

# Nick's Newsletter

240  
NICK  
FISH  
Commissioner  
of Public Works

Volume 1  
September 11, 2008

## **My First 90 Days**

As your newest City Commissioner, I wake up each day excited to go to work. Even in my first 90 days, I've been able to win significant victories for our most vulnerable Portland residents, for affordable housing, the environment, and much more. As I listen and learn from both Portland's committed public servants and the community at large, I am filled with optimism about our future.

My first weeks in City Hall have confirmed what many of you already know: Our city has a justifiable reputation for community spirit and livability. Our challenge is to make sure that every Portlander has their essential needs met and the opportunity to thrive. As the economy slows, it is even more critical that your city government listen to all Portlanders and make good choices reflecting our shared values and aspirations.

This newsletter is one of the ways I will open up City Hall. You can expect regular updates from the Fish Team. I hope that when you receive these newsletters you will treat them as one half of a conversation. If what you read here sparks a question or an idea, let me know. City Hall belongs to you.

As hard as I have worked during this transition summer, I know that fall is the time to roll up my sleeves. With your help, I will happily work every day to be the city commissioner you expected. I wish you all the best and look forward to meeting with you in the future.

## **Taking the Oath of Office**





On June 10, I was sworn in as your Portland City Commissioner by Oregon Court of Appeals Judge, Ellen Rosenblum. My wife Patricia, without whom I could not have achieved this dream, was by my side. Three days later, friends, supporters and family joined us at the Rosa Parks Elementary School. Tamala Newsome, the school principal, was our host. John Kroger, candidate for Oregon Attorney General, administered the Oath of Office after opening remarks by Governor Barbara Roberts. Governor Roberts challenged me with the wisdom of her “[10 Rules for Public Leadership](#).” In my remarks that day, I offered my vision for public service. If you were unable to attend, I invite you to [read my speech here](#).

## **My New Team**

It is very important that the Fish Team reflect my values and vision of public service. My new team will be built around three individuals who have a proven commitment to our community. My Chief of Staff, [Sam Chase](#), has an impressive record creating opportunities for vulnerable seniors and families with low incomes, supporting schools, and protecting the environment. [Hannah Kuhn](#), my Senior Policy Director, has a breath of policy experience in and out of city government. [Carmen Caballero Rubio](#), my Senior Policy Advisor, has built strong relationships with a broad range of communities, and is ready to help me welcome new voices to participate in city government. I have complete confidence in Sam, Hannah and Carmen, and hope you get a chance to meet and work with them in the future. I will be filling out my other staff positions in the coming weeks and will post that news on my website.

## **Bureau Notes**



I think I have the best bureau portfolio in City Hall. I will continue my lifelong commitment to social justice and housing as the commissioner in charge of the Bureau of Housing and Community Development. Hard working people, seniors, people with disabilities, and families with children deserve an opportunity to succeed in life. To thrive, everyone needs a place to call home.

I am also in charge of Portland Fire and Rescue (My four-year old son thinks this is the best part of my being on City Council). I am delighted to work with Portland's new Fire Chief, John Klum. Like housing, public safety is one of the city's core services. My family and I have been sharing dinner at fire houses across the city in order to meet and thank these wonderful public servants.

In addition to my assigned bureaus, I am finding a variety of ways to advocate for other issues close to my heart, including the arts, seniors, parks and schools.

## Accomplishments Update



- **Affordable Housing**—Building affordable housing that serves our most vulnerable populations AND that builds the sense of community in our neighborhoods is critical. That is why I jumped on the opportunity to secure a four acres parcel in Southwest Portland that will serve our most vulnerable seniors, families and others through affordable rental housing and homeownership. I led the Council decision to acquire and redevelop the Jerome Sears U.S Army Reserve site in SW Portland as affordable, “green” housing. My follow-up trip to visit Congressman Barney Frank in Washington D.C. not only helped ensure that the Department of Defense and HUD will follow through on this work, but provided an opportunity to visit and thank our entire Oregon delegation for their commitment to affordable housing in Portland.
- **Homelessness**—In an effort to make sure that our homeless populations aren’t just moved off the streets with no where to go, I am working to ensure that services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and long-term affordable housing is built that will allow people with mental illness and other disabilities an opportunity to get out of homelessness. A Resource Access Center will provide ongoing support to our homeless. In August, I kicked off the Homeless Connect event, an effort, co-led by my Bureau of Housing and Community Development and key non-profit partners, where hundreds of our less fortunate citizens received basic services in a respectful “one stop shopping” setting.
- **Environment**—I worked with the City Council to require that the Columbia River Crossing plans include a strong Environmental Impact Statement as well as light rail, pedestrian access and bike lanes. In keeping with my commitment to make Ross Island an urban wildlife sanctuary, I joined Mike Houck and Bob Sallinger on a tour of the island.
- **A New Voice for Portland’s Communities**—I have spent much of my time engaging with Portlanders outside of City Hall—where our best creative thinking is done. The ideas I hear have already shaped the work I’ve begun, including: an effort to strengthen the siting process for cell phone towers to better respect Portland’s residential neighborhoods; appointing new members of the Housing Authority of Portland, Shelli Romero and Jim Smith, who represent the diversity of Portland’s residents; engaging with small businesses as our most critical job creation engine; and reforming our Business License Fee to treat small business more equitably.

## What’s Next?

- Develop a “Housing Blueprint” at the request of Mayor-Elect Sam Adams that provides a clear direction for the city’s housing policies.
- Lead an effort with Chief Klum to refurbish and revitalize the firefighter’s Campbell Memorial for its 2011 Centennial, honoring the dedication of our firefighters and enhancing the Burnside corridor.
- Develop a targeted, sustainable program budget for the Bureau of Housing and Community Development that ensures our low income residents will have an affordable housing infrastructure for generations to come.

## Opening City Hall to Everyone



In May, Portland voters gave me a gift: the chance to represent them in City Hall. In turn, I made a commitment to work hard every day and bring a new spirit of collaboration and openness to our government. The truth of this commitment is that I need your help and your city needs your participation. I invite you to join the Fish Team. You can be my eyes and ears across our city. Let me know both what we need to do better and what we are doing well. Working together, we will make sure that Portland is as good as its people.

### Contact Nick

By Phone:  
503-823-3589

By Mail:  
Commissioner Nick Fish  
1221 SW 4th Avenue, Suite 240  
Portland, Oregon 97204

By Email:  
[nick@ci.portland.or.us](mailto:nick@ci.portland.or.us)

**Commissioner Nick Fish**  
1221 SW 4th Avenue, Suite 240 · Portland, Oregon 97204  
503-823-3589 · [nick@ci.portland.or.us](mailto:nick@ci.portland.or.us)