

## northwest

# Mayoral Battle Preheats

## Rumors bubble up around Commissioner Sam Adams

by Julie Sabatier

**W**hen Mayor Tom Potter announced Sept. 10 that he would not seek reelection, questions began to swirl about who would be the first to begin a campaign to lead Portland in 2008. Two names that quickly surfaced were City Commissioner Sam Adams and Pearl District developer Bob Ball, both of whom are gay.

Although neither potential candidate has announced his intentions, both of their names have been making headlines because of the ever-industrious political rumor mill.

On the evening of Sept. 17, *Willamette Week* reported on its Web site some nasty gossip concerning a possibly inappropriate relationship between Adams and a 17-year-old gay man.

Beau Breedlove, now 20, and Adams, 44, met at the Oregon Legislature in 2005. Adams says Breedlove, who was interning with a legislator, approached him seeking a mentor.

"He was struggling with coming out. He asked me for advice," said Adams. "He was really interest-

about being a gay man. I didn't want to conform to them—going to the clubs, doing drugs, sleeping around—I wanted to be something more. Sam was the role model that wasn't the typical gay man. That's what I gained from our relationship."

Breedlove no longer wishes to pursue a career in politics. He works at a restaurant in Michigan and aspires to play piano professionally.

No one has yet admitted how the information about Adams' association with Breedlove reached the media. City Commissioner Randy Leonard says he first heard the rumor from Ball, Adams' potential challenger, during an event Aug. 2 at Ball's Wyatt building on Northwest 14th Avenue. Ball told *Just Out* that he was passing along what he got from a "credible source" that was "close to Sam."

"One of the things that I was struggling with was I didn't know if this rose to the level of something I had to report," explained Ball, who said he did not solicit the information. "It concerned me. The person who came to me said that they thought it was factual."

*"This was nothing more, nothing less than attempted political assassination."*

—Sam Adams

ed in getting my take on the situation based on my experience...it was a mentor-mentee friendship, and that is all it was."

Adams says he invited Breedlove to a First Thursday event at City Hall, which Breedlove came up from Salem to attend. Afterward the two had dinner at the nearby Lotus Café. They met for lunch on one other occasion. Adams and a date also attended Breedlove's 18th birthday party at the home of the young man's family.

According to Breedlove, his boyfriend picked him up after his dinner with Adams at the Lotus and drove him back to Salem. Breedlove also had some communication with Adams through text messages and phone calls.

Breedlove backed up Adams in stating that his relationship was not sexual or romantic in nature.

"It started as a mentorship, and now it's a friendship," Breedlove told *Just Out*. "My problem at the time is I was struggling with the general stereotypes

Ball, who is a reserve police officer, decided to contact Leonard after consulting with attorney Mary Overgaard, who served as legal council for the Portland Police Bureau from 1984 to 1993.

"Initially when he heard it, he wasn't going to say anything or do anything, and then he realized he was a sworn police officer, and he wondered if he had a duty to report it to anyone," said Overgaard, who is a straight board member of the Oregon Gay and Lesbian Law Association. "I think that the statute is broad enough that we felt taking it to a public official would meet Bob's obligation. He was very concerned that his actions not be viewed as political. He took this to someone he thought would act appropriately."

Leonard says he took the information to Adams, who denied the accusation. Adams contacted Breedlove and told Leonard that Breedlove was willing to sign an affidavit confirming there had been nothing sexual about their relationship. Leonard says he was satisfied the allegations were untrue. Leonard



Portland City Commissioner Sam Adams adamantly denies rumors that he had an inappropriate relationship with an underage legislative intern.

also says he believes Ball's perpetuation of the rumor was politically motivated.

"Bob has been leaning on me very heavily to endorse him for mayor, up to and including in that conversation [about the accusation], looking me in the eye and saying: 'We're very close friends. This is personal, and I want your endorsement.' That's an exact quote," said Leonard.

Leonard says he no longer counts Ball among his friends. "Notwithstanding the fact that Bob has been a very good friend, I know of Bob's strong points and his weak points, and one of his weak points is he's just an insufferable gossip. You cannot go and tell people something as a fact that is so hurtful and damaging particularly to a gay man, who is perhaps the most singular, susceptible person in our culture to charges of pedophilia."

Leonard says he told Ball directly that he believed the rumor was false and had most likely come to Ball by way of a disgruntled former employee of Adams'. (*Just Out* was not able to confirm this information by press time.)

Leonard was not the only person Ball spoke to about the controversial allegations against Adams. He also revealed what he knew to former Mayor Vera Katz. Katz also went directly to Adams, her former chief of staff.

Ball says that in hindsight he might have chosen to share his information with a different public official. "I don't regret the decision to say something. If I had it to do again, I would maybe bring it to [Multnomah County District Attorney] Mike Schunk. Again, I just followed the advice that I was given."

Both Leonard and Adams say Ball failed to

fulfill his reporting obligation. Under Oregon law, public officials (including reserve police officers) are required to report to the Child Welfare Office, the Department of Human Services or a law enforcement agency if they have "reasonable cause" to believe a minor has been abused.

"This is a smear campaign, and for him to try to now pretty it up and characterize it as anything else is just untrue," said Adams. "This was nothing more, nothing less than attempted political assassination."

Asked if he regrets meeting with Breedlove one on one because of the insinuations now swirling around him, Adams said: "No. To regret that means that there's something untoward about it, and there wasn't," he explained. "To regret that, I think, bolsters a stereotype that I thought was a very old stereotype that gay adults can't be trusted with gay minors."

Dan Ryan, a gay man who serves as co-chairman of the Portland Public Schools board, agrees. "Being a mentor is just part of being a responsible adult," he said. "I salute Commissioner Adams for adding this to his full plate. Actions like this are why people trust Sam."

Jonathan Weedman, who serves as program manager for the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center, said he might have advised Adams to bring along another staffer to the lunch and dinner meetings. "There's a lot of power in numbers, and it reduces speculation," he said before wondering aloud, "Would a straight politician have done anything different?"

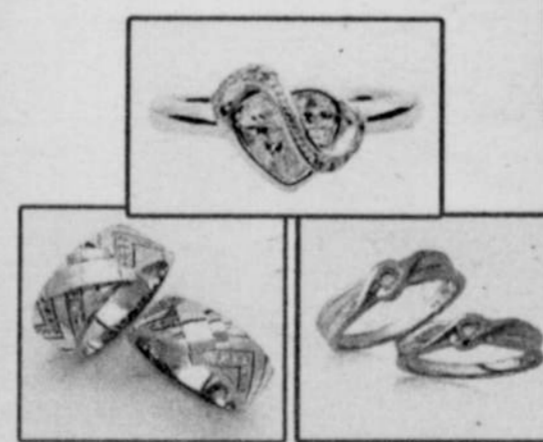
Neither Adams nor Ball has indicated how this incident might affect a decision to run for mayor. Adams says he will announce in the next few weeks, while Ball says he is still deciding between a mayoral campaign and starting a family with his partner. 10

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