

...Union uncovers wage theft at Pearl District apartment

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perience in construction.

C2 and New Heights are certified as a Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) — a designation that makes it a more attractive bidder on public and private projects that track utilization of women and minority contractors. To be certified, a woman must own at least 51 percent of the company, be president or CEO, and be active in daily management.

In 2010, Errin Caudle ran unsuccessfully for Hillsboro City Council, promising to eliminate "needless government regulation and intervention." "As an owner of a small business, I understand the importance of fiscal accountability through honest and transparent management practices," she said on her now-defunct campaign web site.

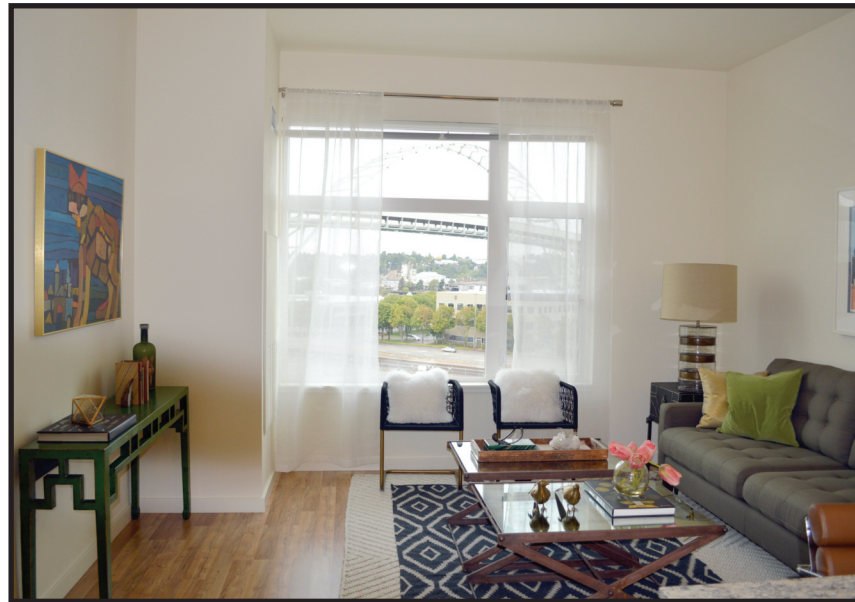
Reached by phone, the Caudles gave contradictory explanations of what happened. Errin Caudle said she wasn't in charge of the job at The Parker, and that her husband handled the project. Gordon, meanwhile, said the foreman was in charge of the project. Gordon Caudle said he was just the bookkeeper, never set foot on The Parker construction site until the DOL investigation, and never met most of his own employees. He alternately blamed the general contractor, his foreman, and

his workers, for what happened.

"We put too much faith in Felix," Gordon Caudle said. [Caudle also said he didn't have Felix' phone number on him, though he'd worked with him for seven years.]

Caudle said he paid at the prevailing wage rate for the number of hours listed on the time cards he received from Felix. At one point in the interview, Caudle implied that Felix might have falsified time cards in order to spread the work around. Caudle said Lorentz Bruun never once let him know that C2 guys were on the job for more hours than the certified payroll indicated. [Indeed, it's part of a construction manager's job to keep track of who's on a job site and when.] Later, Caudle suggested the employees hadn't really worked full-time, and didn't complain until they were due to be laid off as the project was winding down. [C2 remained on the job until mid-September, Caudle said.] If this theory is to be believed, then eight semi-skilled immigrants from Mexico were savvy enough about U.S. law to convince a team of federal investigators to believe them over sworn certified payroll records kept by C2 and Lorentz Bruun.

Gordon Caudle said C2 was invited to bid on The Parker job by Lorentz Bruun, and hadn't worked for them be-



fore. He said the contract was for about \$300,000, to paint walls and doors in a 177-unit, 200,000 square foot building.

Bruun says his company will more carefully vet its subcontractors in the future. Should Lorentz Bruun have known C2 wouldn't be able to do the project for what it was paid? Bruun said there were no red flags, and that C2 came in at within 10 percent of other bidders.

It's not clear yet whether the Department of Labor will pursue other

sanctions against C2, like debarment from future government projects. Clark said that decision depends on the facts of each case and how egregious violations are. As of press time, C2 workers were still waiting to hear from the Department of Labor about the settlement.

"C2 stole money from us," said Garcia. "It's not right."

The \$85,000 settlement would cover the underpayment on the hours they worked, but it won't compensate them for the wages they lost when they were

At the The Parker Apartments, 1447 NW 12th Avenue in Portland, monthly rents range from \$1,323 for a 497-square-foot one-bedroom to \$3,078 for a 1,097-square-foot two-bedroom. The project was constructed with a loan guarantee from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Pictured here at Sept. 22 grand opening, a living room has a view of the Fremont Bridge, across from a kitchen with custom cabinetry and Energy Star stainless steel appliances. bedroom apartment.

terminated — or the emotional impact and stress of joblessness, of not knowing where they'd go next or how to support their families. All six workers interviewed for this story have found other work since leaving C2.

The Parker, meanwhile, held its grand opening Sept. 22. The HUD-assisted apartment project will fit right into Portland's affluent Pearl District. It's LEED Platinum Certified, with a workout facility, coffee bar, dog-washing area, a bicycle repair station and 180 bicycle stalls, and an underground parking garage with 181 parking spaces. Units have walk-in-closets and gourmet kitchens with custom cabinetry and Energy Star stainless steel appliances. Monthly rents range from \$1,323 for a 497-square-foot one-bedroom apartment to \$3,078 for a 1,097-square-foot two-bedroom.

As for the Caudles, they say they're closing their business. "This economy is killing me," Errin says. "It's not worth it any more," adds Gordon. They didn't say what's next for them, but state business records show Errin Caudle registered a medical marijuana dispensary in March, and there's fresh paint at 9046 NE Sandy Boulevard, listed in a July 26 corporate filing as the principal business location for her new venture, Evergreen Medicinals.

Quoteable:

"Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting."

— Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd President of the United States

Oregon Voters —

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Wilsonville

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