



COMMISSIONER NICK FISH
City of Portland

August 27, 2009

Dear Friends,

This summer marks my **one year anniversary** on Portland City Council.

I took office in June of 2008 as Commissioner-in-Charge of Portland Fire & Rescue and the Bureau of Housing & Community Development. In January, Mayor Adams asked me to lead the Portland Parks and Recreation Bureau, and to create a new 21st-century Portland Housing Bureau.

I could not have asked for better, more rewarding, assignments.

This past year, our community faced many challenges. None was bigger than the worst recession in our lifetime. Hunger, homelessness and unemployment rose to historic levels. This crisis has caused each of us to rethink our priorities and refocus on helping those in need.

I am inspired by the way Portlanders responded to these challenges: volunteering in record numbers to support non-profits; providing emergency shelter to homeless families and individuals during the winter weather emergency; answering the call to save the Washington Park Summer Festival; and replanting a vandalized community garden.

Building on this spirit, and working together, we will weather this storm.

It is an honor to serve on the Portland City Council. I am grateful for the support of my Council colleagues, the hard work of my talented staff, and the dedication of City employees who serve the public every day. Finally, I want to thank my family for their love and support.

We have much to be proud of, and much work ahead.

Sincerely,

Nick

2008-09 ACCOMPLISHMENTS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Creating Opportunity and Cutting Red Tape

- *Streamlining the permit process*
- *Reforming the Business License Fee*
- *Expanding opportunities for women- and minority-owned businesses*
- *Sponsoring “Buy Local” initiative*
- *Investing in small businesses*

A New Housing Agenda

- *Advocating for a sustainable budget*
- *Creating a 21st-century Housing Bureau*
- *Leading the charge on foreclosure prevention*
- *Preserving housing opportunity*
- *Removing roadblocks*

Strengthening the Safety Net

- *Continuing progress on the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness*
- *Securing funding for the Resource Access Center*
- *Leading a coordinated winter response*

Protecting Parks, Trails and Natural Areas

- *Delivering programs and services*
- *Supporting green initiatives*
- *Engaging the community*

Standing Up For the Community

- *Connecting with the community*
- *Co-Chairing the Census 2010 Complete Count Committee*

Prioritizing Public Safety

- *Protecting public safety budgets from cuts*

Sustaining Arts and Culture

- *Saving the Washington Park Summer Festival*
- *Supporting the IFCC and RACC*

Saving Taxpayer Money

- *Opposing the two-stadium deal*
- *Supporting lower-cost UV water filtration option*

Nick's Annual Report 2008-09

Creating Opportunity and Cutting Red Tape

Small businesses are the engine of job growth in Portland. With record unemployment, City Hall must focus laser-like on supporting local businesses and protecting family wage jobs.

Streamlining the permit process

I worked with my colleagues to reform our building permitting process. Our balanced approach led to the consolidation of permitting functions from six locations to one. The result: a streamlined permit process that protects core environmental and transportation values, saves taxpayer dollars, and fast-tracks local construction projects.



Nick joins Senator Wyden to announce federal support for green housing

Reforming the Business License Fee

The Council reduced the burden of the Business License Fee on small businesses by decreasing business owners' upfront tax, reducing filing requirements, and eliminating the \$100 fee for starting a new business.

Expanding opportunities for women- and minority-owned small businesses

As Commissioner in charge of overseeing the City's [disparity study](#), I am working to expand contracting opportunities for minority- and women-owned businesses.

The Portland Housing Bureau (PHB) awarded more than \$387,750 in grants to nonprofit and workforce-focused organizations through its [Economic Opportunity](#) program. This nationally acclaimed program teaches low-income participants to launch successful microbusinesses.

Sponsoring "Buy Local" Initiative

Mayor Adams and I co-sponsored an ordinance requiring City bureaus to first buy local goods and services and encouraging local consumers to do the same. When we buy local, more of each dollar stays in Portland and recirculates in the local economy, creating local jobs.

Investing in small businesses

In a tough budget year, I supported \$2.5 million in assistance to small businesses to promote economic opportunities.

A New Housing Agenda

Safe, affordable homes are the foundation for prosperity, stable neighborhoods, and strong families. I ran for Council on a platform of modernizing Portland's inefficient housing system.

We have much to be proud of, but I know we can still do better: better value for each dollar invested in housing; more accountability; stronger coordination with all of our public and private partners; and more efficient government.

Advocating for a sustainable budget

Working with my colleagues and housing advocates, I secured nearly \$10 million dollars in *new* local and federal stimulus resources to strengthen the safety net, restore stability to key programs affected by County budget cuts, and increase short-term rent assistance by more than \$1 million dollars.

Creating a 21st century Housing Bureau

The call for modernizing and transforming our housing system has been loud and persistent. In December, Mayor Adams and I announced our plan to create a new housing bureau, combining the best of the PDC housing team and the City's Housing Bureau.

The new Portland Housing Bureau was officially launched on July 1. I appointed Margaret Van Vliet as the first Director of the new bureau. Margaret brings an extraordinary combination of skills and experience to my team.

Leading the charge on foreclosure prevention

We awarded \$250,000 to Portland non-profits for [homeowner stabilization](#), pre-foreclosure counseling and community-based services to help homeowners stay in their homes, secured \$2.9 million in stimulus funds to purchase foreclosed properties, and sponsored four community-based foreclosure prevention events.

At the state level, I worked with Senator Suzanne Bonamici to support important legislation to protect homeowners and renters facing foreclosure.

Preserving housing opportunity

We secured a \$15 million line of credit from HUD to acquire and preserve affordable rental properties at risk of conversion to market rate rentals or condominiums. In partnership with the State of Oregon, we secured a \$5 million MacArthur Foundation award for preservation of affordable housing for seniors and people with disabilities.



REACH's Patton Park Apartments, a 54-unit building for working families

Removing roadblocks

The federal Section 8 program is the largest housing program in our community. Unfortunately, too many voucher holders – including older adults, the disabled, and veterans – still face barriers to successfully renting an apartment with a voucher.

I convened a [Section 8 Success Rate Task Force](#) to improve the "success rate" of voucher holders, and I collaborated with the Veterans Administration and Housing Authority of Portland to reduce bottlenecks in programs for homeless veterans.

Strengthening the Safety Net

There's nothing more important to me during these tough times than helping people meet their basic needs: food, shelter, and work.

Continuing progress on the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness

We made significant progress in Portland's innovative [10 Year Plan to End Homelessness](#), achieving nearly two-thirds of the plan's 10-year supportive housing goal. We still have more to do.

Securing funding for the Resource Access Center

I secured critical funding to build the [Resource Access Center](#) (RAC), a cornerstone of the City's 10 Year Plan. The RAC is an innovative partnership between the City of Portland, the [Housing Authority of Portland](#), [Transition Projects, Inc.](#), PDC, and Multnomah County.

The RAC will provide vital resources, shelter, and housing placement services to individuals and couples experiencing homelessness in Portland, and it will be the first LEED Platinum building of its kind in the country.

Leading a coordinated winter response

In anticipation of a cold winter, the City joined forces with Multnomah County to pilot two [Warming Centers](#) for homeless individuals and families.

Working with trusted community organizations including the [Red Cross](#), the [Fire Bureau](#), the faith community, and shelter providers, we provided emergency shelters during the unprecedented storms – and saved lives.

I discovered early in December that Portland didn't have an emergency management plan to coordinate services for the homeless during a severe weather alert. Working with the dedicated staff of the [Portland Office of Emergency Management](#) and community stakeholders, we developed the city's first written plan for responding to severe weather crises.



Volunteering with Bridgetown Ministries, Spring 2009

Protecting Our Parks, Trails, and Natural Areas

During my first six months as Parks Commissioner, I convened numerous meetings with community leaders and stakeholders to listen to their concerns. In spite of budget cuts, we are making progress toward our goal of a world class system of parks, trails, and natural areas.

Delivering programs and services

Parks took a \$2 million budget hit this Spring. Fortunately, we were able to preserve essential programs for [seniors](#), [youth](#), and those with [special needs](#) through modest fee increases. We also launched "[Free for All](#)," an online portal showcasing hundreds of fun free events, classes, and programs.



Free summer fun in Portland Public Parks

I teamed with Commissioner Saltzman to fund an expanded [Youth Conservation Corps](#), offering young people paid work experience in ivy removal, trail clearing, tree planting, and training in environmental stewardship.

We are keeping our promise to prioritize new parks and programs in underserved areas of the City. We opened the [Ed Benedict Skate Park](#) in the Madison South neighborhood, and adopted [three Master Plans](#) for new parks in East Portland. And we opened East Portland Community Center's new [Aquatic Center](#), one of the first "green" aquatic centers in the country.

Supporting green initiatives

Portlanders love to garden, and the urban agriculture movement offers great opportunities to feed the hungry, reduce our carbon footprint, and build community. I secured new funding and the Governor's designation for an Oregon Solutions process to expand our highly regarded [Community Gardens Program](#).

[Ross Island](#) is a community treasure for us to enjoy and plays a vital role in the regional ecosystem. I obtained Council support for a "no-wake zone" in the Holgate Channel, a common sense approach to protecting the island's sensitive habitat.

We joined [Intertwine](#), formerly the Connecting Green Alliance, a Metro-led effort to connect all parks, trails, and natural areas across the region. We are working to identify more funding to expand our network of trails for biking and walking.

We are taking a leadership role in the [Gateway Green](#) initiative. The proposed park in the Gateway district will address the growing need for popular biking sports like singletrack riding and cyclocross.

Portland was recently named one of the most bike-friendly cities in the world. Despite this reputation, we lack adequate off-road biking trails. At my direction, the Parks Bureau recently

kicked off a citizen advisory group tasked with exploring ways to make Portland friendlier for off-road cycling, starting with Forest Park.

I joined with Multnomah County Commissioner Jeff Cogen to celebrate [ReUse Week 2009](#), designed to highlight local non-profits that promote the value of reuse in our community: [Community Warehouse](#), [Free Geek](#), [Habitat ReStore](#), [Rebuilding Center](#), [Schoolhouse Supplies](#), and [Scrap](#).

Engaging the community

We recently held a series of Parks Zone Open Houses to give folks an opportunity to share thoughts about their area parks with the Parks Managers responsible for them. We launched [ParkScan](#), an interactive website that urges citizens to become active partners in the stewardship of our parks by communicating directly with Parks staff.

We kicked off the formal planning process for a new [Community Center](#) at the Washington Monroe site in SE Portland. In Waterfront Park, we unveiled [Portland Saturday Market's](#) new home and summer [bike rentals](#) for rides along the river.

Our success depends on partnerships, and I'm grateful for the work of Parks Director Zari Santner, the dedicated Parks staff, our [Parks Board](#), [Urban Forestry Commission](#) and [Portland Parks Foundation](#), regional partners, and thousands of [volunteers](#).

Standing Up For The Community

I am committed to transparency in all that we do, and to shining a light on the people and organizations that make Portland a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

Connecting with the community

We work hard to keep you informed through regular [newsletters](#), a fresh, updated [website](#) (thanks to Sonia Schmanski) and my [calendar](#), posted online each week. As always, I encourage you to share your thoughts with me and to contact me or [my team](#) any time.



Opening the Portland Census 2010 Office

I did extensive outreach with [neighborhood associations, coalitions, and committees](#) across the city – from Outer East to Hillsdale – to ensure their voices are heard. I plan to get out even more this fall.

I serve on the [Multnomah County Task Force on Vital Aging](#), and as Council liaison to [Elders in Action](#). Working together, we restored classes offered at Senior Centers and Loaves and Fishes sites, as well as outings, bowling, and dances designed for disabled citizens.

Co-Chairing the Census 2010 Complete Count Committee

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Multnomah County is the fourth “hardest to count” county in Oregon. Too often, those who are homeless or from low-income communities, people of color, immigrants, seniors and others have been severely undercounted in national census counts.

Multnomah County Commissioner Deborah Kafoury and I kicked off the [Complete Count Committee](#) for Census 2010. Our goal is to increase participation of traditionally undercounted communities.

Prioritizing Public Safety

The Council prioritized basic public safety services in the budget. Especially during tough times, we cannot afford to compromise on Police, Fire and emergency services.

In 2008, I served as Commissioner-in-Charge of [Portland Fire & Rescue](#). It was an honor to work with Chief Klum and the men and women who serve in the bureau. One of the highlights was the Sunday night dinners my family attended at stations across the city. We were impressed with the firefighters we met, and enjoyed excellent home cooking.



Responding to a fire in NE Portland

Sustaining Arts and Culture

I’m a huge fan of the arts. As a board member of the [Oregon Cultural Trust](#), I am working to build a sustainable endowment to support arts and culture state-wide.

Securing stable arts funding in the budget was one of my top priorities. I believe that the arts should be accessible to all, regardless of income.

Saving the Washington Park Summer Festival

This spring, the [Washington Park Summer Festival](#) was cancelled when a major sponsor of the free summer event pulled out. In order to keep this 60 year tradition alive, we needed to raise



Oregon Cultural Trust Day of Culture Celebration 2008

\$100,000 fast. Gordon Sondland and Kati Durant stepped up and issued a \$50,000 challenge grant, and local businesses answered the challenge. In less than a week, we raised over \$120,000, saving the festival. Thanks to the generosity of Portlanders, thousands of Portland families were able to enjoy fabulous musical performances for free.

Supporting the IFCC and RACC

I supported full funding for the [Regional Arts and Culture Council](#) and innovative arts education programs like the Right Brain Initiative. I also secured funding for the [Interstate Firehouse Culture Center](#) to ensure that this regional asset continues to offer culturally diverse programming.

Saving Taxpayer Money

Opposing the two-stadium deal

I am big soccer fan and proud soccer dad. But I voted against the two-stadium deal for soccer and baseball, and opposed the proposal to site a stadium in Lents. I concluded there was too much risk and not enough public benefit.

Supporting lower-cost option for water quality

I opposed building an expensive water filtration plant for our pristine Bull Run water. Instead, I supported an alternative resolution directing the City to continue to seek a waiver from the EPA while planning for a lower-cost, less intrusive Ultra-Violet approach to water purification.