

The Oregonian

Portland building, Veterans Memorial Coliseum, financial reforms make Fred Miller's wish list in 2014-15

By Andrew Theen

Portland's top financial officer has a full agenda for the 2014-15 fiscal year.

Fred Miller is moving ahead as Portland's chief administrative officer on a permanent basis, after Mayor Charlie Hales requested Miller shed "interim" from his job title last week. Both Hales and Miller said in December that the former state and PGE executive would not be a candidate for a permanent position.

Miller replaced former CAO Jack Graham, fired by Hales last year. Graham is suing the city for defamation and racial discrimination.

Miller heads the Office of Management & Finance and its 630 employees. Last week, Miller said he was excited to tackle tough issues and areas "the city could be doing better."

In a four-page memo outlining his plans for the next fiscal year beginning in July, Miller outlined some specifics: a "conceptual recommendation" on what to do with the structural challenges at the Portland Building by September, "develop options" for the Veterans Memorial Coliseum by January, and implement changes recommended by an outside consultant brought in to look at issues facing OMF by the summer.

Changes outlined in the consultant report from Moss Adams appear to be the first on Miller's to-do list. Last week, Hales' spokesman Dana Haynes said the mayor was particularly keen on seeing OMF reforms move ahead after the City Council approved the 2014-15 budget.

The Moss Adams report recommended the city move financial services under the umbrella of the Revenue Bureau in OMF. Miller's memo said the city would need to "clarify the role" of that bureau's director versus a future chief financial officer.

The Moss Adams report said the new position atop the Revenue and Financial Services Bureau "may need to have the title of Chief Financial Officer (CFO) to attract the caliber of candidates desired and align with industry peers."

Hales eliminated the chief financial officer position, last year.

Miller also wants to make customer service a top priority for OMF, saying the office should be "an enviable example of quality customer service."

Other highlights:

- Create a master list of all the city-owned property to better prioritize capital projects
- Develop a communication strategy to improve dialogue between bureaus and City Council officers.
- Develop ways to make city financial data more understandable for the public by September.

Portland parks bond: Commissioner Amanda Fritz 'cautiously optimistic' after poll results for \$68 million proposal

By Brad Schmidt

Emboldened by new polling results, Portland Commissioner Amanda Fritz is pushing ahead on a potential \$56 million to \$68 million bond measure to repair and maintain city parks.

The polling found that 48 percent of respondents support a bond measure, but that number jumped to 68 percent when voters were told it would maintain an existing tax instead of creating a new financial burden.

"I am cautiously optimistic that the survey indicates Portlanders may be willing to invest in crucial repairs to our Parks facilities," Fritz, who oversees Portland Parks & Recreation, said in a statement.

If Fritz decides to move forward, voters would be asked to approve the bond measure in November.

Portland Parks & Recreation has a projected \$365 million in unfunded replacement and maintenance needs in the coming decade. Fritz is hoping to find money to pay for some of those needs by extending taxes first approved 20 years ago.

The city's 1994 parks bond measure expires in June 2015. Fritz wants to convince voters to keep paying the same tax rate for another two decades.

The bill for property owners? The bond measure would charge less than 9 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value, or about \$17.50 a year for a home assessed at \$200,000.

The Parks Bureau paid for the polling of 800 Portland voters, conducted May 21-23, under a contract not to exceed \$40,000. The polling by DHM Research has a 3.5 percent margin of error.

Voters are most supportive of using bond proceeds to pay for the replacement of 20 to 30 aging playground structures, or replacing playgrounds and community center equipment to make sure they're accessible for people with disabilities.

The poll found the greatest opposition among voters who are concerned about their tax bill.

Fritz plans a town hall this month to discuss funding options. In July, Fritz will take the proposed bond measure to the Parks Bureau's budget advisory committee for review. With continued support, she expects to take it to the City Council this summer so the bond measure can be referred to voters on Nov. 4.

City officials have long said their biggest challenge may be convincing voters that parks is in need of money.

According to the poll results, 87 percent of respondents rated the quality of the city's parks system as good or very good.

Portland street fee: Commissioner Steve Novick answered colleague Nick Fish's 11 questions, addressed email to 'Captain Renault'

By Andrew Theen

UPDATE: This post was updated with Nick Fish's Twitter response to Novick's Casablanca reference.

Commissioner Steve Novick frequently makes sports or music references from the City Council dais prior to casting a vote, but on Friday, the first-term member of the Portland City Council extended the pop culture references to a terse email exchange with a colleague.

Last week's marathon public hearing on a proposed street fee on all residences in Portland culminated in a debate between Mayor Charlie Hales, Novick and Commissioner Nick Fish about next steps for the proposed street fee.

Fish, already on the record saying he wanted to see the street fee referred to Portland voters, questioned whether the council should move forward with a proposed vote this week due to the public outcry. Fish, citing the decision last week to split the business and residential street fee proposals in two, said he had a list of questions still left unanswered.

On Friday, multiple media outlets published Fish's questions he sent to his City Hall colleagues.

On Monday, Novick emailed his responses to Fish's questions to City Hall beat reporters from The Oregonian, Willamette Week, Portland Mercury and Portland Tribune.

What follows is the tersely worded email response addressing Nick Fish as "Captain Renault," the corrupt policeman from Casablanca.

Fish's questions are in bold, after the video. This is Renault's most famous scene from the classic movie.

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Dear Captain Renault,

I am pleased to respond to your questions below.

1. The impact of the proposed fee on low-income renters, particularly those with federal vouchers.

The amount of the fee for each category of resident is listed in attachment C. We hope to extend the low-income discounts to as many low-income residents as possible. As you know, it is administratively difficult to make such discounts accessible to renters, especially in multifamily housing. You know this because the Bureau of Environmental Services does not provide such discounts in multifamily housing at all. You and I have now agreed that we will work together to try to make discounts for all utility bureau fees available to all low-income Portlanders.

I have an idea that I hope you will think worth exploring. People below the poverty line can apply for an Arts Tax exemption. How about having people apply for a utility bill rebate at the same time? Anyone entitled to an arts tax exemption gets a check equal to what the annual utility bill discount is supposed to be. I am not certain that would work but I'm going to ask Thomas Lannom about it.

2. The adequacy of discounts generally, and the availability of waivers, for low-income individuals and families.

The amounts are listed in the ordinance. I am not sure what you mean by 'adequacy.'

As to waivers, the City Attorney's office is concerned that if we completely waived the fee based on income, we would run a significant risk that the fee would be judged a tax, which would put us into Arts Tax territory with PERS exemptions, etc.

3. The decision to bifurcate the ordinances on [sic] a residential and non-residential fee.

The nonresidential fee is more complex and requires further discussion. In addition, the 'business community' is not uniform and will have some conflicting interests; it is my fear that without some sort of deadline, the various business groups may never reach any collective conclusion as to what an acceptable structure might be. It is my hope that if they know that "the residential fee is already passed, the city has set a deadline to resolve this fee, this is really happening," it will create pressure to come to something of an agreement.

4. The text and purpose of the Mayor's proposed ballot referral.

It has been filed. I believe it speaks for itself.

5. An analysis of whether it should include a sunset clause or any other triggers.

The analysis is that we expect the need for street maintenance to continue indefinitely. It would be misleading to include a sunset.

6. The proposed composition of the oversight committee and the selection process.

The language of the ordinance speaks for itself.

7. The financial impact of the fee on the faith community and nonprofits.

The ITE trip generation manual includes trip calculations for houses of worship. The impact on nonprofits will vary depending on how many trips a given nonprofit generates. Houses of worship and nonprofits are generally not exempt from paying for utilities. I do not recall any discussion of the impact of water and sewer rate increases on houses of worship or nonprofits.

8. The cost to City bureaus.

We will provide you a list.

9. Whether and how parking lots should be included.

The ITE manual does not count parking lots as destinations, so it does not assign them

trips. We believe that we should adjust that treatment to reflect trips by employees of parking lots. We will determine a way to do so.

10. The value of either an administrative cap or annual audits (modeled after the Children's Levy).

The children's levy is simply a means of passing money to other organizations. The purpose of the children's levy administrative cap (as far as I can tell) is to limit the number and salaries of the people who pass out the money. The money is then transferred to other organizations. I presume that those other organizations - like most organizations, public and private - have administrative expenses of around 15% of total costs. But the Children's Levy ordinance does not purport to limit the administrative costs of the organizations that actually receive the funds.

In this case, the money will be injected into the bloodstream of an existing organization, the Portland Bureau of Transportation, which has an existing administrative structure.

There will be certain additional costs related to the implementation of the TUF:

(a) We will need to have capacity to administer the low-income discounts. Since you and I are now planning to try to do something the City has never done – extend discounts to apartment renters – we do not know in advance how complex that will be.

(b) We will need staff to work with businesses to help determine which "trip generation" category they fit into. We will work to make the categories as user-friendly as possible, but I would not want to put an arbitrary restriction on the amount of customer service we provide to small businesses. We will consult with other cities, such as Medford, that have such fees, to plan our staffing.

(c) We also need to have a mechanism for collecting the funds. There will be costs associated with that, which of course we will strive to keep to a minimum. The simplest and cheapest method would be to put the TUF bill on the water and sewer bill - an idea that the Commissioner for those bureaus has summarily rejected. (I note that the Children's Levy uses the existing property tax system to collect its funds.)

As to audits, the funds will become part of PBOT'S existing budget, just as sewer rate increases become part of BES' existing budgets. If the City moves to a system of requiring annual audits of each bureau, PBOT would of course be subject to such a system.

11. Impacts on small business.

The effect on any given business will depend on how many trips the ITE trip generation manual (with whatever modifications we may make to the manual's formulas) assesses for that type of business and on the number of square feet. In other words, the effect will vary, just as the effect of water and sewer fees on small businesses vary depending on how much water and sewer services they use.

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Novick said Friday that following the email exchange he and Fish had a productive conversation.

On Monday, Fish chipped in on Twitter with a bit of levity.

The residential street fee proposal is expected to go before City Council on Wednesday, with the actual start date of collections beginning July 2015.

Portland street fee: City Council considering delaying Wednesday street fee vote

By Andrew Theen

Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick are considering delaying a vote on a proposed street fee for Portland residents scheduled for Wednesday, according to two City Hall sources with knowledge of the situation.

City officials are expecting an announcement on Tuesday.

After last Thursday's 5 1/2 hour public hearing on the street fee proposal, all signs still pointed to a Wednesday vote on the ordinance, which would create a fee on all residences starting in July 2015. But public concerns appear to be driving backers of the street fee to reconsider that time frame.

If the vote is delayed, it would be the latest wrinkle in the past two weeks surrounding the street fee, pitched by Novick and Hales to create a new revenue stream to pay for long deferred street maintenance and safety programs in Portland.

Novick declined to comment for this story.

Public opposition to the street fee started to mount in recent weeks, with the chamber of commerce saying the city was moving too quickly on its plans, and lobbyists representing grocers and petroleum customers pledging to refer the fee to voters in the fall.

Last week, Novick and Hales put the business and residential portions of the fee on separate tracks. The business fee, they said, was more complex and needed more time to refine how the city would specifically charge businesses. The duo set a timeline of November to take action on the business portion of the fee, or the residential fee, if enacted would be voided. Other government agencies such as Metro, Multnomah County, the Port of Portland and TriMet, would pay the fee.

But the residential fee was still expected to go for a City Council vote on Wednesday. If approved, officials said citizens would still have enough time to take the issue to a November referendum. The fee would bring in an estimated \$40 million in net revenue during the first five years, according to city figures.

Hales and Novick needed just one of their City Council colleagues to sign off on the plan, which would charge homeowners a monthly fee, with discounts for apartment residents and low-income households. Commissioner Nick Fish and Dan Saltzman said they'd prefer to see the street fee go before voters. Commissioner Amanda Fritz is the swing vote on the issue.

Both Novick and Hales have described a sense of urgency in acting to address the deferred maintenance woes, documented by the city auditor's office in a report last year.

Hales and Novick held public town halls during the past few months talking about transportation needs and priorities.

Hales campaigned on a back to the basics approach, and he and Novick both described the street fee as a tough call but the correct one in addressing the long-documented disinvestment in Portland streets.

It's unclear what a potential delay would mean for the previously stated July 2015 deadline when residents and business would begin paying the street fee.

Portland mulls 'Late Night Activity Permit' for businesses open past 10 p.m.: Portland City Hall Roundup

By Brad Schmidt

Any Portland business open to the public past 10 p.m. may need to buy a new permit from the city, according to a concept headed to the City Council on Wednesday for discussion.

City officials say a permit program would help proactively deal with security, alcohol and crowd-management issues at late-night establishments.

And creating a permit process could give the city something it currently doesn't have: leverage to shut down problematic businesses.

Right now, permitting remains only a concept.

But city officials plan to spend the summer gathering public input with the hope of returning to the City Council in September for final approval, said Theresa Marchetti, the city's liquor license coordinator.

The "Late Night Activity Permit" would be required citywide for any business open to the public past 10 p.m., from bars to movie theaters, Marchetti said.

The cost of the permit hasn't been disclosed. Businesses would receive training about alcohol serving, crowd management and security when the permit is issued.

Marchetti said permit costs wouldn't cover, but could help offset, some of the city's expenses for responding to businesses after problems occur.

Why your sewer fees will subsidize environmental camp (poll): Editorial Agenda 2014

By The Oregonian Editorial Board

On Wednesday, Portland City Council will consider spending about \$100,000 in sewer funds on community efforts to build rain gardens, clean up creeks and buy native plants. The money, to be distributed in the form of grants, has received little attention amid the continuing street-fee controversy, and, really, may have gone virtually unnoticed even without it. We're not talking about millions of dollars here.

But relatively small sums can be significant, particularly when the money happens to come from utility ratepayers. Only weeks ago, sewer and water customers voted on a potentially harmful initiative that sprang from the public's frustration with the city's creative allocation of utility funds. A "yes" vote Wednesday would continue that legacy of creativity. The initiative may have failed (whew!), but water and sewer customers still care about how their money is spent.

Wednesday's grants are a product of the Community Watershed Stewardship Program, which is administered by the city's euphemistically named sewer and stormwater department: the Bureau of Environmental Services. The groups that stand to receive the money are undoubtedly well-intentioned, and their projects are likely to be beneficial in one way or another. Still, they have little to do with actual sewer service.

This is just fine, say BES officials, because the funded programs – including, this year, an event to remove trash from Johnson Creek – help the city fulfill the community education and public involvement requirements of its federal stormwater discharge permit. One wonders whether the same burden could be met without spending thousands of dollars on, say, a two-week summer environmental camp organized by Momentum Alliance, which the city describes as "a youth-led non-profit, with experienced coaches, mentoring future social justice leaders, including leadership for environmental justice." The camp is on Wednesday's grant list.

Projects receiving grants do vary, and some are designed to contain stormwater. Still, should ratepayers throughout the city subsidize the creation of a rain garden at a local church when the work could be done by volunteers, including members of the church's congregation? A different church project subsidized by ratepayers, by the way, is spearheaded by a nonprofit, Depave, that contributed to the campaign to defeat the Portland utility district initiative. You can understand why its leaders like the status quo.

Spending ratepayer funds on environmental camp and the like might not have raised eyebrows at one time, but that was before this month's vote. It also was before Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge Stephen Bushong emphasized in March that utility funds should be spent "only on matters that are

reasonably related to the water and sewer services provided by the City." Commissioners continue to enjoy quite a bit of wiggle room, but this would be a good time for them to drop the rationalizing.

There is some evidence that commissioners recognize taxpayers' frustration. Commissioner Nick Fish, who oversees the city's sewer and water bureaus, promised prior to this month's vote to set up a task force to review utility oversight. The Council is divided, meanwhile, on the street maintenance fee sought by Commissioner Steve Novick and Mayor Charlie Hales. Fish, for instance, has resisted the use of utility bills to collect it.

Such heated disagreement on the normally collegial Council is healthy, and the critical appraisal of both new and existing programs should happen more regularly. The fact that a program has existed for years and consumes a relatively small amount of money is not an argument to continue it.

And if you buy the implication that federal regulations somehow require the city to spend roughly six figures each year on environmental camps, rain gardens and native plantings, we have a slightly dented utility district to sell you.

The Portland Tribune

City split could keep street fee off ballot

By Jim Redden

Opponents of a proposed city street fee will have a hard time repealing it — at least all of it — if the City Council sticks to its current schedule.

A majority of the council does not want to refer the fee voters for approval. They include Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioners Steve Novick and Amanda Fritz. Commissioners Nick Fish and Dan Saltzman believe it should be placed on the ballot.

The council made it harder for that to happen at last Thursday's public hearing on the fee. It split the residential fee from the fee on businesses, governments and nonprofit organizations, including schools and churches. Hales, Novick and Fritz appear poised to vote for the residential fee Wednesday.

But the council also agreed to take until Nov. 14 to develop and approve a new fee schedule for businesses, governments and nonprofit organizations. Novick said the delay was necessary to address the concerns of small businesses, who felt the original proposal hit them too hard.

"We want to take the rest of the summer to get the business fee right," says Dana Haynes, Hales' spokesman.

But Joe Gilliam, president of the Northwest Grocers Association, is confused about the council's motives. The NWGA is one of several business organizations that has suggested it will refer the fee to ballot if it does not like the final version.

"No one talked to us about splitting the fees in advance. It looks like the council is playing games to prevent it from being referred to the voters," says Gilliam, adding that he is in discussions with leaders of other business organizations to figure out the next move.

The split will make it hard for opponents of the residential fee to refer it to the ballot, however. Although several homeowners and renters angrily criticized the fee at the May 30 hearing, there is no organized opposition to the residential fee at this time. That will make it hard to collect the nearly 20,000 voter signatures necessary to refer it to the ballot within 30 days of the council vote, as required by election law.

In contrast, organizations like the grocers association and the Portland Business Alliance have the money and organization to support a 30-day petition drive. They have also expressed a willingness to support the fee, however, if they believe it is fair and will address key transportation leads, like the poor maintenance of city streets.

"We've asked for a list of which projects the fee will fund and haven't seen it yet," says Gilliam.

Both fees are scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2015. It is unclear how much they would raise at this point. The original proposal was estimated to raise between \$40 million and \$50 million a year. But that was when the residential fee was set at \$11.56 a month. At Thursday's hearing, the council accepted an amendment from Fritz to set it at \$6 a month for the first year, \$9 a month for the second year and \$12 a month after that. There would also be low-income discounts.

And, of course, the fee to be assessed against businesses, governments and nonprofit organizations is still being crafted.

The transportation user fee would be spent on maintenance, safety, pedestrian, bicycle, mass transit and other transportation-related projects. The council is scheduled to consider asking voters to approve a City Charter amendment restricting the funds raised by the fee to transportation purposes at the November general election.

Street fee prompts look at low income discounts

By Jim Redden

Although the City Council is scheduled to vote on the residential street fee on Wednesday, Commissioner Steve Novick believes it needs to be tweaked to ensure that more households are eligible for low income discounts.

Novick also believes the same is true for the low income discounts offered by the Water Bureau and the Bureau of Environmental Service, which operates the city's sewer system and stormwater management programs.

In a Monday morning email to Commissioner Nick Fish, Novick notes that renters in multifamily buildings do not currently qualify for the water and BES discount programs. The same thing could happen with the residential street fee if the council does not work to address it.

In the email, Novick says he and Fish have agreed to work together to extend all of the current and proposed discount programs to as many renters as possible. The water bureau and BES recently briefed the council on their programs.

Novick made the comment in response to 11 questions Fish asked about the residential street fee after a majority of the council agreed to vote on it this Wednesday. The decision at last week's hearing on the fee after the council agreed to separate it from the one assessed against businesses, government and nonprofit organizations, including schools and churches.

Novick, Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Amanda Fritz appear ready to vote for the residential fee Wednesday. Fish and Commissioner Dan Saltzman believe it should be referred to the voters for approval.

Novick has proposed the residential fee be repealed if the other one isn't approved by Nov. 14. A resolution to that effect will also be considered by the council Wednesday.

Novick's email was addressed to Captain Renault, the police commander in the movie *Casablanca*, who was "shocked, shocked" to discover gambling happening under his nose. Novick used the name because Fish had asked about low income discounts available to those paying the residential street fee, although he is in charge of the water bureau and BES.

Here is the text of Novick's email:

Dear Captain Renault,

I am pleased to respond to your questions below.

1. The impact of the proposed fee on low-income renters, particularly those with federal vouchers.

The amount of the fee for each category of resident is listed in attachment C. We hope to extend the low-income discounts to as many low-income residents as possible. As you know, it is administratively difficult to make such discounts accessible to renters, especially in multifamily housing. You know this because the Bureau of Environmental Services does not provide such discounts in multifamily housing at all. You and I have now agreed that we will work together to try to make discounts for all utility bureau fees available to all low-income Portlanders.

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4. The text and purpose of the Mayor's proposed ballot referral.

It has been filed. I believe it speaks for itself.

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The [International Transportation Engineers] trip generation manual includes trip calculations for houses of worship. The impact on nonprofits will vary depending on how many trips a given nonprofit generates. Houses of worship and nonprofits are generally not exempt from paying for utilities. I do not recall any discussion of the impact of water and sewer rate increases on houses of worship or nonprofits.

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and salaries of the people who pass out the money. The money is then transferred to other organizations. I presume that those other organizations - like most organizations, public and private - have administrative expenses of around 15% of total costs. But the Children's Levy ordinance does not purport to limit the administrative costs of the organizations that actually receive the funds.

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Will voters support new parks bond? Maybe, survey says

By Jennifer Anderson

A new Portland Parks & Recreation survey shows lukewarm voter support for a new bond measure, which has prompted parks Commissioner Amanda Fritz to say she's "cautiously optimistic."

The phone survey, conducted in late May by DHM Research, shows 48 percent of the 800 likely voters expressed support for a parks bond (26 percent with strong support, 22 with somewhat support), and 12 percent not sure.

More respondents were favor when they were told that the bond is a replacement fund and "will fund critical parks repairs without increasing tax rates."

After learning that property taxes would go down if voters reject a bond, voters chose to keep their tax rates level to invest in the parks system.

When given a reason to oppose the replacement bond, opposition grew by a few percentage points, and support dropped to 65 percent.

"I am cautiously optimistic that the survey indicates Portlanders may be willing to invest in crucial repairs to our Parks facilities," Fritz said in a Monday statement. "I find it heartening that Portlanders recognize the need for investment. Still, we need to do more work to finalize our recommendation on whether to proceed with a bond replacement."

Fritz said she'll open the conversation to the larger community and parks stakeholders. There will be meetings and additional surveys, as well as a town hall, planned for June. There will also be an expanded Parks Budget Advisory Committee and Portland Parks Foundation Board meeting in early July.

The parks bureau says 87 percent of Portlanders love their parks system, with 32 percent ranking the quality of service as "very good" and 55 percent as "good."

Parks Director Mike Abbaté said in a statement: "We have a nationally recognized parks system because of a 150-year legacy of public stewardship. I am pleased that the commissioner is having serious discussions on the critical maintenance needs across our parks system, including replacing aging playgrounds, fixing unsafe trails, and other major repairs which currently lack funding."

Homeowners pay 87 cents per \$1,000 on their assessed property value for the expiring 1994 parks bond. A replacement bond measure would replace the expiring one, without increasing property tax rates.

If the 1994 bond expires in 2015 and is not replaced, the annual property tax rate paid by a typical homeowner with a home valued at \$150,000 would decrease by \$13.

Officials estimate the parks will need more than \$365 million in replacement and maintenance projects over the next 10 years.

A new bond at the same rate can generate an estimated \$56 million to \$68 million over the next 20 years.

A new bond would:

- Replace deteriorating playgrounds, including the Couch Park structure serving the Metropolitan Learning Center Portland Public school, which recently had to be removed due to potentially catastrophic failure.
- Reopen and stabilize trails such as the closed Maple Trail in Forest Park
- Repair community swimming pools to prevent emergency closures and extend usable life
- Ensure that more facilities and natural areas are safe and accessible to all, including people with disabilities
- Make repairs and protecting worker safety at Mount Tabor Yard
- Make structural repairs to Pioneer Courthouse Square
- Make other major maintenance repairs like restoring restrooms and fixing leaking roofs
- For more info, visit www.portlandparks.org.

City pins plans for water fix on panel

By Jim Redden

City Commissioner Nick Fish insists he's already responded to repeated accusations of mismanagement of the Portland Water Bureau and Bureau of Environmental Services. But Fish says that he's prepared to do even more, beginning with the appointment of a blue-ribbon commission to review the City Council's oversight of the two bureaus within a couple of weeks.

"The goal is to have any recommendations for changes presented to the council by fall," Fish says. "I predict it will be a contentious process, but a necessary one."

Fish and Mayor Charlie Hales promised to appoint the commission during the recent fight over the ballot measure to transfer control of the two bureaus to an independently elected Portland public water district. Although voters overwhelmingly defeated the measure at the May 20 primary election, Fish says water and sewer ratepayers still want both bureaus reformed.

"The message I got was, Portlanders are upset about their rates, they thought the measure was flawed, and they expect the council to fix the problems," says Fish.

Indeed, criticism of the council's management of the bureaus continued after the vote. Two days later, Janice Thompson, a consumer advocate for the statewide Citizens Utility Board, told the council it needs to convince ratepayers their money is being spent wisely and efficiently.

Speaking at the final public hearing on next year's rates, Thompson said, "The City Council has spent dollars from public utilities in ways that were not in compliance with the City Charter."

CUB is a statewide consumer watchdog organization that has historically reviewed and responded to rate increase requests by private utility companies, including PGE, PacifiCorp and Northwest Natural. Fish and Commissioner Steve Novick convinced the City Council to approve a five-year contract with CUB to provide similar reviews and responses to the water and environmental services rate requests several months ago.

During the May 22 rate hearing, Thompson didn't say whether the 4.9 percent rate increases approved by the council were justified. But she noted that Fish had promised to keep a "tight rein on rates" and forced the bureaus to reduce their budget requests to keep the increases under 5 percent for the second year in a row.

Fish is not pledging to reduce rates, however. "I am committed to stabilizing rates, but I can't promise to ever propose a negative increase," Fish says.

In fact, Thompson questions whether the council can keep the rate increases that low in coming years, however.

"There will be serious challenges since the major drivers of water and wastewater rate increases are environmental regulations and infrastructure maintenance and replacements," Thompson said during her testimony.

Future rate increases

Fish says he cannot promise to keep future rate increases under 5 percent, a sharp reduction for the years of double-digit increases approved by the council, in large part to fund the \$1.4 billion Big Pipe project that has all but eliminated sewer discharges into the Willamette River. Current major projects include the construction of the new Powell Butte and other underground storage tanks to replace the open reservoirs in Mount Tabor and Washington parks. A new earthquake-resistant water pipe across the Willamette River is also planned. And the city's final bill for the Portland Harbor Superfund cleanup is still unknown.

Fish is firm that since being assigned the bureaus last year, he has taken steps to keep rate increases as low as possible. They include selling the controversial Water House as proof of his opposition to pet projects, holding the first-ever council rate review hearing and council work session on the bureaus' Capital Improvement Plans, and requiring more construction cost increases to be publicly discussed by the council.

Next steps include both short term and long term reforms, Fish says.

In addition to the appointment of the blue ribbon commission, short term reforms include working with the city auditor's office to increase oversight of capital projects. Long-term goals include selling more Portland water to suburban customers to increase the water bureau's funding base.

"Perhaps the most effective strategy for stabilizing rates is selling more water to more customers," Fish says.

And Fish says he hopes to reinforce the council's relationship with CUB in the near future.

'Tough love'

In her testimony, Thompson listed a series of ongoing issues that CUB believes the council needs to address. Among other things, she said the council should appoint a Construction Oversight Committee to advise it and the public on the management of capital projects. Speaking about the reported leaks discovered at the new Powell Butte Reservoir that is still under construction, Thompson said CUB could not determine whether such leaks are common problem with such projects, as water bureau officials say, or whether they are unusual and require special attention.

Thompson also said the public education campaigns being conducted by both bureaus about environmental issues need to be assessed to ensure they are achieving their goals in a cost-effective manner. And Thompson said the council should consider charging rates that more accurately reflect the cost of providing services to water and sewer customers.

Fish called Thompson's testimony before the council "tough love," saying she offered fair criticisms while also proposing potential reforms that hold long-term promise.

"This is a big reform effort and it's going to happen over many years, but we've made a good start and I am committed to seeing it through," says Fish.

Airbnb rules may cool city's underground rentals

By Steve Law

Now that Airbnb has made Portland its operational headquarters, the Portland City Council is poised to make Airbnb's service legal here.

More than 1,500 Portlanders have opened up their homes for short-term rentals arranged via the popular web-based service — but that's technically been illegal under city regulations. At 2 p.m. Wednesday, the Portland City Council will host a public hearing and possibly vote on new regulations that could bring much — but not all — of Airbnb and similar services out of legal limbo here.

San Francisco's Airbnb is a leading example of the "sharing economy," where people rent rooms in their homes to travelers. Portlanders are big Airbnb hosts, and also heavy users when they hit the road and look for cheap, homey stays elsewhere.

Under the proposed new regulations, Portland residents will gain the right to rent one or two bedrooms of their primary home for less than 30 days at a time, if they get a city inspection and pay a \$180 fee once every two years. The rules extend to those who rent or own houses, as well as owners or renters of duplexes and self-contained manufactured homes. But those living in apartments, condos and most manufactured home parks are not covered by the new regulations.

In the past, Portlanders renting out rooms under Airbnb should have met the city's requirements for bed and breakfast operations, which include a \$4,130 fee and lots more regulatory hoops. Few did so.

Under the proposed regulations, those renting three to five bedrooms still must meet the stiffer bed and breakfast rules.

After several months of vetting the new rules, city planners won the Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission's approval in late-April, in an 8-1 vote. Commissioners noted they are big supporters of the sharing economy, and wanted to make it easier to support Airbnb and similar services here.

Several neighborhood leaders have raised objections to the new rules, concerned the rules will turn homes in their midst into businesses that might cause disruptions. Neighbors also are worried that homeowners need not be present when renting out their homes.

But city planners and planning and sustainability commissioners reasoned that Portlanders have the right to offer piano lessons or other occupations in their homes, and renting out a bedroom or two is comparable.

The proposed rules require an Airbnb host to notify neighbors on all sides of their property they plan to become hosts. However, they'd have a right to rent out one to two bedrooms, and complaints from neighbors could not prevent that if they operate under the rules.

City's phase two

Steven Unger, owner of Lion and the Rose Victorian Bed & Breakfast in the Irvington neighborhood, generally favors bringing Airbnb out of legal limbo. Though he must meet stiffer rules and pay higher permit fees as a bed and breakfast operator, Unger realizes that won't work for Airbnb.

"Really, nobody's going to pay \$4,200 to rent one or two rooms in their house," he says.

However, Unger says there still are some holes in the city's proposed regulations. Among other problems, the city will allow people to rent out bedrooms of their primary residence, defined as the place they live more than half the year. That means a "snow bird" who spends nearly six months each year living in Tucson could rent one or two bedrooms of his or her Portland home while he or she is out of the state.

“That is a big loophole,” Unger says. “It encourages abuse of the ordinance.”

Molly Turner, Airbnb director of civics, testified in favor of the new regulations. However, Airbnb wants the policy extended to apartment and condo residents, and it opposes the inspection requirements.

“We care deeply about safety and share the city’s interests in protecting residents and visitors alike,” Turner testified before the Planning and Sustainability Commission. “However, we feel that inspections of residents’ bedrooms are unnecessary and unfair.”

The city Bureau of Development Services would expect to do simple inspections, making sure the dwellings have inter-connected smoke detectors, and that bedrooms meet building codes existing at the time a house was constructed, says Sandra Wood, supervising planner for the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.

Unger says inspections are important to avoid some of the “horror stories” that have emerged in other markets, where people used Airbnb locales to sell drugs or host prostitution.

Unger wants the City Council to require that hosts post their license number in ads, much as construction contractors do.

Wood says that’s a fine idea, but it doesn’t fall within the land-use realm where the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability operates.

Unger suggests the bureau needs to do a “phase two,” and address some unresolved issues. Among those are people who rent out their entire house under Airbnb. Under current law, those people may fall under rules for hotels, but in reality, many aren’t fulfilling those requirements.

Wood says the bureau isn’t planning on doing another round of regulations for Airbnb and similar systems, as it needs to spend its time on other, more-pressing issues.

As a result, it’s likely that many people using Airbnb will continue to flout city rules, such as those renting rooms in apartments and condos or those renting more than two bedrooms.

Willamette Week

Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick Postpone Vote on Street Fee

By Aaron Mesh

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick are putting their proposed street fee on hold.

Sources at City Hall tell WW that Hales and Novick are postponing a vote on a residential fee charging households \$144 a year.

The vote was planned for Wednesday, but will be delayed—possibly until November.

Word of the decision was first reported last night by The Oregonian. Novick confirmed the delay this morning on Jefferson Smith's XRAY.FM radio show.

Hales and Novick have not responded to WW's request for comment.

The decision comes after two weeks of backlash—which began as soon as WW revealed on May 20 that Hales and Novick would try to pass a fee on households and businesses without a public vote.

The ire culminated at a nearly six-hour public hearing on May 29, where people said the cost of the fee would cripple their businesses, or mean they couldn’t afford groceries. Paul Romain, a lobbyist for the Oregon Petroleum Association, warned then that the fee would be referred to the November ballot anyway.

Romain tells WW that organizations opposed to the fee met May 30 to discuss ballot referral. That group included representatives of restaurants and convenience stores, as well as political consultant Mark Nelson, who lobbies for 7-11.

City Commissioner Calls Nick Fish "Captain Renault," Answers His Questions on the Portland Street Fee

By Aaron Mesh

Portland City Commissioner Steve Novick has responded to his colleague Nick Fish's 11 questions about the Portland street fee.

Judging from the tone of the email, this is not the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Novick starts the letter with "Dear Captain Renault"—a reference to the corrupt military police officer in Casablanca who was "shocked, shocked" to discover gambling at Rick's bar.

The barb seems directed at Fish's questions about why Novick and Mayor Charlie Hales are funding transportation projects by levying a fee on the poor.

"We hope to extend the low-income discounts to as many low-income residents as possible," Novick writes Fish. "As you know, it is administratively difficult to make such discounts accessible to renters, especially in multifamily housing. You know this because the Bureau of Environmental Services does not provide such discounts in multifamily housing at all."

The response, sent to four local newspapers, continues a tense exchange that began at the May 29 public hearing on the street fee. That's when Fish—who is opposed to passing any version without a public vote—asked to delay action to consider complaints brought by citizens.

When Fish followed up May 30 asking about poverty discounts on the fee, Novick challenged him to offer more low-income discounts on water and sewer bills.

Novick's latest reply also volunteers some of his strategy in passing the residential fee June 4 while delaying on a business fee. Novick says he's trying to leverage the business community into finding a version of the proposal they'll accept.

"It is my hope," Novick writes, "that if they know that 'the residential fee is already passed, the city has set a deadline to resolve this fee, this is really happening,' it will create pressure to come to something of an agreement."

(UPDATE, 4:45 pm: Fish is holding out hope for a happy ending.)

Here is the full text of Novick's response.

Dear Captain Renault,
I am pleased to respond to your questions below.

1. The impact of the proposed fee on low-income renters, particularly those with federal vouchers.

The amount of the fee for each category of resident is listed in attachment C. We hope to extend the low-income discounts to as many low-income residents as possible. As you know, it is administratively difficult to make such discounts accessible to renters, especially in multifamily housing. You know this because the Bureau of Environmental Services does not provide such discounts in multifamily housing at all. You and I have now agreed that we will work together to try to make discounts for all utility bureau fees available to all low-income Portlanders.

I have an idea that I hope you will think worth exploring. People below the poverty line can apply for an Arts Tax exemption. How about having people apply for a utility bill rebate at the same time? Anyone entitled to an arts tax exemption gets a check equal to what the annual utility bill discount is supposed to be. I am not certain that would work but

I'm going to ask Thomas Lannom about it.

2. The adequacy of discounts generally, and the availability of waivers, for low-income individuals and families.

The amounts are listed in the ordinance. I am not sure what you mean by 'adequacy.' As to waivers, the City Attorney's office is concerned that if we completely waived the fee based on income, we would run a significant risk that the fee would be judged a tax, which would put us into Arts Tax territory with PERS exemptions, etc.

3. The decision to bifurcate the ordinances on [sic] a residential and non-residential fee.

The nonresidential fee is more complex and requires further discussion. In addition, the 'business community' is not uniform and will have some conflicting interests; it is my fear that without some sort of deadline, the various business groups may never reach any collective conclusion as to what an acceptable structure might be. It is my hope that if they know that "the residential fee is already passed, the city has set a deadline to resolve this fee, this is really happening," it will create pressure to come to something of an agreement.

4. The text and purpose of the Mayor's proposed ballot referral.

It has been filed. I believe it speaks for itself.

5. An analysis of whether it should include a sunset clause or any other triggers.

The analysis is that we expect the need for street maintenance to continue indefinitely. It would be misleading to include a sunset.

6. The proposed composition of the oversight committee and the selection process.

The language of the ordinance speaks for itself.

7. The financial impact of the fee on the faith community and nonprofits.

The ITE trip generation manual includes trip calculations for houses of worship. The impact on nonprofits will vary depending on how many trips a given nonprofit generates. Houses of worship and nonprofits are generally not exempt from paying for utilities. I do not recall any discussion of the impact of water and sewer rate increases on houses of worship or nonprofits.

8. The cost to City bureaus.

We will provide you a list.

9. Whether and how parking lots should be included.

The ITE manual does not count parking lots as destinations, so it does not assign them trips. We believe that we should adjust that treatment to reflect trips by employees of parking lots. We will determine a way to do so.

10. The value of either an administrative cap or annual audits (modeled after the Children's Levy).

The children's levy is simply a means of passing money to other organizations. The purpose of the children's levy administrative cap (as far as I can tell) is to limit the number and salaries of the people who pass out the money. The money is then transferred to other organizations. I presume that those other organizations - like most organizations, public and private - have administrative expenses of around 15% of total costs. But the Children's Levy ordinance does not purport to limit the administrative costs of the organizations that actually receive the funds.

In this case, the money will be injected into the bloodstream of an existing organization, the Portland Bureau of Transportation, which has an existing administrative structure. There will be certain additional costs related to the implementation of the TUF:

(a) We will need to have capacity to administer the low-income discounts. Since you and I are now planning to try to do something the City has never done – extend discounts to apartment renters – we do not know in advance how complex that will be.

(b) We will need staff to work with businesses to help determine which "trip generation" category they fit into. We will work to make the categories as user-friendly as possible, but I would not want to put an arbitrary restriction on the amount of customer service we provide to small businesses. We will consult with other cities, such as Medford, that have such fees, to plan our staffing.

(c) We also need to have a mechanism for collecting the funds. There will be costs associated with that, which of course we will strive to keep to a minimum. The simplest and cheapest method would be to put the TUF bill on the water and sewer bill - an idea that the Commissioner for those bureaus has summarily rejected. (I note that the Children's Levy uses the existing property tax system to collect its funds.

As to audits, the funds will become part of PBOT'S existing budget, just as sewer rate increases become part of BES' existing budgets. If the City moves to a system of requiring annual audits of each bureau, PBOT would of course be subject to such a system.

11. Impacts on small business.

The effect on any given business will depend on how many trips the ITE trip generation manual (with whatever modifications we may make to the manual's formulas) assesses for that type of business and on the number of square feet. In other words, the effect will vary, just as the effect of water and sewer fees on small businesses vary depending on how much water and sewer services they use.

The Mercury

UPDATED: Street Fee Delayed... New Vote Maybe by November

By Denis C. Theriault

Commissioner Steve Novick has confirmed rumors flying through city hall yesterday and first put into print last night by the Oregonian: The residential part of his and Mayor Charlie Hales' proposed street maintenance and safety fee is on hold "indefinitely."

Novick's comments came during a spot on Jefferson Smith's "Thank You Democracy" radio program on Xray.fm. On Monday, Novick had insisted, when I asked, that the residential fee was "steady as she goes" toward a promised vote this Wednesday.

Novick, who started Monday by tweaking Commissioner Nick Fish with a Casablanca reference, clammed up later in the day, refusing to answer more questions about the timeline potentially changing after word began leaking out about discussions in city hall leaning that way. Those hints took on new vigor after Fish, a staunch opponent of just having a council vote on the street fee, made his own Casablanca joke on Twitter—suggesting he and Novick had reached an ending as mutually agreeable as the one in the movie.

Sources say Commissioner Amanda Fritz, the swing vote on the fee, was involved in discussions over the delay.

Novick has yet to return a call this morning asking for more information about his decision and the implications for his plan. Hales' spokesman also has yet to acknowledge several messages seeking comment, first left yesterday morning and again this morning.

Citizens, businesses, and lobbyists took turns over five and a half hours last week complaining at a hearing about both the mechanics of the proposed fee—up to \$12 for families every month and thousands a year for businesses, raising up to \$50 million—as much as an approval process that saw several late amendments and a rush to a council vote this month.

Before that hearing, Novick and Hales confirmed plans to cleave off the nonresidential portion of the fee, pushing that off until November to refine it. Then, during the hearing, Novick and Hales announced plans to phase the fee in over three years. Fritz modified that plan with her own amendment calling for fees of \$6, then \$9, and up to \$12, with proportionate two-thirds discounts for low-income families.

Novick and Hales said they were pushing so hard for a June vote out of concern whatever was approved would be referred to the ballot by lobbyists and others, a promise repeated at the hearing by Paul Romain, hired hand for the Oregon Petroleum Association, the group that killed the city's last stab in 2008. Novick and Hales said going early would get the fee in front of voters during this November's higher-turnout general election.

Fish and Commissioner Dan Saltzman, and several people who testified, suggested commissioners, in that case, should just refer the fee to the ballot themselves—and tamp down fluoride-style anger over the process.

Whether that might happen still remains to be seen. Presumably we'll see some statement soon on what's next.

UPDATE 10:50 PM: That statement has arrived, and it clarifies, as expected, what's next. A vote on both sides of the fee will come in November, the same time a vote had been set on the nonresidential fee. That plan, ironically, is similar to what Fish proposed at the end of last week's council hearing—except it still indicates Hales and Novick won't call for sending the fee to voters.

The council will still vote this Wednesday on sending voters a charter amendment, this November, that would bind the city's use of the revenue raised by the fee. More public forums will be held. And "work groups" will be convened to talk about two issues: how to ease the burden on small businesses, and how to better extend discounts on all utility payments to all low-income customers. The fee would still take effect July 1, 2015.

"The last street free proposal in 2008 was derailed by a lobbyist filing a referendum petition," said Commissioner Novick. "This one has been temporarily delayed due to concerns voiced by small business owners and low-income people and advocates. We are in a hurry to get to work, but if we're going to be delayed, it's for the right reasons."

"Think of this as a track race," Hales said. "We haven't moved the finish line, which is July 2015. But we're moving the starting blocks. We heard from the community: We are taking our time to hear a more robust debate on the details of this fee. But we have not wavered in our resolve. It is our intention to finally address our deteriorating streets."

Fritz's Parks Bond Proposal Polls Way Better than Street Fee

By Denis C. Theriault

Here's more proof that voters are more willing to embrace something familiar over something new and different (and expensive).

A telephone poll (pdf) commissioned by the parks bureau last month has found nearly supermajority support—up to 68 percent—for Commissioner Amanda Fritz's plan to replace an expiring parks bond this fall with another bond measure that would keep Portlanders' taxes the same.

Support for the replacement bond started below 50 percent, according to pollsters DHM—before respondents were told explicitly they wouldn't be paying any more money. The proposed replacement bond would raise up to \$68 million for the bureau.

The biggest reason for that reticence, according to the poll, echoes something we've heard in the vociferous criticism that's been aimed at Commissioner Steve Novick and Mayor Charlie Hales' plans for

a new street fee (that could eventually cost families \$144 a year): Tax and fee fatigue. The street fee mustered just more than majority support in a separate DHM poll.

But right after, when the 800 or so respondents were assured they wouldn't see their bills rise, that opposition immediately softened. That "stay the same" message, combined with an explanation of the projects a bond would fund, even trumped a reminder that saying "no" would reduce property taxes for once.

"Even after learning that property taxes would go down if voters reject a bond, voters choose to keep tax rates level in order to make critical investments in our parks system," a release from the parks bureau said. "Opposition to the measure only grows by a few percentage points (and support drops to 65%) when Portlanders are given opposition rationale about why not to support the replacement bond."

The city's expiring parks bond was passed in 1994. Even with a replacement bond, the city would still need \$300 million more to wipe out its backlog for parks maintenance and other improvements. The new parks bond, according to the bureau, will help pay for the following projects:

- The replacement of deteriorating playgrounds, including the Couch Park structure serving the Metropolitan Learning Center (MLC) Portland Public school, which recently had to be removed due to potentially catastrophic failure
- Reopening and stabilizing trails such as the closed Maple Trail in Forest Park
- Repairing community swimming pools to prevent emergency closures and extend usable life
- Ensuring that more facilities and natural areas are safe and accessible to all, including people with disabilities
- Making repairs and protecting worker safety at Mount Tabor Yard
- Making much-needed structural repairs to Pioneer Courthouse Square [Eds: But sadly not removing all of the hideous 1980s-mall masonry.]
- Making other major maintenance repairs like restoring restrooms, fixing leaking roofs, and more.

Novick Answers Captain Renault's Fish's Questions on Street Fee

By Denis C. Theriault

Last week's lengthy Portland City Council hearing on a proposed "transportation user fee," AKA "TUF," turned extra tense sometime in the middle of its fifth hour.

That's when Commissioner Nick Fish pressed the fee's sponsors—Commissioner Steve Novick and Mayor Charlie Hales—on how he might offer some suggested changes before this Wednesday's vote, only to find out that Novick and Hales weren't much interested in entertaining those changes. Undeterred, the next day, Fish emailed Novick a list of 11 questions that, at first, drew a snarky response—before giving way to a more substantial conversation on Fish's concerns (and several other issues raised by critics) alongside declarations of peace and love and renewed mutual goodwill.

This morning, Novick sent reporters (us, Willamette Week, the Tribune, and the O) a longer, point-by-point reply to Fish's questions. And maybe things have cooled a bit. Or maybe not.

Novick addressed his reply to "Captain Renault," making the point that the city's sewer and water commissioner, Fish, is somehow "shocked, shocked" that low-income Portlanders are struggling with utility bills.

"I think it's appropriate," Novick says.

UPDATE 4:45: Fish sportingly acknowledged Novick's Casablanca tweak, reminding Twitter this afternoon how the movie ends.

Novick's answers are on the jump.

1. The impact of the proposed fee on low-income renters, particularly those with federal vouchers.

The amount of the fee for each category of resident is listed in attachment C. We hope to extend the low-income discounts to as many low-income residents as possible. As you know, it is administratively difficult to make such discounts accessible to renters, especially in multifamily housing. You know this because the Bureau of Environmental Services does not provide such discounts in multifamily housing at all. You and I have now agreed that we will work together to try to make discounts for all utility bureau fees available to all low-income Portlanders.

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It has been filed. I believe it speaks for itself.

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The Portland Business Journal

After business community voices concerns, Portland Council bumps street fee decision

By Andy Giegerich

With Portlanders passionately weighing in on both sides of a proposed street fee, supporters of the idea on the City Council have delayed an expected vote on the matter until November.

The Council could have voted on the matter in coming weeks. However, an outpouring of both support and opposition to the proposal — \$10-plus for homeowners, around \$75 a month for 60 percent of business owners — suggested that the topic has raised enough passion to merit more discussion.

The Portland Business Alliance called on members to voice concerns about the proposal at a public hearing on the matter last week.

"We have not taken care of our largest asset: our streets. We have to change that," Hales said in a release. "We've been talking about this for 13 years, and we held several town halls this winter and spring to hear from people."

"Despite that, many constituents still haven't been heard yet. We get that. Postponing the Council vote will give people time to weigh in on whether this is the best solution to this dire need, and to consider changes to make it work better."

Hales is advocating for the fees along with Commissioner Steve Novick. Novick acknowledged that the business points played a role in delaying the vote.

"The last street free proposal in 2008 was derailed by a lobbyist filing a referendum petition," Novick said. "This one has been temporarily delayed due to concerns voiced by small business owners and low-income people and advocates. We are in a hurry to get to work, but if we're going to be delayed, it's for the right reasons."

The Council will nonetheless vote on referring a charter change to voters that would lock in the use of any street fee for transportation purposes only.

Portland will also form two work groups. The groups will analyze policies regarding how the proposal would affect low-income residents and fees. Another group will work with small business, nonprofit and government partners on the fee's specifics.

Portland considers new rules for late-night businesses

By Andy Giegerich

Portland businesses staying open late into the evening may need to get special permission to do so.

The Oregonian reports that the Portland City Council is examining requiring those businesses, primarily taverns and restaurants, to get permits allowing them to remain open past 10 p.m.

Doing so "would help proactively deal with security, alcohol and crowd-management issues at late-night establishments," wrote the O's Brad Schmidt.

That is, it could help the city more easily shutter nuisance businesses.

The Council will spend the summer exploring the notion and could put the matter to a vote in September.