

Wash. mayors get started on weight-loss campaigns

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Washougal Mayor Sean Guard, left, coaxes Camas Mayor Scott Higgins to step on the scales during their weigh-in in Washougal, Wash., Wednesday, May 2, 2012. The mayors of the two neighboring Washington state towns on the banks of the Columbia River are embarking on a "Biggest Loser" style contest to see which of the two communities can lose the most weight in 12 months. (AP Photo/Don Ryan)

(AP) -- Sean Guard watched other people exercising from the window of his car or his office in City Hall, as the pounds piled on slowly, a little bit at a time. The Washougal mayor left his city's bike trails and foot paths to those more inclined to exercise while he made short work of chicken-fried steaks.

In neighboring Camas on the Columbia River, Scott Higgins leaves up a skinny picture on his online resume, but the truth is a little harder for the

city's mayor. He has ratcheted up and down the scale, but on Wednesday landed at a firm 300 pounds.

Together, the two present a familiar picture of the ever-expanding American waistline- or, at least the kind of weight problems that contribute to higher health care costs and shortened life spans. Higgins has lost a significant amount of weight two or three times, he said. Guard has never tried.

With a health coach and a new diet program, the two mayors hope to lead their respective cities to a collective weight loss. But first, they talked a little trash.

"I'm planning on sabotaging you at every chance I get," Higgins said. "You might want to tell your office staff to not accept any packages from the city of Camas."

"The more calories the better," Guard responded. "I know how to share."

Taking inspiration from television's "The Biggest Loser," the cities are making it competitive in a contest to see which can lose the most weight in 12 months.

At a Wednesday press conference, Guard and Higgins stepped on the scales. Neither was particularly happy with the number - Higgins was 10 pounds heavier than he said he weighed during an interview last week.

The cities have long been sports rivals, and the mayors are trying to capitalize on that rivalry to get residents to participate in the pound-shedding campaign. Local businesses have already started signing up employees for the contest.

"Camas definitely has a higher percentage (of obesity and overweight

people) than we'd like," Higgins said.

The southwest Washington cities are less than 40 miles from bike-friendly Portland, Ore., and both mayors said they and their cities could make more use of the myriad trails in the area.

"There's great places to walk, we've just got to do it," Guard said. "We just have to plan more meetings together, we just have to walk."

There's more at stake than thinner elected officials. Insurance companies support the idea, and offer a small incentive to the city of Camas.

"Those [health care costs](#) continue to rise," Higgins said. "If we have wellness programs and events like these, our insurance providers give us a 2 percent discount."

At his weigh-in, Guard read Higgins his weight. Higgins dropped his head and chuckled.

"Oh man," Higgins said. "We got work to do."

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