

# County to Open More Shelters

## Coronavirus response aimed at community in crisis

(AP) — Authorities in Multnomah County announced Tuesday that they will be opening hundreds of new shelter beds in public buildings throughout the city to try to stem the spread of the coronavirus in the homeless community.

The most vulnerable homeless residents have been given vouchers for hotel and motel rooms and those businesses will not be allowed to kick them out or turn people away, said Deborah Kafoury, chair of the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners.

Local government will also open spaces for homeless people with the coronavirus to recuperate indoors, she said.

Volunteers have made contact with 1,700 people living on the streets or in their cars in the past week throughout the county to provide information about the coronavirus and to offer services, Kafoury said.

“What if you don’t have a place where you can self-quarantine? What happens when the libraries close, the cafes aren’t open and public spaces are no longer available?” she said at a news conference announcing the initiatives.



Anthony Crowell sits at his barber station, downtown, after multiple customers canceled haircuts Monday because of fears about the spread of the coronavirus. Crowell usually has a steady clientele of business people at his barber shop but customers have stopped coming in recent days. (AP photo)

“These are people who simply don’t have the option to close the front door and hope that the worst won’t come.”

The city and county are also jointly suspending evictions for those who can’t pay the rent due to COVID-19 for as long as the crisis lasts, said Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler.

Renters will have six months to repay their back rent after the city and county lift the state of emergency.

Those who will qualify for the evic-

tion moratorium are renters who have lost jobs or had reduced hours due to business closures; who have been out of work to watch children who are out of school; or who have been sick with the coronavirus or have a family member who is ill.

The city and county are coordinating with the Oregon courts and local sheriff’s officials to make sure no one is evicted.

“Many people are in fear and we understand that,” Wheeler said. “Extraordinary

times require extraordinary actions.”

Gov. Kate Brown on Monday banned on-site consumption at bars and restaurants around the state for at least four weeks in a bid to slow the spread of the new coronavirus and said gatherings will be limited to 25 people or fewer.

Restaurants can still offer takeout or delivery but the ban on in-restaurant dining is intended to give teeth to guidance on social distancing to slow transmission of COVID-19.

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PUBLISHER: *Mark Washington, Sr.*

EDITOR: *Michael Leighton*

ADVERTISING MANAGER: *Leonard Latin*

Office Manager/Classifieds: *Lucinda Baldwin*

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: *Paul Neufeldt*

REPORTER/WEB EDITOR: *Beverly Corbell*

PUBLIC RELATIONS: *Mark Washington Jr.*

OFFICE ASSISTANT/SALES: *Shawntell Washington*

CALL 503-288-0033

FAX 503-288-0015

news@portlandobserver.com

ads@portlandobserver.com

subscription@portlandobserver.com

Postmaster: Send address changes to

Portland Observer, PO Box 3137,

Portland, OR 97208

### Housing Evictions Stopped

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler and County Chair Deborah Kafoury Tuesday announced a moratorium on renter evictions to assist the community during the coronavirus crisis. “For people who are losing their wages due to COVID-19 and find themselves unable to pay rent, we want you to be able to stay in your home,” Kafoury said. People will have 6 months to pay back what they owe.

### Blazers, Timbers Sidelined

The Portland Trail Blazers and Timbers have suspended operations because of the coronavirus. The NBA suspended its season “until further notice” last week after a Utah Jazz player tested positive for the coronavirus. Major League Soccer announced it would stop all games for 30 days because of the virus threat.

### Jefferson Season Ends

The Jefferson High School boys basketball team ended their season last week when the OSAA canceled all remaining winter sports high school championships, including the Class 6A, 5A and 4A basketball

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state tournaments. The Democrats were the only Portland school still competing for a state championship in the sport.

### Suspension of Disconnects

The Portland area’s three largest utilities, Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, and Northwest Natural all announced a suspension of disconnects and/or late fees to support residents during the coronavirus outbreak. “We are ready around the clock to answer any questions about your electrical service and help any customers who are having difficulty paying their electrical bills,” a Pacific Power representative said.

### Price Gouging Targeted

Gov. Kate Brown Monday declared an “abnormal disruption of the market,” trigger-

ing new consumer protections to prevent price gouging. As consumers hoard toilet paper, hand sanitizer and other emergency supplies, there have been reports from around the country that people are selling such items at tremendous markups online, in stores or on the street.

### Stigmas Hurt Businesses

Asian-American-owned businesses in Portland have seen a downturn in business since the coronavirus outbreak because of xenophobic and racist stigmas about the virus’ spread, Multnomah County reported last week. “Some members of our immigrant communities and communities of color have experienced acts of racism and xenophobia,” the county announcement said.

### Biden Wants Woman VP

Joe Biden on Sunday committed to picking a woman running mate if he is the Democratic presidential nominee. “I commit that I will in fact pick a woman to be vice president,” Biden said during a longer answer about what he would do to support women if he becomes president.