City fines property owner $21,600 but allows giant cedar trees to be cut down

By KC Cowan
The Southwest Portland Post

As Portland’s building boom continues, neighborhoods continue to see big changes, and not everyone is happy about it.

A notice from the city arborist went up on 4014 SW Marigold St. in October announcing the pending removal of a clump giant cedar trees. The notice is required to be posted, since the combined trunk of the trees is greater than 36 inches.

The five cedars soar high into the sky. According to the City notice, it is a cluster of five cedar trees with a 72-inch base. The notification posting went up Oct. 10 and will stay up until Nov. 24.

Kicki Masthem lives across the street from the property and loves the cedars. She can see them daily from her side yard. Her neighbors also love the big old trees, she said.

“They’re just going to scrape the entire lot to take down the one home and put up two new homes,” Masthem said. “It doesn’t even seem to matter how old and beautiful the tree is.”

Masthem said she also worries that the new construction won’t fit into the neighborhood. That section of Marigold Street mostly consists of one-story cottages. Masthem worries that the new houses will be modern monstrosities and look out of place.

Not that the current structure is a delight to look at. Masthem says it has been a rental for many years with tenants she described as “sketchy” at best. It now stands empty.

The contact listed on the tree removal notice is Nathan Arnold, who can be reached at Fasterpermits.com. But the owner is Michael T. Fisk, who lives on Southwest 28th Avenue. The house, 1,206 square feet with one full bathroom, has a market value of $60,000. (Continued on Page 6)

City focuses on development of sidewalks, bike paths and stormwater system

Members of three Southwest committees sit down together to meet with staff of the city bureaus of Environmental Services and Transportation. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

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Middle housing could provide new generation with alternative to ‘McMansions’

By Chris Dearth

The Multnomah Neighborhood Association has dedicated considerable energy to fighting City Hall for decades. I’m sure they mean well, but if opponents are successful in defeating the proposed “middle housing” amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, currently before City Council, we could actually see a continuation and acceleration of the current negative housing trends we all oppose. See “Open Forum: ‘Middle housing’ amendment would make new zoning code meaningless,” by Martie Suarez, The Post, October 2016.

Opponents to housing reform, including the neighborhood association, protest against “rezoning.” In fact, the middle housing plan is not rezoning at all but a proposed zoning overlay (similar to a design overlay) and is a pragmatic effort to address many of the ills they have fought for years: disproportionately large, expensive, “McMansions,” we see replacing some of the deteriorating housing stock in our neighborhoods.

I’m not sure reform opponents are as upset at the proposed housing measures as much as they are disturbed by the pace of change in the housing market we see throughout Portland. No question the Portland housing world is changing fast, and planning policies must adapt to meet those challenges.

In my observation, the great majority of the neighborhood association is composed of boomers (like Martie and me) who purchased our homes in the 1980s and 90s when Multnomah was a sleepy little “village.” Not represented by the neighborhood association are younger families, renters, singles, and a more diverse population who find themselves priced out of this homogenous community.

As upset as they are about the proposed housing measures, the housing market is changing fast and the planning policies must adapt to meet those challenges.

In my observation, the great majority of the neighborhood association is composed of boomers (like Martie and me) who purchased our homes in the 1980s and 90s when Multnomah was a sleepy little “village.” Not represented by the neighborhood association are younger families, renters, singles, and a more diverse population who find themselves priced out of this homogenous community.

We all can all agree that the housing status quo is not acceptable. The question is what is a constructive, achievable solution? Simply opposing every new proposal out of City Hall is not the solution. I would hope that the neighborhood association and others can work constructively with Commissioner Novick and others to find ways to encourage affordable housing in Multnomah.

Otherwise we’ll continue to see restricted, unaffordable housing options exclusive more and more of the new generation we desperately need to diversify our community.

Chris Dearth is a 25-year resident of Multnomah Village. The Post welcomes reader response. Please stick to one subject and limit letters to 300 words and guest columns to 500 words. We reserve the right to edit submissions for brevity, clarity, punctuation, spelling and libel concerns. Email editor@multnomahpost.com for more information.
speed safety cameras start issuing tickets on Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway

By Don Schaefer
The Southwest Portland Post

The first speed safety cameras in Oregon started issuing speeding tickets on Sept. 24 after 30 days of issuing warnings that have already reduced top-end speeding by 93 percent. The goal of the cameras is to reduce speeding and save lives.

The Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway corridor is part of Portland’s high crash network of roads. The Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBDOT) has been working with the Governor’s Office of Recovery and karaoke (OR) to develop a high crash corridor program on High Crash Corridors. The installation on Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway is the first safety camera installation since the City of Portland and community safety advocates crafted the state legislature in 2015 to pass HB 2621, which allows them to be used on High Crash Corridors in the Portland city limits.

Safety cameras are a proven tool that can reduce dangerous speeding and save lives. The cameras are mounted along high crash corridors and when people driving past them exceed the posted speed limit, they capture photos and video for review by the Portland Police Bureau. The camera issued warnings for the first 30 days of operation. An officer from the Portland Police Bureau will review violations before a citation is issued. The typical fine is $160.

HB 2621 requires that money received from the speeding tickets can only be spent to cover the cost of the program or pay for safety improvements and programs on High Crash Corridors. The Speed Safety Cameras program provides ample warning to people driving in the area. State law requires speed signage and speed reader boards to be installed on Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway warning drivers more than 100 yards in advance of the cameras in both directions.

Transportation bureau staff also conducted extensive outreach with local neighborhood associations as well as more than 75 businesses and community organizations to raise awareness of the changes along the corridor, before the cameras were installed. This is a bipartisan issue and I look forward to the progress we can achieve this Congress. Thank you again for contacting me. Please continue to be in touch.

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

The first speed safety cameras in Oregon started issuing speeding tickets on Sept. 24 after 30 days of issuing warnings that have already reduced top-end speeding by 93 percent. The goal of the cameras is to reduce speeding and save lives.

The installation on Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway is one of the top roads where people driving are killed or seriously injured. People walking along or crossing on foot are twice as likely to be struck by a car as on the average city street.

Cameras started issuing warnings on Aug. 25, the start of a 30-day period that ends on Saturday. The warnings have reduced top-end speeding along the corridor, where about 25,000 vehicles travel each day and the speed limit is 40 mph faster — a 93.4 percent reduction from the tube count.

In the first week of the warning period, cameras recorded an average 115 violations a day. Violations dropped to an average 72 a day by the week of Sept. 12 to 18. “It’s amazing to see how quickly these safety cameras have reduced dangerous speeding on Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway,” said City Commissioner Steve Novick, who oversees the transportation bureau. “I’m so glad these cameras have already improved safety on a busy street where pedestrians face a terribly high crash rate.”

“Speed safety cameras have a proven track record in other cities, and are already showing their effectiveness in Portland,” said transportation director Leah Treat.

“For us to reach our Vision Zero goal of ending traffic fatalities and serious injuries, we need tools like these cameras. Thanks to the city council and state legislature, we can use this proven tool and save lives.”

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STATE TALK

(Can be read on Page 31)

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Habitat for Humanity to purchase church property for new development

By Jack Rubinger
The Southwest Portland Post

Habitat for Humanity is planning to purchase the United Methodist Church property at 2401 SW Taylors Ferry Road to build homes for families on 12 individual lots.

The organization is still in final negotiations with the Oregon Idaho Conference of the United Methodist Church to purchase the site, so project details are limited.

The church decided to close its doors this year. According to church leaders, the church population was small and the building was in need of significant improvements to stay open.

It was only after their decision to close the church that they reached out to Habitat as a possible purchaser of the property so that it could be used for a purpose that advanced the ministry of the church.

“We’re always on the lookout for land that is affordable that can be developed into affordable homes for hardworking families in need of an affordable place to live,” said Melinda Musser, director of communications for Habitat for Humanity.

“We specifically look for sites where services are accessible, like public transportation, access to healthy food and good schools.

“With the increases in land values in recent years, this has become extremely challenging and we have come to rely on the generosity of others to sell us properties at a discount so that we can pass the savings along to families that cannot afford the current home values.”

According to Musser, there is a huge need for affordable homeownership opportunities throughout Portland.

Many low and moderate income households are no longer able to buy their first home, because of the huge disparity between average income and average home prices.

Also, people are getting pushed further and further out of the city due to housing prices, which is causing longer commutes and increased traffic.

“We all know that housing is key to solving many of the problems our working poor families face,” said Judith McGee of McGee Wealth Management.

“Costs of living have outpaced people’s resources.

“Atmy company, our employees have donated time working on Habitat for Humanity projects,” said McGee.

“They are among the most rewarding team projects we’ve done. Portland needs to find housing solutions that work and look at alternatives that may be non-traditional. We can do better.”

Once the appropriate permits to build have been secured and approved, it typically takes about one year for Habitat for Humanity to build and sell homes.

But it takes about 1-2 years to get site plans developed and through city permitting processes. So far, the organization hasn’t run into any roadblocks.

Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East will be the developer/general contractor on this project.

Habitat has professional construction project managers and superintendents that lead the construction with a balance of subcontracting work, like electrical and plumbing, and leading volunteers and future homeowners in doing things like framing and finish work.

Habitat goes through a careful selection process for all of the homes they build, and selects the families prior to starting to build the homes.

Each family puts in 500 hours of sweat equity helping to build their home and the homes around it alongside volunteers, and then buys the home from Habitat with an affordable mortgage.

Habitat qualifies the family for a mortgage just like a bank would qualify someone for a home loan, to ensure that they have a steady income and are likely to be successful homeowners.

“Habitat homes are built to last,” said Musser. “We know that the families that buy our homes tend to stay put. Most of the first homes we built in Northeast Portland 25 to 30 years ago are still owned and lived in by the same families.”

According to Musser, all Habitat homes have some private yard space, but it varies significantly from project to project. “In some cases we concentrate the houses together to create a shared common green space for a play area or garden. The site in Southwest Portland has a lower density zoning than some of our others which will result in larger yards.”

Habitat for Humanity has been building homes in the Portland area for 35 years. While this initially started with building single family homes on individual lots, for the past 15 years most of Habitat’s work has been in building communities of 10-45 homes.

This has included building communities of detached single family homes, like the 21 homes currently under construction in the Cully neighborhood.

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COMMUNITY LIFE

By KC Conrow and Don Snedecor
The Southwest Portland Post

Come and Play Chess
Play a game independently or get tips from an experienced tutor. Players of all levels and ages welcome. Chess sets are provided. Wednesdays, 3:30-5:30 p.m. at the Hillsdale Library, 1525 SW Sunset Blvd., 503-988-5388.

4 Teachers Show
The Multnomah Arts Center Gallery will display the work of Multnomah Arts Center adult and youth visual arts instructors, as well as Little Artists Preschool instructors beginning Nov. 4. The work will include paintings, prints, drawings, metal arts, ceramics, textiles, woodturning, sculpture, photography and more. Meet the artists at the reception Friday, Nov. 4, from 5 to 8 p.m. at the Multnomah Arts Center, 7688 SW Capitola Highway. Free.

Classic Comedy
Lakewood Theatre Company presents “One Man, Two Guvnors.” Easily confused Francis is working for two bosses who are connected in improbable ways, while Francis must keep them from discovering each other. Riotously funny! Runs from Friday, Nov. 4 through Sunday, Dec. 11 at the Lakewood Center for the Arts, 368 N. State St., Lake Oswego. For tickets, call 503-635-3901 or go to www.lakewood-center.org.

5 Bell Ringers Wanted
Adults and children are welcome to ring the historic bell in the Garden Home Thriftway’s bell tower on Saturday, Nov. 5, at 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. This 100-year-old bell was first hung in the Community Church of Garden Home. You will also see historical displays and photos and talk with Garden Home history people. Presented by the Garden Home History Project and hosted by market staff. Garden Home Thriftway, 7410 SW Oleson Road. For more information, call Janice Logan 503-750-9221.

Fall Cleanup
The Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. (SWNI) Fall Cleanup is Saturday, Nov. 5, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Portland Christian Center’s parking lot, 5700 SW Dossch Road. Bulky waste, yard debris, untreated wood items, scrap metal, reusable household items, and furniture are acceptable. Call 503-823-4892 or visit www.swni.org for more information.

6 Native Beadwork
To highlight the Native American culture, make a beautiful beaded pendant using a variety of symbols and beads of your individual style and choice at the Capitol Hill Library, 10723 S.W. Capitol Highway on Sunday, Nov. 6, from 2:30–3:45 p.m. Free, but you must register online, in the library or by calling 503-988-5234.

12 Raleigh Hills Walk
The SWTrails PDX walk this month is on Saturday, Nov. 12. Explore the Raleigh Hills neighborhood. It is six miles long and climbs about 700 feet. Meet behind the bleachers, near the food carts, at Wilson High School, Southwest Sunset Boulevard and Capitol Highway and be ready to go at 9 a.m. Carpool from there. Well-behaved dogs are allowed on leash. For more information, or to volunteer to lead a future walk in your neighborhood, contact Sharon Fekety at fekety@hevnet.com.

14 Vintage Photos
Enjoy favorite vintage photos of early Garden Home on Monday, Nov. 14, at 6:30 p.m. Aerial photos from 1936 and 1956, the old store, school, church, road runs, baseball teams, dairy cows, Jack’s burro and more! The Garden Home History Project will present this 30-minute slide show at the Garden Home Recreation Center, 7475 SW Oleson Road. Free. Begins and ends on time. Neighbors are welcome to stay for the board meeting afterward. Call 503-246-5879 or visit www.GardenHomeHistory.com for more information.

15 Pissaro, Pinot and Palette
Artist Jeffrey Hall discusses his work and how it relates to the Marriage of Opposites by Alice Hoffman. Then, explore your inner artist in an informal, no pressure, creative art instruction workshop. Transform a blank canvas into a finished piece to take home with you! Wine and light snacks will be served. Tuesday, Nov. 15, 7:00–9:30 p.m. at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center, 6651 SW Capitola Hwy; Cost: $36. For more information, call 503-244-0111.

16 Jingle, Jingle, Jingle
Northwest Senior Theatre presents its holiday show filled with music, dancing and merriment. Nov. dates: 16, 17, 18, and 19. All performances are at 2 p.m. at the Alpenrose Dairy Opera House, 6149 SW Shattuck Road. Wheelchair/walker accessible. $5 at the door with open seating. For more information call 503-227-2005 or email bettymer@comcast.net

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Just listed, in Humphrey Park. This impeccable, well-built Allison home design mid-century home is located on a low-maintenance .68 acre lot. Four bedrooms plus office, 3.5 bathrooms, over 3,700 square feet. Hardwood floors, remodeled kitchen with attached family room, three fireplaces and massive storage. Large shop room with outside entrance. Attached double-car garage. All just minutes to downtown and Beaverton. Lincoln High School.

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Metro prepares for environmental review on proposed light rail project

Metro held an open house at Wilson High School on Sept. 22 to solicit input and share next steps for the proposed light rail between Portland State University, the MountainWorks project, and Bridgeton Village in Tigard. Metro, TriMet, and Portland city staff facilitated various project components of the proposed light rail.

Maps and charts lined the cafeteria for designs from PSU to Tigard and points in between. Transfer options to Marquam Hill and Portland Community College Sylvia Campus were examined by this reporter.

Routes to PCC Sylvia caught the eyes of Marcia Leslie, the former chair of the Far Southwest Neighborhood Association where the college resides. Leslie said she preferred a route closer to Tigard.

The project will be built in stages and is expected to be completed by 2027. The project is estimated to cost $1.9 billion, which is $273,000 with an assessed value of $141,300.

Contractor Robert Wood, with Mountainwood Homes, said he hasn't seen the final design yet, but believes the owner, Michael T. Fisk, is planning a duplex.

"We're not pulling the strings on this one," he said. "We're just building it." The lot is nearly a quarter acre, at 8,003 sq. ft. Could two new homes be built on it without removing the cedars, which stand right on the front edge of the property close to the street? Perhaps.

Woods said that he thinks Fisk believes the demolition of the house and the new construction would irreparably damage the trees, and that they couldn’t be saved, but he wasn’t sure.

Although the city puts up a notice of tree removal, it states quite plainly it is "courtesy in nature, only." It does not provide "for public comment on the proposed owner, or appeal of the proposed to the city of Portland." In other words, neighbors have no options.

But neighbors may be happy to hear that city planner Malia Slusarenko is working hard to save the cedars. "We are working with our city arborist," she said. "He looked at it and we need some more information from the property owner, but we are trying to see if we can save them."

If the trees were down, it will not come without a price. According to city code, the builder must preserve one third of the trees on site.

Since the cedars are the only trees on the property, in order to remove them the developer must pay a hefty fee: $300 per tree inch. That means the developer, Mountainwood Homes, will shell out $21,600 dollars to take down the cedars.

As a city clerk explained, if the city were to cut down the trees on private property, all it takes is a permit and a checkbook to cut them down.

Despite a city policy that encourages the retention of healthy trees on private property, all it takes is a permit and a checkbook to cut them down.

Still, Masthem is encouraging his neighbors to write to the city commissioners and express their dismay at the direction of Portland's growth.

"Chaos is hard," Masthem said. "I know we can't do anything about progress, but to be so disdainful about nature—to scrape everything off the land is just so sad."

Efforts to contact the property owner were unsuccessful.

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Giant Cedar Trees

(Continued from Page 1)

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Novick talk all the time.

"We will give you more updates as they are refined by end of year," Uchiyama promised. "For now, there is a structure to go through both internally and externally."

"We've always had coordination," Uchiyama said, "but now we have coordination.

Another summit will be scheduled next year.

First project in Stephens-Tryon Headwaters area to begin construction

The city of Portland held a series of workshops and community forums last year to help shape stormwater and road improvements in the Stephens-Tryon Headwaters area.

Due to feedback, the city is first designing improvements on Southwest 19th Avenue. The street is currently an unimproved street of dirt, gravel, and pavement. It is designated a Safe Route to School for Capitol Hill Elementary so needs attention.

It's also part of the regional trail from Hillsdale to Lake Oswego.

"The problem is that rain washes sediment and other pollutants off gravel streets into storm drains," said Lisa Moscinski from the Bureau of Environmental Services.

"Tryon Creek, where endangered steelhead trout, Chinook and Coho salmon live, is just downhill of Southwest 19th Avenue."

The Portland Bureau of Transportation is designing a paved street on two blocks of the street from Southwest Orchard to Marigold.

According to Kyle Chisek, Portland Bureau of Transportation, they will be using new street standards.

"This means the street will have a smaller footprint, a less impervious surface, and fewer impacts to streams and other natural features," he said.

To improve water quality in Tryon Creek, Environmental Services is designing vegetated stormwater facilities on 19th Avenue including a large facility between Southwest Tidings Road and Southwest Orchard Street, a site the city closed to traffic in 2002 because of safety concerns.

The project will involve the majority of the project and will begin construction in spring 2017.

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A MAX light rail train with Type 4 cars crossing 185th Avenue from Beaverton into Hillsboro. (Photo by Steve Morgan, Wikimedia creative commons license)
By Erik Vidstrand

The Southwest Portland Post

Even though it was Carol McCarthy’s last meeting as chair of the Multnomah Neighborhood Association, McCarthy’s resolve remained until the very end. Vice chair Martie Sucec remarked that she wanted McCarthy to serve another year but rules forbid a third term. “Her ‘fire-in-the-belly’ is felt everywhere,” Sucec said.

According to McCarthy, “The city is keeping citizen groups, including neighborhood associations, out of the planning process.”

“There is a fire of citizens to save our neighborhood.” Land use chair Jim Peterson made three motions objecting to several comprehensive plan components: the P-45 amendment allowing middle housing, that the neighborhood “center” designation be changed to “corridor,” and that the neighborhood “center” designation be appointed by the new chair and will serve as representatives at SWNI committee meetings.

Elections were then held by secret ballot. A total of 32 total votes granted all four candidates a position for the next year.

Martie Sucec, who was Multnomah chair from 1997-2001, was elected chair. According to SWNI executive director Sylvia Bogert, officers are now limited to two one-year terms. McCarthy said she was filled in for the last year as association secretary. Tad Davis was elected vice-chair, provided updates on Capitol Highway Plan.

“New design concepts were recently posted on the city website,” Lyons announced. “Feedback is needed by early November. Rep Ann Lininger is looking into finding more money from the state coffers to fully fund the project.”

Leslie Ham mond was elected vice-chair. Hammond has been a member of the association for 20 years and just recently became more involved. She disclosed that she has a legal and real estate background.

“I want to assist the board and help Martie,” Hammond said after answering several questions from the audience. “I don’t buy the city’s commitment to keep single-family homes in the area.”

Katherine Christensen was elected secretary. She has been filling in for the last year as association secretary. Tad Davis was elected treasurer. Davis mentioned that he is a Multnomah Village Business Association member.

A brief update on the Spring Garden Park had some members uneasy with Commissioner Amanda Fritz and Director Mike Abbate making the final decision about a contentious amphitheater.

“They may even change the name of the park,” said Ken Boltz, a park neighbor. “At a September park meeting, the vote was pretty even on a paved amphitheater or no amphitheater at all.”

Stewart Rounda stood up at the end of the meeting to applaud McCarthy’s dedication, stamina, and voice for the community for the last two years. McCarthy said she will remain involved on the board as past-chair.

Post-chair Carol McCarthy (left) hands the gavel to newly elected Multnomah chair Martie Sucec. McCarthy served for two terms. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

Slate of Sucec, Hammond, Christensen, and Davis elected to serve neighborhood

These associations must expand to include other groups,” he said. “Additionally there is a clause that a ‘citizen’ is not included but you do not need to be a citizen to become involved. Legal citizenship is not a requirement.”

McCarthy proposed that the Community Involvement Committee be assigned to the Portland Office of Neighborhood Involvement, not the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.

Chris Lyons, transportation chair, provided updates on Capitol Highway.

“We’re not sure how organizations are selected to serve.” There are no open meetings and report [from this group] once a year.

According to McCarthy, “The city is keeping citizen groups, including neighborhood associations, out of the planning process.”

“The fight for appealing the comprehensive plan continues. We need everyone to continue petitioning the city and attending hearings to save our neighborhood.”

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Past-chair Carol McCarthy (left) hands the gavel to newly elected Multnomah chair Martie Sucec. McCarthy served for two terms. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)
Dear EarthTalk: Did anyone ever figure out what has been killing all the bees, and is there anything we can do about it?

– Gerry Sanders, Wichita, KS

By now, we’ve all heard about bees dying across the U.S. and around the world. This isn’t just bad news for beekeepers: these amazing insects pollinate upwards of two-thirds of our food crops— all at no cost to farmers or consumers. All we need do is keep them around, which is proving to be more and more difficult.

A third of all beehives in the U.S. have disappeared in the last decade alone, a situation that has been dubbed Colony Collapse Disorder. Experts say several factors are at play:

First, global warming has changed weather patterns so profoundly that bees have been unable to adapt fast enough. Flowers now bloom so early or late that they don’t coincide with the active season of pollinators, so when bees emerge from hibernation the flowers they need for food have already bloomed.

Another threat is habitat loss: development, urbanization and monoculture farming are decimating natural areas bees need to thrive. And a new generation of parasites is infiltrating hives and impeding chemical communication between bees. But perhaps the biggest threats to bees are some of the pesticides routinely used in agriculture, particularly neonicotinoids.

Commonly referred to as neonicos (with an ‘o’ instead of a ‘i’), this increasingly popular class of insecticides is meant to eliminate pests, but has been proven to have an equally devastating impact on bees. Today, seeds are engineered with neonicotinoids for use as pesticides.

Commonly referred to as neonicos (with an ‘o’ instead of a ‘i’), this increasingly popular class of insecticides is meant to eliminate pests, but has been proven to have an equally devastating impact on bees. Today, seeds are engineered with neonicotinoids for use as pesticides. Activists would like the U.S. government to ban a class of insecticides called neonicos that they blame for wiping out the bees that pollinate a majority of our food crops.

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