

The Oregonian

How do you pay the Portland arts tax? A primer: Portland City Hall Roundup

By Andrew Theen

Stop us if you've heard this before. The Portland arts tax is due by midnight Tuesday.

Despite the best efforts of city of Portland leaders, there still appears to be some uncertainty about how to pay the \$35 income tax.

Let's address those concerns straight away. Payment options:

Online at www.portlandoregon.gov/revenue/artstax/

Over the phone by calling (503) 865-4ART (4278).

Complete and mail a paper form; forms are available at public libraries and available for download at www.portlandoregon.gov/revenue/forms.

In person at 111 SW Columbia Street, Suite 600; office will stay open until 7:00 p.m. on the night of April 15.

For more information, visit the Revenue Bureau's website at www.portlandoregon.gov/artstax.

Revenue Bureau officials say they've made "improvements to make paying even more convenient."

Last month, The Oregonian reported on how revenue officials distributed the money so far and what type of enforcement action may or may not be coming down the pike.

If you've been under a rock for the past few years, Portland voters approved the \$35 Arts Access and Income Tax in November 2012.

The Portland Tribune

Mayor, Fish float water panel proposal

By Jim Redden

Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Nick Fish are offering Portland voters a deal: the City Council will consider reforming the Water and Sewer Bureau, if they defeat the Portland public water district ballot measure at the May 20 primary election.

"The mayor and I are committed to serious reform proposals and doing things differently," says Fish, who is in charge of the Water Bureau and Bureau of Environmental Services, which operates the city's sewer system and stormwater management programs.

But Kent Craford, a co-sponsor of the measure to create a water and sewer district with an independently-elected board, dismisses the promise as a political ploy.

"Voters have seen this movie before. Charlie Hales promised 'lower water and sewer rates' in his campaign and then promptly broke that promise once elected," says Craford, who helped lead the drive to place Measure 26-156 on the ballot. "Enough empty promises, its time for real reform. It's time for a public water district."

Fish insists he and Hales are sincere. Fish says they are already reviewing names for a 12- to 15-member "blue ribbon commission" that would be appointed in June and charged with presenting the council with one or more reform proposals in the fall.

Although Fish is not yet ready to release names, he says that none of the people being considered for the commission is involved in either side of the ballot measure fight.

"They will not be the usual suspects. They will all be independent," says Fish.

And, Fish says Hales has already scheduled an April 30 council forum on other existing reform proposals. They include ideas put forward by the City Club, Portland Business Alliance, a now-defunct city charter review commission and Dan Saltzman. All of them involved creating a body separate from the council to set or propose water, sewer and stormwater rates.

According to Fish, if voters approve the measure next month, its meaning will be challenged in court, leading to years of uncertainty about who is in charge of the bureaus.

The council has already approved an agreement with the statewide Citizens Utility Board to review the budgets of the water and sewer bureaus and weigh in on their spending plans. CUB already provides similar advise to the state Public Utility Commission on private utilities like PGE and PacifiCorp.

CUB has hired Janice Thompson, a former director of Common Cause Oregon, as its consumer advocate for the bureaus. She and other CUB officials are scheduled to present their first report on them on Wednesday, April 16, a little more than a month before the election.

Measure 26-156 was placed on the ballot by an initiative drive financed primarily by large corporate water users, including Siltronic Corp., American Property Management, Portland Bottling Co. and the Hilton Hotel chain. It is opposed by the council, businesses including PacifiCorp and PGE, public employee unions and environmental organizations.

The Mercury

ATTENTION SCOFFLAWS: You Have Until Midnight to Pay the Arts Tax

By Denis C. Theriault

Because our reader polls are super-duper scientific, it's a proven fact that 35 percent of eligible Portlanders will refuse to pay the city's \$35 arts tax by midnight tonight.

Based on population alone, that's 200,000 people who've decided they can simply get away with not paying a tax approved by 62 percent of voters just eighteen months ago. The real number is actually substantially less, given that you're exempt if you earned less than a \$1,000 bucks last year and/or rely on entitlements to make ends meet.

But we're still talking about millions of dollars that could be going to schools and arts organizations that aren't.

Some of you, I realize, have opposed the tax from the start. Fine! And maybe you can get away with ignoring it! The city has said it won't sic collections agencies on scofflaws until they miss a few years of payments. Except the arts tax isn't going away, as much as you might hope. So eventually, they'll catch up to you.

And the rest of you liked it until it came time to pay it—something that was exceedingly difficult last year and even cost you extra money if you tried to do it online. (That's not the case this year.) It's not perfect.

This much is true. But then, when the tax raised less money than expected, some of you skeptics who helped bring about that outcome tried pointing to it as some kind of a justification for not paying. Even though it was partly your fault.

The good news is you still have time to do the right thing this year. More than 12 hours' worth! Arts education matters. And it's not just about schools, who have first dibs at whatever's raised. It's also about arts organizations—most of which aren't dripping with money and could really use the money they've been promised to make sure kids who'd otherwise never get to see a play or stroll a museum get those chances.

So click [here](#). Do it now.