

The Oregonian

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler declares state of emergency due to coronavirus

By Everton Bailey Jr.

March 12, 2020

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler on Thursday declared a state of emergency in the city due to the ongoing spread of coronavirus.

The announcement came during a news conference in Portland featuring state and county officials, where Gov. Kate Brown also announced restrictions on statewide gatherings and other provisions to slow virus infections. Oregon has 21 known cases of COVID-19 as of Thursday.

Wheeler said the declaration allows the city “additional authority to properly address the threat of infection and harm,” which the city charter says could include setting curfews, regulating the sale of certain items, enforcing rent control, limiting how many people can gather and ordering evacuations.

It is slated to remain in effect until March 26.

[\[Read the state of emergency declaration\]](#)

Wheeler said the city will explain specific actions it’ll take in connection with the declaration in the coming days. The city has the option of extending the state of emergency.

A Portland City Council meeting scheduled for Thursday afternoon was cancelled as a precaution.

Wheeler said the city will continue to provide water, sewer and stormwater services to residents during the state of emergency regardless of whether they can pay their bills. He said the city will work to help small and large businesses recoup losses from cancelled events and loss of sales.

Non-essential city gatherings have been cancelled or postponed to protect city employees and visitors, and the city will also stop city employee non-mandatory traveling for meetings or conferences, the mayor said. He said the city will encourage more teleconferencing and urge “vulnerable employees to stay home for as long as they need too.”

The mayor said a city task force will be established to come up with other ideas to address economic losses related to coronavirus.

Wheeler also reiterated city actions announced during a council meeting Wednesday: the city will keep winter shelters open for the homeless population, provide motel vouchers to people staying in shelters who are 60 or older with pre-existing health conditions, and distribute portable toilets and hand washing stations throughout the city.

Emergency handwashing stations

Need to find a place to wash your hands? Here are the city's emergency hygiene stations

He said the virus has caused Portland nonprofits to cancel yearly fundraisers, impacted arts and cultural institutions and put people at risk of being laid off.

“Portlanders have always looked out for each other, but now I’m asking you, particularly at this time, to help your neighbors who might need help,” Wheeler said.

The Portland Water Bureau urges anyone facing financial hardship over the next two weeks in paying their water utility bills to call their customer service line at 503-823-7770.

City officials said handwashing stations were installed at the following locations Wednesday:

- Southeast Grand Avenue and Alder Street
- Southeast Third Avenue and Ash Street
- Outside St. Francis of Assisi along Southeast Oak Street
- Southwest Naito Parkway and Morrison Street
- Northwest 29th Avenue and Industrial Street
- Southeast 79th Avenue and Powell Boulevard
- Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Union Court

There are also portable toilets with hand washing stations inside at these areas:

- Northwest 17th Avenue and Savier Street
- Southeast Water Avenue and Morrison Street
- Entrance to Springwater Corridor at Southeast Ivon Street
- Northeast Cully Boulevard and Prescott Street
- North Going Street and Interstate Avenue
- Southeast Division Street before Multi-Use Path entrance
- Southeast 92nd Avenue and SE Flavel Street

Need to find a place to wash your hands? Here are the city's emergency hygiene stations

By Molly Harbarger

March 13, 2020

The city of Portland has deployed 14 places to wash your hands so that people who don't have ready access to bathrooms can try to stay clean during the novel coronavirus outbreak.

The city plans to place six more soon, and may add stations as the outbreak continues.

A map with all the locations will be updated as stations are added or moved. You can find it here: [Portland Emergency Hygiene Stations](#)

Here's where you can find a temporary station to wash your hands with water as of Thursday, March 12.

Portable toilets with handwashing stations inside:

- Northwest 17th Ave. and Northwest Savier St.
- Southeast Water Ave. and Southeast Morrison St.
- Entrance to Springwater Corridor at Southeast Ivon St.
- Northeast Cully Blvd. and Northeast Prescott St.
- North Going St. and North Interstate Ave.
- Southeast Division St. before entrance multi-use path along Interstate 205
- Southeast 92nd Ave. and Southeast Flavel St.
- Standalone handwashing stations:
- Southeast Grand Ave. and Southeast Alder St. by Jacksons convenience store
- Southeast 3rd Ave. and Southeast Ash St.

- Outside St. Francis of Assisi, 1131 SE Oak St.
- Southwest Naito Parkway and Southwest Morrison St.
- Northwest 29th Ave. and Northwest Industrial St.
- Southeast 79th Ave. and Southeast Powell Blvd.
- Northeast MLK Blvd. and North Union Court near Delta Park

Planned additional toilets/standalone handwashing stations:

- Interstate 5 and North Lombard
- Southeast Burnside entrance to Interstate 205 multi-use path
- West side of Steel Bridge at Day Storage
- Northeast Cesar Chavez Blvd. and Northeast Halsey St.
- Laurelhurst Park, Southeast 37th Ave. and Southeast Oak St.
- Southwest 1st Ave. and Southwest Couch
- There are two other toilets with handwashing capabilities that have been deployed for a few weeks at Peninsula Crossing Trail and Northwest 6th Ave. and Northwest Davis St.
- A toilet with an internal handwashing station is also located at NW 6th & Davis

Portland announces first coronavirus actions, including help for the homeless and limits on large city gatherings

*By Everton Bailey Jr.
March 12, 2020*

With coronavirus spreading in Oregon, Portland officials announced Wednesday that they will temporarily relocate some adults in homeless shelters who are particularly vulnerable to the virus to motels.

The announcement was prompted by an outburst during a City Council meeting by spectators demanding to know the city's response to coronavirus.

Mayor Ted Wheeler told the audience that the state is leading the effort to respond to the virus, and county and city officials are coordinating with them so there is a consistent response. He said city employees have been encouraged to stay home if they feel ill, city bureaus have been told to limit large gatherings to lower the chances of transmitting COVID-19, that winter emergency shelters would remain open regardless of the weather and staff have been advised to "keep people at appropriate distance."

He said people staying in shelter who are 60 or older with pre-existing health conditions will be moved temporarily into motels and other locations for their safety and the safety of other people. He didn't say if that process had begun.

"This situation will change on a daily, if not hourly, basis going forward," Wheeler said.

CORONAVIRUS IN OREGON: THE LATEST NEWS

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly said portable toilets and hand washing stations will be placed in 14 locations across the city and that the Portland Bureau of Transportation issued the permits Wednesday morning. It's unclear where those locations will be.

At least two people were expelled from the meeting for yelling for an explanation during someone else's public testimony. The outburst came while resident Charles BridgeCrane

Johnson said that he wanted to see more money devoted to virus prevention efforts for Portlanders who live in poverty.

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty told Johnson the city planned to increase its response to the contagious disease to ensure the safety of its vulnerable populations. When she asked him to help “dispel the myth that the city council is somehow sitting on their hands and just waiting to see what’s going to happen,” two spectators yelled back that it “wasn’t a myth.”

“Where’s the plan, Ted?” yelled activist Mimi German as she approached the table in front of the councilors’ dais. Wheeler said she was in violation of city council rules would be escorted out if she didn’t stop.

The council chambers were cleared when she and another local activist continued to demand to hear the city’s plan to deal with coronavirus.

Eudaly said she recently spoke with Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden about the Senate passing a \$8.3 billion coronavirus emergency funding bill, which Sen. Jeff Merkley helped write. Both senators also helped secure funding.

Eudaly said she also supports a temporary suspension of rental evictions during the health crisis and was looking into how possible it would be to freeze rent increases during the period as well.

“While I’m deeply concerned about public health, I’m also incredibly concerned about the economic impact to our local economy and especially to residents who can’t sustain the loss of a single paycheck,” she said.

Hardesty said the council hasn’t had any conversations related to a rent freeze or eviction moratorium and said she hadn’t made any decisions on regulating anything in connection with the coronavirus.

“I don’t want people getting out of control about what we will do and won’t do,” Hardesty said. “I think we have to look at the whole picture on who’s being impacted most severely and come up with the best policies we can.”

The announcements are among the first city-specific public responses made in connection with the virus, which has infected 19 people in Oregon in nine counties thus far, including one patient from Multnomah County who is receiving treatment at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Portland.

Portland officials announced Wednesday that a public gathering scheduled next week to celebrate the reopening of the Portland Building is being postponed amid health concerns over the coronavirus.

“Experts tell us that large gatherings create opportunities to transmit the virus, which compromises the safety of senior citizens, people with underlying health conditions and others who are especially vulnerable,” said Portland Office of Management and Finance spokesperson Heather Hafer in a statement. A new date for the event hasn’t been announced.

The reopening of the Portland Building, which houses the city’s administrative staff adjacent to City Hall, was meant to publicly commemorate the end of two years of renovations. The building reopened in January.

Some West Coast cities have instituted bans on gatherings due to coronavirus. Crowds of more than 250 aren’t allowed in the Seattle area, and San Francisco announced Wednesday that all gatherings of more than 1,000 people are prohibited.

No such ban has been instituted in Portland as of mid-day Wednesday and the regularly scheduled city council meeting went on as planned.

The city has been coordinating daily with the Multnomah County Public Health Department on how to respond to the virus, said Dan Douthit, a Portland Bureau of Emergency Management spokesperson. He said the city has been deferring to the county on safety guidance and any decision the city makes regarding crowd gatherings would be done “in concert with Multnomah County.”

City officials said they’ve been focused on communications internally and sending out coronavirus-related information to the public via social media.

Portland Parks and Recreation said no facilities have been closed because of the virus. A chorus concert scheduled Wednesday night at the Multnomah Arts Center has been cancelled. Bureau officials said hand sanitizer stations have been put in the lobbies of public facilities and staff have increased the sanitizing of pools and community centers.

The Portland Tribune

Portland cancels special event permits because of COVID-19

*By Jim Redden
March 12, 2020*

Cancelled events include St. Patrick's Day celebrations and fundraisers for non-profit organizations

Permits for special events in Portland were revoked on Thursday through April 12 because of Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's ban on large gatherings.

Brown banned gatherings of more than 250 people to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus on March 8. The Portland Bureau of Transportation announced the revocations after 5 p.m. on March 12.

"The bureau will provide refunds for any fees already charged to event organizers, under direction from Transportation Director Chris Warner. PBOT is also warning organizers of events scheduled for beyond the four week window that conditions and instructions may change in the coming weeks," PBOT said.

The previously scheduled events include:

- St Agatha's St Patrick's Day Parade and Event, March 14
- Shamrock Run, March 15
- NE St Patrick's Day Parade, March 15
- Jake's Famous Crawfish St. Patrick's Day, March 17
- Paddy's St Patrick's Day, March 17
- Punjabi Memorial, March 21
- Baltimore Woods Native Plant Sale, March 28
- First Thursday and River Pig Saloon, April 2
- Bridge to Brews, April 5

- Union Gospel Mission Easter Brunch, April 12

According to the announcement, PBOT, through the Portland in the Streets program, issues Special Event Permits to allow moving events on city streets or sidewalks. Types of events include marches, parades, athletic events, and demonstrations.

Infill plan amendment hearing postponed

By Jim Redden

March 12, 2020

UPDATE: The City Council abruptly postpones the March 12 hearing on Residential Infill Project amendments

The City Council abruptly posted the scheduled March 12 hearings on several proposed amendments to the Residential Infill Plan.

Instead, the council hearing will now be held on April 9. The public can continue commenting on them until then here..

The most controversial amendment will likely be the Deeper Affordability Bonus Amendment. It would allow up to six units on lots in single-family zones if half of them were affordable to households earning 60% or less of the area median family income.

The amendment would also offer size bonuses for qualifying structures, allowing them to be up to 6,000 square feet. The median house in Portland is 1,500 square feet.

The amendment was proposed by nonprofit affordable housing providers, including Habitat for Humanity. They argue it would help them produce more housing that lower-income families can afford in desirable parts of Portland.

The amendment is opposed by some neighborhood activist and preservationists. They say it will change the character of the city by encouraging the demolition and replacement of existing lower-cost homes with housing that is out of scale with the surrounding neighborhoods.

The plan would essentially rezone all single-family neighborhoods in Portland to encourage more and different kinds of housing for the 100,000 additional households expected to be here by 2035. As currently proposed, it allows more density than required by HB 2001, which was approved by the 2019 Oregon Legislature. That bill allows duplexes on most lots and up to four units on portions of existing single-family neighborhoods.

The plan has been in the works for four years and has undergone numerous changes. It is unclear when the council will hold the final vote.

You can learn more about the plan at beta.portland.gov/bps/rip.

Wheeler declares COVID-19 State of Emergency

By Jim Redden

March 12, 2020

UPDATE: Mayor declares emergency day after discussing city response at council meeting

Mayor Ted Wheeler announced a COVID-19 State of Emergency on Thursday morning.

The announcement came one day after Wheeler discussed the following responses to the outbreak at a Wednesday, March 11, City Council meeting:

Homeless people in Multnomah County most at risk of the COVID-19 virus are being moved out of emergency shelters and into motels and other locations.

Emergency winter shelters are also staying open for other homeless people, who are being directed to stay a safe distance from one another and staff.

In addition, the Portland is preparing to deploy 14 portable hand-washing stations around the city, seven of which will also have portable toilets.

And city workers who feel ill are being told to stay home, even while large gathers of those reporting to work are being canceled.

Later Thursday morning, Wheeler's office released a list of other steps the city is taking, including:

- During the State of Emergency, water service will not be disconnected for non-payment of sewer/stormwater/water bills.
- We will convene a COVID-19 Economic Impact Task Force to generate ideas for a stimulus package to help small and large businesses recoup losses from canceled events and loss of business.

The responses were first revealed during an unplanned discussion at the City Council on the morning of Wednesday, March 11. It happened after protesters disrupted the meeting about 45 minutes after it began. They demanded to know what the city was doing to protect the homeless.

Mayor Ted Wheeler temporarily adjourned the meeting while some of the protesters were escorted out of the Council Chambers. When the meeting resumed, Wheeler presented the first public overview of the city's response to the outbreak. He explained that because Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has declared a state of emergency, the Oregon Health Authority is in charge of the Incident Command Structure.

Second in line are counties, Wheeler said, because they have public health departments. Portland has embedded employees from the Bureau of Emergency Management at the command center in the county to share information and coordinate its response.

Despite the explanation, Wheeler noted, "This situation will change on a daily, if not hourly basis, going forward."

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty added to the sense of uncertainty, saying, "We don't know what we don't know yet."

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly said she supported a ban on evictions and rent increases during the outbreak, although no such measure has been introduced. Hardesty cautioned that the council has only begun such discussion, however, and that she was not yet prepared to support such bans.

Multnomah County is maintaining a website with information on COVID-19 and the responses to it, including the new emergency shelter policies Wheeler discussed, at multco.us/novel-coronavirus-covid-19.

Willamette Week

Where to Find Portland's Emergency Handwashing and Toilet Facilities

By Nigel Jaquiss

March 12, 2020

Officials have placed sinks and port-a-potties around the city in an attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Part of the city of Portland's emergency efforts to slow the spread of the coronavirus is a system of newly-placed portable toilets and hand-washing stations.

City officials first announced the additional stations Wednesday, and released a list of locations today. Portland City Hall is trying to increase hygiene in a city where a disproportionately large share of the population sleeps on the streets. Homeless people don't have easy access to sinks and faucets, so the city hopes this will help.

[Here is a map of those facilities and below is a list of the addresses.](#)

Portable Toilets (with interior handwashing stations):

In place as of March 11:

1. NW 17th and NW Savier
2. SE Water and SE Morrison
3. Entrance to Springwater Corridor at Ivon
4. NE Cully and NE Prescott
5. N Going and Interstate
6. SE Division before entrance MUP
7. SE 92nd and SE Flavel

Standalone Handwashing Stations:

In place as of March 11:

1. Grand and Alder by Jacksons
2. SE 3rd and SE Ash
3. St. Francis
4. SW Naito and SW Morrison
5. NW 29th and NW Industrial
6. SE 79th and SE Powell
7. NE MLK and Union Ct. (near Delta Park)

Mayor Ted Wheeler Declares a State of Emergency in Portland

By Nigel Jaquiss

March 12, 2020

The city will limit large gatherings, provide additional sanitation for homeless people and maintain city utility services for non-payers.

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler this morning declared a state of emergency in the city.

"This is a decision I don't take lightly given the broad implications, but due to COVID-19's progression on the West Coast, I believe that it's in the best interest of public health to declare a state of emergency at this time," Wheeler said at a press conference Thursday morning.

"Portlanders have always looked out for each other, but now I'm asking you particularly at this time to help your neighbors who might need help."

Here's how his office described the effect of that declaration, which comes on the heels of similar actions by Gov. Kate Brown:

The declaration gives the City additional powers to properly address the threat of infection and harm including—but not limited to—limiting mass public gatherings if necessary to stop the potential spread of infection. It also gives the City the tools necessary to support the County, the State and city employees. Portland City Code—viewable at [this link](#)—describes the powers afforded the Mayor in a declared State of Emergency.

Here are the latest actions the City is specifically taking:

During the State of Emergency, water service will not be disconnected for non-payment of sewer/stormwater/water bills.

We will convene a COVID-19 Economic Impact Task Force to generate ideas for a stimulus package to help small and large businesses recoup losses from canceled events and loss of business.

We are expanding community hygiene stations citywide.

We are assisting shelter providers to keep winter shelters open.

We are protecting the thousands of city employees and its visitors by postponing or canceling non-essential work gatherings.

We are stopping non-essential travel for meetings and conferences and encouraging vulnerable employees to stay home for as long as they need to.

The Portland Mercury

Portland Declares State of Emergency Over COVID-19

By Alex Zielinski

March 12, 2020

Mayor Ted Wheeler has declared a state of emergency in Portland in response to the spreading COVID-19 virus.

Former Pentatonix member Avi Kaplan with Paper Wings at Revolution Hall on March 16.

"It gives the city additional authority to properly address the threat of infection and harm," Wheeler said at a morning press conference, where Governor Kate Brown announced new restrictions to statewide gatherings.

This declaration, which gives Wheeler power to prohibit the number of people who gather in public spaces, will remain in effect until March 26—but it can be extended in two-week increments. While a Portland mayor is legally allowed to take control of all city bureaus after a state of emergency is declared, Wheeler's declaration notes that "the current bureau assignment to the members of City Council shall remain in effect as delegated."

Under a state of emergency, Portland's city code also allows a mayor to coordinate with public and private relief agencies, order evacuations, establish a curfew, enforce rent control, and blockade streets, among other things. None of those actions have yet been taken.

Wheeler told reporters Thursday that he's considering cancelling or limiting city council meetings. "At a minimum we will implement social distancing requirements," he said, "but everything is on the table."

Wheeler said the city will refrain from shutting off water due to unpaid bills during the state of emergency.

"The city has decided to do this to ensure that everyone has access to the utilities they need to stay healthy and not worry for the time being if they're going through a financial hardship," said Wheeler.

Wheeler said the city has expanded the number of portable toilets and public hand-washing stations, and has expanded shelter bed capacity for houseless Portlanders by opening emergency shelters and dispersing hotel room vouchers. The city has also postponed non-essential work gatherings and travel for city employees during the state of emergency.

Wheeler announced plans to build a city task force to address the economic losses caused by COVID-19 concerns.

"COVID-19 has been jarring for every one of us," Wheeler said. "Nonprofits have had to cancel yearly fundraisers. Arts and cultural institutions will be severely impacted. Small and large businesses are already developing contingency. People are at risk of being laid off. I share this to tell you that we see, we hear, and we understand the anxiety and fears that people are expressing."

He continued: "I want to say this loud and clear: All of us here are working round-the-clock to make sure your health and your safety are protected. We're making every decision with that priority in mind."

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Updated: Community development eyed for Hill Block parcel

*By Chuck Slothower
March 12, 2020*

Prosper Portland's board voted unanimously Wednesday to bring the historic Hill Block parcel into the Interstate Urban Renewal Area.

The move expands the urban renewal area's geographic boundaries to include the 1.7-acre block. The board also agreed to raise the URA's debt cap by \$67 million to allow funding for development.

The moves indicate the future of the Hill Block parcel – stakeholders now prefer to call it Williams and Russell – is beginning to come into focus after more than two years of study, outreach and conversation that were preceded by decades of inaction and neglect by city and health care leaders.

Raising the URA's debt cap provides capacity for an injection of tax-increment funding to redevelop the vacant block in North Portland. Approximately \$45 million will be available for affordable housing and \$20 million for economic development, said Lisa Abuaf, development manager for Prosper Portland. Other dollars will cover administrative costs.

The board's approval followed tense testimony from some residents who said the agency is repeating past mistakes and not adequately consulting with the African-American community. Prosper Portland officials disagreed, saying that after extensive discussions by a project work group led by African-American community members, it was time to move forward.

“What I'm struggling to understand is why there continues to be such tension,” Prosper Portland Commissioner Alisha Moreland-Capuia said. “I don't think the history is lost on any of us. We can't revise history, but we certainly can work to reconcile it, and that is what we have earnestly set as our goals. I understand the anger is real, but we're not going to get anywhere if that's where we stand.”

The parcel between North Russell and Knott streets and North Williams and Vancouver avenues is fraught with the troublesome history of Portland redevelopment. It was home to a large commercial building that was a center for black commerce before its demolition in the early 1970s by the city of Portland and the Portland Development Commission (now Prosper Portland) for a planned Emanuel Hospital expansion.

That expansion never happened, and the increasingly valuable parcel has since sat vacant. In 2017, Prosper Portland officials rediscovered deed language requiring Legacy Health Systems to develop the property. That led to an August 2017 public announcement of a joint effort to plan for the property's future.

A move in August 2017 to bring the property within the URA was halted after neighborhood leaders protested at a Prosper Portland board meeting that they were not adequately consulted. A work group made up of church, community and city representatives was formed and given broad powers to shape the property's future. The group has met 19 times and conducted public outreach.

“They spent much of the past couple of years focused on two key areas: Understanding the development-related opportunities and constraints, and where community resources could come from,” Abuaf said. “And, also, undertaking community outreach to understand what are the community priorities on the site.”

Two members of the North/Northeast Community Development Initiative board voted against increasing the URA’s maximum indebtedness. The co-chairs, Gwen Thompson and Maurice Rahming, registered their concerns in a letter to Prosper Portland Executive Director Kimberly Branam.

“Our support depends on the successful transfer of the Legacy-owned property to an African-American community organization or significant progress towards this goal,” Thompson and Rahming wrote.

They also expressed concern that setting aside funding to develop the property while Legacy Health Systems still owns it “sends the wrong message.”

“We strongly recommend,” the letter states, “when working with a large corporation with a history of predatory development in the North-Northeast community, that you exercise caution and provide appropriate consideration to the message this sends to the impacted and displaced community.”

At Wednesday’s meeting, Branam said the agency’s current drive to develop the site is an attempt to ameliorate, rather than extend, the city’s 20th-century land grab.

“There is nobody on the board or on staff that is an apologist for urban renewal,” she said.

Legacy Health Systems has agreed, in a memorandum of understanding, to donate the block to a development team selected by the work group. The group is preparing an initial request for interest from developers, nonprofits and any other organizations that want to participate in the project. The request for interest is likely to be issued after the work group meets in April, Abuaf said. A request for proposals would follow this fall, she said.

The Portland Housing Bureau is involved with an eye toward providing affordable housing on the parcel, Abuaf said.

“PHB is a key partner on this one,” she said. “Affordable homeownership or rental units are a priority coming out of that conversation.”

Prosper Portland has not modeled development scenarios for the site, Abuaf said.

“We really have started with what are the project working group’s priorities for the site, and undertaking a pretty robust community engagement process,” she said.

Officials are well aware of the possibilities for a sizable parcel in an increasingly dense area of urban Portland.

“It’s a pretty large parcel, so you could have multiple uses on the site and perhaps multiple projects,” Abuaf said.

The Portland Business Journal

Portland Harbor Superfund cleanup hits possible snag

By Pete Danko
March 12, 2020

Four companies are ratcheting up their fight to downsize the Portland Harbor Superfund site cleanup.

Evraz Inc., Gunderson LLC (a Greenbrier Cos. unit), Schnitzer Steel Industries Inc. and Vigor Industrial LLC made their case in a letter this week to Andrew Wheeler, administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and in a 123-page petition to the agency.

The four are all potentially responsible parties liable for the cost of cleaning up portions of the site.

They say data collected in 2018 shows the site isn't as polluted as it used to be and requires far less extensive active cleanup than ordered by the EPA.

The agency in January 2017 broadly outlined a plan — in bureaucratese, the “remedy” in a “record of decision” — for cleaning up the polluted 10-mile stretch of the Willamette River. It called for dredging 248 acres, capping 150 acres and removing 3 million cubic yards of sediment, all at an estimated cost of \$1.05 billion.

EPA expected new data to inform the detailed cleanup plans that would flow from the remedy.

But the four companies say that's not enough and will still result in a cleanup that will be more extensive and expensive than is necessary.

They're demanding higher contamination thresholds — “remedial action levels,” or RALs, which factor into whether areas are capped, dredged or allowed to recover naturally under monitoring.

The agency said Thursday it was reviewing the petition, which was dated Monday, and would have no further comment at this time.

The companies have made their case to the EPA before, and been told the new data “will have an impact on the data-dependent determinations to be made under the” record of decision. But the agency did not agree the remedial action levels should be updated.

Whether the petition changes that — perhaps by getting the attention of higher-ups in the Trump administration — remains to be seen. In either case, it's another complicating factor in a saga that began in 2000, when the site was added to the federal government's Superfund list.

The petition came the same week the EPA announced eight new agreements on the detailed cleanup plans. A bit more than half the acreage intended to undergo active remediation is now covered under what are known as remedial design agreements.

The EPA had hoped to have all of the agreements in place by the end of 2019, however, and the agency has signaled its growing impatience. It said through a spokesperson that “for those areas of the Portland Harbor Superfund site where good faith negotiations are not underway to perform remedial design, EPA plans to use enforcement measures, including issuing orders and other mechanisms, to facilitate performance of remedial design in those areas.”

The Business Journal contacted two of the four companies for comment and was referred to a Washington lobbyist who declined to comment on the record.

The Skanner

Postponed: 2020 Portlanders Stand with Refugees & Immigrants Celebration

March 12, 2020

Per direction from Oregon Governor Kate Brown, all events with more than 250 expected attendees must be postponed – and Mayor Wheeler has asked that events in Portland be limited to no more than 25 people. That guidance affects several events which Portland Parks & Recreation had been planning to host or to present, including the popular Portlanders Stand with Refugees & Immigrants event, which will not take place as planned on March 19. They will be at work to reschedule it, and provide updates as able.

Portland Parks & Recreation has monitored the COVID-19 situation since it began. In a press release today, the department says they continue to be in communication with, and follow the guidance of, the Oregon Health Authority, Multnomah County Health Department, and the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management regarding COVID-19.

They added that they continue increased efforts to clean and sanitize Portland Parks & Recreation facilities.

For more info, please visit portlandoregon.gov/parks/covid-19.

Mayor Ted Wheeler Declares a State of Emergency

March 12, 2020

Due to the progression of COVID-19 on the west coast, Mayor Ted Wheeler has declared a State of Emergency in the City of Portland. Mayor Wheeler signed the Emergency Declaration on Thursday, March 12, 2020. The declaration gives the City additional powers to properly address the threat of infection and harm including—but not limited to—limiting mass public gatherings if necessary to stop the potential spread of infection. It also gives the City the tools necessary to support the County, the State and city employees. Portland City Code describes the powers afforded the Mayor in a declared State of Emergency.

Here are the latest actions the City is specifically taking:

- During the State of Emergency, water service will not be disconnected for non-payment of sewer/stormwater/water bills.
- They will convene a COVID-19 Economic Impact Task Force to generate ideas for a stimulus package to help small and large businesses recoup losses from canceled events and loss of business.
- Community hygiene stations are expanding citywide.
- Shelter providers will receive assistance to keep winter shelters open.
- Non-essential work gatherings are postponed or canceled for city employees.
- There will be no non-essential travel for meetings and conferences and the City is encouraging vulnerable employees to stay home for as long as they need to.

There are likely more actions to come. For updates, visit the City of Portland's Mayor's Office webpage.

OPB

Cramped In Shelters And Campsites, Portland's Homeless Brace For Coronavirus

By Rebecca Ellis

March 12, 2020

It's near the top of the CDC's list of ways to steer clear of COVID-19: Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Or, in reverse: If you're sick, go home.

But for the 4,000 Portlanders with no bedroom of their own, finding space to recuperate — or stay away from those showing symptoms — is no easy feat.

Take Doreen's Place, located on the ground floor of downtown Portland's Bud Clark Commons. The shelter fits 90, tightly. Men sleep in rows of bunk beds, four deep, with about three feet of space between them. The beds are bolted to the floor and confined by partial walls.

Ideal for a bit of privacy and access to wall outlets. Less suitable for social distancing.

"It's a setup like we used to have [with] the old barracks in the service," said Deon, who sleeps in one of the shelter's 45 beds reserved for people who've served in the military. "So the veterans are used to this type of sleeping arrangement."

Like many experiencing homelessness, Deon, who asked to go by just his first name, is particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus. He's on the older side — he'll turn 50 this month. And he suffers from a chronic medical condition, a lung disease that makes it difficult to breathe. Those are both factors that seem to put people at higher risk of severe symptoms. Plus, he says the air he breathes in Doreen's Place reminds him of that on an airplane: circulating through a lot of people other than him.

After the first Oregon coronavirus case was confirmed two weeks ago, county officials rushed into a series of meetings to get ahead of what could be a potentially devastating explosion among the region's homeless, who are, by and large, older, sicker and in tighter quarters than the rest of the population.

The resulting guidance asked shelter providers to attempt to space out the beds of anyone displaying symptoms of the virus — coughing, fever, shortness of breath — by six feet. Like the flu, that's the furthest distance the coronavirus is thought to travel from person to person.

County officials are making other requests, too: They're asking shelter providers to give people with a "new, worse, or different" cough masks, to post signage about proper sneeze etiquette and to more frequently scrub doorknobs, faucets and keyboards.

Shelter providers say these suggestions are easily doable — and, in most cases, are already underway. Signs urging residents to wash their hands vigorously are fixtures in many a shelter entryway. Some places now break out the bleach wipes hourly.

But finding the room to space out the sick from the healthy in shelters, many of which are specifically designed to fit as many people as possible, will take more time. It's unclear how long.

"This is what's kind of stumping many providers," said Stacy Borke, the senior director of programs for Transition Projects Inc., which runs Doreen's Place. "A recommendation of six feet between beds is ... it's ... it's so much greater than the actual bed spacing."

With 810 beds spread out over nine shelters, Transition Projects is the largest provider of shelter services in the region. Borke says each facility presents its own design quirks that make it difficult, if not impossible, to simply drag a bed a little further away.

"All ideas are on the table and welcome," Borke said. "I think creativity is certainly an option."

Borke said the best strategy right now is to create more room by sheltering fewer people.

As of last week, Transition Projects has temporarily stopped taking in new guests across their shelters. That means when someone like Deon, who recently found housing in Southwest Portland, leave the shelter, the beds won't be filled behind them.

Transition Projects is not the only provider bringing intake to a sudden halt.

In Human Solutions' Gresham women's shelter, people are currently spaced two to three feet apart. Marci Cartagena, the nonprofit's emergency services director, said they're hoping to cut down by 15 to 20 beds by the end of the month. Until then, no new clients will be coming into that shelter – or another in Southeast Portland.

Do Good Multnomah, which operates a shelter for veterans, says their layout in a converted office space gives them a little more leeway. Spokesperson Kim Hunt said last week they were hoping to bring their numbers down by five in order to create a quarantine room.

To counteract the effect this could have in a city with unrelenting demand for shelter beds, county spokesperson Denis Theriault said they're planning on keeping open two winter shelters: one run out of a church in North Portland and the other out of the basement of a county building downtown. Theriault says this will keep an extra 125 beds in the system that usually disappear by springtime.

Motels are another partial solution. Tuesday evening, the county told shelters they could increase their use of motel vouchers to rehouse sick people who won't wear a mask. These are people the county had previously advised providers to remove from their facilities and would otherwise be left sick on the street.

Shelters also have "limited discretion" to use these vouchers on people who are elderly and chronically sick, though Theriault notes there are constraints as to how many vouchers can be used.

Sanitizing and spacing out shelter beds offers partial protection only to half of those experiencing homelessness: the other 51% of Portland's homeless population sleep outside, many clustered in isolated campsites.

These areas pose their own challenges.

Sinks, for example, are hard to come by. Lisa Hawash, an associate professor of practice at Portland State University who has studied the city's lack of hygiene facilities for the homeless, says options are limited to the Portland Loos, social services organizations during the workday,

or a lenient business. (Of course, not all are. A Starbucks in Old Town Chinatown recently stopped giving out the bathroom code because the numbers were “getting around the neighborhood.”)

Misinformation can swirl. Interviews with those experiencing homelessness turned up rumors that the number of Oregon’s cases have mounted to 500 and that a nationwide quarantine was imminent. Others had never heard of the virus.

And, just like the shelters, there’s not a lot of extra space. A tent can work for social distancing – but only if you’re the only one in it.

Cities and counties are trying to find solutions to these challenges. Portland is in the process of installing seven new portable toilets and 25 hand washing stations. Multnomah county is organizing a massive outreach push to hand out blankets, hand sanitizer, masks and informational cards on the virus. Theriault says the effort is akin to a point-in-time count, where providers fan out across the county to count the number of people experiencing homelessness on a single night.

And the county’s making a familiar ask of people living in the camps: If you’re sick – and can’t find a different tent – try to create a six-foot buffer.

But some sleeping outdoors say that’s potentially asking too much of people living in a space barely wide enough to stretch out your arms.

“A lot of us out here in these camps, we camp as a group – we’re never six feet apart,” said Raven Drake, who’s been living at a campsite on the Western bank of I-5 in North Portland for the last few months. “That’s just unrealistic.”

While she has a tent to herself, about a mile down the hill, she says as many as nine people cram into six-person tents.

Drake has a medical background: an obsession with her older sister’s nursing textbooks followed, she said, by five years as a combat medic in the U.S. Navy. So when Multnomah County leaders held brainstorm meetings last week, Kaia Sand, the head of local advocacy group Street Roots, brought Drake along.

At the meeting, Drake said she told officials what campsites such as hers needed to prevent an outbreak: access to bathrooms, showers, water and hand sanitizer.

But when it comes to carving out space, that’s something Drake’s taking into her own hands. She’s set aside a second tent – one usually used for cooking and socializing – to isolate sick people with light symptoms.

She has blankets, tea, water and the business cards of physicians to call if a patient’s condition doesn’t improve.

“It just sort of gives us space to be able to bring people to allow them to recuperate,” she said, noting most people who catch the virus display only mild symptoms. “And so, for most people, the best thing they could do is get rest, drink electrolytes and water, and allow this to run its course.”