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# Fred Meyer

What's on your list today?

# LOCAL NEWS



Advocating for a Portland Office of Equity are community activists Dora Perry (from left), City Commissioner Amanda Fritz, and Anne Naito-Campbell. The office would battle disparities and work toward a more equitable future for all residents.

## Office of Equity Vote Nears

### Fritz brings in supporters to rally effort

BY MINDY COOPER  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The Portland City Council has scheduled a hearing Wednesday, Aug. 31 to create an Office of Equity in an effort to eliminate disparities in a more racially and ethnically diverse city and achieve equitable outcomes for all residents.

The ordinance, which is co-sponsored by Mayor Sam Adams and Commissioner Amanda Fritz, has been three years in the making after equity emerged as a value and goal Portlanders feel passionate about when researching the city's 25-year Portland Plan.

"Success of this work, so that measured outcomes are better than in all the previous good-hearted attempts to eliminate disparities and achieve equity, depends on shared ownership," said Commissioner Fritz.

Although recent studies have shown that more diversity is coming to Portland every day, the gap continues to widen between those who have access to a good education, employment, healthcare and other issues, and those who don't. People of color and people with disabilities experience higher rates

of poverty, unemployment, and shorter lifespan compared with other Portlanders.

The office would look at policies and practices within the city as well as externally with community groups and neighbors to find ways to decrease disparities.

In a visit to the offices of the Portland Observer on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Fritz said a lot of people within the community are not willing to admit we have a problem of race and equity in Portland.

She said one mission of the Equity office will be to educate and help everyone within the community to begin thinking with an "equity lens."

Although some individuals throughout the community seem to have a skeptical eye as they still wait on a clear and strategic plan for action, Fritz said, "we have to figure that out together, and it takes more than just city employees. It's got to be everybody."

"We need real collaboration and transparent accountability within government, and between government and all our diverse communities," she said. "Only then will all people in all communities thrive and make Portland truly a socially, environmentally, and financially healthy place to live, work, and play."

The office could start with three employees and a \$525,000 annual

budget, Fritz said.

She said there would be a lot of conversations, which will hopefully lead to changes in the high level of inequality in the city. "Even if you don't care about the issue morally, socially this is an economic issue."

The Urban League of Portland, one of the nation's oldest and largest community-based movements devoted to empowering African Americans to enter the economic and social mainstream, is one organization advocating for an effective, accountable Office of Equity to lead and implement an equity strategy for the city and region.

The organization said they are calling on the Portland City Council to take a firm step toward eliminating racial and other disparities in the city by passing the Office of Equity ordinance and they said will take part in the public hearing at City Hall.

The meeting will begin at 6 p.m. and the vote will take place next Wednesday, on Sept. 7.

"The Office of Equity is an important tool that can create an intentional, accountable, city-wide strategy, instead of piecemeal one-off projects with limited success," said Marcus C. Mundy, Urban League of Portland president and chief executive officer. "We hope the City Council will pass this ordinance. It is an investment in the future and will reap benefits for all Portlanders."