

Uniquely Qualified

continued **▲** from front

unique credentials.

With the retirement of Bertha Ferran, whose seat she takes, she will be the only woman and the youngest commissioner ever on the five-member panel. Certainly she is the only mother, a parent to three sons, with her husband Aubre Dickson.

Equally significant, on a panel that has spent considerable time in recent years dealing with questions relating to racial minority and women-owned contractors and companies; she will be the first to represent the interests of firms that are often disadvantaged at winning PDC contracts. At Colas Construction, a firm started by her father Hermann in 1997, she is a member of the National Association of Minority Contractors.

The company has "a portfolio that extends across the metropolitan area," Colas-Dickson told Mayor Sam Adams and the other city commissioners, including northeast and east Portland and Gresham. The firm has specialized in mixed-use and commercial projects. Among the projects was the renovation of the Golden West Hotel, a historical downtown gathering place for African-Americans in the early and mid 1900s, as a complex for low-income housing. Her company also renovated the 32-unit Iron Crest development in Gresham, and did affordable housing projects for HOST Community Development and Hacienda Community Development.

"We have created quality, self-financed, quality projects in blighted areas that have uplifted the communities around them," Colas-Dickson said. Her objective on the PDC commission will be to create a "livable, equitable, sustainable city," she said.

Born in Portland, Colas-Dickson attended St. Mary's Academy and graduated from the University of Oregon in Eugene with degrees in accounting and business administration.

There are strong bonds of loyalty in her family business, she told the Portland Observer. She joined the company part-time in 1998, and has worked there full time for 10 years.

"If I did well and my father wanted to have me, I wanted to help," she said.

Noting that her sons were in the audience for her PDC appointment, she told city council members that she was "especially passionate about schools, parks and public spaces."

She wants to see "cranes in the air, shovels in the ground, and keeping business doors open."

City Commissioner Nick Fish told Colas-Dickson that as someone long interested in affordable housing development "I've had the honor of working with your family. I have no doubt you'll be an enormous success. I know you have a deep, deep commitment to the values we share."

Adams said that with Colas-Dickson's addition, PDC now has "the best group of commissioners

the city has ever had."

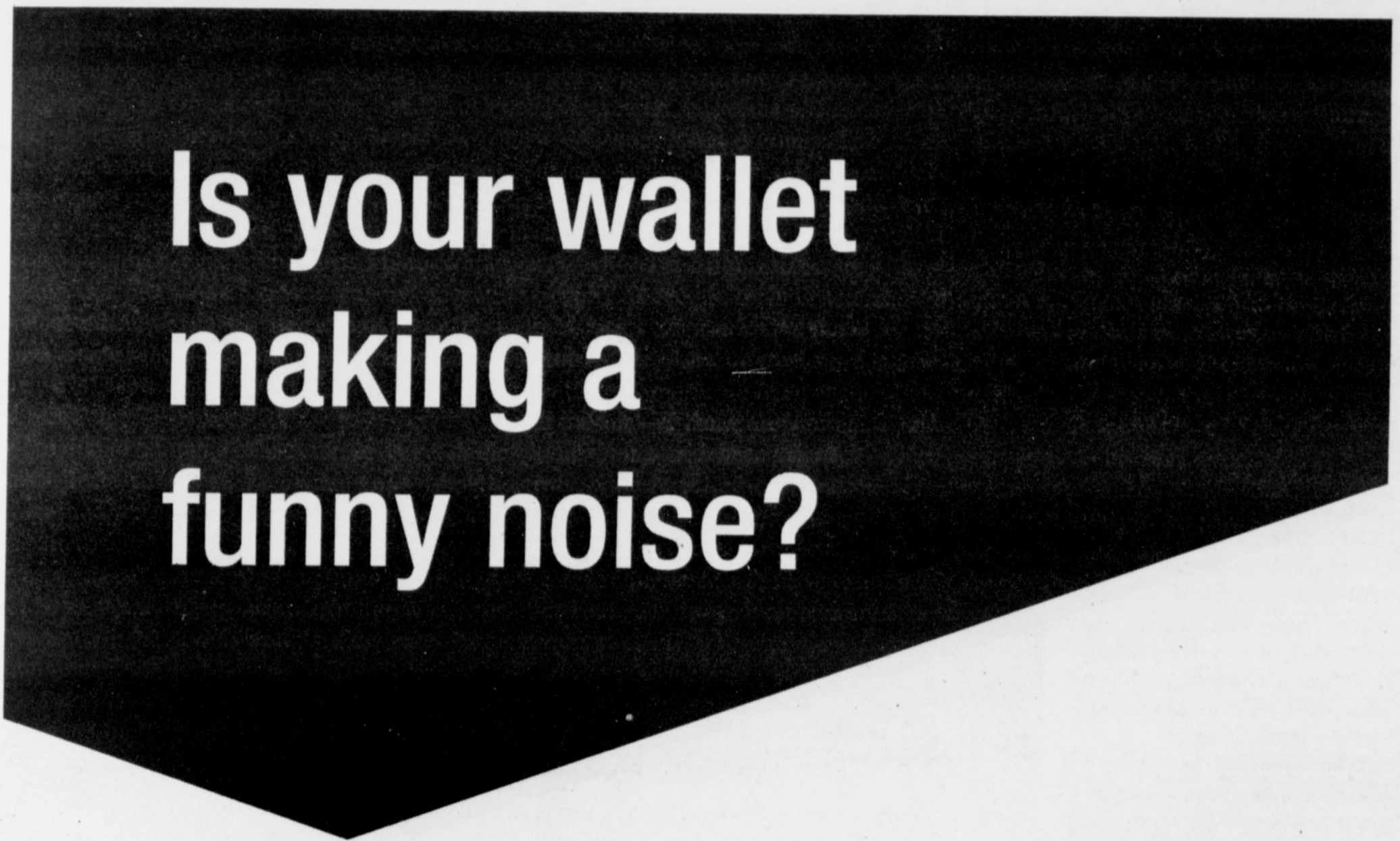
Commissioner Randy Leonard, a frequent critic of PDC, said that the agency has traveled "an interesting road since 2002. For the last few years, under (Director) Bruce Warner I have been pleased to work with them. They have achieved racial and ethnic diversity, true, but they're also exceedingly competent."

Some of the strongest criticisms of the agency have been about the low level of minority participation in their urban renewal projects, and some of their strongest critics have been minority contractors.

Colas-Dickson is aware of the complaints but says, "In recent years PDC has been doing a much better job of realizing the disparity in minority participation in contracting in the past, and is working to correct it. I will continue working for these changes."

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