

BLAZERS Ask for Public Assistance

Red ink puts team's future in doubt



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

When the Portland Trail Blazers lost ownership of the Rose Garden Arena in bankruptcy, it lost major revenues from luxury suites, courtside seats and concessions. Now the team is looking for public assistance to stay viable as an NBA franchise.

Trail Blazer officials are visiting with state and local political leaders about needing public assistance in order to stay in Portland, blaming red ink since owner Paul Allen built the Rose Garden Arena and then lost the stadium in a bankruptcy that saw major revenues from the complex go to his creditors.

Last week, Blazer management spent their off-court time pitching the idea of a public-private partnership with Gov. Ted Kulongoski, Portland Mayor Tom Potter, city commissioners and other political leaders.

A partnership, the Blazers conveyed to the city, is needed to ensure their survival in Portland. The plea to become "financially viable" included no specifics as to how it would happen, or how much it would cost taxpayers.

Mayor Potter said he'd love to lend a hand, but not a dollar. No other public official came up with any promises either.

Blazers owner Paul Allen, listed as the seventh-richest man in the world, has lost \$600 million on the team since he bought the NBA franchise in 1988, team officials said. In 1995, Allen built the Rose Garden Arena but lost it in bankruptcy court. Creditors now own the arena and its revenue from luxury suites, courtside seats and concessions.

The Blazers are expected to lose another \$100 million in the next three years, team officials said.

Urban League Career Fair

The Urban League of Portland hosts its annual Career Connections Job & Education Fair, Thursday, March 9 from 11:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at DoubleTree Hotel-Lloyd Center, 1000 N.E. Multnomah.

The event is free and open to the public. More than 60 exhibitors are participating this year, representing such industries as banking, education, government, health care, media, insurance, social services and utilities.

Event sponsors include American Family Insurance, Enterprise Rent a Car, Portland General Electric and Providence Health System.

Utility Files for Rate Increase

PacifiCorp, the Oregon utility doing business as Pacific Power, is seeking to raise its electricity rates by 13.2 percent.

The company filed the request with the Oregon Public Utility Commission on Thursday. If approved, the higher rate would take effect in December.

The request included a 10.8 percent hike in rates for residential customers, and a 19.8 percent increase for large industrial customers. It comes as PacificCorp comes under the control of MidAtlantic Energy Holding Co. based in Des Moines, Iowa.

The Oregon PUC approved the company's sale Friday.

Drug Benefit Program Help

Multnomah County is working to provide assistance to seniors and people with disabilities who are faced with enrollment problems in the new Medicare drug benefit program.

Local residents who have transferred drug coverage from Medicaid to Medicare have been denied their medication or been asked to pay large deductibles and co-payments they cannot afford.

"Our case managers are working feverishly to help resolve this crisis and assure that our clients don't face a health and safety risk due to not filling their prescriptions," said Mary Shortall, manager of Multnomah County's Aging and Disability Services.

The department's has a helpline at 503-988-3646 that serves as a clearinghouse to find solutions and assist people with their Medicare needs.

March is National Nutrition Month



Join the AAHC and a naturopathic physician for a free talk and learn

10 Steps to a Healthier You!

March 14th 6:00-7:30 pm
at Emanuel Hospital,
Medical Office Building (MOB) West
Located at 501 N. Graham

Reserve your space by contacting the AAHC at 503.413.1850 or saras@aahc-portland.org

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