

Portland mayor and council candidates face a labor audience

Three months before the election, 12 candidates pitched themselves to 180 unionists.

Portland voters will choose four out of the five members of City Council this year, and as the May 19 primary gets closer, union members are starting to engage. On Feb. 18, 12 candidates for mayor and city council faced questions in front of 180 unionists at a worker-focused candidate forum sponsored by the Oregon AFL-CIO, the Northwest Oregon Labor Council, and 15 local unions.

Event organizers were selective, inviting only candidates they perceived to be running serious campaigns ... and only in the three races that are considered in serious contention. [A fourth race, for City Council Position 1, is thought to be a lock for Latino Network director Carmen Rubio, who formerly worked as an aide to Multnomah County Commissioner Serena Cruz, Mayor Tom Potter, and City Commissioner Nick Fish and isn't facing any well-known challenger.]

Even then, it was a crowded line-up, with eight candidates for two City Council seats, followed by four candidates for mayor. The event took place at

Laborers Local 737 hall at 17230 NE Sacramento Street, and was emceed by actor Michelle Damis, an officer of Portland SAG-AFTRA.

With so many candidates and lots of questions, organizers had only two candidates answer each question, and limited each answer to 30 seconds. Sometimes it took longer than 30 seconds to ask the questions. Incumbent Mayor Ted Wheeler and other candidates seemed frustrated with the time limitation. Still, for many in the audience, it was their first glimpse of most of the candidates, and they came away with at least some sense of where candidates stand.

All pitched themselves as friends of labor. Candidates said they were for using union labor in public construction, against privatization, for prioritizing responses to the housing and homeless crisis, and against giving Uber and Lyft free rein to disrupt the taxi industry and clog up Portland streets.

But there were a few differences: City Council candidate Loretta Smith said she supports bringing Major League Baseball to Portland because the jobs would reduce homelessness in East Portland, while Julia DeGraw and Mingus Mapps said they wouldn't put public money

WATCH THE FORUM ONLINE

The 109-minute debate can be seen at youtu.be/rhJWOAGRx3M, and the mayoral portion starts an hour and 10 minutes in.

into a private stadium. [Backers of the proposed team have pledged to use union labor if a stadium gets built.] And Sarah Iannarone several times put Wheeler on the defensive, faulting him for an inadequate response to homelessness, and for signing a letter opposing a bill to require companies getting Enterprise Zone tax breaks to pay the prevailing wage in construction.

One highlight of the event took place while candidates were off stage: Between the city council and mayor parts of the forum, all 12 candidates were invited to front row seats to listen to what a panel of unionists had to say. And it got a little hot in the room.

■ Cleveland High School teacher Ami Fox, a member of Portland Association of Teachers (PAT) told candidates that every Portland teacher has students who don't know where they're going to sleep any given night. And so far, what's been done about affordable housing isn't nearly enough, Fox said: "If you're elected, people with degrees are going to crunch the numbers and tell you a \$1,000 a month studio is affordable housing. Please hear me right now: This is not affordable housing."

- Leina'ala Slaughter, a member of Laborers Local 483, was working her dream job at a city recreation center ... until last year. "I was laid off," she said, her voice breaking. "So to those people who were on City Council: I remember everything you said, and at voting time, I'm going to remember everything you said, because I will not vote for you." Jo Anne Hardesty, who isn't facing reelection this year, was the only member of City Council who tried to halt the recreation center cuts. Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Chloe Eudaly voted against Hardesty's proposals to find money to stop the community center closures.
- Firefighter Ryan Shank illustrated how the housing and homelessness crisis is being

felt across the city: His co-workers sometimes face threats of violence when they respond to illegal campfires at homeless encampments.

- Laborers Local 737 field rep Anjanet Banuelos Bolanos gave the city credit for opportunities women and minorities have gotten on public works jobs, thanks to city community benefits agreements, but said those commitments can only continue to help workers if they're enforced.
- City worker and AFSCME Local 189 member Lana Spada speaks Russian and Rumanian at work to communicate with residents. The city benefits from multilingual skills like hers, but has resisted union calls to honor that with a pay premium.

THE CANDIDATES

Portland Mayor

Ozzie Gonzalez TriMet Board member, heads sustainability/diversity at Howard S. Wright

Sarah Iannarone urban policy consultant and former cafe co-owner, ran for mayor in 2016.

Teresa Raiford political activist associated with the Black Lives Matter movement

Ted Wheeler incumbent mayor seeking a second term, also a former investment manager, state treasurer, and Multnomah County chair

Portland City Council Pos. 2

(to serve two years remaining in the seat held by Nick Fish, who died Jan. 2)

Margot Black math instructor at Lewis & Clark College, co-founded Portland Tenants United

Sam Chase former chief of staff to Nick Fish, current member of the Metro Council.

Julia DeGraw longtime food and water activist, ran against Fish in 2018

Tera Hurst executive director of Renew Oregon, chief of staff to former Portland mayor Charlie Hales.

Loretta Smith former Multnomah County Commissioner

Portland City Council Pos. 4

Sam Adams former mayor of Portland

Chloe Eudaly incumbent city commissioner

Mingus Mapps former Crime Prevention coordinator, fired by Eudaly's office



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...Swan Lake Energy Storage signs project labor agreement

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turbines to a lower reservoir. As with a hydroelectric dam, the spinning turbines generate electricity that can then be fed back to supplement the grid.

The \$800 million project has a 393-megawatt capacity — enough to meet instantaneous demand of up to 390,000 homes.

Oregon has set ambitious goals to decarbonize the state's electricity supply. Successfully meeting those goals hinges on the ability to replace retiring coal plants with facilities that can produce energy when needed to ensure reliable electricity service even during extremely hot or cold weather conditions. Recent studies have found that the Pacific Northwest could face significant capacity resource shortages of 7,000 megawatts by 2025, and as much as 10,000 megawatts by 2030, and that

currently planned resource additions are insufficient to fill the gap.

"Swan Lake can be online by 2025 and help ensure Oregon and other states can achieve their aggressive climate targets," said Erik Steimle, Rye Development's vice president of project development.

In 2019, the Oregon Legislature passed a joint resolution in support of environmentally appropriate pumped storage and calling for Oregon utilities to consider integrating it into their systems. Portland General Electric has identified pumped storage as one of the key technologies it will pursue to meet its increasing capacity needs.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued a 50-year construction and operational license for the project last April.