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Mayor Keith Wilson addressed a crowded auditorium and held firm on the centrality of shelters in solving the city's homelessness crisis.

Capacity armory crowd fails to nudge his shelter plan

BY ALLAN CLASSEN

Mayor Keith Wilson finally faced the folks fighting his proposed overnight shelter in the Pearl District, at least the 580 who filled the armory auditorium on July 28 to get some answers.

He drew polite applause and acknowledgment of his idealistic vision, couched along the lines of his campaign speeches.

The devil was in the details. Confirmation that the 200-bed shelter at Northwest 15th and Northrup will have only two showers did not go over well. When the audience learned that sex offenders will be allowed inside the low-barrier shelter because no one will be checking for IDs, many guffawed.

And when Wilson redirected a question about management of spillover effects on the surrounding blocks by launching into an anecdote about his neighbor in North Portland, the reaction was so negative that he never finished the story.

Wilson remained poised throughout his 90 minutes on stage and drew modest hand-clapping as he walked off. The key takeaway from the evening may have been the fact that the mayor offered no course correction or revisions to the plan he has outlined from the start.

While the mayor has said he is “grateful for the incredible support I’ve received ... from District 4 councilor members,” the trio came on stage for a 15-minute overtime period after Wilson left. Dutiful and conditional support might better characterize their positions.

Councilor Eric Zimmerman said his support has always been contingent on good neighbor agreements involving affected neighbors. No drug dealing, queueing or trash around the shelters should be tolerated.

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Shelter lease raises questions

BY ALLAN CLASSEN

New light was shed on the city’s proposed 200-bed homeless shelter at 1435 NW Northrup St. by public documents acquired by the NW Examiner last month.

The city and property owner Vanessa Sturgeon of Sturgeon Development Partners signed a 12-year lease in May that Mayor Keith Wilson later described as a two-or-three-year deal.

The \$18,000-a-month lease covers the main floor and part of a basement, a total of 16,000 square feet, to be used “only for shelter for unhoused individuals and associated sheltering services.”

The lease term and limited-purpose stipulation would seem to undercut promises that Wilson expects to end the city’s homeless crisis soon.

The lease also states that the “tenant shall not record the lease.” Recording is a normal practice in commercial leases that protects tenants from eviction or losses should the landlord lose control of the property.

Robert Layne, a communications strategist for the city’s Portland Solutions program, told the Examiner that suspicions over the discoveries in the documents are unfounded.

Layne said the lease is effectively year-to-year

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Kate Fulton speaks to television news reporters in front of a just-completed sign announcing the coming of Market of Choice.

Co-op members choose Market of Choice

BY ALLAN CLASSEN

For most of two years, Food Front Cooperative Grocery leaders blocked all democratic pressures to turn their former store at 2375 NW Thurman St. into Market of Choice.

Under new leadership committed to letting members finally have their way, Market of Choice received 92 percent of 688 votes cast in a vote announced on July 28.

Mark New, a local retail developer making no guarantees that he could find a grocery tenant, received 8 percent.

“We are so delighted that the majority interest of active members is clear,” co-op President Kate Fulton said.

MOC offered \$1.54 million plus a matching donation of up to \$100,000 to Friendly House.

Board Vice President Sue Harrison said Zach Wright, who is leading the company after his father Rick’s unexpected death in June, is gratified by the show of support and pledged to complete the transaction promptly.

Fulton is thrilled “to honor Rick’s steadfast commitment to our members and the neighborhood.

“The loss of Food Front has been felt by so many, and putting in a local community-minded grocer in its stead is one of the closest replacements we can hope for. We are looking forward to the vibrancy that has been lacking since the closure.”

Former President Roman Shvarts and former Vice President Sanela Ruznic, who for months were the majority of a three-member board, favored New’s proposal.

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