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A mess in the police bureau, and nothing but silence from the mayor

By [Guest Columnist](#)

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By Dave Lister

Mayor Sam Adams and former Mayor and Governor Neil Goldschmidt have a lot in common. Both equated leadership with building things. Both wielded tremendous political power. Both became embroiled in scandal. Both were largely shunned in political circles after their scandals broke. Another similarity is that both of them broke with tradition and assigned the Police Bureau to another city commissioner rather than keeping it in the Mayor's portfolio.



Dave ListerThe reason for that is simple. Politics. Guys like Goldschmidt and Adams don't want their meteoric rise in politics sullied by controversy. And in liberal Portland, nothing creates more controversy than the actions of its police officers. From Kendra James to James Chasse to the "beanbag girl", police controversies bring nothing but grief to the officers, the chief, the union and, normally, the mayor. Guys like Adams don't want to deal with that. They're more interested in broad brush stuff and photo ops. They're more interested in overseas junkets to promote economic pipe dreams, or posing in hard hats with shovels at groundbreakings.

Adams lied to win the mayor's race. He admitted that. When he was caught in the lie he refused to resign. Instead, he asked for our forgiveness. He promised he would work harder than any mayor before to make amends. He promised to solve our unemployment problems and help keep kids in school. In reality, he's gone underground. He may be working hard, but it must be behind the scenes. He's let city Commissioner Randy Leonard become the city's front man and he's letting city Commissioner Dan Saltzman and Chief Rosie Sizer take the heat for the police controversies. If you try to reach him for comment you will get his mouthpiece, Roy Kaufmann, and you will be told that the mayor is unavailable until after five. Unavailable until after your deadline.

I haven't heard much lately about the promised second effort to recall Mayor Adams. After the first attempt went down in flames business icons Ron Tonkin and Tim Boyle of Columbia Sportswear announced they would help fund recall version 2.0. They even recruited former State Senator Avel Gordly to give the effort a progressive face. Maybe they're waiting until after the holidays, or maybe they've decided to save their money. If they proceed, it's pretty easy to imagine how Adams' supporters will spin the second effort. They will say that a legitimate, grassroots effort failed to collect the needed signatures, which proves Adams is a populist mayor. They will say that our political process is now being hijacked by some fat cat business people with axes to grind who want to change the outcome of the election. A strategist like "winning Mark" Wiener would spin it into the stratosphere. But Wiener, the brains behind Adams mayoral campaign, probably won't be helping this time. Wiener called Adams an "(expletive deleted) idiot" after the scandal broke. He is also rumored to be otherwise engaged.

If they throw enough money at it, the people backing a new recall will probably get the signatures they need. But I doubt if a recall will be successful on the ballot.

Adams is at a crossroads. He can spend the next three years of his term being a lame duck, or he can show some leadership. I don't care how hard he claims to be working. He needs to take off the hard hat, drop the shovel and come out of hiding. Mayor Adams needs to take over the Portland police bureau and straighten out the mess. He needs to be the mayor. Then maybe, just maybe, he will have a legacy.

Dave Lister is a small-business owner who served on Portland's Small Business Advisory Council.