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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Village Coalition and Hazelnut Grove upend mediation with Overlook Neighborhood

The Overlook Neighborhood Association (OKNA) recently learned that the Hazelnut Grove homeless camp, under guidance from the Village Coalition, has undermined a city-initiated mediation process with the Overlook Neighborhood. Hazelnut Grove and the Village Coalition entered into negotiations with representatives of Mayor Ted Wheeler's and Commissioner Chloe Eudaly's offices in violation of mediated agreements. Their choice to hold separate negotiations about the future of the camp and to exclude Overlook from those negotiations has ended hopes of successfully concluding the mediation process with a good neighbor agreement (GNA).

The Overlook Neighborhood Association therefore renews its call for the city to remove Hazelnut Grove from its current site as soon as possible. The city has never issued a permit to the camp, and the camp remains an illegal use of environmentally sensitive and unsafe land that puts residents and neighbors at risk.

Jamey Duhamel, Eudaly's policy director, had specified at the start of the mediation process that one goal was to "Discuss the viability of HG remaining in place as a legal camp, or identifying other viable options for them to move to both within the Overlook community or elsewhere." That goal cannot be attained when Hazelnut Grove, the Village Coalition and city officials meet to make a determination about the viability of the camp and do not include the Overlook Neighborhood.

Representatives of the Village Coalition and Hazelnut Grove sought to conceal their meeting with Wheeler and Eudaly's offices from the neighborhood because the mediation participants had agreed not to enter into such discussions until the GNA process had run its course. The inappropriate conversations came to light when an official familiar with the city discussions spoke up at a recent mediation session. A representative from the Village Coalition stated that their highest priority is to do what is in the interest of the homeless residents, even if that means violating the mediation pledge and deceiving Overlook.

When asked before being elected mayor whether Hazelnut Grove should be shut down, Wheeler agreed that it should. "Yes, just based on what I've seen, why are we allowing people with mental health issues or potentially drug and alcohol addiction issues to live in the woods? That's not a good solution," he said in a televised interview. [\(8:49\)](#)

Overlook Neighborhood Association Board Chair Chris Trejbal, who served on the mediation team for the neighborhood, made the following statement in response to the failure of the mediation process:

It felt like a punch to the gut when we learned that Hazelnut Grove, the Village Coalition and the city chose to pursue negotiations without Overlook again. They upended all of the hard work and progress we'd accomplished. Moreover, their deceitfulness after

pledging not to hold such outside conversations destroyed all of the trust that had been developed over months of mediation. No successful agreement can exist when one party believes that deception and violating promises are acceptable.

Overlook engaged in mediation in good faith over eight two-hour sessions since June. I have had a chance to interact with several residents of Hazelnut Grove and enjoyed getting to know them. I urge them to reconsider their relationship with the Village Coalition, which has only sowed distrust and prevented opportunities for better relations and a realistic path forward.

In the two years since campers illegally occupied public land near the intersection of N Greeley and N Interstate avenues, the city, Hazelnut Grove and the Village Coalition have repeatedly cut the Overlook Neighborhood out of all meaningful discussions. Meanwhile, health and public safety issues persist. Hazelnut Grove is located in designated wildfire and landslide zones as well as a designated wildlife corridor. Luckily, we have survived this year's driest months without a fire that would be devastating to the bluff and nearby homes.

We have tried the mediation process as Mayor Wheeler asked, and it has failed. OKNA therefore calls on Mayor Wheeler and City Hall to make good on the promises that the city has made for two years to relocate Hazelnut Grove.

About the Overlook Neighborhood Association

The Overlook Neighborhood includes approximately 4,000 homes, 6,000 residents, a thriving industrial area and several business districts. Anyone who claims to live in, own a business in or is a designated representative a nonprofit in the neighborhood is a members of The Overlook Neighborhood Association (OKNA).

OKNA is one of Portland's recognized Neighborhood Associations and serves as a liaison between residents of the neighborhood and the city government.

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