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PHOTO BY Brent LaFollette

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Planning & Sustainability Commission Approves Propane Project

By Barbara Quinn
Review Columnist

It now goes to City Council

Tuesday, April 7 began with light grey skies and clouds full and tense with the promise of showers. The sense of tension carried into the afternoon as people filed into the final hearing on the proposed Pembina propane terminal at city offices at 1900 SW 4th in downtown Portland. The Planning & Sustainability Commission would hear four and a half hours of citizen testimony before voting on whether to remove an environmental overlay zone. It's removal would enable a terminal at T6 holding a massive 33 million gallons of propane delivered in mile long trains every two days and from there shipped out to Asia.

The room was filled beyond capacity and many were left without seating in the back. Yet the atmosphere was one of camaraderie. The vast majority wore red, a sign of opposition to the project. They were a wide swath of humanity: na-

tive Americans in traditional dress, doctors, children, elderly, families, faith leaders, people from north Portland, Linnton, Hayden Island and beyond. It was explained that at least six of 10 commissioners had to vote yes to approve the terminal. Five to five would be a deadlock.

The first to testify was a native American woman representing the Walla Walla tribe. She said there had been an agreement that the city would consult with the tribe on these kinds of projects. They had not. She spoke of protecting the Columbia and the salmon.

Soon after, an articulate 13-year old boy offered this: "The Climate Action Plan includes policy around the export of oil and coal. It's illogical to say yes to propane before we have a policy on propane."

Later, a woman doctor from Physicians for Social Responsibility testified, "We need prevention not mitigation. This proposal flies in the face of good science and social equity." Another physician referred

to Fukushima saying, "Placing a nuclear plant in a tsunami zone is similar to placing a propane terminal in an earthquake zone."

Bob Sallinger of Portland Audubon added, "We have incomplete information and this hearing shouldn't even be happening. You have not addressed risks with rail or ship transport at all."

A statement was read: "Due to community concerns as well as concerns about safety, the north Portland neighborhood chairs are opposed to making an exception to the zoning overlay zone for this project."

David Douglas Red Thunder in referring to the 5.3 mile blast zone testified, "This propane terminal poses a threat to north Portland, Vancouver and my beloved West Hayden Island."

The Raging Grannies approached together and sang an opposition ballad with a refrain of do dah, do dah to the amusement of all. Also testifying together was a family from St. Johns, a mom, dad, and

adult daughter with her three-year old daughter dressed as a butterfly. As a whole, the testimony was amazing, articulate and passionate, almost all in opposition.

The commissioners' first round vote produced a 5/5 deadlock, but with further discussion and an amendment, one commissioner swung her vote to make it 6/4, to approve the zone change. The displeasure of the crowd was immediate, strong and vocal.

The Planning and Sustainability Commission, in choosing not to take a leadership position on sustainability, instead listened to city staff for guidance—a staff that has enabled the project. In fact, it was Mayor Hales and his Planning Director, Susan Anderson, who requested the zone change to accommodate Pembina.

The commission hopes to compromise with strong citizen opposition by attempting to lower the propane's enormous carbon footprint. They plan to charge a one cent per gallon fee to offset the

carbon created by its burning. The fee calculation presupposes that half of the volatile fuel will go to making plastic where it's sequestered, 15% to replace oil and 15% to replace coal. Unfortunately, there is no way to ensure those end uses.

But one thing is clear: the fossil fuel industry remains lucrative—the fee adds up to 6.2 million dollars per year for 25 years. So it appears North Portland will get questionable mitigation rather than prevention. With a handful of jobs and a load of carbon, the concern is to watch the atmosphere warm, droughts recur, and the quality of life melt away with glaciers.

One citizen's comment said it best, "Does anyone see the farce in your name, *Sustainability Commission*, and what we're doing here today?" The proposal will now move on to the City Council for public discussion and final approval.

HAVE A CHANGE OF ADDRESS? PLEASE TELL US ASAP

City buys land next to Amos Benson house

The precious land is on the former Open Meadow School site

By Gayla Patton
The Review

As this issue goes to print, it's not quite a done deal - but close to it, because the Portland City Council has approved the purchase of land next to the now closed Open Meadow School site on North Crawford. They expect to close on the property next month.

Those living in the area are already familiar with the spectacular views from the land that looks out at the Willamette River and the railroad bridge. Bald Eagles

are often spotted soaring the banks of the River, and before it ceased to be an alternative high school, Open Meadow High School students could be seen staring out the windows to enjoy the scenery which spanned as far as downtown Portland. It was unfortunate, however, that those living in the neighborhood were not able to partake in these spectacular views - but now they will be able to.

The City is paying approximately \$880,000 for the three-acre property,

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"City buys land"*

An aerial shot of the new City-owned park and former school site. What is an appropriate name? Send your suggestions to the Review.



The gorgeous shot in this issue's Masthead was taken by Brent LaFollette. If you have a beautiful picture you've taken of the St. Johns Bridge, send it to the Review in jpeg format, high resolution, to be entered into the St. Johns Bridge Photo Contest. Full details are on Page 2.