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Tribal Liaison Appointed

The position marks a first for Portland

Mayor Charlie Hales disclosed Thursday that Patricia Davis Gibson will be the first ever Tribal Liaison for the City of Portland.

The Tribal Liaison position will work out of the Mayor's office on relationship and policy development with Native American nations and governments, as well as



Patricia Davis Gibson

with internal staff. Davis Gibson will be the leading point person for contact between City officials, bureaus and members of the tribal public.

Davis Gibson has immense tribal expertise, having held positions in Indian Country as a tribal attorney, Juvenile Justice Policy Liaison and Chief Judge. She is of the Comanche Tribe of Oklahoma, a direct descendant of Chief Ten Bears, and is also of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma and the Muskogee Creek Nation.

"This position is long-overdue for the City of Portland, and we could not have found a better candidate to serve as our first Tribal Liaison," Mayor Hales stated in a press release.

"Ms. Davis Gibson has an incredible record of representing Native American interests across the state. With her expertise, Portland will be able to better collaborate with tribal nations and the tribal public."

Davis Gibson will start as Tribal Liaison on August 15.

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Mayor Wants Sanctioned Camps

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Hazelnut Grove from its current site, because the site is extremely difficult for sanitation services to access in order to empty dumpsters, portable toilets, and needle containers," says Hottman.

Officials and housing advocates want to identify a more serviceable site, and re-establish Hazelnut Grove under a nonprofit manager, per the city's "Home for Everyone" framework, she says.

Citywide, only one property out of 120 scouted sites has been

identified as a potential sanctioned camping site that could meet the new requirements and that's the Kalbrenner property, located at southeast 104th and Reedway.

Hoffman says the city is working on preparing the property, including removing vegetation and contaminated soil, installing water and electricity infrastructure and establishing a nonprofit site manager. Depending on zoning, it could hold 100 to 200 campers.

In addition to existing shelters, like one in Westmoreland that of-

fers 150 beds and the new 200-bed Hanson Shelter that just opened with the transfer of sheriff's offices in east Portland, Hottman says about 200 more shelter beds are on the way.

For the inevitable hundreds of houseless persons that won't end up with a shelter bed following the pending camp sweeps, where they will end up is still a question Hottman can't answer.

"That's a big question and that's a tough question. It'll be up to them to find hopefully a discreet place to get by."

Empowered for Disasters

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really have a concept of it," Van Keuren says.

Despite general apathy, the program has seen an increase in interest. Applications for the program are on the rise but the diversity of those enrolled falls short of reflecting Portland's population.

"We're really trying to improve diversity in the program. It's been challenging," says Van Keuren.

At present, only 10 percent of Portland NET members classify themselves as non-white, which is a stat both Van Keuren and the NET board are hoping to change through reaching out to local organizations that work with communities of color.

"It makes a huge difference when you're actually working with those community leaders on an ongoing basis, especially when there's not a crisis or a problem to solve. Just hanging out with them and getting to know them is very important and frankly I don't think we've done that very well in our bureau."

Van Keuren says the NET teams should see themselves not so much as the people that are going to be responding to every

single problem after a disaster happens, but more like a force multiplier to the effort by public safety officials.

"We see very consistently in disasters all around the world that people come out of the woodwork and want to help. We call them Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteers (SUVs). They can either very greatly enhance the capacity of your response or they can really diminish it, depending on how well you manage them."

Residents interested in joining a neighborhood NET faction or that have questions or concerns regarding natural disasters, are urged to visit the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management website portlandoregon.gov/pbem.

"It's scary, but you can empower yourself and it does make a difference. You can make a decision for yourself of how you're going to be in the event of an earthquake," Van Keuren says.

"You just have to decide whether you're going to be the person that's unprepared and needs help from everybody, or if you're going to empower yourself and be ready for it. If you empower yourself, which doesn't really take a lot of effort, you don't have to be afraid."

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