

Labor loses spot on the Port of Portland Commission

For now, Gov. Brown has ended the tradition of having two labor reps on the board.

The nine-member Port of Portland Commission used to have three representatives of organized labor. Now it has just one.

Appointed by the governor, Port commissioners may not get a lot of public attention, but they oversee a vast publicly-owned enterprise, including four marine terminals, a river dredging operation, the Portland International Airport, and five massive industrial parks. The Port's mission is economic development, and it's supported by property taxes as well as revenue from its operations.

Four-year terms of office expired this year for Port Commissioners Tom Chamberlain (who was Oregon AFL-CIO president) and Gary Young (who was IBEW Local 48 business manager.) To replace them, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown nominated Meg Niemi, president of 14,500-member Service Employees International Union Local 49, and Katherine Lam, a minority business owner. Both were con-

firmed by the Oregon Senate Nov. 20.

Niemi's nomination makes sense: Portland-based Local 49 represents service workers and has campaigned for years to improve wages and conditions for workers at the Portland International Airport, where the union represents over 550 janitors, cabin cleaners, and workers who assist senior and disabled passengers. And Niemi herself comes from a maritime family that goes back several generations in Astoria, she told the Senate Rules Committee Nov. 19.

Lam is co-owner of Bambuza Vietnam Kitchen, a chain of restaurants that has a concession to operate at the Portland International Airport. She served on the advisory group that selected the Port's executive director, Curtis Robinhold. And she serves on the commission that oversees Business Oregon, the state agency that gives tax breaks and other subsidies to businesses. Her husband, Daniel Nguyen, is co-owner of Bambuza and a member of Lake Oswego City Council.

As the sole remaining union

representative on the commission, Niemi will have to speak for all working people region-wide. Judging by Chamberlain's experience, it may be a lonely job.

When then-governor John Kitzhaber nominated Chamberlain to the board in 2011, he joined two others from organized labor: Ken Allen, who was then Oregon AFSCME executive director, and longshore worker Bruce Holte, who was then International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 8 president. When Allen retired, his seat went to a representative of business. Holte was replaced by Young in 2015. With over a billion dollars in planned construction in the works, it made sense to have a building trades leader on the commission, Chamberlain said. But even as one of two labor representatives, Chamberlain often felt like a voice in the wilderness.

"The Port's more like a corporation than any other semi-government entity in the state," Chamberlain told the Labor Press in August. "They're always thinking about the bottom line."

Reached by phone in early November, Chamberlain praised the choice of Niemi: "She understands the struggles of low-wage workers. We have a lot of low-wage workers at the Port."

But Chamberlain said he was "extremely disappointed" with the choice of Lam, not for any specific gripe with her, but because she's taking a spot that was held by a labor representative. Neither Chamberlain nor Young — nor the Northwest Oregon Labor Council — were contacted by the governor's office for input into who might replace them.

"We don't need another business owner on the Port Commission," Chamberlain said. "The majority of [the commissioners] already come from management or are business owners or huge corporate farmers. It's really important that you have folks representing workers, not just management or business."

Niemi said she'd hoped both positions would remain occupied by representatives of organized labor.

"I would love some company," Niemi told the Labor Press.

UNION DEMOCRACY

NW Oregon Labor Council re-elects slate of officers

Northwest Oregon Labor Council — the central labor council for AFL-CIO-affiliated unions in the Portland metro area — elected a slate of incumbent officers Nov. 25.

- **Executive Secretary-Treasurer** Bob Tackett, Steelworkers Local 330
- **President** Jeff Anderson, UFCW Local 555
- **1st Vice President** Everice Moro, Oregon School Employees Assoc/AFT Local 6732
- **2nd Vice President** Ed Barnes, IBEW Local 48
- **Executive Board** Tracey Powers, Office and Professional Employees Local 11; Darren Hamann, Bakers Local 114; Jaime Rodriguez, American Federation of Teachers-Oregon; Jeff Cuellar, UFCW Local 555; Dave Tully, Teamsters Local 223; Will Lukens, Machinists/District Lodge W24; and Scott Zadow, IBEW Local 48.
- **Reading Clerk 1** Dianna Hess, OSEA/AFT Local 6732
- **Sergeants at arms 1** — John Hall, Machinists Local 63; and Ellen Ino, Laborers Local 483
- **Trustees** Mike Housley, Machinists Local 1005; Joe Esmonde, IBEW Local 48; and Lucy Carrier, UFCW Local 555.

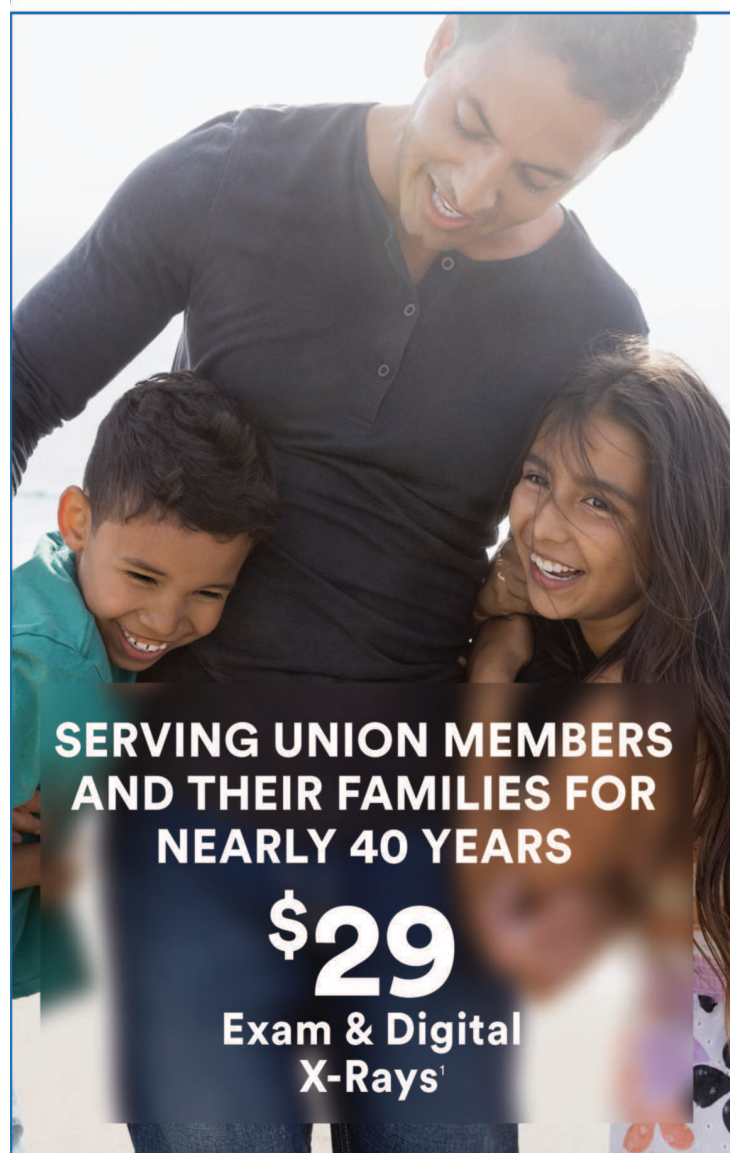
All ran unopposed. The new four-year terms begin Jan. 1, 2020. Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle will officiate at a ceremonial swearing-in at the labor council's Jan. 27 meeting.

JOB TRAINING

Oregon Tradeswomen is moving to Gresham

Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc. (OTI) is moving. The non-profit works to recruit and prepare women for careers in the construction, manufacturing, mechanical, and utility trades. In recent years its staff of 16 has operated out of a ground floor storefront at 3934 NE Martin Luther King Jr Blvd.

On Jan. 10, the group will move into a newly renovated 8,300-square-foot space in Gresham. Located at 484 SE 187th Ave., it's part of the 5.5-acre Rockwood Rising development on the site of a former Fred Meyer store. Besides offices, it will include about 4,000 square feet of workshop and classroom space that OTI will use for its pre-apprenticeship training program. The eight-week program gets women ready to enter skilled trade apprenticeship programs.



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