

...Portland City Council: No new fossil fuel infrastructure

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equality in our state by the city taking a stand against the working class to earn a living in these sectors.”

Myers was joined by Laborers Local 737 President Dave Tischer and IBEW Local 48 political director Joe Esmonde in speaking against the resolutions.

“Basically what Portland is doing is taking on the fight of special interests,” Tischer said. “I believe these resolutions are bad for jobs, bad for business, they’re bad policy, and they’re bad for Portland.”

Esmonde lamented that the City didn’t reach out to minority communities, and challenged climate change activists at the hearing to have the same passion on income inequality. Esmonde served on a City fossil fuel export advisory committee, which met twice.

“We were told we’d have input into anything coming out of that committee,” Esmonde told City Council. “We’ve had none.”

But other union leaders at the Nov. 4 hearing spoke in favor of the resolutions. Cager Clabaugh, vice president of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 4 in Vancouver, said his union voted

unanimously to oppose a new oil terminal, in part for safety concerns, and because a spill could put other terminals out of action.

“One of the first jobs I had as a longshoreman was putting a lumber mill on a ship in pieces to send to the Philippines,” Clabaugh said. “You can look over the Lewis and Clark Bridge to see all the timber we send out. Let’s not make it easy to send our natural resources overseas. Let’s export finished products.”

And schoolteacher Ned Hascall delivered a message from Portland Association of Teachers president Gwen Sullivan. PAT’s Oct. 28 rep assembly passed a unanimous resolution in favor of stopping all new large-scale fossil fuel projects in Portland. “We support these resolutions on behalf of our children and their future in our city and in our world,” Sullivan said.

A regionwide controversy

The Portland resolutions are the latest development in a regionwide controversy. More than a dozen large fossil fuel infrastructure projects have been proposed in the Pacific Northwest in recent years, including the proposed \$500 million Pembina propane export facility at the Port of Portland and the pro-

WATCH IT ONLINE

See the whole Nov. 4 hearing at <http://bit.ly/1QKnifb>. Testimony from building trades union leaders starts at 3:55:00, from ILWU at 1:02:55, and from PAT at 3:13:10.

posed Tesoro-Savage oil terminal at the Port of Vancouver.

Mayor Hales at first welcomed the Pembina project, which had an agreement to be union built, only to later deliver the killing blow.

The Tesoro Savage proposal is still waiting for approval from the State of Washington. If constructed, it would be the nation’s largest oil-by-rail terminal — a \$100 million, 42-acre oil-handling plant. It would enable up to 15 million gallons a day of crude oil to be transferred from the Bakken fields of North Dakota — by train through the Columbia Gorge — to ships bound for West Coast refineries.

The terminal has been a hot political issue in Vancouver. On Nov. 3, project opponent Eric LaBrant won election to the Port of Vancouver by 56 percent, in a vote seen as a referendum on the project. LaBrant testified in favor of the Portland City Council resolution at the Nov. 12 hearing.

“Coal, oil, and gas are actu-

ally distractions from the kinds of jobs we need to bring into this region,” Labrant said. That echoed language in the second resolution that sought to downplay the jobs impact: “Economic opportunities presented by expanding fossil fuel infrastructure are modest, with few jobs and little value added when compared to the related environmental costs,” the city council resolution declared.

In a nod to jobs concerns, Commissioner Nick Fish was able to add a requirement that city staff will analyze the economic impacts of any proposed code changes, especially impacts on local blue-collar jobs. Fish also was able to add a non-binding clause saying the City will “explore opportunities to invest in Portland’s ‘human infrastructure’ by supporting programs to retrain our workforce as the city transitions to a clean energy economy.”

In the end, the resolution opposing oil trains passed 4-0 (Commissioner Dan Saltzman was absent), and the resolution opposing fossil fuel infrastructure passed 5-0. And they’re unlikely to be overturned: State Treasurer Ted Wheeler, the leading candidate for mayor, said he supports the resolutions.

Federal law limits cities’ abil-

ity to stop trains and interstate pipelines, but they have broad authority over local land use issues. The Portland ordinance wouldn’t limit seismic or other improvements to existing fossil fuel infrastructure, and it wouldn’t affect “end-user” infrastructure like gas stations or natural gas hookups for new buildings. But it would prevent proposals like Pembina’s from gaining future approval.

Keystone XL RIP

The Portland ordinance also came at the same time a much bigger fight played out nationally over the Keystone XL pipeline. The U.S. State Department has spent seven years reviewing Trans Canada’s application for permission to build the pipeline, which would bring oil from the western Alberta tar sands to refineries along the Gulf Coast. Between the passage of Portland’s first and second ordinances, President Obama finally took a side: against. He concluded it would not serve the national interest of the United States, and rejected the application.

All three Democratic presidential candidates oppose Keystone, while all the Republican candidates are for it.



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