

The Oregonian

Mayor Charlie Hales talks suburbia, Portlandia, street fee on Urbanophile: Portland City Hall Roundup

By Andrew Theen
November 04, 2014

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales chatted at length last week about the Rose City's stereotypes, strengths and place in the world in a wide-ranging interview with Urbanophile, a website operated by blogger and urban analyst Aaron Renn.

It's the second time in the past few weeks Hales spoke about Portland and its economy to a national audience. Hales also appeared in the Washington Post recently.

The first-term mayor hit on a number of topics, including his role in the city's light rail and streetcar expansion (and the latter's growth nationwide), Portland's destination as a place for young entrepreneurs, his rationale for pushing the street fee and his vision for the city's future (and how the Knight Cancer Challenge may fit into it).

Once Hales gets going on a topic, he can talk for a while, and Renn succeeded in getting the mayor rolling on several issues.

Here are a few tidbits.

Hales said the "caricature" of the city depicted on Portlandia does have some truth, but the city is more than that:

"Another part of Portland that doesn't show up in the caricature is there are a lot of great neighborhoods in Portland, where you really can walk to the farmers' market, and go to a local movie theatre, and there's a brew pub right down the street, and all those parts that you expect in a great urban neighborhood are there. That's only about half the neighborhoods in the city. The other half of the neighborhoods are places that were half-baked suburbia when they got annexed into the city. And we're trying to make them complete communities with a local economy in that neighborhood and those kind of services that you can walk to. And, oh yeah, in many cases, there aren't even sidewalks, and there's no neighborhood park. So, we're spending a lot of effort and money on trying to retrofit those suburban parts of Portland, to not be physically identical to the old neighborhoods, but have those ingredients of a complete neighborhood that Portlanders like to see."

On young people ditching the suburbs:

"So the pattern of shifting to the urban core, of valuing quality of place and quality of life, those values and preferences have started to create major currents that send economic activity our way. I don't think that's a short term phenomenon. We're not going through another real estate bubble here. We're going through a sea change in how the economy works. It is more urban. It is more about the creative and intellectual pursuits, of software and engineering and medicine. And Portland's well positioned for that."

On his vision for Portland's future:

More of the same. That sounds a little tepid, but remember there's only half of our neighborhoods that fit the archetype or the stereotype of how great it is to live in Portland – tree lined streets, nice bike lane, farmers' market, great local artisanal food, and the locally owned restaurant on the main street. That's true in half of Portland. It's not true in the other half. It's also a city of two tiers when it comes to economic vitality. We have a lot of folks in Portland who are doing very well, making good incomes, able to afford those great old houses and those great old neighborhoods. And we also have a lot of people who are struggling. We have a lot of hunger in Oregon and here in Portland, too. We have schools where 80% of the kids are on free and reduced lunch. So we've got a national problem of income disparity. And we have it here, too. And I think Portland is going to be a leader now in that human equation of how is it that the city can beat the national odds of people getting left behind, just like we solved the urban equation differently in the last few decades.

Check out the [full 22 minute interview at Urbanophile](#), or read the transcript posted by Renn, it's a fun read and listen.

Portland street fee proposal to be released by Nov. 12, week after open house: Portland City Hall Roundup

*By Brad Schmidt
November 03, 2014*

The Portland Bureau of Transportation will hold an open house Wednesday about its controversial street fee.

But the open house won't include specifics about the actual taxes and fees that will be considered by the City Council.

That's because city officials still haven't decided what to propose.

"We do not yet have complete agreement on a proposal," Commissioner Steve Novick, who oversees the transportation bureau, said in an email to The Oregonian on Monday.

Novick said he expects to have a proposal ready for public review by Wednesday, Nov. 12. "If we reach agreement earlier, we will announce earlier," he added.

The City Council is scheduled to review the street fee proposal at its Nov. 20 meeting. A vote would be no earlier than Dec. 3.

Novick and Mayor Charlie Hales have been working on a street fee proposal since May, although the scope and funding structure have changed dramatically after the duo delayed a City Council vote in June.

Officials are now considering an income tax on residents and flat fees on businesses. The income taxes could range from \$1.50 to \$200 a month, with low-income residents exempted. Business fees could range from \$2.50 to \$120 a month.

The money is expected to raise about \$40 million annually, netting about \$29 million each year. Of that, about \$12 million – or 42 percent – could be spent paving the city's crumbling streets, under a list of potential project spending released by the bureau.

Although a specific funding proposal won't be ready for Wednesday's open house, city officials say the event will be helpful nonetheless.

Transportation officials are expected to provide an updated list of projects that would be funded from the street fee. The list on the city's website hasn't been updated recently.

Dylan Rivera, a spokesman for the bureau, said Portland residents and business owners will be able to talk to and ask questions of city employees about the projects.

"Where did this project come from?" Rivera said. "Why this project instead of that one?"

Rivera said he expects the open house "will be really valuable."

The open house will be held Wednesday from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at 2408 S.E. 16th Avenue.

The Portland Tribune

Portland Park Rangers Win a New Contract

*By Miller Resor
October 31, 2014*

UPDATE, 5:40 pm: The park rangers have voted to ratify the agreement.

"It's been a long process," says Erica Askin, business manager for Laborers Local 483. "I think it is a positive step for all. The contract and being in a union will significantly improve the rangers' lives."

Portland City Council is expected to approve the agreement Nov. 19.

ORIGINAL POST, 2:05 pm: Portland's park rangers are today expected to end a nearly two-year labor tussle with City Hall by approving a contract agreement that includes a pay increase, health care benefits and additional rights.

The deal represents a partial victory for the rangers who patrol city parks—many of whom work seasonally, for as little as \$12 an hour. Those part-time rangers will now get pay raises to \$15.83 an hour, health insurance and a guarantee of being first in line for re-hiring after working one summer.

"We are happy to have the agreement," says Tim Crail, the parks liaison for City Commissioner Amanda Fritz. "It was a long process. We think rangers are an important part of the park system."

The new contract also cements park rangers as a wing of city law enforcement. City Commissioner Nick Fish started the program in 2012 to replace private security guards in parks—and the experiment has been widely hailed as a success.

Park rangers first sought to unionize in March 2013, and overcame resistance from Mayor Charlie Hales to become part of Laborers Local 483, a union for Portland city workers. On March 6, the rangers were finally recognized as a union, but it was not until Wednesday that an agreement between them and the city was reached.

In September, WW looked at the terms of the contract battle, and the work performed by rangers described as the city's "goodwill ambassadors."

"But their jobs require each of them to be a blend of tour guide, security guard, trash collector, vandalism spotter, dog-leash scold, first-aid provider, dispute negotiator, restroom monitor and mental health worker," WW reporter Sami Edge wrote.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Portland permit center's hours being reduced

*By Inka Bajandas
November 3, 2014*

The Portland Bureau of Development Services starting this week will close its Permit Center at noon on Thursdays so that staffers can devote more time to reviews of permit applications as well as training for new employees.

The center at 1900 S.W. Fourth Ave. will maintain regular hours of 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. Closing at noon instead of 2 p.m. on Thursdays will help staffers issue building permits quicker, BDS spokesman Ross Caron said.

"It'll free up one afternoon a week where staff can perform their back-of-desk duties," he said.

The BDS has hired more employees to help keep pace with increasing numbers of permit requests associated with a development boom in the city, but many of these workers still require extensive training, Caron said. Extra time on Thursday afternoons for training will help bring these new employees up to speed quicker, he said.

Early closure of the Permit Center on Thursdays is scheduled to last until March 2015 while the recent hires are trained over the next five months. At that point, BDS officials will evaluate whether the new employees are ready for the center to return to regular hours, Caron said.

The Portland City Council in March approved adding 18 BDS employees. The bureau will seek the council's approval to hire more, he said.