



Date: October 26, 2022

To: Portland Mayor Wheeler  
Portland Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty  
Portland Commissioner Mingus Mapps  
Portland Commissioner Carmen Rubio  
Portland Commissioner Dan Ryan

From: Bob Gravely, Regional Business Manager, Pacific Power

RE: Agenda items 899-903 - Homelessness and Housing resolutions

As a Portland-based electricity provider for nearly 90,000 customers in Northeast, North and downtown Portland, Pacific Power appreciates the opportunity to express support for the collection of proposals put forward by Mayor Wheeler and Commissioner Ryan to address housing and homelessness in the community.

We share the broad concern around the conditions many of our community's most vulnerable residents are enduring and the desire to see those living on the streets moved into more secure, clean and safe housing with access to services. We also have had serious concerns about the impact unauthorized encampments have had on our own core mission to provide safe and reliable electricity service to the community, and believe a comprehensive approach is needed.

Of particular concern are fires or other acts of vandalism connected to encampments that impact or threaten live electrical infrastructure. These impacts create direct public safety risks for those living in or visiting encampments, nearby neighbors, and our employees, and jeopardize equipment needed to provide a critical service to the city. To cite just a few areas of concern and examples:

- Semi-permanent encampments around substations. Encampments directly outside the substation at NE Knott and NE Rodney were the scene of many fires over a period of months in early 2022. Multiple wooden power poles were damaged by fire at this location, which is in a residential neighborhood and across the street from a community center.  
<https://katu.com/news/local/fire-at-homeless-camp-near-electrical-substation-sparks-concern>
- Delayed restoration times during outages due to blocked access to facilities. In 2020, an RV fire at an encampment caused an outage affecting a major hospital. Access to the site for crews was blocked by debris from the camp, delaying the restoration time.

These examples are directly connected to unsanctioned camps that would be ended in the proposals from Mayor Wheeler and Commissioner Ryan. We see many other instances of theft and vandalism to electrical facilities that can impact public safety and service, including theft of grounding and stability wires for power poles, tampering with meters, and the removal of enclosures that expose the public to

high voltages. While these instances may or may not be directly connected to encampments, it's likely that successful efforts to move more people into stable housing environments with access to services would also help reduce these public safety concerns.

We support agenda items 899-903 and encourage the City Council's continued focus on this critical issue.

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