

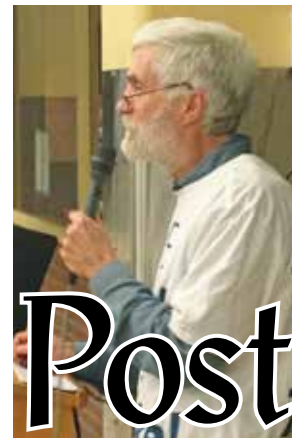
► Join the folks at SW Trails for their monthly hike, this time from Hillsdale to Council Crest
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The Southwest Portland Post

Volume No. 24 Issue No. 4

www.swportlandpost.com

Portland, Oregon

Complimentary

February 2016

Multnomah neighbors rally around Capitol Highway improvements

By KC Cowan
The Southwest Portland Post

The weather was chilly, but the mood was sunny as Multnomah residents walked door to door to spread the word of upcoming improvements to Southwest Capitol Highway between Taylors Ferry Road and Multnomah Boulevard.

They are members of the ad hoc Capitol Highway committee, led by transportation chair, Chris Lyons.

The group has been working with the city of Portland to finalize sidewalk and bike lane designs along Capitol Highway. It's been the top transportation priority of the neighborhood for more than two decades, according to Lyons.

"The one thing we really lack here is sidewalks and bike lanes," he said. "And while I think most people in the neighborhood don't care about having those on our less-busy side streets, we feel like arterials, like Capitol Highway,

should have the infrastructure like bike lanes and sidewalks."

Despite the need, the city has been unable to come up with the millions of dollars necessary for this "top priority," leaving residents without safe bike lanes and only a dirt path as way to walk into Multnomah Village.

"We want to be able to access the village without having to take convoluted routes to get into the commercial area," said Lyons.

"We also want safety. You see how unsafe it is there. People are having to bike right alongside a ditch and walk along what we call the 'goat path,' which is just a mud path."

The years of waiting could be at an end, however, as the Portland City Council votes on a local gas tax to fund this, and many other infrastructure projects.

Mark Lear, resource manager for Portland Bureau of Transportation says the 10-cents-a-gallon tax would raise

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Cindy Loud McDonald, Beth Fernandez, Sarah Lyons, and Stan McDonald take a break from canvassing Jan. 9 on what's known as the goat path along Capitol Highway that could soon become a real sidewalk. (Post photo by KC Cowan)

Is homelessness in Southwest Portland a growing concern?



By Jack Rubinger
The Southwest Portland Post

Is homelessness a growing problem in Southwest Portland? Marc Jolin, director of A Home For Everyone Initiative, offered some statistics as well as a broader perspective.

"Homelessness is a community-wide problem," he said. "The numbers of people sleeping outside, in their vehicles, or in places not meant for human habitation is not as large in outer Southwest Portland as in some other parts of the city, but there are certainly homeless people living in that part of town."

According to Jolin, "In the last street count, conducted in January of 2015, on one night we counted 133 individuals sleeping outside or in vehicles in Southwest Portland outside of downtown. That was about 8 percent of the total unsheltered homeless population.

"There are homeless people in outer Southwest for the same reasons there are homeless people throughout our community. Someone who becomes homeless may feel more comfortable in a particular part of town because it is where they grew up, where they have friends or family, or because it is where they lived or worked before becoming homeless," he added.

Why are more than 150 people coming to the Sears Shelter in Southwest Portland every day?

The Sears Shelter [formerly the Sears Armory building] is located at 2730 SW Multnomah Blvd, just a quarter mile west of Barbur Boulevard near Multnomah Village.

There are several reasons for the migration, according to Celeste Duvall, manager of Transition Projects.

The shelter is dedicated to women and couples only. There were no couples shelters in Portland so for the first time, couples can come in together and do not have to split up or choose to stay together and therefore on the street only.

The women's shelters in Portland including the one Transition Projects manages are filled and this allows more women (the most vulnerable population) to come off the street and stay in a safe, clean, warm, and welcoming environment.

Women and couples may bring their animals which is most often not the case with most shelters.

Sears Shelter dwellers are accessing shelter services provided by Transition Projects through its day center located at the Bud Clark Commons building in Northwest Portland, as a first point of contact.

When the Sears Shelter opened on Thanksgiving Day, Portland Mayor Charlie Hales' office said that the building would have to be vacated by the end of May. Discussions about where the

women and couples will go are ongoing.

Hales said he is interested in hearing if there are issues, or if the shelter seems to be operating smoothly.

Hales has scheduled a community forum for Tuesday, Feb. 16 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Multnomah Arts Center, 7688 SW Capitol Hwy. Check with the mayor's office for updated information about the event.

"When the Portland City Council declared a state of emergency in housing and homelessness, we reframed the issue," said Hales. "'These problems can't be solved overnight' was no longer an acceptable response. We moved to asking ourselves daily, 'What problems can be solved tonight?'"

"The Sears Shelter and the community's warm response show that Portland as a community can move the needle on homelessness, and can do so with compassion and generosity."

The Volunteer Meal Provider program at the Sears Shelter has been very successful. Volunteers provide bag lunches Monday through Saturday and on Sunday a hot meal is served.

There continue to be challenges. Sears Shelter staff always needs volunteers and there are many opportunities to choose from including donation of specific items and meal providers.

For more information about volunteer opportunities, contact lauren.holt@tprojects.org or call 503-280-4741.