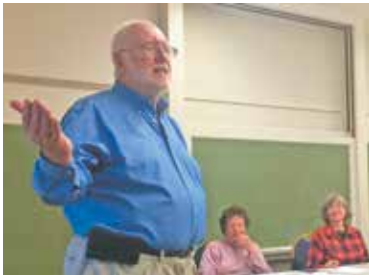


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The Southwest Portland Post

Volume No. 24 Issue No. 7

www.swportlandpost.com

Portland, Oregon

Complimentary

May 2016

Westside candidates answer questions and mingle at Multnomah Center forum

PRIMARY ELECTION 2016

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

Election season is here. Vote-by-mail ballots were scheduled to be sent to registered voters April 28. The primary election, which includes presidential candidates, is Tuesday, May 17.

On a warm evening in late March, approximately 150 local neighbors gathered in the Multnomah Center auditorium to listen to variety of diverse candidates vying for the offices of Portland mayor and city commissioner.

Tables loaded with campaign handouts and buttons encircled the room. Some of the candidates mingled with community members and some sat at their tables ticking off statistics and reasons why the incumbents, city commissioners Steve Novick and Amanda Fritz, shouldn't keep their jobs.



Ted Wheeler, candidate for Portland mayor, answers a question from Beth Omansky, Multnomah crime prevention chair. Deborah Harris, business employment specialist, speaks to the press about her mayoral candidacy. (Post photos by Erik Vidstrand)

As this reporter has noted at numerous town meetings focused on crucial issues facing Southwest neighborhoods, very few young people were in attendance.

The forum was sponsored by Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. The facilitator explained the rules allowing

no questions or applause from the audience.

Questions had been pulled from an earlier online survey incorporating homelessness, home demolitions, infill, transportation, the tree canopy, and maintaining the charm of Multnomah Village.

Portland City Commissioner positions #1 and #4

At 7 p.m. sharp, the first four candidates, competing for City Commissioner Position #1 sat on stage in front of a brilliant red velvet curtain. (Continued on Page 3)

Heritage tree in Multnomah Village endangered by new development

By KC Cowan
The Southwest Portland Post

Portland is undergoing "growing pains" as thousands of new residents come into the city and seek homes. The rush to develop has led to many smaller homes and buildings being sold to make way for new construction.

Businesses must close or relocate, cottages are demolished to build larger houses, and old-timers bemoan the "changing landscape." A Facebook page is dedicated to decrying the

"Demolition of Portland."

Nothing can make citizens stand up and take notice, however, like the destruction of heritage trees. And in Multnomah Village, one tree on a lot at 7316 SW 33rd Ave has become the subject of debate and concern.

The property was purchased on Feb. 24 from the elderly owner, Roger Slade, for \$185,000. The buyer is listed as Ronald Layton. On March 11, Layton resold the property to Renaissance Custom Homes for \$450,000—a sizable increase in value.

Neighbors have heard that Renaissance plans to split the lot into two parcels, for two new houses. But they are most upset over the fate of a Northern Deodar Cedar tree on the southern end of the lot, which they fear is slated to be cut down.

Sara Long, activist and City Council candidate, learned of the possible destruction of the tree and took action. She climbed into it and said she'll do everything she can to keep it from being cut

down.

"I told the (Portland) city council that tree is coming down over my cold, dead body," Long said.

The new tree code (Title 11), allows developers to remove heritage trees for the cost of a \$1200 permit. Long is furious that such an old tree can be cut down for so little money

Others agree. Multnomah vice chair Martie Sucec testified to City Council that the Deodar Cedar tree was brought as a sapling from England in the early 1900s. She claimed it was cherished by the property owner and he was promised it would not be cut down when the land was sold.

In addition, many are upset over the low sale price, followed by a much higher resale to the developer. Sucec called it "predatory." Long categorizes it as elder fraud and contacted City Commissioner Nick Fish's office about it.

Commissioner Fish's policy advisor Jamie Dunphy has a strong background in elder fraud and abuse and said, on paper, the sale does look suspicious. However, there could be many reasons for the low sale price.

"There could have been a dozen reasons," Dunphy said. "There could have been a reverse mortgage on it. There could have been a contested inheritance sale; there could have been liens against the house, or a foreclosure."

And while Commissioner Fish's office would be more than willing to look into it further, one thing stops Dunphy—they haven't been asked to do so by the former owner or his family.

"I talked to my former colleagues at the state AG's (attorney general's) office. And they pointed out very quickly that

we don't have authorization to talk to them on behalf of this individual," Dunphy said.

"The information we got was from a third party. You can't go talking about people's financial information without explicit, written permission on their behalf."

Meanwhile, although the first legal day the tree could come down was April 5, nothing has happened yet. There is a "No Trespassing" sign up on the house (one on the tree vanished) but although Long checks daily, there's been no sign of a tree removal crew.

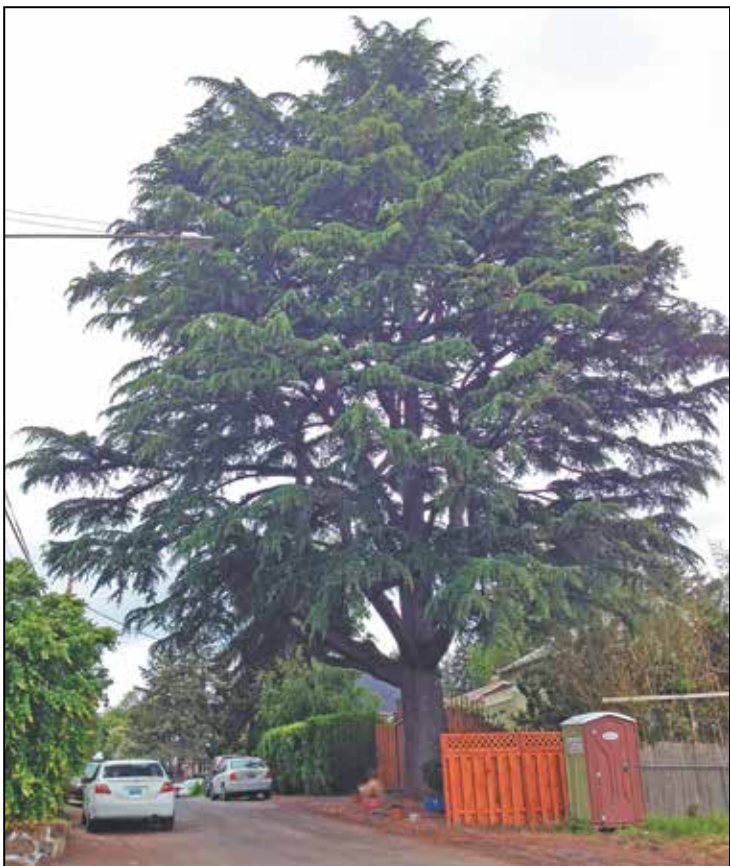
"I come back every day to check on it. Every morning. And people (in the neighborhood) are supposed to get in touch with me if it happens," she said.

Long criticized Renaissance and its president Randy Sebastian. "He wants to take this little home, which would have been a wonderful starter home for someone," Long said, "and he wants to tear it down and throw it in the landfill and then cut (down) this beautiful tree and build two McMansions right next to each other."

Sebastian said the tree might not necessarily have to be sacrificed. "We're doing everything we can to save the tree," he said in a voice mail message. "We may or may not be able to, depending on the root system. We even changed the floorplan to accommodate the tree."

But Sebastian is under no obligation to do so. The City's tree policy does not protect trees on lots 5,000 square feet or larger. Therefore, modest homes on large lots can be bulldozed, along with historic trees, so larger homes can be built.

(Continued on Page 3)



A similar heritage cedar tree is located on Southwest 31st Avenue near Capitol Highway. (Post photo by Don Snedecor)