

# CAMAS-WASHOUGAL POST-RECORD

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## Hearings examiner OKs Discover Recovery permit

Decision will allow drug rehabilitation center to operate in Camas; opponents say site, next to school, is wrong spot

By **KELLY MOYER**  
Post-Record editor

Camas Hearings Examiner Joe Turner has ruled in favor of granting a conditional-use permit to Discover Recovery, a substance-abuse treatment and recovery center hoping to operate in Camas' mostly residential Prune Hill neighborhood.

If there is no appeal, Turner's decision will pave the way for Discover Recovery's owners to convert

the former Fairgate Estate assisted living center into a 15-bed rehabilitation center geared toward working professionals seeking help for substance abuse disorders.

The 2.39-acre Fairgate Estate property is located next to the Dorothy Fox Elementary School, Dorothy Fox Park and Harvest Community Church at 2213 N.W. 23rd Ave., in Camas, in a residential-12,000 (R-12) zone.

Though intended for single-family homes with an



A "No Drug Detox Next to Dorothy Fox" sign stands at the corner of Northwest 28th Avenue and Northwest Utah Street, across from the Camas elementary school, on March 16, 2021.

average lot size of 12,000 square feet, Camas' R-12 zone also allows for several conditional uses, including "nursing, rest or convalescent homes," defined by the state of Washington as a facility that "main-

tains and operates 24-hour skilled nursing services for the care and treatment of chronically ill or convalescent patients, including mental, emotional or behavioral problems, intellectual disabilities or alcoholism."

Discover Recovery, a company that has operated a 40-bed inpatient drug treatment and rehabilitation center in Long Beach, Washington, since 2018, applied for the conditional-use permit on Jan. 21.

By the end of February, hundreds of Prune Hill neighbors had come together online to oppose the rehabilitation facility, form the Dorothy Fox Safety Alliance — a group that

later registered as a limited liability corporation — sign a petition opposing the placement of a drug rehab in Prune Hill and raise more than \$5,000 on GoFundMe to pay for an appeal if Turner ruled in favor of the Discover Recovery conditional-use permit.

At a March 24 public hearing before Turner, dozens of Prune Hill residents urged the hearings examiner to deny Discover Recovery's permit based on a city requirement that the proposed conditional use "not be materially detrimental to the public welfare."

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Jemtegaard Middle School teacher Dani Allen (right) instructs students in April 2021. The students are creating a painting featuring Mount Hood and the Columbia River that will soon cover an unsightly sign at the Washougal Food Center on Washougal's "E" Street.

## MAKING A MORE BEAUTIFUL WASHOUGAL

Local students, nonprofits partner on project to beautify prominent corner

By **DOUG FLANAGAN**  
Post-Record staff writer

The metal post that holds the marquee sign in the parking lot of the Washougal Food Center, at 1736 "E" St., has seen better days. Some of the black paint used to spell out the word "liquor" has peeled away, revealing chunks of the original surface and turning the letter "I" into a silver splotch.

"The liquor sign is in the middle of the community, and it's not very nice looking and falling apart," Amara Farah said. A senior at Washougal High, Farah felt compelled to beautify the prominent Washougal corner. "I wanted to cover it with a picture that's going to positively represent Washougal and lift others up."

Farah is now working in conjunction with the Unite! Washougal community coalition and the Washougal Arts and Culture Alliance, to create a Washougal-themed painting that will be erected on one side of the post later this spring.

"We were like, 'This is a very popular part of town ... and we should do something beautiful with it,'" said Taylor Vincent, also a Washougal High senior and the project's co-leader. "Instead of it being gray and dented, it will be colorful and wonderful. And I think it will catch people's eyes



The painting that will be erected onto the metal post in the parking lot of the Washougal Food Center includes representations of the Columbia River and Mount Hood.

and make them respond in a positive way."

After talking with Unite! Washougal's executive director, Margaret McCarthy, about her idea, Farah approached Washougal Food Center owner Jesse Singh, who approved of the project.

"We went in and said, 'Hey, we'd be willing to replace your liquor sign with something that would positively impact Washougal. Here are some of the designs.

Let us know if you want to change anything or if you have anything in mind,'" Farah said. "The first time we were there he seemed excited, but the more we kept showing up to show him what progress we were making, he seemed more and more on board with it, and that enthusiasm really started to come through."

A group of middle- and high-school students have gathered every Monday and Friday afternoon in Washougal High School art teacher Rob Yee's classroom for the past three months to work on the painting.

"The opportunities for youth to engage and own their community, and for us to partner with them, that's what's so exciting for me," McCarthy said. "If I don't like something about my environment, I can work with others and collaborate and have teamwork and value each other as we change it for the positive. That's what community is all about, and hopefully what Unite! Washougal is all about — working together and learning from each other and making this a better place for us all to live."

The picture will feature representations of the Columbia River and Mount Hood, and the phrase "You are enough."

Farah, who has volunteered

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## Local election season kicks off

There are 15 open positions on Camas-Washougal city councils, school boards and commissions

By **KELLY MOYER**  
Post-Record editor

Camas-Washougal area voters will decide the fate of 15 open positions on city councils, school boards and other commissions this year, beginning with the primary election on Aug. 3.

Candidates have until 5 p.m. May 21, to declare their intention to run for an open position. Registered Clark County voters will receive their primary ballots in the mail in mid-July.

Washougal voters will select a new mayor this year, as well as three council members and two school board members.

Open Washougal City Council seats include position 3, a four-year term currently held by Councilman Paul Greenlee; posi-

tion 5, a two-year term currently held by Mayor Molly Coston; position 6, a four-year term currently held by Councilwoman Julie Russell; and position 1, the four-year, vacant mayoral position.

On April 21, Greenlee registered with the state's Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) as a full-reporting candidate (those expecting to raise more than \$5,000 during a campaign) in the Washougal mayoral race.

Washougal School Board positions include the director 4 and director 5 seats currently held by school board members Donna Sinclair and Chuck Carpenter.

In Camas, there are three open city council positions — all are four-

See Election, page A8



A voter drops off a ballot in the 24-hour ballot drop box next to the Camas Post Office on Oct. 29, 2018.

## Gresham passes on Camas' Fox

Mayor: City administrator 'decided to pursue other opportunities'

By **KELLY MOYER**  
Post-Record editor

The city of Gresham, Oregon, has not selected Camas City Administrator Jamal Fox to be its next city manager.

Fox, who began his position in Camas eight months ago, was one of three candidates being considered for the top Gresham post.



Camas City Administrator Jamal Fox

See Fox, page A6

**WASHOUGAL'S 'RISING STAR'**  
Clark College grad turns life around, gives back  
Community, Page A7

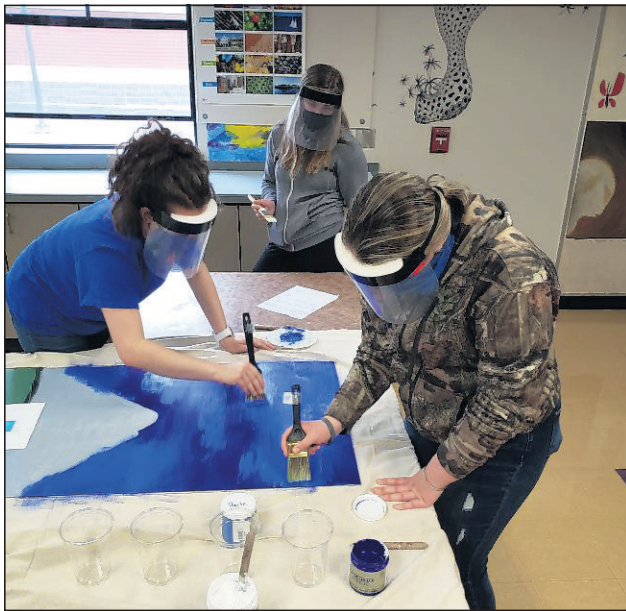


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Community ..... A7  
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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO COURTESY OF DANI ALLEN

Washougal students work on a painting at Washougal High School in April 2021. The project is part of the Unite! Washougal community coalition's latest beautification project.

## Washougal:

From page A1

with Unite! Washougal for several years, said the students wanted to have a picture that would positively represent their hometown and also lift the spirits of people passing by.

"I think it's nice to have something in the middle of our community that's go-

ing to represent it in a positive way and hopefully give the store owner some more business," Farah said.

The students are painting the picture on dibond, a form of aluminum composite panel.

"We're painting a metal piece that's the same size as the sign, and we're going to screw it into the side," said Jemtegaard Middle School art teacher Dani Allen. "It's easier, because if we had to go to the park-



DOUG FLANAGAN/POST-RECORD

The metal post that supports the marquee readerboard in the parking lot of the Washougal Food Center, seen here in May 2021, will soon be covered by a Washougal-themed painting, courtesy of the Unite! Washougal community coalition.

ing lot, we'd have to have ladders, and we'd have to put out the drop cloth. In Mr. Yee's room it's so easy to clean up, and we don't have to have any ladders because we can just move up and down the sign."

The picture is just about finished and "looking great," according to Vincent.

"I'm super pleased with the people we brought together," said Vincent, who joined Unite! Washougal as a volunteer in 2020. "We always knew that if we could, we wanted to involve as many kids as we can, because art is made for everyone. I love that we have something physical to embody something that we're really passionate about. It's been a really wonderful experience."

The project aligns perfectly with Unite! Washougal's goal of improving the lives of local youth by promoting healthy choices, McCarthy said.

The Unite! Washougal

director has been working with local business owners as part of Washington's "Let's Draw the Line Between Youth and Alcohol" campaign to alter the placement of their alcohol and tobacco products. She said that "environmental design and influences" such as the Washougal Food Center's liquor sign can impact the decisions of young people.

"When you go into a store and you have 20 different vape pens as an option, your environment affects your choices even if you don't realize it," McCarthy said. "We have this 8-foot liquor sign in our community. What does that do to the environment of our community, and how does it affect our youth? We're not trying to be prohibitionists. We're not trying to make it so people can't make a living. We just want our youths' brains to grow and for them to have the best opportunity to do all of the amazing things they can do."

The group's work won't be finished when the picture is unveiled, however. The leaders hope to keep the effort going for as long as possible.

"(The post) is two-sided, so we're planning on doing the other side," Vincent said. "We haven't started planning that yet, but that would be the first step. There's lots of other small businesses in Washougal with signs, and we're thinking that (we could) continue to partner with WACA or maybe another organization and keep beautifying the community. This could be a thing for generations if kids want to continue it."

## Fox:

From page A1

In a news release issued Monday, May 3, Gresham Mayor Travis Stovall said the city council had decided Nina Vetter, a city administrator from Colorado who has worked in local and federal government since 2009, would take over as Gresham's city manager in June.

"After thoughtfully considering the priorities of our Council, the needs of our employees, and the input from the community, we believe that Ms. Vetter's skills will be critical to moving us forward," Stovall stated in the news release.

Gresham leaders had interviewed city manager candidates in early 2021, but later reopened the search and had 37 candidates apply before the March 22 deadline.

Stovall held a virtual community forum on April 21, to introduce Gresham residents to the city's top three candidates: Fox, Vetter and Patrick Quinton, a former director at Prosper Portland.

If Gresham leaders had selected Fox, the city of Camas would have found itself searching for a city administrator for the second time in less than a year and a half.

Camas Director of Communications Bryan Rachal said in April that Fox "has been pursued by multiple municipalities."

"Knowing what type of leader Jamal is, we completely understand why. Jamal's skills, talent and leadership have been much appreciated and they have been an important part of the success the City has experienced during the pandemic. While we are saddened to possibly lose Jamal to another city, we're also excited for the opportunity for him and his family," Rachal said.

Camas Mayor Barry McDonnell told the Post-Record in April that Fox had decided to pursue "other opportunities" for personal reasons.

"We appreciate that while the decision is tough, he has to do what's best for his family," McDonnell said of Fox. "We've been through a similar situation and our leadership team stepped up and will do so again."

"We will retain the quality of services that the community is used to and we will work to find a new city administrator that will help continue the smart growth we have going on in Camas," McDonnell added. "We appreciate all of the work

that Jamal has done. He showed up every day and gave it 100 percent, and that's all we could ask for."

## City announced Fox's hire in July 2020, after 7-month search

Camas leaders began their most recent city administrator search in early 2020, after then-city administrator Pete Capell, who had run the city's day-to-day business since 2013, announced his retirement in December 2019, saying the city's change in mayoral leadership had prompted him to reconsider his role with the city of Camas.

In January 2020, Camas City Council members mulled the proposals of three executive-search consultant firms — with costs ranging from \$18,000 to \$28,000 — and agreed to hire Waldron, an executive search firm with offices in Portland and Seattle, to lead the hunt for a new city administrator.

Although Waldron had detailed an 18-week process that included community open houses and interviews with key stakeholders, McDonnell said in June 2020 that the COVID-19 pandemic had put that timeline on hold.

"We're still moving along," McDonnell told the Post-Record in June 2020. "Hopefully, we will be able to meet in person in July."

Less than one month later, on July 20, 2020, the mayor announced in a video posted to the city's YouTube channel that he had selected Fox, then the deputy chief of staff to Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler, to be Camas' next city administrator.

Fox began his position with the city of Camas on Aug. 31, 2020.

Fox told McDonnell in the YouTube video that he and his wife were looking forward to moving to Camas with their 14-month-old son.

"We wanted a place to lay our roots and grow our family. Camas was that community," Fox said in the July 2020 video. "It (has) that small-town, family-niche feeling ... It just felt like home."

Under the city's mayor-council form of government, the city administrator oversees the day-to-day business of the city at the direction of the mayor. The city administrator is Camas' highest paid city employee, with an annual salary ranging from \$143,400 to \$171,768 in 2021.

Fox did not respond to the Post-Record's request for comment.

Asked about the recent news regarding Gresham's decision to pass over Fox for its top city manager job, Camas Communications Director Bryan Rachal said the city of Camas would "continue business as usual."

"Our residents always come first, and they always will," Rachel said.

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