

The Oregonian

Portland Street Fee: Committees study capping fees for businesses, linking residential rate to income

*By Brad Schmidt
August 13, 2014*

Portland transportation officials have a new street fee proposal that would cap monthly charges for businesses at \$135 a month – a massive reduction compared to the city's earlier plan.

After sharing the proposal with businesses leaders at a work group on Monday, the city will refine its so-called "business entity fee" and provide a clear explanation about the methodology, Portland's top executive said in a memo Wednesday.

Before a meeting Aug. 25, the city will compile administrative cost estimates and look at ideas to potentially phase out the fee.

Dylan Rivera, a spokesman for the Bureau of Transportation, said city officials estimate the new model -- considered preliminary -- could still raise an estimated \$26.5 million from businesses.

Under the old plan, landlords would have received bills through the city's utility system, which includes about 11,000 accounts. Under the new option, the city would use business license records, which include about 65,000 accounts.

Willamette Week first reported the new business-fee proposal.

The math presented at Monday's meeting appears to provide massive discounts across the board to virtually all types of businesses, with city officials offering only one example where fees would increase from the original proposal.

Under the example, a 797-square-foot barbershop would have paid \$12.91 a month as part of the proposal shelved by Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick in June. Under the flat-fee proposal, the same barbershop would pay \$25 a month.

But for 15 other examples the city listed – ranging from a café to a 20-person office to a large retailer – proposed fees decreased. For the café, rates dropped from \$51.16 a month to \$30. For the 61,510-square-foot retailer with an estimated 250,000 vehicle trips, the fee drops from \$2053.71 to \$120 a month.

Under such a scenario, a large retailer would pay about the same amount over an entire year as originally proposed for one month.

Rivera said the new proposal offers "more parity."

Hales and Novick are pursuing a street fee to help pay for street maintenance and safety projects. Hales has said residents and businesses should split the costs, projected in the city's plan to hit \$53 million in the third year of collections.

But the Wednesday memo from Fred Miller, Portland's chief administrative officer, notes that the original plan to collect \$26.5 million from businesses "is too high to earn business community support."

A separate work group is also considering options for residential fees, projected at \$12 a month for homeowners.

Under proposals reviewed Tuesday, the city outlined a variety of options that included income-tax based collections.

Rivera said the work group asked city staff to continue studying its "progressive" street fee that could offer reductions for residents with below-median incomes.

The work group also wants to see more information about a "progressive income tax," which could exempt income below a certain level. One option set the threshold at \$100,000, but Rivera said the work group would like to lower the level.

The city has scheduled street fee meetings into October. A proposal is expected to head to the City Council in November.

City ready to sell 16 acres of waterfront land: Portland City Hall Roundup

*By Brad Schmidt
August 13, 2014*

The city of Portland owns about 16 acres of prime waterfront real estate that it wants to put on the market.

On Wednesday, the Portland City Council considered designating land owned by the Bureau of Environmental Services as surplus, enabling its sale.

The land, on the western banks of the Willamette River, just north of the Fremont Bridge, has a real market value of \$7.9 million.

The city's sewer bureau acquired the property in 2004 as a staging area for its Big Pipe project.

The city also wants to sell a nearby property of about a half acre, also owned by the sewer bureau, which at one point was considered as a potential location for the Right 2 Dream Too homeless camp, as Willamette Week pointed out last week. It has a real market value of about \$789,000.

But perhaps more interesting is the future of the 16-acre waterfront land, at 2400 N.W. Front Ave.

It's currently zoned for industrial uses. But the waterfront parcels to the south allow residential units, and a condo and apartment boom has followed.

The city is currently updating its comprehensive land-use plan. A draft plan released last month did not include any proposed changes, but the City Council isn't expected to sign off until next year.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz said Wednesday she thought the property would remain zoned for industrial use.

The proposed sale would be the first under new policies developed by Commissioner Nick Fish, who oversees the sewer and water bureaus, for property disposition. The new policy follows outcry over a water bureau property sold to developers for new housing.

Money from the Front Avenue sale would go into the sewer construction fund.

The City Council will vote to authorize the surplus property designation Aug. 27.

Willamette Week

City Hall May Find Money for Road Paving in Its Own Budget, Reducing the Street Fee

*By Aaron Mesh
August 13, 2014*

For months, Portland Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick have been adamant that they will create a "street fee" to collect \$53 million a year for transportation projects.

They now seem more inclined to negotiate.

In recent meetings with business leaders, WW has learned, city officials have extended an olive branch: City Hall may find part of that money in its own budget, reducing the amount it demands from taxpayers.

A document presented by the city's chief administrative officer, Fred Miller, to business leaders on Aug. 11 says the city could generate the \$53 million it wants to raise for road paving and safety projects from three sources.

One part would come from a residential street fee or an income tax. Another would come from a fee on businesses. And the third part would come from cutting bureau budgets and shifting more money to transportation.

Miller followed up that presentation this afternoon by sending out a memo, which was first reported by The Oregonian. It says public sentiment shows the city needs to dedicate its own money to road repair to get the support of business leaders.

"If fixing streets is important," Miller writes, "the city should show its support by allocating more available revenues to maintenance and safety."

The document Miller presented a business work group on Aug. 11 does not specify how much money the city would contribute from such cuts. But city sources tell WW it could be as much as \$14 million a year—leaving \$39 million to raise from new taxes or fees.

While the document is vague about how the city would provide its share of the transportation funding, it suggests that City Hall would send more discretionary money from the city's general fund toward the transportation bureau.

WW has reported that over the last decade, City Hall hasn't altered the portion of the general fund it dedicates to transportation.

The document suggests that the city has identified three ways it could chip in.

The first is by taking the \$4.5 million the transportation bureau currently spends on the Portland Streetcar each year, and moving that cost into the city's general fund. (This is an idea Novick has floated before.)

Second, the city will look for new revenue not related to a street fee. The document doesn't specify what those new revenues would be—but the mayor's office is crafting a tax on recreational marijuana, as WW reported last month.

Finally, Portland could dedicate to transportation a portion of its utility license fee: money paid to the city by power and telephone companies. It's unclear what city bureau or bureaus currently receiving utility licenses monies would take cuts for the benefit of greater transportation funding.

Hales spokesman Dana Haynes tells WW he can't comment on a new proposal—but that the mayor is open to new ideas.

"The mayor and Commissioner Novick have said they are not married to the current iteration of the fee," Haynes says. "The mayor has said he's open to doing something else more politically palatable. If Fred's proposal does that: Hallelujah."

"Do-Not-Buy" List Could Leave City With No Options for Corporate Investment, Committee Warns

Portland moving forward with Commissioner Steve Novick's plan for "socially responsible investing."

*By Aaron Mesh
August 13, 2014*

Portland is moving forward with City Commissioner Steve Novick's plan to stop the city from investing its \$940 million portfolio in companies that are ethically challenged.

But as reported in this morning's Murmurs, the group that guides that portfolio warns the "do-not-buy" list could leave the city with few corporations left to invest in.

Novick drew national media attention in May when the city started implementing his plan to dump its \$36 million investment in Wal-Mart bonds.

Last week, the City Council took steps toward creating a "do-not-buy" list based on how companies treat their employees, the environment and public health. The City Council on Aug. 6 approved recommendations from a group studying how to start "socially responsible investing."

The plan has alarmed the city's Investment Advisory Committee, which guides the city's portfolio. In a May letter only recently made public, the committee warned that a list of "bad" companies could grow so

large it would leave the city with no options for corporate investment.

"Scoring may prove to be difficult as companies may align well with certain principles but not with others," the six-member IAC wrote on May 23. "For example, Wal-Mart has an excellent environmental record but a poor record with respect to labor and business practices. As such, the 'do-not-buy' list might possibly include the city's entire list of eligible issuers."

The IAC also warned that the "do-not-buy" list could hurt the city's investment earnings and created a "ripple effect" on Portland government.

"If the city's bottom line is reduced due to reduced portfolio earnings," the IAC document says, "then services to the public may need to be reduced. The public might feel that this is a good thing in the beginning but when their services start to be affected, it may cause great discontent and anger with the city."

Novick says the IAC's concerns are guiding the city's decisions.

"Their warnings are actually quite helpful to us," Novick tells WW, "as we explain our policy to advocates who want us to put particular industries, in their entirety, on the do not buy list, or object to companies based on one criterion."

Novick says he's going forward with the plan—but he'll be careful about how large the list gets.

"We're not going to put every company on the 'do-not-buy' list," Novick tells WW. "Coke is by definition damaging to human health, but I would not suggest putting them on the list unless I saw evidence that they violated other criteria."

The Mercury

Hall Monitor

This Didn't Have to Take So Long

By Denis C. Theriault

August 13, 2014

FOUR MONTHS AFTER she first screwed up her courage and publicly confronted a police oversight system that had let her down—twisting her maternal outrage into a mighty cudgel—Latoya Harris is about to taste a bittersweet victory.

No, the officers who arrested and handcuffed her nine-year-old daughter in the spring of 2013 won't ever face discipline for their shockingly harsh handling of a girl who was predictably sullen—but never violent—when they showed up at her home in New Columbia to ask about a playground fight she'd been in several days before.

And, no, Harris and her daughter won't magically forget the stress and suffering that have haunted them since.

But Harris' daughter—because of her mother's bravery—hopefully will be Portland's last small child ripped away from her family by police officers way too willing to ignore the call of common sense.

Last Wednesday, August 6, Captain Dave Famous, in charge of the Portland Police Bureau's professional standards division, addressed the same police accountability panel Harris addressed in April. And he confirmed to that board, the Citizen Review Committee, that new policies banning the arrests of children in all but the most extreme cases are under final review by Police Chief Mike Reese.

And while the details may yet shift, Famous said one major point will not:

The new rules will explicitly limit arrests of children 12 and younger—a "bright line," Famous said. It'll be the same for fingerprinting, too.

Those rules also will spell out a high threshold for determining the kind of "rare occurrence" when that "bright line" might justifiably be crossed.

"For example, a juvenile with flailing limbs or breaking property may not pose a substantial threat, while a juvenile with flailing limbs, access to weapons, and the intent to harm self, others, animals, or members may pose a substantial threat," Famous wrote in notes shared with me after the meeting. "Discussion of

such a standard through the directives process has been painstaking, viewed in the light most favorable to the juvenile."

Right now, nothing in the bureau's book of policy directives speaks to the proper handling of young children—making what Officers Matthew Huspek and David McCarthy did perfectly legal. That's why they didn't face discipline, even after Harris filed a complaint with the city's Independent Police Review (IPR) office thinking that they should.

It's important to give the police bureau credit for eventually coming around—acknowledging what's clearly a policy gap—and moving forward with so much alacrity once it did.

Harris has separately filed a tort claim over her daughter's arrest, and the city could have held out for a day in court before making changes.

"They are actually going to write a directive that goes further than what we recommended," says Mark McKechnie, director of legal advocacy group Youth, Rights, and Justice and one of the experts who helped advise the bureau on changes.

But let's not forget something else: The bureau knew all of this before Harris came forward—and did nothing.

I was at that CRC meeting in April, stunned by what Harris had to say and insistent that we talk more over the next few days. I relayed Harris' tale in the Mercury the next week ["Arrested at Age Nine," News, April 16]—shocking juvenile justice advocates, horrifying parents, and raising eyebrows in city hall.

And that's when the bureau decided to do something. The actual arrest wasn't enough. Harris' complaint wasn't enough. Disdain from IPR wasn't enough. But we were. The people and our anger. And Harris' refusal to take no for an answer.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Portland officials forming street parking advisory committee

*By Inka Bajandas
August 13, 2014*

The Portland Bureau of Transportation is seeking volunteers to serve on a street parking advisory committee.

The 20-member committee will advise PBOT staffers working on a yearlong effort to update the city's Area Parking Permit Program, said Grant Morehead, transportation planner and project manager. PBOT is using a \$225,000 Oregon Department of Transportation grant to refine the parking permit program for neighborhood residents and people who work in non-metered areas to better respond to a surge in mixed-use development, he said.

"As the city continues to grow, our approach to parking is going to have to change," he said.

PBOT staffers will analyze parking demand in five areas selected with the help of advisory committee members. Morehead said he expects the areas to include places like Southeast Division Street and Hollywood that have experienced a lot of mixed-use development, as well neighborhoods like Northeast 42nd Avenue that could follow suit.

The committee will hold its first meeting in mid-September, and members are expected to meet six to eight times through June 2015. A proposal with committee recommendations to update the city parking permit system could be ready to go before Portland City Council by next summer or fall, Morehead said.

PBOT is seeking committee members representing a variety of interests. These include residents and business owners in mixed-use corridors, neighborhood and business associations, property developers, residential property managers, and commercial business interests.

More information about the committee and application materials is available at www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/83231.