

Nick's Newsletter

240
NICK
FISH
Commissioner
of Public Works

Volume 5, March 2009

"No matter how long the winter, Spring is sure to follow" – Proverb

Dear Friends,

Spring is in the air, and with it brings the promise of change.

While recent budget cuts have contributed to a particularly icy winter, we have some promising new developments to report that are sure to help our local community.



We look forward to working with all of our community partners as we plan for a brighter future.

My Vote on the Proposed Stadium Deal

After much thought and more than 1,000 letters and emails from concerned citizens, I voted no on the proposed stadium deal. (The proposal passed the Council by a 3-2 vote.)

This was a tough decision. I am a big soccer fan. I would personally buy tickets to watch Major League Soccer, and I respect the views of passionate supporters of MLS.

However, as a City Commissioner, I did not feel the stadium deal was the right deal for Portland. Among other things, it requires too much

public subsidy, and provides too little economic benefit, at a time when we face the worst recession of my lifetime.

The Council recently closed an 18 million dollar hole in this year's budget. We are facing painful cuts in next year's budget. Now more than ever, I believe we must focus on the City's core priorities, investing in affordable housing, education, parks, transportation and small business. These are the keys to a major league city.

Community Gardens - It's time to get dirty!



As the new Parks Commissioner, one of my top priorities is to expand [Community Gardens](#). Did you know that over 1100 Portland residents are currently waiting for a garden plot? Please join me at the opening of Portland's

newest community garden, the Peace Community Garden at SE 127th and SE Market, on March 28th at 10 a.m. By growing food and sharing a portion of our harvest with hunger relief agencies, we can have a positive impact on our community during these tough times.

Portland Parks & Recreation's [Community Gardens](#) will also be hosting many events this Spring. The schedule includes vegetable gardening and composting classes as well as work parties for garden clean-ups, fruit tree plantings, and native habitats. For more information, or to sign up, call 503-823-1612 or e-mail comgardens@ci.portland.or.us.

A Season of Service

Heart of the Community Awards

As a strong supporter of the arts, I was honored to be a part of the 2009 Portland Trail Blazers/Hands on Greater Portland [Heart of the Community Awards](#). I had the pleasure of presenting the 2009 *Heart of the Community* award to Paul King and Walter Jaffe, co-founders of White Bird Dance. Paul and Walter have been making dance exciting and accessible to Portlanders since 1997.



Photo courtesy Hands on Greater Portland

Also recognized was our own [Multnomah Youth Commissioner](#), Shantel Monk, who won the Nathan Sibell Youth Leadership Award. Shantel was honored for her efforts to raise awareness about leukemia and for her volunteer work with a number of organizations, including Big Brothers Big Sisters, Wednesday's Child, Hope Meadows, and Speak Up...Speak Out. We are lucky to have her on the Fish Team!

Lowenstein Trust Award

[JOIN](#) Executive Director Marc Jolin was honored at the February 25th Council session with the 17th annual Steve



Lowenstein Award recognizing his remarkable work with JOIN's Connecting the Street to a Home Program. Marc has dedicated the past 20 years to combating homelessness, first in Philadelphia and in Portland since 1992. His commitment to helping this vulnerable population and his spirit of giving inspires us all. Congratulations, Marc.

BUREAU UPDATES

Big News from East Portland

The Parks Bureau brought 3 [Master Plans](#) to Council on March 18th. The Beech, Clatsop Butte, and Parklane Plans focus on integrating parks with nearby schools, incorporating green and sustainable practices, and including more diverse groups in local planning processes. For maps, diagrams, photos, and more, visit the Parks Bureau [website](#).

On February 18th, at an evening session, Council adopted the [East Portland Action Plan](#). The Plan addresses areas of need highlighted by the 2007 East Portland Review: investing in public infrastructure, transit service, and green spaces to create a more livable community.



The East Portland Community Aquatic Center celebrated its grand opening on March 14th. Thanks to the 2002 Parks levy and the leadership of former Mayor Tom Potter and Dan Saltzman, Portland now has a public pool East of 82nd. And it's not just any pool. The Center, [expected to become](#) the first public swim center with [LEED Platinum status](#), features a solar electric system, outdoor bioswales to retain and treat stormwater runoff, skylights and windows for light, and a waste heating recovery system to keep the water comfortable.

Not only is the pool 60% more efficient than Oregon code requires, it can hold as many as 14 swimming classes at the same time, features a current channel, and boasts a *very* impressive water slide.

The [center is located](#) at 740 SE 106th – be sure to check it out for some summer fun!

New Dedicated Funding for Affordable Housing

Oregon finally has a dedicated stream of funding for affordable housing! The Oregon legislature took a giant step toward the day when every Oregon resident will have a safe, decent, and affordable place to call home by voting in favor of HB 2436. The bill will add a small (\$15) increase to the [document recording fee](#) (DRF) payable on each document recorded in a real estate transaction. The DRF will assist urban and rural communities across Oregon in preserving and developing affordable housing, addressing homelessness, and putting homeownership back within reach of working families.

Farewell to Will White

Last month we said goodbye to Will White, long-time director of the [Bureau of Housing and Community Development](#). He assumed a position as a policy advisor to Senator Jeff Merkley in Washington D.C.

Under Will's leadership, BHCD achieved success with the [10 Year Plan to End Homelessness](#), empowered people to self-sufficiency through the [Economic Opportunity Initiative](#), and developed and preserved housing to serve seniors, families with children, people of color, and our lowest income population.



As the City's Housing Commissioner, I was fortunate to work with Will during my first six months in office. I wish him the best in his new position.

City Budget Update

The City, facing the worst economic downturn in my lifetime, will soon make tough budget choices. As we deliberate, my highest priority will be to protect the safety net programs that our youth, families, seniors, and people with disabilities depend upon.

The outlook is sobering. Economic projections prepared by the City's finance office suggest that Council will have little or no discretionary funding to allocate in the FY 2009-10 budget. As part of this process, all bureaus have been asked to rank and prioritize their programs based on their alignment with the bureau's mission and community support, and to recommend program cuts totaling 2.5% and 5%.

At this stage no decisions have been made about the BHCD and Parks budgets. It is critical that citizens have opportunities to make their voices heard and I will be listening to these voices and community input before making any decisions.

I encourage you to stay informed about these public events:

- BHCD presented its budget to Council on Friday, March 13th. To view or read the transcript of this session, [click here](#).
- Parks presented its requested budget to Council on Monday, March 16th. To view or read the transcript of this session, [click here](#).
- The Mayor will release his proposed budget for the City on or about April 28th.

The community will have an opportunity to address Council at public hearings before the full City Council on May 20-21. Your participation in the City's budget process helps to ensure that Council's decisions will be sound and well-informed. Please watch the City's budget website, www.portlandonline/communitybudget, for details.

Portland Roast Festival

Last month I had the pleasure of joining Sen. Margaret Carter, Steve Novick, and others at the annual [Portland Schools Foundation Roast Festival](#) pitting the “hacks” (politicians) against the “flacks” (journalists.) The “hacks” brought class, humor, and dignity to the event. Based on the performance of the “flacks,” I recommended declaring their side of the stage a blighted area so that we could use urban renewal dollars to get them some better material.” (The flacks won the popular vote!)

Meet my team

For more about me or the folks on my team, [visit our website](#) at www.portlandonline.com/fish.

As always, please feel free to contact my office with any ideas, questions, or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Fish". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nick" being more prominent than the last name "Fish".

Nick Fish

1221 SW 4th Avenue, Room 240
Portland, Oregon
97204
503-823-3589
www.portlandonline.com/fish