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LOCAL NEWS

No Place to Call Home

Housing emergency has no clear answers

BY OLIVIA OLIVIA
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

It's the middle of a weekday afternoon and Thomas Edward Mullen has just taken the bus downtown for his three minutes on a microphone. He, like scores of other residents, long prepared their short speeches to deliver to the City Council on their housing woes.

Mullen's story is not that different from many others heard that day: He had a home, many years ago, but lost it. He aged; he was injured, and could not afford to pay for rent and medical care without a job. As you can guess, precious few employers were interested in hiring an aging, disabled black man.

Soon, Mullen says he found himself on the streets, where he lived for several years. Now he's at the Clark Center on Martin Luther King Boulevard, a 90-bed short-term residential program for men that provides the supports needed to move out of homelessness.

The complex features an on-site computer lab, mental health counseling, life skills, and case management, but stays are only up to four months. Mullen does not know where he will live next.

"If I were a country, I'd have my flag turned upside down," Mullen said about his situation. "I'm old, I can't work no more. I put so many years in and lost my home, and now I have no where left to go."



PHOTO BY OLIVIA OLIVIA/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Thomas Edward Mullen, a Portland resident who lost his home to homelessness, awaits his turn to speak during last week's discussion of a citywide housing emergency before the Portland City Council.

He stared at the line of others wanting to speak, and said he was not sure if he would even be allowed to talk due to the number of people. "It's a long shot but I want to try, I came here today to try," he said.

The urgency and concern from renters was palpable during the Oct. 7 hearing. So were the tensions between tenants and landlords, city developers and local and state leaders.

Katrina Holland, deputy direc-

tor for the Community Alliance of Tenants, explained that her organization has been trying to more clearly focus on the affordability of renting in the area.

"Affordable housing – what they usually mean is subsidized housing or state housing – is not enough and not what we are focusing on. That's why we re-established this as a Renters' State of Emergency, not just a housing

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First Indigenous Peoples' Day

Portland celebrated its first ever Indigenous Peoples' Day on Monday changing what was formerly known as Columbus Day.

Joining several other communities across America, the Portland City Council adopted the holiday as a way to support local native communities on what was traditionally a day used to celebrate the colonization of the Americas.

Portland is home to the ninth-largest Native American population in the United States, and its urban Native community is descended from more than 200 tribes. The history of indigenous communities in Portland is woven into the fabric of the city; a shared commitment to environmental stewardship and love of place continue to make Portland a leader in sustainability and livability, officials said.

"The movement to make this day a reality in the U.S began decades ago, so this resolution is long overdue," said Dante James, director of Portland's Office of Equity and Human Rights. "I am pleased that Portland is honoring the history, spirit and contributions of American Indian communities with whom we share our city and region."