary of state to President Ulysses Grant. His grandfather won election to the U.S House, as did his father.

Fish came to savor his life far from the East Coast, however, moving with his wife, Patricia Schechter, to Portland in 1995 when she accepted a position at Portland State University. Fish raised his family here, taking particular pride watching his children, Maria and Chapin, play soccer.

Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum recalled getting to know Fish in his early days as a Portlander. Fish was eager to meet people and volunteered to organize a summer picnic for the U.S. District Court of Oregon Historical Society, managing every aspect of the event.

“From the start, Nick was a person of unbounded optimism, good cheer and delightful gossip,” Rosenblum said to laughs. “Right?”

Ever the networker and purveyor of inside-baseball political insight, Fish launched a campaign for City Council in 2002, eventually winning on his third try. He asked two former city commissioners, Gretchen Kafoury and Mike Lindberg, which bureaus he should seek.

Kafoury said housing. Lindberg said parks. Fish got both.

On the council, Fish was student of politics and history. Lindberg recalled getting regular calls from Fish, seeking to learn about events or decisions from decades earlier.

“Those calls were amazing to me,” Lindberg said, “because what he wanted to understand was the foundation upon which the present is built.”

Fish served on the City Council under four mayors, earning a reputation as a consensus-builder and diplomat. He is perhaps best known as a longtime champion for building more affordable housing, advancing the issue years before it was politically popular.

Marc Jolin, who leads city and county efforts to help shelter homeless people, recalled seeing Fish show up every year to share a Thanksgiving meal with homeless people or to deliver food boxes to people who had just secured housing.

One couple Fish met 10 years ago got married a few months before his death. Fish attended.

“It was this genuine commitment to human connection and belief of the central value of every person that led Nick to use the power of his office, again and again, to make sure the city was caring for those left furthest behind,” Jolin said.

Fish had a passion for helping the underdog, a strong moral compass and natural affinity for politics, said his younger brother, Peter Fish.

It’s why a hospice nurse advised family members that Fish’s Dec. 31 decision to eventually resign from the City Council “may well be a turning point.”

“Wise counsel indeed,” his brother said.

Ted Leavitt, a friend of Fish’s since age 10, offered the final words of the afternoon.

“There’s an enduring legacy from his work,” Leavitt said.

The Portland Tribune

Remembering Portland's Nick Fish: 'We all miss his presence'

*By Zane Sparling
February 16, 2020*

Long-serving commissioner at Portland City Hall honored by more than 600 at Sunday, Feb. 16 ceremony at PSU.

Perpetually curious. Energized by human interactions. Dedicated to the underdogs.

Of these things, he was all of them. And yet.

"It was not words that defined Nick Fish," said former Oregon Gov. Barbara Roberts. "You could sense his compassion and empathy in a single handshake."

More than 600 people filled the ballroom at Portland State University's downtown campus for a celebration of the life of Nicholas Stuyvesant Fish, the long-serving member of the Portland City Council who passed away Jan. 2 after a two-and-a-half year battle with stomach cancer. He was 61.

The scion of an illustrious East Coast family whose ancestors served in the American Revolutionary War, Fish moved to Portland for love — following his wife Patricia Schechter, who had gotten a job as a professor of history at PSU. They raised two children, Maria and Chapin, whose exploits on the track and soccer field were well known to everyone in Fish's orbit.

But beyond his dedication to his family, Fish was remembered by a dozen speakers during the two-hour event as a servant leader committed to equality and equity, whether that meant building new greenspaces in East Portland or ensuring the safety of Portland's water supply.

At six feet tall, he was a towering presence following his first election to City Hall in 2008. But the New York-born, Harvard-educated politician and lawyer was always approachable, his friends said, eager to strike up conversation (or learn the latest gossip) with anyone.

Mike Lindberg, a former city commissioner who was Fish's close confidant, recalled his friend's respect for history and desire to understand the nuance and context of any situation.

"He would say to me," Lindberg recalled, "I'm going to six events this weekend. I can hardly wait!"

Those in attendance at the memorial included Gov. Kate Brown, U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden and U.S. Reps. Earl Blumenauer and Suzanne Bonamici, as well as City Commissioners Chloe Eudaly and Jo Ann Hardesty, Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury and many more.

"Nick could have gone anywhere in politics. He was super intelligent. He was the consummate statesman," said Mayor Ted Wheeler, noting that his colleague turned down a job with the Obama administration. "We all miss his presence. We can almost predict some of the things he would have said."

Portland State has established the Nick Fish Memorial Fund for Leadership, which will support students attending its Hatfield School of Government. Donations can be made online here.

As House Speaker Tina Kotek put it: "Being a public servant wasn't just a job for Nick. It was a joy."

Suit seeks penalty for \$73,000 donated to Portland mayor

*By Zane Sparling
February 17, 2020*

An advocate with Honest Elections claims city auditor has not enforced campaign finance limits for Mayor Ted Wheeler.

An elections advocate is suing Portland's auditor — claiming she failed to enforce campaign finance limits approved by city voters in 2018.

In a lawsuit filed Feb. 13 in Multnomah County Circuit Court, plaintiff Ronald Buel points to \$73,100 in allegedly over-the-limit contributions accepted by the re-election campaign of

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler. Whether such limits are constitutional, or even in effect, remains in contention.

After passing with support of 87% of the electorate, Portland's city charter was amended in several ways, including a new max contribution of \$500 per person to any one campaign. Buel says Wheeler has since accepted seven donations worth \$5,000 apiece and others as well, with much of the cash coming from developers.

"We are mystified at the actions of Mayor Wheeler, who is not above a law that is the will of the people," said Buel. "We do not understand why he is choosing not to comply with voters' clear desire."

Despite willingness in Portland and Multnomah County to rein back money's influence in politics, Oregon remains one of five states in the U.S. lacking any statewide caps on campaign gifts, a rule dating back to an Oregon Supreme Court decision in *Vannatta v. Keisling* in 1997.

Multnomah County Judge Eric Bloch has already ruled Portland's limits do not comply with that interpretation of the Oregon Constitution, though Buel and other advocates say he technically never enjoined — or halted — the charter amendments from going into effect.

The case is currently up for review by the Oregon Appeals Court.

"There's a difference between offering an opinion, which the court did, and issuing an injunction," said Buel, the founder of Willamette Week, who is filing the suit with the group Honest Elections Oregon.

The 25-page suit seeks to compel City Auditor Mary Hull Caballero to apply financial penalties to Wheeler's campaign for breaking the donation limits. Wheeler had announced voluntary caps of \$5,000 per individual, and \$10,000 for unions and organizations, in November.

Caballero and a spokeswoman for Wheeler's campaign did not immediately respond to requests for comment, but the Tribune will update this article if we hear back.

"Multnomah County can enjoin it, we recognize that, but they could also say you should be abiding by it until we reach this decision," Buel continued. "So we'll see what they say."

Metro's transportation and homelessness plans: Hang together or stand separately?

*By Jim Redden
February 17, 2020*

Pell-mell rush of the homelessness tax explained: A new poll says putting them on the same ballot could doom them both.

A new poll helps explain why Metro is rushing to refer a measure to fund homeless services to the May 19 primary election ballot.

The regional government's planned transportation funding measure could fail if it, and the homelessness tax, were both placed on the Nov. 3 general election ballot. And the homeless services measure might not pass, either.

The recently released DHM Research poll found that 62% of likely voters in the Metro region support a measure to reduce homelessness that focuses on expanding social services, such as mental health and substance abuse treatment.

But the poll also found that support drops to 54% if it appears on the same ballot as transportation funding measure.

The transportation measures fares even worse. The poll found 59% of voters support a measure to reduce traffic, create additional transportation choices, fight climate change and increase earthquake safety. But that support drops to 49% if it appears on the same ballot as the homeless services measure.

Complicating the picture in Multnomah County is a local measure to fund free preschool for all children, which is being considered by the Multnomah County Commission for the November ballot. The poll found that 66% of county voters support it. But that support dropped to 46% if it appears on the same ballot as the other two measures.

In other words, the chances of Metro passing both of its measures drop if they appear on the same ballot, with Metro's key prize, the transportation measure, more likely to fail.

The Metro Council held a public hearing on the framework for the homeless services measure proposed by the HereTogether advocacy coalition on Thursday, Feb. 13. It is scheduled to hold a work session to draft the measure on Tuesday, Feb. 18. The council could vote to refer the measure to the May ballot on Thursday, Feb. 20.

According to Metro officials, the council is considering a 1% tax on personal incomes above \$125,000 per year and \$250,000 for couples. As of press time, it remains unclear how much money that would actually raise.

Metro voters approved a \$652.8 million measure to fund the construction of affordable housing in the region at the November 2018 general election.

Portland Business Alliance officials said a progressive regional payroll tax would be a better funding source. The alliance supports increased funding for homeless services but thinks a payroll tax would be more stable during economic downturns, said a letter sent to the council on Sunday, Feb. 16.

The proposed measure was both supported and questioned during the Feb. 13 hearing.

"The reality is this is something that we've been talking about for years," HereTogether board member Katrina Holland said. "Quite frankly, after the housing bond passed, immediately advocates in the community were thinking we need to pair these dollars with services dollars and we tried multiple things but it didn't go well."

But Cascade Policy Institute President John Charles Jr. said Metro doesn't have many answers so far and the process has been rushed.

"How are they proposing to get the money? How much money? Where is it going to go? What are the metrics for measuring success? They don't, by their own admission, know any of that," said the leader of the local free-market think tank.

The poll was commissioned by the Portland Business Alliance and posted on its website on Wednesday, Feb. 12. It was conducted in early January, before Metro decided to consider placing the homeless services measure on the May ballot.

With Portland water prices rising, some seek a new source

*By Christopher Keizur
February 16, 2020*

Potential cost increases could lead the city to pursue other sources of water, like a robust groundwater system.

Gresham City Council is mulling a break with the Bull Run Reservoir, discussing the possibility of creating a new system to supply the city with drinking water.

During a Tuesday afternoon, Feb. 11, meeting, city staff presented two options that will dictate the future of Gresham's water. Council must decide by the end of this year whether to renew a contract with the city of Portland and stick with the Bull Run system, which will have significant rate increases by the end of the decade, or to construct a locally-controlled system that relies completely on groundwater.

It won't be an easy decision for Gresham's leadership.

"There is a long history with Bull Run water. We have depended on that water for 115 years," said Gresham Mayor Shane Bemis.

The main spur that drove Gresham staff to explore other water supply options is the Portland filtration plant that will come online in 2027 at the Bull Run Reservoir. While the plant will ensure more consistent water quality during heavy rain and other natural events, it also will lead to a significant cost increase for customers, including wholesale buyers like the city.

Specific numbers won't be finalized until this summer, so the exact financial impact of the plant is still nebulous.

On top of the price increase, the city of Gresham, if it remains a customer, also would be on the hook for about \$100 million in capital funds to help complete the almost \$1 billion facility.

Gresham isn't the only wholesale buyer balking at the increased costs. In 2020, the top customers for Bull Run water were Tualatin Valley Water District, Rockwood Water People's Utility District, and Gresham. Tualatin Valley plans to significantly cut-back its purchase of Bull Run water before the filtration plant goes online, as does Rockwood Water. If it doesn't follow suit, Gresham will be the only major wholesale purchaser at the Bull Run, accounting for more water purchased daily than the rest combined.

But Gresham could break away, a plan that is being investigated by city staff.

Through a joint effort with Rockwood Water PUD, the city could construct groundwater wells and filtration plants in the next six years across the region. Those new sites would be able to generate enough water to meet the community's needs, at a seemingly lower cost than remaining tethered to the Bull Run reservoir near Sandy and Mount Hood.

"We believe the groundwater is sustainable — it's a vast resource," said Steve Fancher, director of environmental services and city operations. "This isn't really a change to the customer in terms of turning on the tap."

The total cost for a local groundwater system is estimated to be about \$54 million. Gresham staff also said that through local control, the rates for customers would be lower than if the city renewed a contract with Portland. The small cities, including Troutdale, Wood Village and Fairview, all currently use groundwater.

"We believe we can get a much more consistent water quality," Fancher said.

But despite assertions that the groundwater system is viable, there will be community members who struggle with a divorce from the Bull Run. Like Bemis said, there is a long history between the pair. The mayor shared that the first telephone line in the city actually ran from the Bull Run Reservoir down to the Gresham Rexall Drug Store — now Jazzy Bagels at the corner of Powell Boulevard and Main Avenue.

Nothing has been officially decided. The wholesale 20-year water supply contract with the city of Portland will expire in 2026. Gresham must provide a 5-year notice request by June of next year if it wishes to cease business.

Willamette Week

Portland Police are Searching for Masked Protesters Who They Say Jabbed People with “Metal-Tipped Umbrellas”

*By Tess Riski
February 17, 2020*

The antifacist group PopMob encouraged counterprotesters to bring umbrellas: "Tell the KKK they can't stand under our umbrella."

Portland police are asking the public to identify four masked protesters who they say deployed pepper spray, threw objects, and jabbed umbrellas at other protesters and police.

That request comes in the wake of a Feb. 8 demonstration in downtown Portland. That protest occurred after rumors surfaced that a Ku Klux Klan rally was scheduled to take place downtown, though it's unclear if such a rally was ever actually planned.

In response to the rumors, the antifacist group PopMob organized a counterprotest that encouraged individuals to bring umbrellas: "Tell the KKK they can't stand under our umbrella," the event description reads.

Police now say those umbrellas were used as weapons.

"During this event, metal-tipped umbrellas were used to jab toward people and chase them down the street, and objects (including rocks, concrete, batons, cans, and food) were thrown at community members and police," the Portland Police Bureau said in a press release.

The police included photos of the suspects, which depict some of them holding what appears to be pepper spray in their hands.

Today's announcement by police comes after what has become an established pattern after Portland protests: Conservatives widely disseminated videos and reports that antifascists had violently attacked people who confronted them. Those reports led to questions about whether police had done enough to control leftist protesters.

In this case, police upheld one aspect of those social-media reports: the use of umbrellas on adversaries.

PopMob organizers did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

At a Tearful Celebration of Commissioner Nick Fish's Life, Past and Current Electeds Pay Tribute

*By Nigel Jaquiss and Rachel Monahan
February 16, 2020*

A large group gathered Sunday at Portland State University to bid goodbye to Fish, who died Jan. 2.

There were few dry eyes in Smith Memorial Union on the Portland State University campus Sunday, as friends and family gathered for a celebration of the life of the late city Commissioner Nick Fish, who died in office Jan. 2 at age 62.

"Nick Fish was the gold standard for public service," U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) tells WW. "Even when he was very ill, he never stopped caring and he never stopped listening."

Fish was the son of the former U.S. Rep. Hamilton Fish (R-N.Y.), who split with his party in 1974 to vote for the impeachment of then-President Richard Nixon, a Republican. (Fish's mother, Julia McKenzie Fish died in a car crash when he was 11.) He is survived by his wife, Portland State University Prof. Patricia Schechter, their daughter Maria and son Chapin and three siblings.

Fish, a graduate of Harvard, worked first as a congressional aide then, after graduating from the Northeastern University School of Law, practiced labor law in Manhattan before moving to Portland in 1995, when his wife, Schechter, took a job on the history faculty at PSU.

Fish lost his first race for council in 2002 to then state Rep. Randy Leonard (D-Portland). In 2004, Fish handily defeated Sam Adams in the May primary but failed to get a majority of votes. In the November general election, Adams upset Fish, a painful defeat Fish talked about wistfully long after he won his seat in 2008.

Despite his losses to Leonard and Adams, he later formed close relationships with both men.

"I think it's fair to say he took those defeats hard," Adams says. "But out of both of them came enduring friendships and Nick persevered—and we're all better off because he did."

On Sunday, the third floor ballroom at Smith Memorial Union was packed to overflowing with more than 600 people, many of them current and former elected officials, friends and neighborhood activists.

In the final days of his life, Fish and Schechter put together the program for Sunday's event. It began at City Hall, where Mayor Ted Wheeler addressed a group of about 100 of Fish's closest friends, who then marched to PSU, accompanied by a Fire Bureau honor guard.

Close friends and speakers entered the ballroom carrying long-stemmed white roses in Fish's honor.

Several of the guests shared their thoughts about Fish before Portland Fire & Rescue presented colors to open the event.

Wheeler says he'll remember Fish's humility and his devotion to the city. "He could have worked anywhere and done anything," Wheeler says. "He cared deeply about the less fortunate people in our community and above all he was humble—he never sought the spotlight and would in fact push it towards others."

Former Mayor Charlie Hales relied on Fish as a fix-it man, handing him the troubled Water Bureau and Bureau of Environmental Services and yanking from him his beloved parks bureau. "He didn't relish the assignments," Hales says. "But I knew he could do it."

Fish regularly got such assignments. Wheeler assigned him the financially troubled Portland Parks and Recreation last year after he'd straightened out Water and BES. He took on turnaround jobs with a smile and self-deprecating humor.

Multnomah County County Chair Deborah Kafoury says that the enthusiasm Fish brought to his work set him apart from many elected officials.

"His love for the institutions, the people and the policy—he loved it all," Kafoury says. "And he loved to talk. You could say he was loquacious."

City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, who worked with Fish as a longtime community police reform and social advocate before become his colleague in 2018, says what set him apart from others was his level of engagement. "He was always open to meeting and to new information," Hardesty says. "He genuinely cared, and that's missing too often today from the political process."

On an often-fractious council, Fish was Switzerland, the neutral broker who kept lines of communication open between his colleagues.

"I'm really going to miss him," says City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly. "It's not the same without him."

"He was the best kind of boss," says Fish's final chief of staff, Sonia Schmanski. "He was a teacher. He taught all of us what it really mean to work with other people toward common goals."

Speakers including PSU President Stephen Percy, Former Gov. Barbara Roberts, Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, House Speaker Tina Kotek, Former City Commissioner Mike Lindberg, Wajdi Bek of the Muslim Educational Trust, Pastor George Hocker, Kay Toran of Volunteers of America, Peyton Chapman, the principal of Lincoln High School and other community leaders and Fish family members shared their memories of the late commissioner.

"Nick was a gift to Portland," Roberts said. Rosenblum remembered that the first thing she learned about Fish was that he'd moved across the country to support his wife's career. "I liked him right away," she said, recalling Fish's "good cheer and delightful gossip."

Lindberg, who served 18 years on the City Council, retiring in 1996, recalled speaking to Fish about the city's history.

"He frequently called to ask what happened 30 or 40 years ago," Lindberg said. "He wanted to understand the foundation on which the present was built. He saw what others couldn't and saw his that his job bringing others together."

Darrell Grant, a noted jazz musician and PSU faculty member performed a musical interlude with the singer Marcia Hocker, who sang "I'll Be Seeing You."

House Speaker Tina Kotek (D-Portland), who along with her wife Aimee Wilson were longtime friends of Fish's, touched on a characteristic of Fish's that many others cited.

"We loved his optimism," Kotek said, who like other speakers wiped away tears as she spoke. "He always felt problems could be solved, that things can and should be better."

Marc Jolin, the director the city-county Joint Office of Homeless Services, told the audience about Fish's commitment to people living on the streets, which Jolin first witnessed when Fish approached him about a homeless man who froze to death in Lone Fir Cemetery in Southeast Portland in 2008. Jolin said that from that moment on, Fish fought tirelessly to preserve and strengthen the social safety net.

"He didn't do any of these things because he saw political advantage," Jolin said. "He did them for the man who died in Lone Fir and thousands who will be homeless tonight."

The program ended with a heart-wrenching montage of photos and brief video clips compiled by Fish's children, Maria and Chapin.

"The people who spoke today were dead-on about who Nick Fish was," says former Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith, longtime Fish ally. "He would love it."

The Portland Mercury

The Rose Lane Project Should Speed Up Bus Service—But The City Says It Can't Do It Alone

*By Blair Stenvick
February 14, 2020*

The Portland City Council unanimously voted Thursday to adopt the Rose Lane Project, a plan to add red bus-only lanes (and other transit-priority changes) to roads across the city.

Both city commissioners and members of the public at a Thursday council meeting focused on the plan's promise to speed up bus service and make commuting more equitable and reliable for all Portlanders. But the conversation also showed where gaps in TriMet's service plan, and the Portland Bureau of Transportation's (PBOT) limited jurisdiction, could hamper the Rose Lanes' potential.

The overarching aim of the Rose Lane Project is to make riding the bus more desirable and convenient, and help PBOT reach its goal of having 25 percent of all trips within the city taken by transit by 2035. Currently, that number is at 12 percent.

"On average, we need people to drive half as much as they do today," said Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, who oversees PBOT, at Thursday's meeting.

PBOT's plan comprises at least 29 projects, with more to be identified soon, all of which should be finished over the next two years. The projects range from dedicated bus-only lanes to more targeted projects meant to quicken transit service, like new left-turn pockets and priority traffic signals for buses. PBOT estimates it will cost around \$14 million total, with some money coming from the bureau's regular revenue and some coming from state and federal funding sources.

The projects laid out in the plan target about a dozen highly used TriMet routes, including Lines 2, 4, 14, 20, and 72. A few of the projects have already been completed during an initial pilot phase—including a bus-only lane over the Burnside Bridge, which PBOT Director Chris Warner highlighted in a presentation to City Council:

"We wouldn't be presenting a vision this bold if we didn't have proof that transit priority works," Warner said, adding that bus lines that use the Burnside Bridge already experience fewer traffic delays.

While all commissioners expressed appreciation for the plan, Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty questioned whether it would do enough to help commuters in East Portland, given that the majority of identified projects are located closer to the city center.

“I’m more concerned about what’s happening in neighborhoods like mine with a very limited transportation infrastructure,” she said. “We’re not starting on an even playing field.”

Eudaly answered that PBOT was focused on improving the system holistically, and that “if you’re waiting for a late bus in East Portland, it’s probably because it got stuck in traffic downtown.”

Hardesty also raised issues about limited TriMet service in East Portland—meaning the number of buses that run and the scope of TriMet routes. If TriMet wasn't running enough buses to serve people's needs, Hardesty reasoned, making them arrive on time thanks to Rose Lanes would only accomplish so much.

Eudaly said those are factors outside of PBOT’s control.

“We can’t fix all of the inequities in our transportation system with one project through PBOT,” Eudaly said.

Representatives from TriMet who spoke at the meeting were supportive of the Rose Lane Project, and said they hope to soon add more bus service using new state funds. But they made no promises. Bernie Bottomly, TriMet’s director of public affairs, said the routes targeted by PBOT’s plan are also “the lines we want to improve and add service to... because these are the lines that connect to those communities.”

Eudaly said she had “hoped for a greater commitment” from TriMet, and that she worried that no hard promise for increased service “may dampen public enthusiasm.”

Another factor outside of PBOT’s control is streets owned by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)—state highways that double as major Portland commute roads, like SE Powell, SW Barbur, and East 82nd. As part of its report on the Rose Lane Project, PBOT included a study into how much more effective the project would be if it could include projects on SE 82nd. Using access to jobs within a 45-minute commute as a metric, the study found that adding a Rose Lane to 82nd would increase that access by 31 percent for all Portlanders, and even more (34 percent) for people of color.

PBOT staffers said they hope to partner with ODOT to add a Rose Lane to 82nd in the future.

Thursday’s meeting also included input from 30 public commenters, most of whom were positive about the project. Many wore rose lapels, rose pins, or red clothing to show their excitement about the project.

Those supporters included a retired TriMet scheduler, and a current TriMet bus operator, who said he’s “witnessed firsthand the snowball effect of traffic delays.”

“The Rose Lane Project will bring people back to the bus,” he added.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Complex redevelopment scheme forming

By Chuck Slothower

February 14, 2020

The Broadway Corridor master plan is beginning to come into focus, but fundamental questions remain unsolved as the Portland Design Commission begins to evaluate the 32-acre proposal.

Prosper Portland's grand plan to remake the former U.S. Postal Service property into a mixed-used neighborhood with affordable and market-rate housing, retail and office space, parks and a bike-friendly Green Loop still needs substantial work, design commissioners said at a hearing Thursday.

Commissioners picked apart elements including buildings' podium heights, the curb-less Green Loop on the North Park Blocks and the arrangement of buildings on developable blocks. Prosper Portland and ZGF Architects are requesting approval of the master plan as provided by the Central City 2035 Plan.

Phasing emerged as another key issue. Design commissioners said they want to ensure parks and other public infrastructure will be built alongside buildings, and are not left for later when a recession or budget issues could mean they never happen.

"There needs to be enough ... solid information to make sure that the public benefits that have been promised as part of the process are delivered," Commissioner Zari Santner said.

The Portland Bureau of Transportation is conducting a traffic demand management study, and design commissioners are examining parking within the Broadway Corridor. Commissioner Jessica Molinar expressed concern that Northwest Kearney Street would be overburdened with cars entering and exiting from buildings on the street. Kearney and Irving are intended to serve as the main traffic arteries, with Johnson serving as a pedestrian-friendly retail atmosphere.

"This isn't just typical design review guidelines," said Kurt Krueger, development review division manager for PBOT. "It's meaty stuff that this commission is not used to dealing with."

Krueger said it's critical that the city lay the groundwork for the future, when different design commissioners and city staff will evaluate projects filling in the area.

"We want to set up a framework that whoever is sitting in these seats in 10 years can pick up and understand what we're doing here in the next couple of months," he said.

Commissioners pushed back on some aspects of ZGF Architects' proposal for Prosper Portland. They questioned the city's preference for 100-foot-tall building podiums.

"I'd say 100 feet is out of context for a podium in the Pearl (District), let alone a podium in Portland," Molinar said.

Santner urged the city not to treat the open space as an afterthought. She said she was "disappointed" the master plan doesn't have a fully expressed design to bookend the Park Blocks.

"The open space in this development is the terminus of more than 24 blocks of open space from (Portland State University) on down," she said. "There needs to be something very significant to signify the terminus. ... I hope you pay attention to that."

The project must also meet the needs of Continuum Partners, the Denver-based development advisor that would have the inside track on developing key parcels. The firm's CEO, Mark Falcone, did not promptly return messages seeking comment.

Prosper Portland and ZGF are scheduled to return before the Design Commission on April 16 for another hearing on the master plan.

OPB

Calls For Civil Rights Investigation Grow Over 2017 Arrest Of Black Portland Man

*By Conrad Wilson
February 14, 2020*

The chorus of voices calling out an egregious case of racially motivated policing involving officers from West Linn and Portland now extends from the halls of Congress to the Oregon governor's office and throughout the Portland region.

Members of Oregon's congressional delegation and the entire Portland City Council have called on Oregon's U.S. Attorney Billy Williams to investigate whether civil rights laws were broken in the 2017 arrest of a Portland man, Michael Fesser.

Late Friday, leaders in West Linn added their voices to the call for an federal investigation.

"The case is complicated and concerning," the entire West Linn council wrote to federal prosecutors. "It involves multiple decisions over the last three years that need to be fully evaluated."

Fesser was surveilled by West Linn police officers after reporting racial harassment to his boss, Eric Benson, the owner of Southeast Portland's A&B Towing.

Rather than address the concerns, Benson asked his friend, former West Linn Police Chief Terry Timeus, to investigate allegations that Fesser was stealing from the company.

West Linn Police officers surveilled Fesser and ultimately arrested him on Feb. 25, 2017, with the assistance of five Portland police officers without probable cause. Fesser sued West Linn and received a \$600,000 settlement, which was first reported by the Oregonian/OregonLive this week, setting off the firestorm of response from public officials.

"We strongly believe a federal investigation is also merited into the possibility of federal violations that might suggest a civil rights violation rising to the level of criminal offenses," U.S. Sens. Jeff Merkley, Ron Wyden and U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer wrote in a letter to Williams on Thursday.

"All Oregonians must have full confidence that law enforcement at every level will treat them with fairness and without prejudice motivated by race or personal animus."

A spokesman for the U.S. Attorney's office confirmed they received the letter, but said they can't comment on any potential investigation.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown also ordered the state's Department of Public Safety Standards and Training to swiftly and thoroughly review the case.

“If what Oregonians are hearing about this case is true, everything about it is egregious, horrific, and completely unacceptable,” Brown said in a statement. “Law enforcement officers take a pledge to uphold the law and keep everyone safe—which is the opposite of active abuse of power, cronyism, hate crimes, and obstruction of justice.”

West Linn City Councilor Jules Walters said the settlement was discussed at the city council meeting Monday evening.

The money came from the city’s insurance company, raising questions about how much city officials knew about details of the case.

Walters said despite hearing about the case during an executive session, she learned more after reading the Oregonian article. Because the settlement conversation took place during an executive session, Walters said she couldn’t provide specifics about what was discussed in the meeting versus what details she learned from the newspaper account.

“From reading the article, I read facts that I had not heard before,” she said. “I was extremely upset and morally outraged this is happened in our city.”

West Linn City Councilor Richard Sakelik said there’s an interference clause in the city’s charter that prevents elected officials from interfering with employee matters. Still, he believes the council — and the public — deserve more information.

“I want to get to the truth of what happened,” Sakelik said. “Who knew what? When? With all these investigations, I think that will happen.”

In their letter, Portland’s elected leaders sought to distance Portland Police from the incident, writing in a public letter they were “appalled by the alleged abuses of power” by Timeus and Sgt. Tony Reeves, who was also involved in the surveillance.

On Wednesday, West Linn put Reeves on paid administrative leave, pending the outcome of an investigation started by district attorneys in Multnomah and Clackamas counties.

“We are particularly distressed by the fact that West Linn involved the Portland Police Bureau in this incident through what appeared to be a routine request for assistance in effecting an arrest,” Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioners Amanda Fritz, Jo Ann Hardesty and Chole Eudaly wrote in their letter. “This type of misconduct cannot be tolerated anywhere. It will not be tolerated in Portland.”

The leaders noted the Portland Police Bureau is conducting an internal affairs investigation. And they said they welcomed the DA’s investigation “to determine to what extent Portland resources, including PPB and Portland Bureau of Emergency Management, were used under false pretexts.”

In addition to placing West Linn Sgt. Reeves on paid leave, current West Linn Police Chief Terry Kruger noted this week that the arrest took place three years ago and that Reeves is the only police officer involved who remains on the force.

Kruger suggested the department is in a different place than it was under Chief Timeus.

“The former Chief, Captain and Lieutenant involved, no longer work here. Three Sergeants, one Detective and thirteen Officers have also left service from the City of West Linn in that same timeframe,” Kruger wrote Wednesday. “All in a department of 30 sworn personnel.”

West Linn Councilor Sakelik said he too learned of Reeves’ involvement in the surveillance from the newspaper article, after Monday’s city council executive session.

“Our council was never advised by any city staff that Mr. Reese had done any of these things,” Sakelik said. “The residents of the city are up in arms. Everyone wants to know why was this guy on our payroll for two years.”

Further Reading (linked below)

The paradox of yes: Responding to homelessness with ideas big and small