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Unwavering Support for Smith

Leaders say county chair led biased investigation

BY MICHAEL LEIGHTON
PORTLAND OBSERVER EDITOR

An esteemed group of African American leaders issued a rebuke to Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury Tuesday saying the findings of wrongdoing in a county-led human resources investigation against County Commissioner Loretta Smith were unsubstantiated and instead were a political and racist attack against Smith, the only black member of the county commission.

A letter addressed to Kafoury by the group "reaffirms the community's unwavering commitment to Commissioner Smith and highlights the county's flawed investigation."

Smith has been fighting allegations of inappropriate behavior by two former employees since the beginning of the year, denying that she made demeaning statements and was harsher in the treatment of the female and women of color staffers who worked for her.

Her supporters were strongly critical of Kafoury's role in the



Deborah Kafoury



Loretta Smith

investigation and said Smith was not afforded due process.

"This unseemly process surrounding unsubstantiated charges and allegations about Commissioner Smith have been the worst sort of political and racist attack, thinly veiled as a human resources investigation, indeed a modern day political lynching. We are not going to stand by while one of our best and brightest is maligned," said the rebuke.

"Our community has fought long and hard for African Americans, elected or not, to receive equal treatment under the law and we are outraged that did not occur under your leadership," the leaders added. "We will contin-

ue to be vocal in our enduring support of this woman who has dedicated her entire professional life to public service, to the betterment of our youth, and to all of Multnomah County."

The letter was signed by former Sen. Avel Gordly, Albina Head Start Executive Director Ron Herndon, Self Enhancement, Inc. President Tony Hopson, African American Alliance Co-Chairs Lorenzo Poe and Joyce Harris; and Albina Ministerial Alliance Chair and Co-chair Dr. Rev. Leroy Haynes Jr. and Dr. Rev. T. Allen Bethel.

Kafoury could not be reached for comment, but defended the investigation earlier.

Portland Jazz Icon Dies after Illness



Thara Memory

Grammy Award-winning Portland jazz icon Thara John Memory died at the age of 68 on Sat-

urday evening, according to his attorney.

Memory, an Oregon Music

Hall of Fame inductee, was best known for directing the American Music Program, a nonprofit education center which instructed students in the 7th through 12th grades in jazz technique. He also led an after-school music program at northeast Portland's Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School.

The musician won his first Grammy while collaborating with his most famous mentee, Esperanza Spalding, in 2013.

Memory was indicted in February on allegations of misdemeanor sexual abuse. Of his four alleged victims, two were under the age of 18. The cases did not proceed to trial prior to Memory's death, and will remain unresolved.

No cause of death has been released, though Memory had been struggling with failing health for several years. He was known to be suffering from kidney problems and diabetes.