

## The Oregonian

### Portland home demolitions: City will ask developers to give neighbors a heads up

*By Elliot Njus  
June 25, 2014*

Portland development officials will start handing out door-hangers with demolition permits, an effort to have developers give neighbors a heads up when a nearby house is coming down.

The program, conceived by an advisory committee of developers, is voluntary and offers only guidelines for who should be notified and when. But it may help alleviate some tensions that have come up in Portland's redevelopment boom.

"This is attempt mostly to just be a good neighbor," said Jeff Fish, an infill developer and chairman of the city's Development Review Advisory Committee. "If it's working, if it's doing what we intend and the neighborhoods like it, we could make it mandatory."

The Bureau of Development Services will start handing out the door hangers on July 1, along with guidelines that suggest leaving them at three homes to the rear of the house to be demolished, two neighbors on either side of the property and the three neighbors across the street.

The guidelines also recommend distributing the notices at least 10 days before the demolition is planned. In cases where one house is being demolished and replaced with one other house, city code doesn't require any waiting period between receiving a permit and demolishing a house.

In those cases, residents have complained they've been caught off-guard by the sudden demolition of a nearby home.

The city had previously granted the same exemption for houses being replaced with two houses, but earlier this year said it would end that practice.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who oversees the bureau, said the notices are another way it is making "changes with the context of existing code to address community concerns."

### Old Town Chinatown: Portland Development Commission approves \$1.5 million deal for Right 2 Dream Too site

*By Andrew Theen  
June 25, 2014*

The Portland Development Commission's board approved a \$1.5 million plan Wednesday to buy the prominent Old Town Chinatown property that's been home to the Right 2 Dream Too homeless community since Oct. 2011.

Board members voted reluctantly but unanimously to ink the deal with Michael Wright, the property owner who invited the homeless camp in after a dispute with the city dating to at least 2008.

"This wasn't an easy party to negotiate with," PDC Chairman Scott Andrews said of Wright and his business partners, who owned the Cindy's Adult Bookstore that stood alongside another building on the site until being torn down.

Reached by phone after the meeting, Wright said he wasn't aware of the outcome of the commission's vote and wanted to see final details before commenting.

The deal clears one hurdle to moving the homeless camp known as R2D2 to a new home but does not mean its residents automatically will move anytime soon.

Wright will be guaranteed \$1.5 million for his oddly shaped land on West Burnside Street and Northwest Fourth Avenue, if -- and it's a big if -- the homeless camp is gone within 30 months and Wright and his business partners have settled all outstanding property taxes. The transaction will close once R2D2 is gone, a move the city is working with camp organizers to secure.

Patrick Quinton, PDC's executive director, acknowledges the 30-month grace period is strange.

"It's far beyond anything that any of us have ever negotiated," he said.

The deal calls for the city to pay Wright and his partners \$10,000 a month from now until the 30-month due-diligence period is up -- an amount totaling \$300,000 -- to be followed by a \$1.2 million payment at the end.

But there's an incentive for Wright to close the sale sooner. If he's able to settle debts and R2D2 moves at any point, the city will immediately pay the balance of the \$1.5 million that Wright and the partners are owed.

A year after city leaders began searching for a new home, the R2D2 homeless group remains entrenched at the base of the Chinatown gate, and some business owners and neighbors are beyond frustrated.

Neighborhood leaders vented their frustration to the board prior to the vote. They argued that Old Town couldn't afford to wait 30 months to see progress on the site. It made no sense, they argued, to build in such a delay when the city is preparing to invest tens of millions in investments and incentives as part of the five-year action plan for the historic neighborhood.

Residents expressed envy for other city neighborhoods, where apartment are going up at a brisk rate and construction cranes are prominent. They are frustrated that Old Town languishes, and that homelessness remains concentrated in their neighborhood.

"Allowing this illegal encampment to continue for possible an additional 30 months is not acceptable," Howard Weiner, the Old Town Chinatown Community Association chair, wrote in a letter delivered to the board.

Helen Ying, a community board member on the community association, said the entire group is concerned about the area's vitality. Several long-time businesses closed in recent years, and many more are holding on by a thread.

David Gold, a property owner who's building is steps away from R2D2's campsite, said it was "disgraceful that the city hasn't addressed this problem."

Michael Wright talks about how Right 2 Dream Too started Michael Wright talks about how he first invited Right 2 Dream Too to move to his property at the base of the Chinatown gate. Wright spoke from a dive bar near where his former business, Cindy's Adult Bookstore, used to stand.

Gold and several business partners unsuccessfully attempted to rehabilitate The Grove Hotel, across Fourth Avenue from Wright's property. Had the city enforced its typically stringent design review and land use processes, Gold said, the tent community would've long since been disbanded.

"The Grove hostel would be open today," he told the board, and the neighborhood would already see the dividends.

Bob Naito and a team of hoteliers now plans to move forward with a hostel on the property. Gold cautioned that the new development would face the same death as his. "Tenants don't want to pay to face a homeless camp," Gold said. He said he "wasted" \$245,000 on the failed hostel project.

Quinton and the PDC board appeared sympathetic to the neighborhood group's concerns, but also deflected those complaints to City Hall.

Andrews, in his final meeting as board chair, said he would hate to see the city walk away from a chance to move on the key property despite his misgivings about the deal.

The City Council authorized a deal in February that directed \$846,000 to help find a new home for R2D2. The money came from developers Homer Williams and Dike Dame, who simultaneously prevented R2D2 from moving to a then-city-owned parking lot near the developers' Marriott hotel project.

Thus far, the city's effort to buy or rent a new home for R2D2 has been unsuccessful. The city blew threw a list of 21 potential buildings and vacant properties to either buy or rent for the group.

Quinton said the development commission ordinarily would wait for the market to play itself out before buying a property.

But since last year, when the city started to express interest in Wright's vacant lot, agency officials haven't waited.

Wright, in an interview last fall, told The Oregonian he and his partners needed a fair price -- he named \$2 million -- from the land sale to allow him to retire to Costa Rica. He said he could wait for the city to come up with a fair price.

Quinton said making the deal with Wright required the provision stretching the due diligence period to 30 months. PDC officials said the sales agreement could be the turning point in forcing a solution.

Quinton said the development commission will use the 30-month threshold, if it takes that long, to determine the highest and best use for the 7,762-square-foot property.

"There's no question we can get through the due diligence quicker than this," Andrews said.

But he added the caveat, we're not in control.

Wright is.

## **How much money does Portland Mayor Charlie Hales make?**

*By Brad Schmidt  
June 25, 2014*

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales and the rest of the City Council are slated to receive bigger paychecks beginning July 1.

Hales' hourly rate would jump to \$63.25 while Portland's four commissioners and the auditor would earn \$53.27. That's \$131,560 a year for Hales and \$110,802 for Portland's other elected officials.

The pay bumps represent a 2.7 percent cost of living adjustment, the same increase awarded to Portland's non-unionized employees. The Portland City Council voted unanimously to accept the higher hourly rates on Wednesday.

In response to public testimony, Hales said he finds it "nuts" that the mayor and city commissioners earn far less than the managers they manage.

Hales said it could be perceived as political suicide to ask for more money. But he said he's interested in forming a review panel to consider pay increases for future elected officials.

"It's a crazy situation," Hales said.

The City Council on Wednesday also approved a \$363,875 study of annual compensation for the city's non-unionized employees. The study is expected to recommend new classifications and competitive pay rates for employees, likely to take effect in the 2015-16 fiscal year.

The City Council's six-digit salaries are far from tops in Portland government. The city's highest salary – open only to select administrators, including the water and sewer directors – will be \$199,160 beginning July 1.

The salaries for Portland's elected officials are also a far cry from the pay earned by some others in the region. Multnomah County Chairwoman Deborah Kafoury is slated to earn \$143,724 in the upcoming fiscal year; Beaverton Mayor Denny Doyle earns more than \$161,000.

As for cost of living adjustments, they haven't always been a sure thing, and some officials haven't taken the money in the past.

In the midst of the recession in 2009, for instance, then Mayor Sam Adams and commissioners Nick Fish and Amanda Fritz rejected their authorized increase.

As it stands, here's what Portland's elected officials have been making: Hales earns \$61.59 an hour; Fritz, Commissioner Dan Saltzman and Auditor LaVonne Griffin-Valade earn \$51.87; Commissioner Steve Novick earns \$49.77; and Fish earns \$47.84.

To date, the Bureau of Human Resources hasn't received any notice from members of the City Council that they won't accept their new pay rates.

Portland's 2.7 percent cost of living increases for all non-represented employees citywide is expected to cost Portland almost \$3.9 million in the upcoming fiscal year.

## **Portland street fee: Residents get their turn in town hall with Mayor Charlie Hales, Commissioner Steve Novick**

*By Andrew Theen  
June 25, 2014*

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick held their second street fee town hall in as many days Wednesday night, and city officials were treated to a similar reception as the first.

About 150 people packed an auditorium in North Portland, and 49 signed up to share their thoughts about the residential street fee, which Hales and Novick abruptly pulled from a City Council vote earlier this month.

Tuesday's meeting at the Oregon Convention Center focused on the business portion of the fee. Read our coverage of that meeting here, in case you missed it.

The current residential proposal calls for a phasing in of the fee, from \$6 per month the first year to \$12 the third year (July 2018). There are discounts for both multifamily and low-income homes, as well as apartments.

Wednesday's meeting centered on what the fee would cost those homeowners and renters.

Portland street fee: Woody Broadnax testifies at a town hall Wednesday  
Portland resident Woody Broadnax testifies at a street fee hearing in North Portland Wednesday night.

While a certain portion of the testimony meandered, with passionate advocacy for charging bicyclists with yearly registration fees, permits and other costs, a segment of the attendees did zero in on the rising cost of living for all Portlanders.

Some testified about living on a fixed income. Others said they'd be forced to make tough decisions between filling much-needed prescriptions and putting food on the table. It's not about \$6 or \$9 or \$12 per month, one woman said, it's about paying so many fees over and over again. The Arts Tax, the \$35 annual payment required of most residents, came up several times.

Elaine Friesen-Strang, a former director of The Arc and member of the AARP's volunteer executive council, testified that 17 percent of Portlanders live at or below the federal poverty line. She said the fee would affect those people in apartments and houses. "There are older Oregonians that are living in their homes, not multi-dwellings, that are barely able to stay in their own homes," she said.

Transportation safety is particularly important for seniors, she said, who often walk or talk transit.

Garry Knox and his wife testified together. In what was also a consistent theme, Knox said city road crews pave streets they don't need to, and other city bureaus then come through and rip them up. "You're wasting our money," he said. "I don't have money to waste."

As in previous meetings, Hales said nobody in city government is excited to present the street fee option or ask for more money to pay for roads. "We know a lot of people dislike this proposal," he said before the testimony began. He again cited the stagnant federal gas tax and lack of sufficient revenue as a lingering problem.

But as with the Tuesday town hall, transportation officials presented a couple new funding options that could raise the same amount of money -- roughly \$27 million per year (business would be expected to contribute the same amount).

The new options: a sales tax of 1/4 of 1 percent (with groceries exempt), a flat income tax of 1/4 of 1 percent, and a progressive income tax (lower taxes for lower income residents).

As with the Tuesday meeting, many of the same ideas for alternative options were addressed too, posted on paper scratch paper hung in the back of the room. The ideas: raise the state gas tax, lobby for a studded tire fee, etc. Some asked for increased parking fees to raise revenue.

There isn't another town hall scheduled in the immediate future. Hales noted this was the tenth meeting since February. The duo are expected to return to their council colleagues in November with another funding plan, be it the street fee in an altered form or some combination of options.

The transportation bureau's working groups on how to tweak the business, residential, low-income and nonprofit/institutional portions of the fee are expected to start meeting in mid-July.

## **Portland street fee: Town hall for homeowners, renters scheduled for Wednesday evening**

*By Andrew Theen  
June 25, 2014*

Consider this another friendly reminder.

The first public town hall for Portland homeowners and residents to discuss the proposed street fee since city officials backed away from a City Council vote earlier this month starts Wednesday evening in North Portland.

On Tuesday, 140 people attended the business and non-residential street fee town hall at an Oregon Convention Center ballroom. Thirty people testified before Portland Mayor Charlie Hales, Commissioner Steve Novick and PBOT director Leah Treat.

New to this discussion? Hales, Novick and Treat have been discussing adding a monthly street fee to utility bills for both residents and business owners for months. Homeowners would face a sliding scale, according to the proposal, that includes a low-income discount and multi-family housing discount.

The current plan calls for homeowners to pay \$6 per month starting in July 2015, with the price ramping up to \$12 per month in the third year. Businesses would be charged based on the estimated trips generated to their doors and their square footage, a formula based on the Institute of Transportation Engineer's Trip Generation Manual.

Hales and Novick delayed a vote on the controversial fee in early June, saying they'll return to vote on a funding plan in November

In case you missed it, here's our coverage from yesterday and everything you'd need to know heading into tonight's meeting:

- Business owners give Hales, Novick, an earful and lots to think about
- A look at the arcane formula and trip data driving the city's business fee
- Oregon is increasingly home of the street fee. Why?
- Austin has a fee, and is the only city even remotely in Portland's ballpark, population wise
- From last month: All the details as they emerged

Wednesday's meeting starts at 6:30 p.m. and is scheduled to last two hours. The meeting is at Kaiser Permanente, 3704 N. Interstate Avenue.

## **Charlie Hales' challenge to street-fee critics: Editorial Agenda 2014**

*By The Oregonian Editorial Board  
June 25, 2014*

At the conclusion of Tuesday's town hall meeting on street maintenance funding, Portland Mayor Charlie Hales issued a challenge. To anyone who could unearth misspent money since the beginning of the 2013-14 budget cycle, The Oregonian's Andrew Theen reported, the mayor said, "I'll show up on your doorstep with \$10 and a TV reporter."

By "misspent" money, spokesman Dana Haynes later wrote, the mayor really meant illegally spent funds. This attempt to roll back the mayor's challenge might have been more convincing had the mayor's office not also tweeted, "In response to pet project accusations: If you can find misspent money in my budgets, I'll show up on your doorstep with \$10 & a TV reporter."

The spending debate from which the challenge emerged isn't one about illegal spending. It's one, fueled by the city's own auditor, about Portland's chronic underfunding of basic street maintenance while pouring transportation money into politically favored – or pet – projects such as the streetcar. If Hales' challenge involved illegal spending, at the very least you'd think the reward would exceed 10 bucks.

The mayor's tweeted message, by focusing on spending only during Hales' tenure, had a déjà vu quality. It called to mind his handling of Jack Graham, Portland's former chief administrative officer, who attempted to misallocate public funds prior to Hales' arrival in office. Hales declined to impose discipline after becoming aware of this episode, he explained during a June, 2013, appearance on OPB's Think Out Loud program, because "I'm here now, and we're running the store in a prudent way, and we're watching people carefully and making sure they're doing their job." Hales dismissed Graham several months later.

Our point here is not to rehash a painful episode, but, rather, to point out that Hales' election did not absolve the city of all past spending mistakes any more than it absolved city employees of inappropriate behavior that occurred before he took office. History matters, as it has established the fees, taxes and

regulations that affect Portland's businesses and residents today. It has created the city's spending patterns, and it has taught City Council's constituents to be wary.

For these reasons, Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick should acknowledge and accept history as they seek to provide adequate funding to maintain Portland's streets. What that means in practical terms is that the mayor ought to be less defensive in responding to those who point out – accurately – that the City Council's past spending decisions helped create the problem Hales and Novick are preparing to ask taxpayers to fix. By prodding constituents to focus only on very recent budgets, the mayor both misses the point and reveals that he's not really listening to what concerned Portlanders are saying.

Portlanders know the city's streets are a mess and that they're probably going to pay higher taxes to fix the problem. Getting them to say "yes" to new funding, however, will require a deliberate process that examines existing transportation spending (are the city's priorities correct?), determines the smallest amount of additional funding required, apportions the cost appropriately and, of course, puts the new tax or fee on the ballot.

This approach requires modesty and patience by the mayor and his colleagues. Giving short shrift to taxpayers' concerns – and the city's own history – will be no more effective than trying to ram through a new fee on a tight schedule, as Hales and Novick did earlier this year.

## The Portland Tribune

### Street fee prompts howls of protest

*By Jim Redden  
June 26, 2014*

Mayor Charlie Hales and Steve Novick have done a lot of work on their proposed street fee since it was first introduced on May 22.

Among other things, they have come up with discounts for low-income households, finalized a \$53 million a year fundraising goal, agreed to spend 97 percent of the money on maintenance and safety projects, developed detailed maps about where the work would be done, and said they are open to ideas for collecting the funds from non-residential properties.

None of that seemed to make much of a difference Tuesday morning when dozens of angry Portlanders lambasted the proposal during a town hall on the non-residential fee at the Oregon Convention Center. Signs calling for Novick's recall and the words "street fee" with a red slash through them circulated in the room. Asked for a show of hands, around 80 percent of those at the 8 a.m. forum signaled they had come to oppose the fee. With Hales and Novick sitting in the front of the room, many of those who testified questioned whether Portland even needs more money for streets, arguing that the city already collects plenty of taxes that could be spent for maintenance and safety projects, including urban renewal funds administered by the Portland Development Commission.

"If you raise taxes on small businesses, they have no choice but to raise their prices and pass it on to their customers," said Richard Kiely, president of the 82nd Avenue of Roses Business Association.

At several times, the forum threatened to spin out of control. When Hales attempted to respond to one speaker, the audience shouted him down. Eryne Kehe of JLA Public Involvement, who was hired to moderate the forum, repeatedly struggled to keep it from devolving into a shouting match.

Many of those who testified also questioned the original method proposed by Hales and Novick for collecting funds from non-residential properties — a motor vehicle trip generation formula based on a lengthy manual compiled by the Institute of Transportation Engineers. Speaker after speaker told Hales and Novick that the fee unfairly penalized small businesses, who would be forced to pay thousands of

dollars a year under the formula. When asked to offer alternatives, few of those who spoke agreed on another idea.

"I didn't hear a consensus in the room for an alternative proposal that would raise as much money," Novick said near the end of the meeting, provoking groans from some of those in attendance.

Hales and Novick were also scheduled to appear at a public forum on the residential fee on Wednesday evening. Their commitment to the fee will be tested the next day. That's when the City Council is scheduled to consider a Nov. 4 general election ballot measure proposed by Hales to restrict the funds raised by the fee to transportation projects. Its passage would suggest a that majority of the council is willing to consider a final version of the fee, which Hales and Novick want considered on Nov. 12.

Pressed at Tuesday's town hall, Hales repeated his assertion that the council does not need to place the fee itself on the ballot. He said the council is elected to make tough choices, not outsource them to the voters. That claim did not sit well with many in the room, however. Roger Jones, president of the Hawthorne Business Association, and past president of the Alliance of Portland Neighborhood Business Associations (now known as Venture Portland), predicted a petition drive would refer the fee to the ballot if the council does not do so.

"It will either be referred to ballot by the council or the voters," said Jones.

Three working groups are being appointed to consider different aspect so the fee, including low income discounts, alternative non-residential fees, and whether nonprofit organizations should be exempt. Hales said all three will hold monthly public meetings while the proposal is finalized.

## **Willamette Week**

### **Can Urban Renewal Money Help Fill Portland's Street-Paving Backlog?**

*By Aaron Mesh  
June 25, 2014*

As Mayor Charlie Hales continues his street-fee roadshow this week, he's challenged citizens to suggest alternative ways to fill the city's \$910 million paving backlog.

One idea that keeps resurfacing: Why not use those piles of urban-renewal dollars?

Conservative radio host Lars Larson suggested to WW in May that city officials should take \$50 million a year from urban renewal areas, run by the Portland Development Commission, and send them to street repair.

"Let the developers finance their own projects," Larson said, "and pour that \$50 million into bringing the streets back up to standard."

Today, Portland economist Eric Fruits, who's been running a portion of the online "No Portland Street Fee" campaign, made a similar suggestion.

"Just under half of PDC's budget is tied up in slush funds—business development and property redevelopment," Fruits writes. "That's almost \$120 million in slush. Can't we shake loose a little of that slush to fix our blighted roads?"

PDC officials say the answer is both yes and no.



"To some extent, yes, and we're already doing that," says PDC spokesman Shawn Uhlman. "You can use for street work if it's in an urban renewal area. But you can't use dollars generated in the urban renewal area outside the URA."

Uhlman says there also also state restrictions against using urban-renewal dollars for maintenance—the paving would have to be part of a construction project.

One example of such a project is in the East Portland neighborhood of Lents. WW reported in January that the PDC has spent \$7.9 million on the streets and sidewalks of Lents—much of it real progress, given that more than \$1 million of the money was spent on paving the area's dirt roads. The PDC also made a \$2.6 million investment in sidewalks, bioswales and plazas running along Southeast Foster Road. And Uhlman says the PDC is contributing at least \$2 million more to the latest plans to improve Foster.

The paving may be only a fraction of the city's need. But as WW reported today, the backlog has grown because street repairs didn't keep up with transportation budgets.

The next town hall on the street fee is at 6:30 pm tonight at the Kaiser Permanente's Town Hall, 3704 N Interstate Ave.

## The Mercury

### Hall Monitor A Lesson on Transparency

*By Denis C. Theriault  
June 25, 2014*

AT FIRST, it just looked troubling.

Last year, after flagging a spike in officers' reported use of force against "transients" and people with mental illness—the summer of 2013 saw 112 such cases, up from 93 in the three months prior and 76 before that—the Portland Police Bureau promised, all on its own, to do a deeper review.

The spike came even as overall force was going down. So was it expanded camping sweeps? Or just a summertime influx of young travelers? The bureau's force inspector, writing in a public report last fall, urged his superiors to pull data from previous years and to diligently study the data it collected over the next several months.

It was a good sign the bureau was taking the reports seriously. They're among the lesser-known provisions of a federal reform package meant to address accusations that our cops engage in a pattern or practice of using excessive force against people with mental illness.

But suddenly, for a few hours last week, the whole affair started to look downright sinister.

The bureau's most recent use-of-force report, tallying incidents from January through March, abruptly dropped "transients" from a list of specially tracked categories. It left mental health encounters alone. Notes accompanying the data were silent on the reason why. They also kept silent on what, if anything, had been turned up in the bureau's review.

That silence, in turn, fed a series of troubling questions.

Were the numbers getting worse? Had the review found something unsavory? Or had bureau officials just forgotten the whole thing and hoped we'd all forgotten, too?

The answer from the bureau, it turns out, is none of the above.

Sergeant Pete Simpson, the bureau's lead spokesman, said analysts had a sound reason for scrapping the "transient" category: They had begun their study, but decided the category was too "vague."

Analysts had hoped to home in on force used against unsheltered, chronically homeless Portlanders, only to find that the "transient" category also wraps in people too belligerent or out of it to list an address, or homeless Portlanders who don't have an address of their own, but are nonetheless sheltered, crashing with friends or family.

Simpson says analysts are still collecting the data, just not reporting it. He says they hope to restore the category to future reports, although maybe not in time for the next report, with subcategories of "transients" added beneath.

The bureau's been struggling with a slow-going transition to a new system for writing and sharing police reports, he says. Officials hope the new system will make it easier to track and record the kind of granular data that avoids vagueness while promoting meaningful conclusions.

"We're learning as we do each of these," Simpson says. "We want to make sure we're collecting data in such a way that we present it the right way so we can have an honest conversation."

He could have stopped there, after having mostly defended the bureau's honor. But he was savvy enough to acknowledge the larger lesson: The next time the bureau makes a change that substantial, it ought to tell us why.

"If we see something, or we take something out, and there's a change," he says, "let's just explain it."

## **A Measure of Faith**

### **City Hall Wants to Help More Churches Help More People off the Streets**

*By Denis C. Theriault  
June 25, 2014*

RACHEL HAD BEEN in and out of shelters for so long—more than three years—it was the only kind of living her four-year-old son had ever really known.

"I tried to act as normal as possible, doing counting and ABCs and trying to teach him things," says Rachel, who's finally thriving in a home of her own again—thanks to a three-year-old assistance program that Portland City Hall will recognize on Wednesday, June 25.

But it wasn't, she insists, the only life she'd ever known.

True, she'd been on the streets once before, when her oldest boy, now 10, was still tiny. She'd been a single mom and had fallen behind on the rent.

But she met someone soon after, she says, and they married, and he worked while she stayed home for eight years and raised two more children. Maybe she didn't have everything she wanted. But she had her family. And a home. Until that went away, too.

She moved out after a divorce three years ago. And she was a single parent again, except this time with three kids to feed. She tried to make a go of it. But no one, she says, wanted to hire someone who hadn't worked a traditional job for years—or rent to someone with an eviction on their record.

"Nobody wants to give you a chance," she says. "It's just a vicious cycle."

For Rachel, it was a cycle that held all the way through this winter. In January, she arrived at a shelter in Goose Hollow run by Portland Homeless Family Solutions—and it wasn't long before they connected her with the helping hand she'd been longing for all those months.

A case manager helped her finally find housing this March, and a group called Village Support Network, a branch of the interfaith New City Initiative, assembled a team of volunteers and donations to make Rachel's new start stick. That team helped with furnishings, dishes, and appliances—but, more importantly, with childcare and college applications and budgeting. She's now three months into a six-month effort.

"I don't think I could have done it without them," she says. "I'd be all alone."

And now, some three years after it quietly started its work, the Village Support Network is due for a major shot in the arm from Portland City Hall.

Alongside a resolution praising the group's work—signaling a renewed political will to link up with churches after a car-camping program ran aground ["Nobody's Home," News, April 17, 2013]—officials say they're eventually hoping to commit \$25,000 in city cash to help the group dramatically expand its capacity. Instead of working with 25 or so families like they're doing this year, the Village Support Network is hoping to serve about 50 by next year.

"It seems like a fairly good investment," says Josh Alpert, a policy director for Mayor Charlie Hales. Hales and Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who oversees the Portland Housing Bureau, are co-sponsoring the upcoming resolution.

Alpert says Hales wants the city to do more to promote—and benefit from—the kind of head-down, grinding charity work done by Portland's religious institutions. That emphasis comes as the city and Multnomah County work to better commingle their own spending on homelessness and housing.

Until recently, the county had assigned a staffer to work with faith-based groups. That unfilled position, says spokesman David Austin, will be the subject of a staffing assessment. In the meantime, the county is applauding the city's effort.

"We think linking up with the faith-based community around issues of housing and homelessness has proven to be very fruitful," Austin says.

The city, says Alpert, noticed that "there is this gap," which is why they're looking to spend a little bit of money to help out.

"We'll try for a year," Alpert says, "and see the results as they scale up."

Paul Schroeder, who runs New City Initiative, confirms he approached the city for help with its expansion plans for Village Support Network. But he promises that infusion will be well spent.

Of 15 families helped during 2013, he says, only one had lost their new housing a year later. And nearly three-quarters saw a family member find a new job.

"It speaks to the great support these families receive," he says.

Finding the right formula for that support has required some refinements over the years.

Schroeder says his group now spends more time working with eligible families on finding precisely the right teams. The chemistry at stake is too important to force when you're getting so deeply involved in someone else's life. Monthly meetings are part of the deal—sometimes daily phone calls. One of the first families to go through the program, discussing their experiences at a recent meeting, said they felt like their team members sometimes treated them like they were stupid.

"We want to see a good vibe and make matches accordingly," Schroeder says.

Schroeder also was quick to point out that, though the overwhelming majority of teams have come from Christian churches, the denominations involved run from the righteous to the mellow. The Village Support

Network also has had teams from a mosque and two synagogues. And its parent group, New City Initiative, has worked with a Buddhist temple.

"We're very explicit," he says. "This is not about proselytizing."

But if that kind of spiritual connection comes, too? Schroeder says that's just gravy.

Rachel says that's been the case with her team, from Sunnyside Adventist Church. They were like family. They threw a birthday party for her sons, full of toys. They take her calls—offering moral support—whenever she needs it. One woman knows what it's like raising boys, she says, "trying to do your best." And they also pray for her—a demonstration of affection that's made it easier to trust someone with her troubles.

She worries all the time she'll lose it all again. They tell her she won't. Not this time.

"You get that edge to you when you're homeless, that no one in the world cares," she says. "They really seem to care."

## **The Two-Year Itch Collecting Portland's Arts Tax Is Difficult. Still.**

*By Dirk VanderHart  
June 25, 2014*

This article has been modified to reflect the following correction: There is a remaining challenge to the Arts Tax, filed by Portland resident George Wittemyer and currently before the Oregon Court of Appeals.

NEARLY two years after voters approved it in 2012, the controversial Portland Arts Tax isn't quite out from under legal threat.

The window for appeal of the most recent challenge—filed by Lewis & Clark law professor and erstwhile blogger Jack Bogdanski—closed April 9. But another challenge, by Portland resident George Wittemyer, is before the Oregon Court of Appeals.

Even without legal wrangling, though, the tax's remaining challenges are considerable. Two years in, the city's still finding its feet in administering the charge, and that's got city leaders thinking twice about how best to collect a proposed "transportation user fee" to help out the underfunded Portland Bureau of Transportation.

Since May, the Portland Revenue Bureau has sent out nearly 90,000 letters to Portlanders it believes haven't paid the tax over the past two years, threatening to add a penalty. Those letters—and "other reminders," officials say—have jogged taxpayers' memories to the tune of \$1.1 million.

But they've also caused anger and confusion.

Take the case of one Southwest Portland woman who reached out to the Mercury, but requested she not be named. Unlike 30 percent to 35 percent of eligible Portlanders, this woman paid her \$35 tax last year. She paid the tax this year, too, according to a receipt she provided to the Mercury.

And yet, earlier this month, she received a letter from the city saying she'd better pay up. If she didn't pony up by July 11, the letter said, she'd be charged an extra \$15.

It was a misunderstanding, of course. The woman's tax was paid in 2013 using her first, middle, and last names. This time around, her husband used the woman's hyphenated last name when paying, confusing the city's system into creating a separate account.

Abby Coppock, a spokeswoman for the Portland Office of Management and Finance, says the revenue bureau isn't keeping tabs on how many people have been falsely flagged as not paying.

But similar misunderstandings could crop up if a person's changed a name because of marriage, or if they incorrectly enters the last four digits of their Social Security number when paying online. The city is building a database of taxpayers as it goes, and it's not hard to send the system into confusion.

"This is a part of [the revenue bureau] getting their system up and running now that they have two years of comparative data," Coppock says. "Part of this effort is just to get a larger cleanup of the database."

According to the latest figures, the city has collected \$8.3 million in Arts Tax money for tax year 2012—a 65 to 70 percent compliance rate, according to Coppock, most of it doled out to local school districts for arts education. The city says it's received \$6.3 million for 2013, although officials won't yet give a compliance rate. The tax was initially estimated to draw \$12 million (that was before exceptions were crafted for low-income Portlanders and people under 18).

The ongoing challenges have contributed to the uncertainty surrounding the city's latest controversial revenue idea: the "transportation user fee" proposed by Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick.

In town halls and other appearances this year, Novick said Portlanders had been clear they didn't want to pay that so-called "street fee" as part of their water and sewer bills, and so dismissed that possibility. The commissioner also defended collection of the Arts Tax, pointing out compliance has grown.

That's since changed. Both Novick and Hales have repeatedly praised the efficiency of collection via utility bills, which they peg at about 98 percent.

"We could use the same collection 'platform' as water and sewer without actually putting it on the water and sewer bill," Novick told the Mercury on Monday, June 23, "and make it a separate bill generated by the same system."

## **A Place to Go**

### **Why Homeless Campers on the Springwater Finally Have Toilets**

*By Dirk VanderHart  
June 25, 2014*

WHEN A HOMELESS man was shot by police on the Springwater Corridor this month ["Before the Crowbar," News, June 18], it followed advocates' protestations about city crackdowns on campsites along the popular recreational trail.

And Nicholas Glendon Davis' death spurred breathless TV news reports about transients living on the Springwater—accounts that tapped into neighbors' ample angst.

But the biggest recent news in the Springwater's ongoing issues with homelessness might have come in May, just west of where Davis was killed. There and in three other places, mint-green portable toilets have quietly popped up along the trail, which beats a meandering path east from the Willamette River to the little town of Boring.

"Their installation came from direction from Parks Commissioner Amanda Fritz's office," says Portland Parks and Recreation spokesman Mark Ross, "following discussions about homeless issues."

Mayor Charlie Hales' office has directed much of its attention around homelessness toward cleanups and enforcement, while calling for millions in new funding for services ["Sweeping Up," News, April 9]. Fritz, meanwhile, has been taking a different approach.

As reported by the Mercury, lately she's been talking not so much about getting illegal campers off of public space. Instead, she's trying to figure out whether people in dire life circumstances might be allowed to sleep on city land—provided they're not causing trouble ["The Neutral Zone," News, June 11].

The toilets, say city staffers and advocates for the homeless, are part of that question.

"Amanda understands that in order to get to the bottom of this problem, we have to do some harm reduction," says Israel Bayer, executive director of Street Roots. "You can sweep people and cry until you're blue in the face about homeless people on the Springwater. The reality is that people are going to live on the Springwater."

The four toilets are spaced at regular intervals between the Willamette and SE 174th. The most used, according to the parks bureau, is a commode at SE 100th. It's near a section of the trail that, on a recent visit, was dotted with visible campsites. It's also roughly four blocks west of where Portland Police Officer Robert Brown shot Davis, a homeless man who police say had come at officers with a crowbar.

Fritz declined to discuss her rationale for the toilets at length.

Portable toilets "are for everyone to use," she wrote in a text message. "Both people living inside and people living outside need a decent place to go to the bathroom while on the Springwater."

But the commissioner has been more forceful recently, posing questions about campsite enforcement that have been rarely heard in Portland City Hall.

"Are there situations where, if people were on city property, other than sidewalks, and if they weren't causing a problem," she told the Mercury while discussing homeless camping downtown, "that we would not be moving them on until morning?"

If the restrooms are an olive branch of sorts, they come as advocates for the homeless complain the city's been cracking down harder than usual on Springwater campers.

In mid-May, not long after the first portable toilets were installed, the parks bureau ousted campers along a five-mile stretch of trail in order to remove invasive plants.

The bureau says it gave ample notice, but advocates with East Portland's Clackamas Service Center claim city workers callously pushed campers along, and left chopped bushes and shrubs on their remaining property (the parks bureau says that the only objects left at the campsites were refuse). More recently, Trena Sutton, a longtime advocate, says the campers who've tried returning to the trimmed areas have developed skin rashes—which the Clackamas Service Center has called in a nurse to examine.

"People are coming up with serious skin conditions that have been in the brush since then, trying to find a place to sleep," Sutton says.

Ross, with the parks bureau, says workers sprayed herbicide in the area, but that it shouldn't have been a problem once dry. He notes poison oak also is prevalent on the Springwater.

Through June 18, park rangers had formally excluded 23 people from the Springwater this year, mostly for camping, Ross says. They'd issued 18 warnings for camping, made 50 referrals to homeless outreach organization JOIN, and called police and Multnomah County Animal Services on "a handful" of camps.

"One such camp was contacted multiple times and resulted in rangers issuing five warnings for off-leash dogs and one citation," Ross wrote in an email.

Still, he says, the majority of the bureau's contacts with people along the trail are "positive."

Parks isn't the only bureau breaking up camping on the Springwater. The Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) oversees swaths of land along the corridor. The bureau called out city contractor Pacific Patrol Services to clean up sites twice in May, and has another cleanup scheduled for Thursday, June 26, according to Eli Callison, a program specialist who oversees the cleanups for the bureau.

Callison's grappled with homeless camps on the Springwater for years. He's used to kicking campers out of one area, only to find them on BES property farther down the trail. And this year, he thinks there are more campsites off the Springwater than in the past.

"It's kind of moving around in a circle," he says. "It's not solving the solution for why they're out there homeless. It's putting a Band-Aid on the problem where they're at."

## **The Daily Journal of Commerce**

### **PDC board OKs purchase of Right 2 Dream Too parcel**

*By Jeff McDonald  
June 25, 2014*

The Portland Development Commission's board on Wednesday approved, by a 4-0 vote, a \$1.2 million purchase agreement for the property at Northwest Fourth Avenue and West Burnside Street that currently holds the Right 2 Dream Too camp.

The agreement includes a 30-month due diligence period for the PDC to evaluate the 7,762-square-foot parcel on the northeast corner of the intersection. The agency will make monthly option payments of \$10,000 – a total of \$300,000 – to the sellers, a group led by Michael Wright.

"This is the opposite of what PDC has traditionally done, which is to buy property knowing what it's going to do," PDC spokesman Shawn Uhlman said. "This will give PDC time to figure that out."

The delayed closing also will give the group selling the property time to relocate the Right 2 Dream Too homeless camp, Uhlman said.

The property is part of PDC's urban renewal plans near the Chinatown gate, which is an entryway to Old Town Chinatown, he said.

The option payments will be in addition to the purchase price and be made to compensate the seller for the delayed closing. The PDC will reserve \$1.5 million in its budget to acquire the property and lock it up, Uhlman said.