

The Oregonian

Trail Blazers and city to honor Jack Ramsay, Google Fiber agreement, urban renewal changes: Portland City Council Roundup

By Andrew Theen

Wednesday's Portland City Council meeting could be must see TV as elected officials debate a wonky yet important series of urban renewal area amendments, take up a resolution to honor the late Jack Ramsay, and consider a 10 year deal with Google to install its fiber-optic network in the Rose City.

Mayor Charlie Hales has hinted at the urban renewal changes for several months, and just last week, his proposed 2014-15 budget included an additional \$1.5 million in cash to spend, assuming the City Council approved a host of tweaks and wholesale changes to 6 urban renewal zones.

City Council will discuss the changes Wednesday at 3 p.m. The highlights include eliminating the Education District, approved just two years ago and centered around Portland State University. Some 35 acres of that are would be added to the North Macadam district. The proposal includes other amendments and expansions of districts,

Earlier in the afternoon, the council will consider a 10-year franchise agreement with Google to move forward on the company's fiber-optic network. Last week, Mike Rogoway reported that the franchise deal doesn't require Google to serve the entire city. "It gives us permission to build here, and it also outlines the ways that we'll partner with the city to invest in local infrastructure and give back to the community," a Google spokesman said. Read Rogoway's story for all the details.

The City Council will also consider a resolution to formal change the name of a major public street serving the Rose Quarter to honor the late Trail Blazer coaching legend Jack Ramsay.

North Winning Way is the road just north of the Moda Center that runs east-west and connects to North Larrabee Avenue on the west and terminates at North Williams Avenue and Northeast Wheeler Avenue on the east.

Under the proposal, the street would eventually be renamed "Ramsay Way."

Initially, the city and the Portland Trail Blazers would install sign caps designating the street as "N. Winning Way - Ramsay Way."

Here's how you can watch the City Council meeting online.

The Portland Tribune

Big issues on City Council agenda

By Jim Redden

It could be a long day at the City Council on Wednesday because of several major and potentially controversial items on the agenda. They include changes to the Disabled Parking Permit program, a proposed study of city policies to encourage affordable housing construction, the proposed franchise agreement for Google Fiber, and amendments to six existing Urban Renewal Areas.

The proposed changes to the Disabled Parking Permit were submitted by Commissioner Steve Novick, who is in charge of the Bureau of Transportation. Among other things, the new policies are intended to prevent vehicles with such permits from continuing to park for free for hours on end at city meters.

Downtown businesses have long complained that too many drivers appear to be using the permits to park all day for free while they are at work. The proposal would also create a limited number of parking spaces at strategic locations for long term parking for permit holders, however.

The proposed housing construction study was submitted by Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who is in charge of the Portland Housing Bureau. It directs the housing bureau to review and assess the city's policies for encouraging affordable housing in the urban core, and to return to the council with recommendations for new incentives.

According to the resolution submitted by Saltzman, the city is expecting the creation of 30,000 new households in the urban core — formally called the Central City — by 2035. But 33 percent of those households are expected to pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing, far more than the previous forecast of between 17 and 23 percent.

The resolution also says that although the city already offers a number of incentives to developers for the construction of affordable housing, few are taking advantage of them. State law currently prohibits cities from requiring that affordable housing be included in new residential or mixed use developments.

City policies currently prioritize public resources for the construction of low income housing over housing for those earning higher incomes—including moderate incomes, sometimes referred to as the working or middle class. Saltzman has previously said the council needs to consider subsidizing a broader range of housing.

The council is also scheduled to consider the franchise agreement with Google for the possible installation of its ultra-high speed broadband system in Portland. It was submitted by Mayor Charlie Hales, who is in charge of the Revenue Bureau, which oversees the Office of Office of Neighborhood Technology, which negotiated the proposed agreement with Google.

The proposed agreement requires Google to pay a 5 percent franchise fee. It exempts the company from a 3 percent fee that Comcast is currently charged to help fund public and educational programming. Still to be resolved is whether and where Google can site the equipment it needs to run the system, including its large "network hubs."

Google would not be required to serve the entire city, only that areas that show the greatest interest for the company's one gigabit service, at least at first. The council is expected to discuss options for ensuring all residents have some form of access to the service.

Google has said it will decide whether to expand its service into Portland and other cities in the region and country by the end of the year. The other cities in the region are Beaverton, Hillsboro, Gresham, Lake Oswego and Tigard.

And the council will consider a proposal by Hales to amend six existing urban renewal areas. Hales oversees the Portland Development Commission, which administers the city's urban renewal programs.

The proposal would direct the PDC to work on a plan to reduce some URAs, expand others and eliminate what would be left of the Education URA around Portland State University. The plan would be presented to the council later this year. It is estimated to increase city property tax collection by \$21 million over the next 30 years. Other local governments that collect property taxes within the URAs would also benefit.

Willamette Week

Mayor Charlie Hales Says Crosswalk Funding Must Wait for Street Fee Hales' budget does fund a study of light-rail to Tualatin

By Aaron Mesh

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales released a proposed city budget Thursday largely free of the dramatic threats to sacred cows (and horses) that marked his last budgeting season.

But Hales' proposals for the \$423 million general-fund budget include one striking omission: He's not supplying the \$1 million requested by City Commissioner Steve Novick to build crosswalks for pedestrian safety.

Hales and Novick are both pushing a street maintenance fee that would charge households up to \$12 a month, and businesses much more. They say the Portland Bureau of Transportation doesn't have enough money for streets and sidewalks.

Novick's budget requests to the mayor in March included \$1 million to install flashing crosswalk beacons in Southwest and East Portland. As WW first reported, he also asked for \$650,000 to study the possibility of building a new light-rail line through Southwest Portland to Tualatin.

Hales has not funded the crosswalks—but he did fund the transit-line planning.

In a Thursday press event discussing his budget, Hales said he decided against funding crosswalks because it would have lessened the urgency of passing the fee.

"We don't have enough money to do that," Hales said. "More importantly, it would send people a false hope. We're saying to our citizens: 'Don't kid yourself.'"

But if the city doesn't have enough money for crosswalks, how does it have enough money for scouting capital projects?

Hales said he sees planning the Southwest Corridor high-capacity transit line as a long-term investment, rather than a stop-gap measure.

"We ought to stay in that game, so long as we have a transit agenda," Hales said. "That doesn't mean we don't have a mess on the [maintenance] side. But it's a ray of light."

A city audit in February 2013 found spending on new construction—such as \$55 million on the Milwaukie light-rail extension—has left the transportation bureau without enough money for basic road upkeep.

Novick tells WW he's disappointed not to see the crosswalks funded before passing a fee, but understands Hales chose other priorities such as homeless services.

"The mayor's got a tough job," Novick says. "I thought [the \$1 million] would have been sort of a down payment. Spending some money on it would have showed how serious we are. But I understand where he's coming from."

The Portland Business Journal

Google Fiber, urban renewal and a new Trail Blazers street name get Portland city hearings

By Andy Giegerich

During a week when the city of Portland's poised to go a bit Blazer-crazy, Portland's City Council will tackle a Blazers-related motion as well as two other items that could affect the city's landscape for years on end.

For starters, at its Wednesday meeting, the Council will consider granting a franchise to Google Fiber Oregon LLC to build and operate a fiber network using the city's streets. The contract would last for 10 years.

The project would provide Internet speeds up to 100 times faster than current rates.

The Council is set to consider the item at 2 p.m. on Wednesday.

An hour later, commissioners will dive into a proposal to amend provisions of six urban renewal areas. The big-ticket item on the list is the Education Urban Renewal Area around Portland State University.

The proposal to do so, by Portland Mayor Charlie Hales, has irked PSU President Wim Wiewel and others.

Finally, the Council will tackle the measure that could rename North Winning Way to Winning Way-Ramsay Way. The move would honor coach Jack Ramsay, who died last week.

That measure, which'll hit the docket the morning after the Blazers first second-round playoff game with the San Antonio Spurs, will be under consideration at 11:30 a.m.