

## The Oregonian

### Why Portland is footing bill to replace private sewer connections for West Hills but not the eastside

*By Brad Schmidt*

Portland is spending an estimated \$1.25 million replacing sewer pipes on private property in the West Hills and may soon foot the bill for an additional \$2.85 million for more upgrades.

Nearly 320 homeowners have agreed to participate in a pilot project that covers the full cost of replacing the pipe that connects a home to the city's sewer system. Another 1,500 homes sit in high-priority westside areas that could become eligible for free replacements in the future.

Typically such costs are the responsibility of homeowners – an obligation many eastside residents learned the hard way in 2012 when the city started charging \$5,100 per house to fix old pipes that didn't meet current city code.

City officials say they hope the Southwest Portland project prevents rainwater from leaking into the sewer system through cracks in aging pipes, which during heavy rainstorms can cause raw sewage spills into Fanno Creek.

The Bureau of Environmental Services is also repairing or replacing larger main lines in Southwest Portland as part of a long-term project estimated to cost \$42.7 million.

Bill Ryan, the sewer bureau's chief engineer, said the city is doing the work for homeowners because simply improving sewer lines in public rights of way won't do enough to limit sewage spills.

"You can take care of the public portion of the sewer and solve (only) a small portion of the problem," Ryan said.

#### **State demands a fix**

Portland's sewer system in the West Hills is particularly susceptible to overflow issues during wet weather.

With its hilly terrain of clay and silt, westside ground can become saturated by rain. Water infiltrates pipes through cracks.

In 2011, the state demanded a fix.

Three times in three months, raw sewage spilled from a manhole near Southwest Dewitt Street and 25th Avenue, in the Hillsdale area. Portland agreed to find a solution by December 2016 but, in the meantime, the city can continue sending sewage into Fanno Creek during storms.

Portland launched its pilot project hoping to make a dent in the problem.

The city offered to complete the work for free in order to encourage participation, Ryan said. More than 80 percent of targeted homeowners have agreed to participate.

Another 1,500 homes are in top priority areas because they contribute to overflows at Fanno Creek or are in neighborhoods with high levels of water infiltration.

If the city keeps offering free replacements at a price of about \$2,200 each, total costs would be \$4.1 million, the city estimates.

All ratepayers would foot those costs, which would run about 6 cents a month for the typical customer – or one-tenth of one percent of the average bill. Of that, the pilot project represents 2 cents a month for the average customer.

The city estimates that repairing and replacing pipes to prevent water infiltration should be cheaper than increasing capacity with larger pipes or building a separate stormwater system.

“The upshot here is that by getting all of that stormwater that infiltrates in, whenever it rains, out of the sewer system, that is saving ratepayers lots of money,” Ryan said.

### **Eastside residents upset**

Not surprisingly, the program is drawing praise from residents in Southwest Portland who won't have to pay. But some eastside residents – on the hook for similar but not identical work – are frustrated.

Dick Loughney, who lives at the bottom of a hill just off Dosch Road in Southwest Portland, has signed up for the sewer bureau's pilot project.

The bureau is simply “fulfilling its obligations” to ratepayers who will ultimately cover the bill, Loughney said.

“I feel like I've been paying it forward,” he said. “I'm not deluding myself into thinking the city is paying for it.”

But Reuben Deumling, a resident of the Sunnyside neighborhood in Southeast Portland, called the westside program “egregious.”

In 2011, more than one hundred eastside residents received notice that they would be financially responsible for the entire cost of fixing sewer connections that violated code, some for pipes that were more than 100 years old.

These “nonconforming connections” included multiple homes sharing one pipe that feeds the sewer system, or private pipes running through other homeowners' properties. Officials estimated about 2,300 improper connections citywide, many in Portland's oldest eastside neighborhoods. The nonconforming sewer connections hinder redevelopment efforts.

The city never considered covering costs for fixing nonconforming sewers, Deumling said. He helped negotiate a compromise in 2012 where homeowners pay nearly \$5,100 and the city covers the rest, typically about \$8,000.

Regardless of whether sewers in Southwest Portland pose a health risk, Deumling said, the city should maintain a consistent policy.

“It doesn't seem logical,” he said. “It seems like adding insult to injury.”

### **City defends program**

Ryan said the logic is simple: Preventing sewage spills, and avoiding more costly projects, benefits the entire community. Replacing nonconforming sewer connections benefits only the homeowner or future buyers.

“It goes back to who benefits,” Ryan said.

Officials expect to track results from the pilot project this winter before making recommendations about whether to keep paying for private replacements.

Other options: an insurance fee charged to ratepayers, with proceeds covering a wide-range of issues beyond infiltration; cost-sharing between the city and homeowner; or requiring homeowners to pay, perhaps by mandating sewer-line inspections and replacement, if necessary, when a property is sold.

Officials also could require homeowners to disconnect foundation or gutter drains, although that option is considered a last resort for fear that diverted water could cause landslides.

"We're going to make the best decisions we can based on the data we get from the pilot," said Jim Blackwood, a policy director for Commissioner Nick Fish, who oversees the sewer bureau.

## **Google Fiber agreement computes without subsidies: Editorial Agenda 2014**

*By The Oregonian Editorial Board*

Discussion about Google Fiber's franchise agreement at last week's Portland City Council meeting bounced between testimony about the importance of Google's super-high-speed Internet service to Portland's economic future and concerns about how the city can ensure that access to the new service is equitable.

In other words, the back-and-forth was quintessential Portland: one eye focused on the city's image as an innovator and another focused on ways to make the city more inclusive. Those goals are good. But in this case, there's no need for the city to spend a lot of time -- or money -- trying to reach them. Google Fiber has the framework of a workable plan already in place.

Portland is among nine U.S. metro areas that Google is considering for expansion of its Google Fiber service, which provides Internet access 100 times faster than a standard broadband connection. It already provides the service in Kansas City and is in the process of rolling it out in Provo, Utah, and Austin, Texas.

Some have raised concerns that the new service has disproportionately benefited moderate- to upper-income households in Kansas City. As is the case in Kansas City, Google's proposed franchise agreement does not require it to provide access to every neighborhood in Portland and the five suburban cities the company plans to serve. Google will select its service areas, called fiberhoods, based on customer interest. That type of agreement does create the possibility for inequity. But Portland isn't Kansas City. It's more technologically advanced and less economically stratified. Plus, Portland has the advantage of learning from what happened in Kansas City, said Mary Beth Henry, director of the city's Office for Community Technology.

Portland already has broadband strategic plan in place and a broadband adoption advisory group, which has met once, that is studying the types of issues raised on Wednesday's meeting, Henry said. She estimated that about 20 percent of Portland households don't have Internet access. A 2012 statewide study put the percentage without Internet at 12 percent in the metro area, which includes technology-focused Washington County as well as Clackamas County and Multnomah County.

Commissioners Nick Fish and Amanda Fritz asked at the Council meeting whether the city should consider using some of the franchise fees paid by Google to help increase availability for low-income residents. Fish said Monday that he didn't have a specific approach in mind but wanted to make sure access was part of the discussion. It should be, but subsidies would neither be the best use of franchise fees nor the best way to increase Internet access.

As part of its rollout, Google has agreed to offer customers five-megabit service (roughly comparable to basic service available from other providers) for seven years for a one-time installation fee of \$300, the equivalent of about \$3.57 per month. Customers also would have the option of paying the \$300 in 12 monthly payments of \$25. At that price, cost is unlikely to be the biggest deterrent to access.

The city would be wiser to focus on increasing awareness of the availability of Google Fiber and the practical advantages of high-speed Internet access. Google already has agreed to provide access to some community groups. Google and the city should work with those same groups to publicize availability of the low-cost service option.

Henry said the city has not attempted to estimate how much revenue it will gain from Google franchise fees. Since Kansas City doesn't have franchise fees, there's no baseline to use for making a projection. Whatever the city does collect will go into the general fund, as do other franchise and license fees. Before designating any of those fees toward Internet access, the city should look at what other needs they could help meet. The list of possibilities is long.

The City Council is scheduled to vote on the Google franchise agreement June 11, so it has time to do more homework. Further study should show that this is a very good deal for Portland and the city doesn't need to develop subsidies to make it better.

## The Portland Tribune

### City rules put street seat changes in gear

*By Jennifer Anderson*

The Portland Bureau of Transportation is getting much more selective with its three-year-old Street Seats program, which installs public seating in the place of on-street parking spaces.

On Monday, bureau officials announced that they have approved three of the 10 Street Seats applications submitted this spring:

- Bonfire Lounge, 2821 S.E. Stark St.
- Lompoc Brewing, 1620 N.W. 23rd Ave.
- SoMa EcoDistrict, Southwest Fourth Ave. between College and Hall streets.

In addition, PBOT will work with four other applicants to resolve outstanding issues: Bamboo Izakaya; McMenamins on Hawthorne, Ristorante Roma, 622 S.W. 12th Ave.; Barley Mill, 1629 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd.; and Torta-landia, 4144 S.E. 60th Ave.

The bureau denied three applications, based on lack of community support or outreach, or poor design quality. Those are at Dick's Kitchen, 3312 S.E. Belmont St.; Brix Tavern, 1338 N.W. Hoyt St.; and McMenamins Greater Trump, 1520 S.E. 37th Ave.

The city also has made several changes to its Street Seats program for each applicant in the future. The changes came in response to public comment and concerns from individuals and groups including the Northwest District Association, which cited various concerns they had with three locations in the Northwest District area.

As of this month, at all new Street Seats and renewals:

- Businesses are not allowed to "stack and store," as many have been leaving their tables and chairs chained up to the wooden structure when not in use, to prevent theft. That's always been the rule, per the city's sidewalk seating code, says Sarah Figliozzi, the Street Seats program coordinator, but "a number of places have been out of compliance," she says. "We'll be reminding them of their responsibilities."
- Smoking is banned on all Street Seats. Some had complained of second-hand smoke being allowed because they were 10 feet from the business door.
- Businesses need to maintain eight feet of pedestrian clearance space to allow foot traffic, which isn't the case at some places where sidewalk cafes take up space.
- Businesses are required to have an approved operations plan, including maintaining the plants and weekly cleaning the Street Seats to remove litter and other debris. The plan must also address how the space will be used in the winter — whether they'll use canopies or umbrellas, or remove the structure in the off season as Oven & Shaker has done in the Pearl District since 2012.

During the latest round of Street Seats renewals and applications, which ended April 30, PBOT officials used the public comments to shape the new guidelines.

“These stipulations were in response to the community feedback we heard,” says Gabe Graff, a bureau project manager. “There were elements we were already thinking about, but they were reinforced by everything we heard.”

### **‘Every seat is a dollar sign’**

Last week, just before PBOT made its announcement, Ron Walters and Phil Selinger worried that the next round of street seats would be approved without hearing their concerns. The two Northwest District Association leaders had cited numerous concerns about the three Street Seats locations in their area that were proposed as new or renewal sites.

One was Bartini/Urban Fondue, at Northwest 23rd Avenue and Glisan Street, which had submitted its renewal.

On sunny days when the Street Seats space is occupied, Walters and Selinger say, the happy hour crowd gets “raucous,” and often spills onto the sidewalk, right where Bartini’s sidewalk café customers sit.

There is often little room left on the sidewalk for pedestrians, especially the elderly or those with shopping carts or motorized wheelchairs, to get by, Walters says.

Neighborhood association officials wrote in an April 22 letter to the bureau that its members supported the Street Seats renewal “so long as a sidewalk café is not allowed in addition to the street seats and patrons sit only on the street seats.”

Bartini General Manager Garrett Schumacker disagrees that pedestrian access is a problem. “We have all-day happy hour twice a week; as long as the sun’s out, everyone’s here,” he says. “I’ve never encountered the problem (of patrons blocking sidewalk access); I’ve never had anyone complain to me.”

PBOT’s Figliozzi says they’ll work with Bartini to adhere to the new stipulations of maintaining the eight-foot pedestrian clearance. And, she says, “they’ll need to remove it during the winter, given past practices of it not being used.”

Businesses pay an annual permit of \$2,600 to serve food and drinks on a 20-foot platform. If the removed parking space or spaces are in a metered district, they must pay the cost of the lost meter revenue.

Whenever the Northwest District’s meter plan goes into effect, businesses with Street Seats will be responsible for those fees, according to PBOT.

At Oven & Shaker, Operations Manager Kevin Chambers says that since the restaurant is in a meter district, it doesn’t make sense to pay for the Street Seats in the winter, when they would be little used.

So they take it off-site and store it. They take it out again for the summer from July 4 to Oct. 1.

“We make it so it’s modular; we pull it apart and put it back together again,” Chambers says. “The plan is to make it last this third time around.”

At Bartini, however, the Street Seats sit unused in the winter and on rainy days. Bartini’s Schumaker says it’s still a draw to business; before, the space was a loading zone, he says, which was unsightly for customers.

Schumaker says participating in the Street Seats program is a no-brainer. The added outdoor area offers 32 seats, in addition to the 24 that can sit at their sidewalk café and the 44 inside.

“My business level goes up by two-thirds in the summer,” Schumaker says. “In a restaurant, every seat is a dollar sign. The more seats, the more dollars you’re making. With the addition of 32 seats, it’s hard for it not to pencil out.”

## **Not for every neighborhood?**

Dick Satnick, owner of Dick's Kitchen, appreciates the city's thoughtfulness in coordinating the street seats. His application for the company's Belmont location was denied; he says it's because some of the neighborhood landlords said they didn't want to lose parking spaces.

"We can try again; we're not going to give up," Satnick says. "We just don't have any public seating on Belmont to speak of."

Meanwhile, his second restaurant on Northwest 21st Avenue and Irving Street had its Street Seats application approved last year, but he just got it up and running last week. It supplements the four picnic tables the restaurant has outside.

"The people using it seem to like it," Satnick says of the added outdoor seating on Irving, noting that the space changes the way he staffs the place. "I'm a big fan of the streetscape, the buzz and the vibe that happens from people hanging out in public spaces. It's a good idea, not necessarily for every neighborhood."

## **Willamette Week**

### **Multnomah County District Attorney Won't Investigate Sewer Building**

*By Aaron Mesh*

Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill will not investigate allegations of contracting violations on a \$12.6 million Bureau of Environmental Services office that tripled in cost.

Underhill's office sent a letter this afternoon to backers of a ballot initiative that would remove control of Portland's water and sewer utilities from City Hall, declining to investigate.

He says an audit performed by City Auditor LaVonne Griffin-Valade is sufficient.

"My office is making no comment and taking no position on either the allegations raised or the potential outcome of the city auditor's investigation," Underhill writes.

City Commissioner Nick Fish asked asked Griffin-Valade to add the building to a procurement audit after WW revealed how it had tripled in price.

Kent Craford and Floy Jones, co-petitioners on Ballot Measure 26-156, asked for a criminal investigation following a story by KOIN-TV reporter Dan Tilkin that the city's top architect on the project left to work for contractor Skylab Architecture late last year.

"We're disappointed to hear that the DA is deferring to the auditor," Craford tells WW, "as City Council's past practice has been to thumb their noses at these good but toothless audits. My expectation is that Commissioner Fish will sweep this scandal under the \$5,202 rug."

Fish says he's happy Underhill rejected what he called "political grandstanding" by Craford and Jones.

"We're pleased that DA Underhill has deferred this issue to the auditor, who at our request is doing an unprecedented audit of a specific project," Fish says.

"Ironically, if Mr. Craford had his way, the auditor would no longer serve as the independent auditor of our utilities—which is one of the reasons Auditor LaVonne Griffin-Valade has come out strongly against this measure."

WW examined in April how the Columbia Boulevard Wastewater Treatment Plant services facility rose from \$3.2 million to \$11.4 million in price, thanks to cost overruns and silent approvals by the City Council. The price tag on the building is now \$12.6 million, city officials say.

## The Portland Mercury

### THE OUTSIDERS WANT IN VOTE! Because the May 20 Election Is a Big One

*By Portland Mercury Staff*

IT'S THE QUIET ones you need to watch out for.

Last year around this time, Portland was in the midst of an increasingly uncivil civil war over a simple question: Should we, like every other major American city, fluoridate our much-beloved water supply? It got intense. Someone set a pro-fluoride yard sign on fire, and a state employee was caught stealing anti-fluoride placards. There were threats—veiled and not—brandished on Facebook and online forums.

But this year? It hasn't always been clear that campaigns are underway. Yard signs haven't blossomed with much profusion, and less than a month from Election Day, the advertising has been modest.

Yet we'd argue there's actually more at stake this time around than in 2013.

That water supply everyone went insane over last year? Its governance is very much in question. The mental health care and social services that are going to be crucial in this city's somewhat meandering battle against homelessness? Your choice in the hotly contested race for Multnomah County chair will be hugely influential.

It's true the ballot that will arrive in your mailbox any day now is hardly sexy. Many races are little more than empty formalities, tiny hurdles for Portland's established incumbents to hop on the way to another term. The average Portlander gives precious little thought to the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners and Metro. But there are vital decisions to be made, and we are best as a city when we take the time to identify our values, consider the options, and make an informed choice.

In the pages that follow, we've done just that—offering exhaustive looks at the local races likely to make the biggest difference in your lives. Whether you parrot these recommendations, obstinately go against all of them, or something in between, Portland will be better off for your involvement.

Vote, goddamn it. Vote.

#### CITY OF PORTLAND

##### Measure 26-156 Portland Public Water District: No

IF THERE'S ANYTHING positive to take away from the bleak slugfest over Portland's public utilities, it's this: Since the campaign for a Portland Public Water District (PPWD) began last summer, people have talked more about the city's skyrocketing water, sewer, and stormwater rates than at any other time in recent history.

Commissioner Nick Fish, who's taken his lumps as a target of the water campaign, trumpets the fact that Portland had its first town hall-style meeting about utility rates this year. He says he's accomplished meaningful change in his short time helming the Portland Water Bureau and Bureau of Environmental Services (BES).

That's a bit of an overstatement, but city hall has begun paying attention. It's fair to question, though, whether any reform would have occurred without the all-hands-on-deck urgency brought by the ballot measure.

So you should be thankful the campaign spurred these discussions. Then you should vote no on Measure 26-156.

In broad strokes, the measure will transfer control of the water bureau and BES to a seven-member elected board. Proponents argue such a body would bring an unjaundiced eye to utility policy and eliminate cronyism and the needless pet projects that city commissioners have admitted weren't prudent uses of ratepayer money.

Kent Craford and Floy Jones, the key faces behind the district campaign, make a compelling and well-reasoned case that projects like the Portland Water House and new headquarters for the Rose Festival shouldn't be repeated. But the PPWD mostly creates new problems and uncertainties—raising serious doubts it's the best tool to achieve that reform.

What's more, Craford and Jones concede there's no indication the water district would bring rates down. Craford will only use the word "chance."

"It's our only chance," he tells the Mercury.

PPWD backers have a rhetorical ace in the hole they'll bring out at every opportunity: The city's combined utility rates have risen something like 70 percent in the last decade. It's the perfect factoid to whip rate-weary voters into a froth. But it's also been used extensively to mislead.

Over the course of this campaign, it's been maddening to see Portland's rates compared, without context, to rates in other cities. It's true we have high rates here, but that has little to do with the foibles city commissioners should be ashamed of. Our surging rates are due, instead, mostly to enormous projects that have either been required by the federal government (building new water reservoirs) or that have made Portland a better city to live in (the Big Pipe project, which essentially eliminated human shit from the Willamette River).

The main reasons our rates are going to keep rising? More projects. We'll be paying for the reservoirs well into the future, and the city has miles of crumbling water and sewer pipes that merit our attention. Backers of the PPWD say we need to push off that upkeep, but any blanket policy could be disastrous.

We agree, though, that the bureaus' list of projects needs to be given a hard look. We're hopeful the Citizens' Utility Board of Oregon (CUB), which just signed a contract to scrutinize public utility rates, will have useful input in that regard.

The fact that your rates likely won't be lowered is maybe the most definitive outcome of the PPWD.

There's no sign of who would—or even could—run for a seat on the district. The measure has severe restrictions that ban anyone who's contracted with the water bureau and BES—or worked for one of the many, many companies that have—from running for six years until after that contract expired. (The cooling-off period is only three years for people who've served on a utility budget advisory committee—like Jones, who says she might be interested.) There's even a contention that people holding a paying job couldn't run, though Craford and Jones dispute that.

The restrictions are such that wealthy industrial interests—the driving monetary force behind the PPWD—could run for a seat. But many of Portland's environmental advocates, who fear the new board might water down or eliminate vital green infrastructure programs, could not.

There's so much more:

- The measure, as written, would create voting districts that align with Portland Public Schools' districts. That leaves out swaths of the city, and would need to be resolved either in a lawsuit or before the city council.
- There's a fear—by groups like the Portland Business Alliance, the City Club of Portland, and CUB—that the new district could result in lower bond ratings (an issue first exposed by

- the Mercury), making it more expensive to borrow money. None of those groups are credible, according to Craford and Jones.
- Members of the new board would serve three-year terms, meaning that some PPWD elections would be held on odd years, when little or nothing else is up for a vote. Not only does that virtually guarantee a pitiable turnout—garnering less scrutiny of candidates by the electorate—it means the district may have to pay (with your utility money) to run some elections.

But as we said at the outset, PPWD campaigners have a point. At a time of rising rates, city council has made things marginally worse with insensitive missteps in recent years. Just because the current members of council seemed duly chastened by those embarrassments doesn't mean similar problems couldn't arise from a new lineup, years down the road.

And we were disappointed that Commissioner Fish, for all his talk about the change he's ushered in, couldn't list specific ideas for reforms that would ensure such problems never occurred again. He elected, instead, to demur to the findings of an advisory panel he and Mayor Charlie Hales have proposed if Measure 26-156 fails.

But this city has enough panels. Craford and Jones are right that we need meaningful changes. They just haven't suggested good ones.

## **City Council Seat No. 2: Nick Fish**

LIKE IT OR NOT, in this town's political playroom, incumbents are terribly hard to unseat. Even when you have money and consultants. Even when you have endorsements. Even when people know your name because they've read it in the newspaper.

How come? Challengers face two very difficult hurdles. They have to tell everyone why the bum they want to replace is a bum who actually needs replacing. And then they must convince people all across the city—an expensive and time-consuming proposition—that they are the person who'll do things better.

Mary Nolan, a former legislative leader, couldn't make either case in a difficult fight against City Commissioner Amanda Fritz in 2012. The same goes for the two candidates looking to knock off Commissioner Nick Fish in this year's election.

Fish isn't perfect. It's taken him some time to find his voice—in public, if not behind the scenes—on issues like the way our police have been told to treat the homeless. He can be overly cautious and scripted. He was too quiet in the fight over Right 2 Dream Too.

But he's still been one of the most effective and values-minded city commissioners during his six years on the council. And he deserves to stick around for another four-year term.

Here's what we like: Fish has been a steadfast supporter of safety-net funding—helping protect it from cuts when many thought it might be impossible. He's made tough votes against dubious projects, like the Oregon Sustainability Center. He helped build the Bud Clark Commons.

He hired Central City Concern's Traci Manning to run the housing bureau—bringing on one of the region's best collaborators at a time when the city and Multnomah County find themselves working more closely than ever.

He's questioned the wisdom of our current arrangement with the feds on the Joint Terrorism Task Force. He pressed Salem to outlaw discrimination against Section 8 renters. And he presided, as parks commissioner, over an award-winning parks system (despite not getting the green light to put a parks bond out to voters).

Fish's rivals, Sharon Maxwell and Michael Durrow, are both thoughtful and passionate.

Maxwell, in particular, seems primed for future political runs—she's an African American business leader who's spent decades living in, and trying to help the plight of, North and Northeast Portland. Her big

idea—that Portland should consider scrapping its at-large system of electing commissioners, and go with districts instead—is far from ridiculous, given the big money it takes to play in citywide politics.

However, we're not convinced either candidate would be a capable replacement at a very important moment for Portland—certainly not immediately, and likely not even over the next four years.

Fish, with Commissioners Amanda Fritz and Steve Novick, brings gravitas to a progressive council wing that Mayor Charlie Hales (who's entirely pragmatic) and Commissioner Dan Saltzman can't ignore.

He's a voice of reason among his colleagues, helping soothe feelings and bridge rifts—or sometimes frankly telling them when he thinks they're wrong. Hales might see him as a potential rival—and likely hasn't been pleased to hear Fish loudly criticize his early handling of homelessness. But he's found their relationship worthwhile enough that the two have regular one-on-one breakfast meetings.

Much of Fish's reputation comes from his stewardship of the parks and housing bureaus. In the case of the housing bureau, he gave birth to it—presiding over the process that fused its predecessor with the part of the Portland Development Commission in charge of affordable-housing construction. That work has earned him a slew of endorsements from community groups and elected officials.

This next term, however, won't be as kind. Fish is now almost a year into a new role, serving as commissioner of both of the city's utility bureaus: water and environmental services. And almost immediately he was painted a villain by the people pushing the Portland Public Water District.

That's not quite fair. Fish voted, like the rest of his colleagues, for crazy ideas like a "water demonstration house" and the use of rate money to fix up the Rose Festival's headquarters. But those projects aren't the real reason rates have gone up. And Fish has taken steps to unwind those mistakes and avoid new ones, all while steeping himself in the nitty-gritty of how rates are set and the reality that millions more must still be spent to shore up our aging infrastructure.

Water activists say he should do more. They neglect to mention that Fish has ordered unprecedented operations cuts in his bureaus, worth millions, at a time when the city finally has money to spend. Those cuts are keeping rates from increasing even faster—and it's not clear that anybody, on the council or not, could do anything to keep rates from rising.

Money for homelessness programs has been bumped up under Saltzman, but even that came after Fish publicly called out both Saltzman and Hales for an approach that seemed, initially, heavier on enforcement.

Hales has said he assigned Fish to those bureaus because he sees him as a fixer. A cynical observer of city hall might argue Hales was trying to keep the commissioner busy. With Fish away from the housing bureau, Saltzman has been making noises about changes that Fish has questioned—like an emphasis on "workforce housing" instead of affordable housing—that seem as good for developers as they might for Portlanders.

"I do not want to see us backtrack on our mission of ending homelessness," Fish tells the Mercury. "I have some questions if [in city hall], we have the continued will to make progress here."

We need Fish around to help make sure that backsliding doesn't happen.

### **City Council Seat No. 3: Nick Caleb**

DAN SALTZMAN, looking to cap a 16-year run on the Portland City Council with at least four more, said something interesting when asked why he wants to keep a seat he's filled for nearly a generation.

"I would submit I'm the candidate most capable of leading change," he tells the Mercury, never mind that keeping him in office would be anything but.

Funny thing, isn't it?

Saltzman, just a few weeks before the May 20 primary, is suddenly speaking like a man who's been forced into campaign mode—after a handful of challengers decided to take him on just before the filing deadline in March.

Before then, he was on cruise control. He collected some checks. He did his day job. He figured he'd win. (He probably still will.) But then came a real race, led by one rival in particular, Nicholas Caleb—a college professor and activist who's backed by the same Socialist Alternative movement that knocked off a similarly entrenched incumbent in Seattle last year in a referendum on the minimum wage.

Now, it seems, Saltzman has had to sharpen his pitch a bit. He's for upping the minimum wage. He's sensitive to the plight of the homeless and desperate renters. We believe him, but it's time for Saltzman to step down and let someone else take his seat.

No, Saltzman isn't a terrible city commissioner. His penchant for efficiency and good governance is unparalleled and useful. He's done yeoman's work on a mission he's carried from his 1990s-era term on the county commission: helping children and families. And he's refreshingly willing (even when he's wrong) to buck the pack and speak his mind.

But Saltzman isn't the face of change. He's the status quo. And when you look around at the city's panic about housing costs, homelessness, a buckling and fraying transportation system, rising water and sewer rates, and trust issues with our police bureau, only one commissioner has been active—and voting—long enough to have credibly allowed that reality to take root.

We also pointedly disagree with him on issues including his handling of Right 2 Dream Too (he was too hardball) and the city's work with the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (he wants more).

Which is why we're endorsing Nicholas Caleb—the rival who's done the most to jolt Saltzman's attention this cycle.

(Another challenger, KBOO reporter Joe Meyer, is among the smartest of the bunch, a trained Ivy League physicist among other laurels—but his campaign, with its emphasis on putting a "regular Joe" in city hall, lacked the substantive pull of Caleb's.)

Caleb is hardly a panacea for Portland's ills. We've got serious reservations about his experience and interest in playing the more mundane policy and political games in city hall's sandbox.

But he's shown a flair for bold, populist ideas and perspective—like his call for a \$15 minimum wage, his interest in pursuing rent controls, and his help crafting a "water trust" initiative meant to protect our Bull Run water supply.

Caleb's also willing to embrace the human side of policy debates. Where Saltzman hedges when asked if the city should arrest homeless campers—cops shouldn't, he says, but then he welcomes a new prosecutorial policy that specifically lays out that power—Caleb is unequivocally opposed.

"[The new policies] are just sit-lie laws that can be enforced at a higher rate," he says.

Caleb is from East Portland—unlike any sitting commissioner. And he won the nod of Bike Walk Vote, he says, because of his support for bringing traffic safety improvements to that sprawling and long-neglected neighborhood.

We also appreciate Caleb's notions of how the Portland Development Commission ought to act. Citing rebellion in some quarters that killed a Trader Joe's planned for NE MLK and Alberta, Caleb was mindful of the larger lesson: "People don't like these top-down decisions."

To his credit, Saltzman has cagily adapted his public rhetoric in the wake of Caleb's activism. He weaves it into talk about his efforts to pass the Children's Levy three times and reform the tax levy that pays for police and firefighter pensions.

Now Saltzman talks about the \$2 million in new one-time money he's invested in homelessness and the millions more he's seeking—without mentioning the political outcry over camping sweeps last summer that forced his hand on resources. Now he talks about a housing trust fund and incentives for affordable

housing, like waiving system development charges and giving density bonuses—without quite mentioning that he's helping developers scratch off lines on their city hall wish list.

Now he talks about his recent lobbying at the League of Oregon Cities on behalf of lifting Oregon's statewide pre-emption on local minimum wages—claiming he came to a personal, but not public, realization about income inequality a few years ago.

(The only thing Saltzman hasn't had to pivot on is his relative antipathy for the Portland Police Association, who savaged him during his brief tenure as police commissioner in 2009-2010. "It was a nightmare," he told us when asked about their endorsement process.)

We're genuinely glad to see an establishment candidate like Saltzman so passionately embrace those values. Warts aside. But it's easy to wonder whether that same passion would have burst forth without someone chasing behind, putting some of those ideas on the table in the first place. And it's not much harder to wonder whether that's the candidate we ought to be backing instead.

## **MULTNOMAH COUNTY**

### **Chair: Deborah Kafoury**

THIS YEAR'S RACE for Multnomah County Commission Chair—the face of the region's underappreciated social safety net, and the de facto leader of an overlooked county commission—was supposed to be an afterthought.

Jeff Cogen was supposed to breeze into another four-year term, if he wanted it—biding his time until he and his smiling, nebbish political persona decided it was time to run for something bigger.

That's all gone now. Cogen admitted to having an affair with another county employee—and the whirl of gossip, outcry, pot smoke, and secret vacations swept him, rather unceremoniously, out of public life last fall.

The county's been in fine hands for the past few months, led by Cogen's former chief of staff, Marissa Madrigal. But the awfulness surrounding his departure has left a dark cloud—and it's well past time to burn a little sage, open a window, and firmly put the episode to rest.

We suggest giving the job to recently resigned County Commissioner Deborah Kafoury—the better choice in a hard-fought campaign against surprisingly compelling ex-City Commissioner Jim Francesconi.

Both candidates have placed poverty and the fight against homelessness near the top of their respective agendas. Both tout impressive records of cajoling fellow politicians and community leaders to get behind their initiatives—Kafoury as a former state legislative leader and county official, Francesconi as a city commissioner and community organizer.

But only one—Kafoury—has recent experience helping a government body chart its course in difficult times—and with some notable triumphs.

Before leaving the county commission to run for Cogen's old seat (an anachronistic county rule that really ought to be changed), Kafoury deftly scraped together a troika of major policy accomplishments that bode well for how she'd conduct herself if promoted to a position with amplified bureaucratic control.

Biggest and most crucial, she took the lead on building a shared infrastructure with the city and Home Forward, the region's public housing agency, on homelessness spending. The first phase of that effort, A Home for Everyone, is concerned with federal money.

Under Kafoury's continued stewardship, the county and city might build upon that collaboration to finally break down the vexing silos—the city's focus on chronically homeless individuals vs. the county's focus on homeless families and social services—that divide and complicate efforts to address the issue.

With former partners like City Commissioner Nick Fish feeling sidelined from the region's discussion on housing and worried about his own government's commitment to solving the issue the right way, having

Kafoury at the table is a good bulwark against backsliding. She publicly questioned leadership decisions by Fish's replacement as city housing commissioner, Dan Saltzman, last summer.

Kafoury also deserves plaudits for making sure her name is part of the conversation around the new Sellwood Bridge—a high-wire lobbying act that put the county in league with the city, state, and federal governments. And she should also be thanked for helping scare up state money to maybe replace the county's esteemed, quake-vulnerable downtown courthouse.

Kafoury's county experience also shapes a more realistic vision for how its agencies should work. Francesconi has called for expanding the county's anti-poverty mission by doing more for "job creation." It's an interesting economic argument, but the millions available are a small sum of the county's billion-dollar budget. And the issue marks a potential distraction from the vital mental health and rehabilitation programs the county's already been struggling to provide.

None of that's to say the county will go to hell if Francesconi wins.

Francesconi brought up the need for a minimum-wage hike well before some other candidates did—and he's clearly more comfortable than Kafoury when discussing it.

His take on the county's business income tax is better. Kafoury wants to increase business owners' compensation deduction to match the city's; Francesconi makes clear that would mean less money for East County and the safety net.

He also credibly highlights his own passel of accomplishments. He famously passed a parks bond, when he was Portland's parks commissioner. He's done work for the poor and as a community college lobbyist. He also helped start the city-county SUN school program, years ago, with former County Chair Beverly Stein.

But in a telling detail, despite the success of their shared initiative, Stein has nonetheless thrown her support behind his rival.

And Francesconi, despite officially exorcising the demons of his failed 2004 mayoral run and coming off as intensely likeable, has nonetheless made some small and uncomfortable missteps.

In an interview with Willamette Week, in a story that saw his campaign harrumphing (not illegitimately) about a Coca-Cola contributions to Kafoury, he had to admit he'd forgotten calling the same Coke official to ask for money. (But not in her capacity as a Coke official, he swears. Okay.)

"At the end of the day it matters what you've accomplished," Francesconi says. "Look at what people have actually accomplished."

We agree with him. We just think the answer favors his rival.

## **County Commission District 1:**

### **Jules Bailey**

WHEN DEBORAH KAFOURY abdicated her commissioner seat to pursue higher office last year, the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners lost one of its more visible leaders. Kafoury may very well be back, but there was no guarantee, when she quit, that the person who filled her shoes would be a good fit to take on the county's prodigious social services and public-safety challenges.

There's a lot at stake. Now that Multnomah County has a relatively stable funding base—and with some enormous projects on the horizon—the board of commissioners needs people with passion and smarts to seize that momentum.

Which is a long way of saying we're glad two viable contenders stepped into the fray. Brian Wilson and Jules Bailey would both serve as capable replacements for Kafoury.

Bailey, a state representative and economist, brings a bit more to the table. He's our choice for District 1.

Wilson's not exactly an unknown; people involved in county governance have heard his name for years. A financial analyst, Wilson was a driving force behind the successful push for a Multnomah County Library District in 2012. That district came with a taxing authority largely responsible for the county's relatively sunny finances.

Before that effort Wilson served on a citizen task force in the run-up to the Sellwood Bridge project—something he touts frequently, though it was policymakers like Kafoury and former County Chair Jeff Cogen who ultimately sealed that deal. He's also chaired the county's charter review commission and served on the Portland Housing Bureau's advisory committee.

"I look at everything through a county lens," Wilson tells the Mercury. "I've been working in the county for a long time."

The implication is one Wilson makes any time he gets a chance: That Bailey is a hard-bitten denizen of the statehouse without a firm grasp of the county's business. It's not entirely incorrect.

Bailey—an economist who's represented inner Eastside Portland in the Oregon House of Representatives since 2008—thrives, as he often says, at the "50,000-foot level." A Portland native and Princeton graduate, Bailey tackled workforce development in New York City and spent time at Portland consulting firm ECONorthwest before running for office.

Both men capably communicate the county's challenges. For Wilson, the most-pressing task is outfitting the health care department to address the many new Medicaid recipients served by the Affordable Care Act. Bailey says public safety needs to be a primary focus—particularly the necessity of wisely using millions in new money available to Multnomah County under recent sentencing reforms.

As you'd expect, both Bailey and Wilson express urgency about better social services for the homeless. But when asked about increasingly stringent enforcement policies by the police and district attorney's offices since last year, neither candidate offered much substance. Bailey said enforcement is the "wrong conversation," but it's also a conversation that's moving swiftly. People claiming to be champions for ending homelessness shouldn't be afraid to say whether such potent policy decisions are good or bad.

Wilson also had some troubling thoughts about the future of the city's housing bureau, one of the county's main allies in the fight against homelessness. He thinks it's a mistake to let the housing bureau lead construction of affordable-housing projects in partnership with nonprofits—instead wishing that work had been left to the developer-friendly Portland Development Commission.

Both men are sympathetic to business interests. Wilson says the county needs to completely retool its business income tax—a vital source of county revenue often criticized for pushing commerce outside Multnomah County's borders. Bailey won't go that far, but agrees with Kafoury about increasing deductions for business owners' salaries. Neither candidate had a proposal for how to make up for the lost money those changes would bring.

Bailey's self-described "nerd" persona is perhaps not likely to inspire bold leadership—something county government could use more of, at times. But that number-crunching bias is a tool, too. The county would be well served by a commissioner who thinks like the accountants and auditors that so frequently supply the board with information.

Bailey's bid might raise some concerns about careerism. But his personal history—he told us about the cot his parents kept for his heroin-addicted uncle in the basement, among other details—also suggests he groks the county's mission.

Multnomah County's business, it's been frequently said in this campaign season, is anything but sexy. It's important, often dull work that needs a careful eye.

That's not to say Wilson wouldn't bring that to the table. We've been struck by his commitment to attend not just county board meetings, but also the monthly meetings of the Local Public Safety Coordinating Council and others, in his quest to become conversant in the issues.

As we said up front, either candidate will serve capably as a county commissioner. Bailey's more extensive policy experience, and unique mania for numbers, put him slightly ahead.

## **County Commission District 2:**

### **Loretta Smith**

LORETTA SMITH'S first bid for elected office looked like a long shot.

In 2010, Smith squeaked through a packed primary to square off against presumptive favorite Karol Collymore in the general election. The candidates were remarkably similar in their stances, and Collymore had far more experience in the mechanics of Multnomah County (and the backing of then-rising star Jeff Cogen).

But Smith, a longtime aide to US Senator Ron Wyden, found an identity in the run-up to the November vote. And thanks to some helpful missteps on Collymore's part, she cruised to victory.

This is not 2010. Facing a relatively untested field, Smith is the best-qualified candidate for District 2, and should be elected to another four years.

As one of the metro region's only black elected officials, Smith is unflinching in her focus on creating opportunities for minorities.

"We're really failing our kids of color right now," she told the Mercury. "People should not be afraid to take a stand and say we need a more culturally specific program."

She's able to point to successes. After calling a forum focused on African American men and boys in 2011, Smith was overwhelmed by their call for new job opportunities. A month later, she'd cobbled together finances to give 25 young people summer jobs at the county. Last year, that program employed 100 young people. Smith is shooting for 125 this year.

In fact, Smith's made employment a major point of her campaign. She acknowledges jobs aren't a central part of the county's mission, but argues economic development money can be leveraged to great effect. That's not incorrect, and it's also a contention of county chair candidate Jim Francesconi. But job creation needs to take a backseat to the county's core missions of social services, health care, and criminal justice.

Smith's other pet issues are similar to those of her former colleague (and supporter) Deborah Kafoury—and really every candidate for county office this year. People with mental illness need better connections to services; seniors are important. But Smith is notably skeptical of Kafoury's call to raise business owners' deductions on the county's business income tax.

Other candidates running for Smith's position are passionate and sincere.

Bruce Broussard—a restaurateur and public access talk show host—has deep ties in the city's African American community, and at 75 doesn't hesitate to call it like he sees it. He'd be a repository of institutional knowledge on the commission, to be sure, and he's passionate about eliminating sweetheart property development deals in the county. But many of Broussard's ideas were only loosely sketched, and not politically feasible—particularly from a seat in county government.

A third candidate, Kelvin Hall, is involved with the Albina Ministerial Alliance Coalition for Justice and Police Reform. He's touting a somewhat confusing "single-member district" plan (confusing because Multnomah County already has districts), in which each district would form powerful committees to help make decisions about projects and infrastructure. It's an interesting idea, but such a system would fall apart in sprawling District 4, which takes up most of East County.

Teressa Raiford, the final candidate for Smith's seat, didn't show for a scheduled interview at the Mercury.

Among Smith's more potent points is that, after four years, she's just becoming expert enough to deftly navigate the county bureaucracy.

And it's clear she's still trying to expand that knowledge. In contrast to some of her peers on the board of commissioners, Smith often asks tough and insistent questions in board meetings. Sometimes—as was

the case in a recent hearing about foggy plans for a new county courthouse—those questions air out important deficiencies in what's being proposed.

We'd like to see Smith continue asking questions in the years ahead.

## **The Portland Business Journal**

### **Where are Portland's 2014 'Street Seats?'**

*By Wendy Culverwell*

Wanna play in the street this summer? Portlanders and their guest have nearly a dozen spots to choose from, courtesy the Portland Bureau of Transportation.

The city approved a fresh batch of “Street Seats” locations for 2014 — some returning from 2013 and three newcomers to the program. Street Seats allows businesses and non profits to convert on-street parking into public areas. Popular offerings include cafe seating and mini parks.

New for 2014: All Street Seats locations will be smoke-free by popular demand.

The new locations for 2014 are Southwest Fourth Avenue and Hall Street, at Bonfire Lounge, 2821 S.E. Stark St., and at Lompoc Brewing, 1620 N.W. 23rd Ave.

Seating can be installed as early as June.

Returning locations:

- The Analog Café, 720 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd.
- Bartini/Urban Fondu, 2108-2118 N.W. Glisan St.
- Enzo's Caffè Italiano, 2529 N.E. Alberta St.
- Mississippi Pizza, 3552 N. Mississippi Ave.
- Oven & Shaker, 1134 N.W. Everett St.
- The Portland Bottle Shop, 7960 S.E. 13th Ave.
- Songbird Café, 6839 S.E. Belmont St.