

Mayor Potter and City Council weigh Sears Armory proposals

By Mark Ellis
The Southwest Portland Post

Another Sears Center hearing, this time at City Hall before Mayor Potter and the City Council, and again the vying entities and interested citizens presented a now-familiar litany of best-use scenarios.

But the 20-month Base Realignment and Closure process set in motion when the Army declared the old Multnomah armory surplus is itself nearing closure. On June 12 the decision about what to recommend to the Army regarding the future of the site was passed into the hands of Portland's highest governmental body.

Sheila Greenlaw-Fink talked about the Communities for Affordable Housing plan, a multi-income redevelopment proposal similar to one proffered by Jeff Bacharach for the Housing Authority of Portland.

Portland Development Commission spokesperson Will White came forward to pitch his organization's support for one of the housing alternatives, and Volunteers Of America's Greg Meenan tossed out a late-breaking proposal aimed solely at securing the Sears Site exclusively for Portland's most desperately homeless.

Suzanne Kahn used her allotted time to lobby for a new Portland Office of Emergency Management (POEM) center, and Portland Community College spokesperson Randy McEwen sought approval to consolidate the system's administrative offices at Sears, thus freeing up campus space for educational uses.

Westside Christian High School's Hutch Johnson made a lawyerly plea on behalf of recreating the Cold War training and deployment center into a parochial high school.

In perhaps the most appropriate denouement for a military installation, it is the Department of Defense which will pass judgment on Mayor Potter and company's ultimate recommendation. Before the day that recommendation is made there remained one last chance for the general public to be heard.

The two top housing proposals (CPAH and HAP), Westside, and Emergency Management all benefited from incisive and heartfelt testimonials. An edge in the sheer number of advocates would go to the housing proposals, with Westside next, and POEM's center after that.

Testimony was given which stressed strongly that affordable housing has become prohibitive for many income levels, in effect driving families and school age children from the area.

Equally compelling was the idea of creating a quality academic institution, Westside, which alone among the contenders would require no public funding. Finally, proponents of the POEM plan warned that without a Westside management center, swift measures in the event of a catastrophe, natural disaster, or unsafe weather conditions could not be guaranteed.

Multnomah homeowner Jessica Wade spoke about the growing need for housing, while Multnomah Neighborhood Association chair Randy Bonella expressed his group's preference for either housing or the POEM facility.

A long-time resident, who had once fulfilled a term of service stationed at the base, asked that the existing site not be torn down (as any of the housing proposals would necessitate) and opined that the POEM center might best approximate the existing manageable traffic and use patterns.

Hillsdale Neighborhood Association president Don Baack supported hous-

ing, and raised the possibility of finding other southwest sites for the POEM center.

A Westside mom spoke about a group of WS students who had gone to Thailand on a mission to help children caught up in the sex trade.

Resident Arnold Panitch countered fears about the nature of individuals who seek public housing saying that he'd lived near one such development and that there were no problems.

And then it was time for the elected officials to speak, their final thoughts and declarations as they began to weigh the options.

Dan Saltzman had the same funding question for each housing applicant, a question about the percentage of in-house and possible public funding available, and admitted that, based on what he'd heard, he liked the CPAH or Westside plans. Sam Adams, obviously thinking about the POEM center, had questions about the strength of some of Portland's oldest and most tired bridges, and stated clearly that a SW emergency response center was long overdue, whether or not Sears was the best site.

Newest commissioner Nick Fish praised all who had spoken for the civility of their testimony. He implied that his thoughts were coalescing in favor of housing, but acknowledged the Westside Christian bid with a rumination about how "we're all sinners."

"Why do you look at me when you



Portland City Council will hold a hearing on July 9 to help decide the fate of the Sears Armory. (Post file photo by Don Snedecor)

say that?" Randy Leonard asked, providing a moment of levity before segueing into his concerns about the economic flight of families with children.

It was left for Mayor Potter to ask for a study on alternative sites for the POEM center, and to thank the civic-minded assemblage. He and the commissioners retired with a lot to consider before the future of the Jerome F. Sears armory is passed up the chain of command once more.

Editor's Note: Mayor Potter and Commissioner Fish offered a resolution to City Council at the June 12 hearing. That resolution recommends that the Sears Armory site be redeveloped as mixed-income, rental and ownership housing. The resolution also recommends to the Department of Defense that Community Partners for Affordable Housing as the preferred developer of the project.

According to David Sheern, project manager for the Portland Development Commission, at Commissioner Leonard's suggestion, the City Council delayed voting on the proposal to allow additional time to consider alternatives. City Council is scheduled to vote on the Potter/Fish resolution at Portland City Hall on July 9 at 10 a.m. (time certain).

POST A TO Z BUSINESS CARD DIRECTORY 503-244-6933

Beaverton Hills
~ An Assisted Living Residence ~
Cherie Henry
ADMINISTRATOR
4525 S.W. 99th Avenue ~ Beaverton, Oregon 97005
(503) 520-1350 ~ Fax (503) 671-0511 ~ www.mtwestret.com

WOOD FLOORS
by C.Z. Becker Co.
(503) 282-0623
www.czbecker.com
CCB# 48132
Restored to their original beauty

Woof. Meow. Hooray.
A separate clinic for dogs.
A separate clinic for cats.
Peace under one roof.
503-892-6387
Best Friends Veterinary Medical Center

Cats Cradle
Cat Sitting
Libby McKirdie
Happy to look after them while you are away
503-452-9707

Cuts & Chemistry LLC
Hair Design and Color Specialist
Sue
(503) 246-2077
6349 SW Capitol Hwy
Portland, Oregon 97239
Cell (503) 318-9890
Mightyme35@aol.com

Decks built for muddy, steep, difficult yards.
DECKS
I live in the neighborhood. CCB #173192
Davis Hart...503-888-4342...DecksByDavis.com

EDEN CONCRETE RESURFACING
• ACRYLIC CONCRETE RESURFACING
• ACID STAINING
• EPOXY GARAGE FLOORS
BILL EDEN
PHONE (503) 841-1917
WMEDEN@Q.COM
CCB# 174077

Elder Choice Nursing Services
Anna Marie Castle RN, BSN, MHA
Economical in Home Nursing Care with 30 Years of Experience
Health Insurance Consulting ~ Home Hazard Analysis
House Cleaning ~ Transportation to Appointments Provided
Cell (503) 730-3638 ~ (503) 730-3637

Client Trainer Goal
FT
FITNESS TOGETHER
7417 SW Beaverton Hillsdale Highway Suite 500
across the street from Raccoon Lodge in Portland
503-206-7675
FTraleighhills.com