

The Oregonian

Portland street fee: Mayor Charlie Hales says city must get public to 'grudging acceptance' of street fee

By Andrew Theen

UPDATED: This story was updated with reaction from Commissioner Amanda Fritz and more coverage from Tuesday's press conference

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales said despite Tuesday's announcement that the City Council was delaying until November its vote on a controversial street fee proposal, he and Commissioner Steve Novick still believe the city needs to move forward with the "imperfect but doable option."

Hales said he sees three options facing the City Council as it waits to take up the street fee on businesses and residential property owners on Nov. 12: "Do this, do nothing, or do something else that produces enough revenue."

"I'm in favor of doing this," Hales said of the street fee.

On Tuesday morning, Hales and Novick decided to shelve an up-or-down vote on the street fee scheduled for Wednesday morning. Novick said the delay amounts to "hitting the pause button" and will allow the duo to home in on tough issues like how to ensure low-income families in apartment complexes actually received discounts.

The delay is the latest fundamental shift in what's been a rapidly evolving plan characterized by missteps in recent weeks. During that time, backers decided to split the residential and business portions of the monthly fee and the projected monthly cost for residents changed twice before the council held a contentious public hearing last Thursday.

The latest about-face followed a 5 1/2 hour public hearing last week where Hales and Novick reiterated their determination to proceed with a City Council vote Wednesday. But over the weekend, it became clear that the swing vote – Commissioner Amanda Fritz – wasn't ready to move forward.

"What I suggested was that we take some more time," Fritz said Tuesday.

"It was clear to me, even before the hearing, but definitely at the hearing, that there were a number of details that could be improved," she added.

Now, the two elected officials say the goal is to come up with a better proposal for the street fee without completely throwing the idea out the window.

Novick confirmed that Fritz "gently suggested" the need for more time and a more inclusive process. Asked whether the City Council would have proceeded with a vote Wednesday, had Fritz been on board, Novick said: "I don't actually know."

Despite punting the street fee issue to November, Hales said the City Council will still vote Wednesday to refer a charter amendment to voters. The Oregonian first reported on the charter amendment, the language of which says that "a majority" of funds from the street fee will go toward maintenance and safety.

"We mean it," Hales said Tuesday of the charter amendment, "This fee is for transportation and for nothing else and the voters will get to lock that down a week before we take this back up [street fee issue]."

At the press conference Tuesday, Hales continued to hammer home the issue that a street fee dedicated to help maintain Portland's streets isn't a new idea. He said the political challenge is to get the public to "grudging acceptance for an idea that none of us loves."

If it's not a street fee, Hales said the funding mechanism must pass a two-part test: 1) everybody pays, both businesses and residents; and 2) the mechanism can raise enough money to "make a difference." A 2013 city audit said the city's roads were in need of \$75 million in annual pavement maintenance for a

decade to bring the infrastructure to fair condition, in addition to the \$10 million the city currently spends. Now, Novick said that cost is \$91 million per year for a decade.

Hales said last week's nearly six-hour public hearing included very valid questions from the public on how low income people are affected as well as how to mitigate costs for small business owners.

During the next five months, transportation bureau officials, Hales and Novick will return to hosting town hall events to discuss the street fee plan. The city will convene working groups to study various aspects of the plans, too, Novick said.

In an effort to win Fritz's support – and pass the fees by a City Council vote instead of referring them to voters for approval – Hales and Novick had already undercut one of their fundamental arguments: immediate action.

Last week, Fritz proposed phasing in residential fees. Instead of charging homeowners \$11.56 a month, she pushed for \$6 the first year, with increases annually to \$9 and then \$12.

The slow rollout would have reduced projected residential fees over the first three years from \$82.1 million to \$63.9 million.

That impact is even more pronounced because officials want to charge half to residents and half to businesses. Instead of collecting a projected \$164.2 million in the first three years, revenue would dip by more than one-fifth, to \$127.8 million.

"We needed a third vote," Novick said.

Despite a public process that blew up multiple times – delaying a vote on business fees, persisting with residential charges, delaying everything until November – neither Hales nor Novick offered much acknowledgement of mistakes.

"I'm not sure if I would call them mistakes, but it's certainly a challenge to get people to focus on something like this until there's a specific proposal on the table that they're actually going to pay for," Hales said.

But Novick defended the process, noting that the city had floated the concept of an \$8 or \$12 monthly fee since April. Novick did say he should have done a better job talking to business leaders to make sure they understood the non-residential fee structure, which would have based monthly charges by the type of businesses, square footage and projected trips generated.

Looking ahead to a November City Council vote, Novick said he couldn't offer a date for when specific fees would be proposed for public consideration.

Both Novick and Hales acknowledged if the City Council enacts a fee in November, voters could decide to refer the issue to the ballot in 2015.

Sandra McDonough, president of the Portland Business Alliance, said an additional five months is certainly better than the two-week roll out Novick and Hales originally offered May 22.

But she said questions remain about the city's proposed spending package and the fee structure – all of which need careful vetting.

"What this shows is they're doing some listening," she said.

Alberta Street sees new round of revitalization with city-funded grants

By Casey Parks

You can track the history of the Alberta neighborhood just by looking at the changes at the 90-year building on the corner of NE 13th Avenue.

In the mid 2000s, the grey building still bore the Accuracy Grinding tag. When the street went through a bit revitalization in 2009, the building became a little classier: A coat of white paint and wood trim covered up Accuracy Grinding.

By 2010, when the white gave way to periwinkle and a sign announcing Bikram Yoga, the building and the street looked totally transformed.

Now, even the new Alberta Street is changing. As hip eateries such as Little Big Burger and Bunk Bar move in, Alberta's old standbys are glossing up their spaces, too, using city dollars to help pay for new looks.

The Hilt's circa-2010 white-and-black logo has been replaced with a punchy red font reminiscent of a comic book. Portland Fret Works -- which led the way for the first revitalization by turning a tiny dry cleaning shop and empty lot into a guitar repair shop and the Vita Cafe -- will soon be replacing its sign.

And the hot yoga studio at 1301 N.E. Alberta St. has said goodbye to the periwinkle freshly applied just four years ago.

"There are some brand new properties on Alberta that look great, but there are also some properties on Alberta that have significant deferred maintenance," said Sara Wittenberg, executive director of the nonprofit Alberta Main Street.

The most recent changes at N.E. 1301 began with a name change. The Bikram in Bikram Yoga is a real person -- and a controversial one, as of late. After five women sued Bikram Choudhury for charges from rape to sexual harassment, Alberta's Bikram Yoga studio owner Suzanne Cummings decided to remove the Bikram name.

Cummings pulled off the B, but the I stuck to the building. The K and the R came right off.

As the letters fell away, Cummings decided to keep the name that was left: I Am Yoga. The building bore the same happenstance sign for nearly a year. But the shadows of the B and K remained.

"A lot of people thought it was vandalism," Cummings said. "It looked terrible for a few months."

Now, the building has a new sign and another fresh paint job to boot. Cummings is sticking with the "I am Yoga" name, but the building is now red and yellow with a fire-and-fowl mural painted on the side.

Cummings paid for the new look using a \$2,500 Alberta Main Street mini grant. The Portland Development Commission created the nonprofit Alberta Main Street in 2009 to boost the economic vitality of the neighborhood. The city provides the cash, and the nonprofit divvies it up.

Five years later, the street is chock full of new businesses, and Alberta Main Street leaders are turning their focus toward smaller cosmetic concerns. For the past year, the nonprofit has used money from the Portland Development Commission to match business owners who chip in matching dollars to upgrade their facades. The taxpayer-funded grants range from \$500 - \$2,500.

The goal, the nonprofit's leaders say, is strengthening the business district -- not gentrifying the neighborhood.

"We couldn't be happier after the first couple of rounds of the grants," Wittenberg said. "Incrementally, property by property, it makes the street better for the businesses and the residents in the neighborhood."

Eleven businesses took advantage of the program last year, winning a collective \$20,000 to replace crumbling curbs and outdated signs. Those owners spent a total of \$32,000 of their own money for the projects. Another 12 won grants adding up to \$18,000 this year.

This year's grants divided the Cork wine shop into two spaces, making way for Gladys Bikes. Binks added a water bottle filling station and a mural. Frock Boutique bought a new sign and art bike rack. Shift Vacation Rentals bought tulip chairs.

Those changes have inspired other business owners. Across the street from I am Yoga, Fuel Cafe is rebranding itself with a sunshine and wheat logo. They didn't win a grant, but the street's new look inspired the owners to invest in their own new red-and-yellow sign. The cafe is also updating its menu.

And later this spring, 11 blocks from I Am Yoga, a mini grant will pay to refurbish one of the street's remaining historic features: the Rexall Drug sign. The neighborhood pharmacy closed in 1981 after 66 years in business. The sign still hangs above a coffee shop, but it went dark years ago.

"The property owner wants to have it be lit up again," Wittenberg said.

Portland street fee: Commissioner Steve Novick explains delayed vote in lengthy blog post, cites income tax

By Andrew Theen

Commissioner Steve Novick and Portland Mayor Charlie Hales will take questions from the media at 2 p.m. on Tuesday about why the duo decided to table a controversial vote scheduled for Wednesday.

But that didn't stop Novick from posting a lengthy blog post explaining why the City Council won't vote on a proposed residential street fee.

The delay, first reported by The Oregonian on Monday and confirmed on Tuesday morning by Novick on formal mayoral candidate Jefferson Smith's radio show, pushes future City Council action to November.

Delaying the residential fee effectively repackages the street fee with the business portion, split off by Novick and Hales last week.

Here's what Novick had to say about the delay:

A primary focus is going to be on how to ensure that we alleviate the impact on low income Portlanders. Commissioners Fritz and Fish were both very focused on that, and they are right to want to be sure that we do all we can. I don't regret having set the deadline of a June 4 vote, even though we're letting the deadline slip. Sometimes having a deadline forces you to focus. This deadline has focused the public, and it has focused us.

The first term commissioner has said previously he preferred a progressive income tax to the street fee.

He elaborated on that on his blog, while also bringing up a potential sales tax, too:

Based on perceived political and practical obstacles, we stopped thinking about options like a sales tax, or a local income tax, or an increase in the business profits tax.

But maybe now that we have a lot of people more engaged, they'll want to take another look at some of those options. And that's okay - as long as they do it quickly, because we have a November 14 vote deadline to meet.

A lot of small business people didn't like the idea of a user fee because it doesn't take profitability into account; maybe they'll want to raise the idea of increasing our existing business profits tax instead. That would have the advantage of administrative simplicity because the mechanism is already there.

We wrote off the sales tax because it lacks public political support, but I was looking at some numbers the other day, and it appears that many people would pay less under a 0.5% sales tax than under our residential street fee proposal, even though a 0.5% sales tax would raise as much money as the nonresidential and residential fees combined. That's because, even though a sales tax is regressive compared to the income tax, rich people still buy a lot more than lower and middle income people. It also occurs to me that we could possibly use the arts tax exemption process to develop a low-income sales tax rebate, which would alleviate regressivity.

Check out what else Novick had to say on his blog.

Portland street fee: Vote delayed until November, Commissioner Steve Novick says

By Brad Schmidt

Update: Portland Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick will be taking questions today at 2 p.m. Tell us what you want to know, and see what each is saying about the decision to delay.

Portland Commissioner Steve Novick made it official Tuesday morning: a vote on the city's controversial street fee is getting delayed until November.

Novick's confirmation came a day after The Oregonian reported that Novick and Mayor Charlie Hales were considering calling off Wednesday's scheduled City Council vote.

Officials heard more than 5 ½ hours of testimony about the street fee, much of it negative, during a public hearing last week. Novick and Hales had already decided to delay a vote on the business side of street fees because of pushback.

Now, Novick said Tuesday on the "Thank You Democracy with Jefferson Smith" radio show, he and Hales are postponing the street fee vote indefinitely.

"As of this morning, we're also going to delay the residential," he said.

The street fee, as originally constructed, was expected to raise up to \$50 million a year. Most homeowners were expected to pay \$11.56 a month and businesses would have paid based on the type of business, square footage and projected vehicle trips.

Hales and Novick have not responded to requests for comment since Tuesday. At 10:45 a.m. Wednesday, Hales' office released the following statement:

The proposal by Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick to launch a street fee in 2015 remains on schedule. However, the council vote on how to structure the fee will be pushed back until November.

"We have not taken care of our largest asset: our streets. We have to change that," Mayor Hales said. "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."

"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."

The City Council on Wednesday will still vote on referring a charter change that would lock in the use of any street fee for transportation purposes.

"Voters need to be assured that we will spend this money the way we say we will," Hales said. "A charter change will ensure that we stay true to that commitment, administration after administration."

However, the council vote on both the residential fee, and the non-residential fee, will be pushed back to November.

Further public forums will be scheduled to hear from residents and the business community. And two work groups will be formed. Their charges:

- *To analyze city policy regarding low-income residents and fees. The work group will look at the street fee as well as fees for other city utilities, including water and sewer,*

to see how well low-income residents are being served and how widely discounts can be applied.

- *To further engage with small business, nonprofit and government partners on design and implementation of the fee.*

"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."

The Portland Tribune

Residential street fee vote delayed

By Jim Redden

Mayor Charlie Hales has hit the brakes on the City Council vote on the controversial residential street fee.

Although the vote had been set for Wednesday, Hales announced Tuesday morning that it will be delayed until November. That is when the council is tentatively scheduled to take up the fee for businesses, governments and nonprofit organizations, including schools and churches.

According to Hales, both fees are still scheduled to take effect in July 2015.

"Think of this as a track race," Hales said Tuesday morning. "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."

The council will still vote Wednesday on placing a measure on the November 2014 General Election ballot dedicating the revenues raised by the fee to transportation projects.

"Voters need to be assured that we will spend this money the way we say we will," Hales said. "A charter change will ensure that we stay true to that commitment, administration after administration."

The fee proposal was developed by Hales and Transportation Commissioner Steve Novick to generate additional funds for maintenance, safety and other transportation-related projects. They held several public forums on it in different parts of town, and also met with business owners on a number of occasions. Hales and Novick did not release their final proposal until after those forums and meetings, however.

The first public hearing on the proposal was last Thursday. At that time, the council split the residential fee from the business fee because of complaints from small business owners who felt they could not afford it.

According to Hales' spokesman Dana Haynes, the mayor decided to delay the residential fee vote after hearing from many people who said they did not have enough information about it. Haynes says many people are also worried about the fee's impact on low-income Portlanders, a concern shared by Hales.

"They want us to be as fair as possible to low-income residents, so we want to see if we can make it less regressive," Haynes says.

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.

The residential fee proposal currently calls for households to pay \$6 a month in the first year, \$9 a month in the second year and \$12 a month after that. Low-income discounts would also be offered, although the city does not currently have a way for renters to qualify for them.

Hales also announce that two work groups will be formed to work on the fee proposals. Their charges are as follows:

- To analyze city policy regarding low-income residents and fees. The work group will look at the street fee as well as fees for other city utilities, including water and sewer, to see how well low-income residents are being served and how widely discounts can be applied.
- To further engage with small business, nonprofit and government partners on design and implementation of the fee.

And Hales says that additional public forums on the fee will be held before the council considers it again.

"The last street free proposal in 2008 was derailed by a lobbyist filing a referendum petition," Novick said Tuesday morning. "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."

Willamette Week

Fee For All

The wrong turns that Steve Novick took to raise more money for Portland's roads.

By Aaron Mesh

City Commissioner Steve Novick has led the parade for new road funding into a blind alley.

He's the architect of a plan to raise at least \$40 million a year for transportation projects by creating a street fee that would charge households \$144 a year, and could hit businesses for even more.

His plan unleashed a flood of opposition and vitriol—hundreds of comments to the City Council by everyone from business owners to social-service providers, running better than 20-to-1 against. The backlash has been so great that Novick and Mayor Charlie Hales have postponed a June 5 council vote on the fee until November, pledging to rethink the plan.

It's unfamiliar territory for Novick, who has enjoyed citywide popularity as a social liberal with a clever solution to any policy puzzle.

Novick and Hales insist the fee is the only way to solve a \$1.3 billion backlog of road maintenance—a problem that has festered for decades. Previous attempts to create a street fee cratered in 2001 and 2008.

"I think this is a big enough issue, it's worth losing the next election over," Novick says. "Most of us don't confront issues in general unless they're in front of our faces. Posting a deadline brought people out."

But Novick has made a hard job even more difficult, in part by appearing to disregard growing opposition to the street fee. Despite his best efforts avoid it, Novick may still have to face down voters to win approval of the plan.

If he wants his street fee to succeed, here are some missteps Novick will have to correct.

1. Seeks new money before deciding how to spend it.

Novick made fiscal responsibility a major theme when he ran for the U.S. Senate in 2008. But last fall, he convened a task force to look for new ways to raise street funding, without attacking a root cause of the Portland Bureau of Transportation's cash crunch: the failure to prioritize spending. City Auditor LaVonne Griffin-Valade scolded the City Council in March 2013 for not ranking projects by importance. Under Novick's oversight, PBOT still hasn't created that list. Novick's chief of staff, Chris Warner, says prioritizing spending "doesn't even come close to solving the problem."

2. Taxes the poor.

In 2012, Novick denounced the \$35-a-person Portland Arts Tax as “beyond regressive” because it hit people without regard to their income level. But his residential street fee is also regressive—by 2017, it would charge up to \$144 a year per household, including renters. Even low-income housing residents would pay at least \$59 a year. “When you say it’s regressive and you vote it through anyway,” says Ann Sanderson, a Woodstock hair salon owner who has led an online campaign against the fee, “you’re hurting the people who can’t fight back.”

3. Thwarts a public vote.

City surveys this spring showed voters probably wouldn’t approve any new taxes or fees. So Novick and Hales decided to have the City Council pass the fee without taking it to voters. Their proposal would allow voters to decide whether half the street fee should be reserved for maintenance and safety—but it still denies the public an up-or-down vote on the fee itself. “People want us to solve the problem, but none of the ways to solve the problem would pass,” Novick said at a May 29 hearing. “And the problem would get worse and worse and worse.”

4. Rushes to pass a plan even he doesn’t like.

Novick and Hales debuted the fee while admitting the plan wasn’t one they preferred. They also unveiled the plan before PBOT had finished calculating how much many businesses would pay. “Things don’t work out well in Portland,” says Rich Rodgers, a former City Hall staffer, “when you try to jam it like that.”

5. Puts the financial burden on small businesses, schools and churches.

Portland Public Schools, for example, was blindsided by the news it would owe up to \$400,000 next year. Churches would have to pay up, too—all because it’s a “fee,” not a tax from which they would be exempt. The sticker shock of the fee for businesses gets worse, because it’s structured in such a way that mom-and-pop stores would pay a larger relative share than corporations. “This is a town that loves small businesses,” says Sanderson. “You will cripple them.”

6. Writes the plan in fear of powerful interests.

Novick built his reputation as a politician who wouldn’t cater to special interests. But he admits he chose a flat fee over options like an income tax because it was less likely to inflame the powerful, who could refer it to a public vote. “The income tax would affect rich people more,” he said May 29. “All it would take is a few disgruntled rich people to raise money and defeat it.” When the business lobby howled about the fees, Novick and Hales delayed the vote on charging businesses. Novick now says he was taking too defensive an approach, and will reconsider income and sales taxes. “We’ve been playing not to lose,” he says. “That’s always a mistake. From here on out, I play to win.”

7. Challenges voters to a duel.

Novick announced the fee with a challenge to the public: “If the voters are really mad at us, [Hales and I are] both up for re-election in 2016, and they can throw us out.” That looked to some observers like conviction—and to others like arrogance. “He’s telling the voters, ‘Come at me, bro,’” says Eric Fruits, chairman of the Laurelhurst Neighborhood Association. Novick says he didn’t mean to sound combative. “I don’t matter,” he says. “It doesn’t matter if I’m a political idiot sometimes. What matters is we get to the end goal.”

Portland Street Fee Didn't Have Crucial Third Vote: City Commissioner Amanda Fritz

By Aaron Mesh

Here's one of the reasons Portland Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick today announced a four-month delay in passing a street fee: Commissioner Amanda Fritz, their crucial third vote, told them she wasn't ready to vote for it.

Fritz tells WW she informed Novick and Hales she didn't think their proposal was ready after a contentious May 29 public hearing.

"After the hearing, it was very clear to me there was more to be fixed than could be fixed in a week," Fritz says. "I talked to Commissioner Novick and then to the mayor. I pointed out the virtues and the value of having an expanded process."

How would she have voted? She won't say.

"I am very glad it didn't go to a vote tomorrow," Fritz says, and laughs when asked a second time if she had decided which way to vote. "I'm not going to answer that question. I'm very glad that push didn't come to shove."

It's been apparent since April that Fritz provided the City Council's swing vote on the fee, after colleagues Dan Saltzman and Nick Fish proclaimed their opposition to WW. The Oregonian reported this afternoon that Novick said Fritz's concerns caused the city to pause the plan.

Fritz says she had decided the weekend before the hearing that the fee's burden on Portland's poorest citizens was too great. But she waited until after public testimony to tell Hales and Novick. In the hours after pausing his plan to charge households \$144 a year, Novick has said he's open to reconsidering a sales tax or an income tax.

Fritz says she's eager to have that discussion in committees over the next four months.

"Dan Saltzman says he trusts Portlanders in elections," she says. "I trust Portlanders a lot more around a table, with everybody there, hashing out something that nobody likes but everybody can live with with. Set up a committee: That's the Portland way."

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

UPDATE: Steve Novick says he's open to reconsidering a sales tax or income tax.

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 City Council vote on a residential fee charging households \$144 a year.

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

Word of the decision was first reported last night by The Oregonian. Novick confirmed this morning the fee has been delayed "indefinitely" 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.

UPDATE, 11:25 am: Hales and Novick have released confirmation they're delaying a council vote until Nov. 12.

They say outcry from small businesses and low-income housing advocates changed their minds.

"The last street fee proposal in 2008 was derailed by a lobbyist filing a referendum petition," Novick writes. "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."

UPDATE, 12:20 pm: Novick has written a blog post reiterating his conviction that funding streets and sidewalks is "a moral obligation." But he says the public ire presents an opportunity to engage people on a solution.

Novick says he's open to reconsidering a sales tax or an income tax, instead of the street fee.

"Now, the polling on a sales tax is not encouraging," he writes, "and I'm sure some powerful groups are dead set against it, but if the work groups are interested and think an army can be raised to promote the idea ...

"A local income tax is, of course, the most progressive idea, and it's something the people of Portland have actually supported before - the I-Tax. For some reason it did not do well in our poll. But again, if the work groups conclude that progressivity is the highest value, maybe there's a strategy for that."