

## The Oregonian

### Portland street fund: Latest public hearing features few new ideas, more distrust of city spending

By Andrew Theen  
January 08, 2015

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That overture was largely ignored.

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Thursday's public hearing came one day after Hales shifted the street funding discussion on its head with a new plan to seek a public "advisory vote" on several funding plans in May. At the start of Thursday's hearing, Hales asked participants to talk only about what they would like to see on the ballot.

But instead of new ideas, many of the roughly 30 people who testified said the city needs to do a better job of setting spending priorities and cutting programs before asking for new money.

Laura Jackson, who said she was a former transportation planner in Washington state, criticized the city for routinely paving roads — then having them torn up months or years later for utility work.

Jackson said the city needs to gain trust back from residents. "I'm willing to give you guys money to do this," she said of the transportation package, "but you've got to give something back."

Hales urged people to attend yet-to-be-scheduled budget hearings once the 2015-16 budget process ramps up to offer specific suggestions for cutting programs or services.

Commissioner Steve Novick said it would be a nice change of pace to have budget meetings where residents pushed for cuts. Normally, the meetings are flush with advocates and interest groups asking for more money for various programs.

Portlanders should know more in the next two weeks about funding options the City Council hopes to send to voters as possible ways to raise \$44 million each year for street safety and maintenance projects.

Of the options floated by Hales as likely to appear as a yes-or-no option on the May ballot, the gas tax increase received the most approval.

Bob Clark with the Oregon Taxpayer Association, said he could support a 10 cent gas tax increase. Hales said the proposal could go as high as 20 cents a gallon, but Novick said 13 cents was a likely alternative.

Roger Hull, a Northeast Portland resident, said another property tax levy would be too much to bear considering his bill increased 30 percent in one year.

"When I was young, I used to read about old people being taxed out of their homes," Hull said. "Now I'm old."

He urged the City Council to "figure out how every person who benefits from whatever it is, pays for whatever it is."

Clark suggested that the City Council use an expected \$19 million in new discretionary general fund money in the upcoming fiscal year entirely for street maintenance projects.

According to the city elections officer, Deborah Scroggin, the City Council has until Jan. 22 to submit formal plans in order to make the May ballot. Commissioner Amanda Fritz said there will probably be another public hearing Jan. 20 for residents to review the entire proposal.

The business portion of the \$44 million proposal appears to be in limbo. On Wednesday, Hales and Novick indicated that the City Council would vote on the business fee this month, but it wouldn't be enacted until a residential fee is approved.

## Portland street fee hearing Thursday night: Follow coverage, share your thoughts

*By Michelle Brence  
January 08, 2015*

The Portland City Council is holding a public hearing Thursday night at 6 p.m. to gather more reaction on proposals for raising money to fix Portland streets.

The process became more complicated Wednesday after Mayor Charlie Hales scrapped the latest proposal -- one in a string introduced since May, with most meeting heavy opposition -- in favor of asking voters what they think.

The new, new plan is to take some nonbinding options to voters in May, then to pursue the one that gets the most votes, even if none get 50 percent.

Still following? Finally, opponents could still challenge whatever option the City Council approves by referring it back to voters.

City streets are in bad shape because of years of neglected maintenance, but Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick have yet to find a solution that the public -- and at least one of the other three City Council members -- can support.

Commissioners Dan Saltzman and Nick Fish have said they think voters should have a binding say. Commissioner Amanda Fritz, considered the swing vote, rejected the last plan as placing too high a burden on Portland's low-income residents. They haven't said what they think of the new plan to ask voters to weigh in on nonbinding options -- a vote expected to cost \$100,000 to \$300,000.

Overall, Hales and Novick are seeking a way to raise upward of \$40 million a year, half from a fee or tax on residents, half from a fee on businesses, nonprofits and agencies.

The business side of their proposals has been less controversial, but Hales said in a statement Wednesday that it won't take effect before there's agreement on the residential fee.

What do you think? Do you like the idea of having a say on options? Do you have an idea of what you would support among options such as a gas tax, income tax or flat fee based on income? Are the roads in your area in bad shape? Share your thoughts in the comments below.

You can watch the public hearing here and follow along on Twitter by following @cityhallwatch and #pdxStreetFee (with a feed embedded below). And check back later tonight for a full report on Thursday night's hearing from Andrew Theen.

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## **Portland street fund: If City Council pursues it, special May advisory vote could be costly**

*By Andrew Theen  
January 08, 2015*

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales' idea to send several street funding options to voters in May could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to administer, according to the city's elections officer.

On Wednesday, Hales announced that the City Council would send a menu of street funding plans to voters in May to determine the most popular method of collecting \$22 million a year from residents.

The options could include a local gas tax, progressive income tax, flat street fee, local-option levy or other measure.

Read more: Full details on the background of the street fund discussion and the latest twist

An advisory vote is nonbinding, meaning the City Council could ultimately select its own preference, rather than pursue the public's preferred choice.

The advisory vote is only for the residential half of the \$44 million street fund. The City Council is expected to vote on the nonresidential half of the plan, business, nonprofit, government agencies' share, later this month. But the business fee wouldn't take effect until after the city approves the residential fee.

Deborah Scroggin, Portland's elections officer, said because 2015 is an off-year election, Portland's share of the election bill could be incredibly variable. She said while it's too soon to give a precise number, based on previous off-year elections, Portland could owe anywhere from \$100,000 to \$300,000.

The price is determined by the number of measures included on the ballot and in the Voters' Pamphlet. There will probably be statements in favor and against for each option, and that takes up space in the pamphlet.

Scroggin noted that Portland's share of the cost would be higher since other large public entities aren't expected to send measures to the ballot.

The deadline for the City Council to send the street fee proposals and specific ballot language to the auditor's office is Jan. 22, according to Scroggin.

Election Day would be May 19.

## **Portland's new police chief: 'We can do anything we put our mind to...let's make a difference'**

*By Maxine Bernstein  
January 08, 2015*

Last summer, Susanne O'Dea said she flew to Portland from her home in Virginia to visit with her eldest son, Larry.

"I remember we were just sitting around and Larry said, 'Maybe I should retire,' " his mother recalled.

But his mother knew he had to be kidding. Her son had risen through the ranks of the Portland Police Bureau to serve as an assistant chief. Susanne O'Dea said she told him, "No, you're not done here."

And she was right.

On Thursday, his mother and father watched as Larry O'Dea, 52, was sworn in as the city's 45th chief of police. Portland Mayor Charlie Hales appointed O'Dea to succeed Mike Reese, who retired.

O'Dea, a 28-year bureau veteran, thanked his father, Lawrence O'Dea Jr., an Army veteran, for passing down his sense of service and work ethic, and his mother for having faith in his abilities.

"My mom told me you can do anything that you put your mind to," O'Dea said, speaking before a standing-room-only crowd in the second-floor auditorium of the Portland Building. "Those words matter."

O'Dea spoke after he was formally sworn in, two commanders were promoted to assistant chief, two captains were promoted to commander, five lieutenants were promoted to captain and two new officers were sworn in.

O'Dea has added a fourth assistant chief to his command staff, promoting Kevin Modica, an African American bureau veteran, who will oversee community engagement efforts. He also promoted Robert Day, most recently Central Precinct commander, as an assistant chief.

O'Dea called it a "defining moment for police," one in which officers must focus on relationship-based policing to rebuild the community's trust in the Police Bureau.

The new chief described his vision: He wants to build an organization that has diverse members and diverse leadership, "so anyone in the community can look inside and see someone that looks like them."

He plans to extend education courses about how race affects the job police do to the rank-and-file, and with the hiring soon of a bureau equity manager, make sure the bureau's hiring and promotion policies are inclusive.

"A well-trained, well-educated diverse workforce that is working on community priorities is our path to continue to build trust in the community, as well as allowing us to tailor our public safety response to what different segments of the community require," O'Dea said.

To move forward, officers must also reach out to the community's youth, he said.

O'Dea thanked a group of Rosa Parks Elementary School students for accepting his invitation to attend the ceremony. Six fourth- and fifth-graders sat in the front row with their principal and assistant principal.

O'Dea credited Sgt. Willie Halliburton for establishing a relationship with the students. He'd routinely stop in and have lunch at the school when he patrolled the New Columbia neighborhood.

"It shows the impact one bureau member can have," O'Dea said. "That relationship is so critical."

And O'Dea told the students that police officers are here to help them.

"We are here to commit to you to do the very best in serving you," he said.

O'Dea told the newly promoted command staff and two new hires that they were there because they earned their new badges. One of the new officers hired, Eric Tomlinson, 34, is a Jefferson High School graduate who grew up in Northeast Portland and said he wants to make a difference in his own community.

"You're here because I trust you in helping move this bureau forward," he told the group.

"Remember, like Mom says, we can do anything we put our mind to ... and let's make a difference," O'Dea said.

O'Dea served as a reserve officer in Fairfax County, Va., and a reserve deputy sheriff in Clackamas County before joining Portland police in 1986. He was appointed as an assistant chief in November 2008, and most recently served as assistant chief of operations.

Mayor Charlie Hales announced in October that he had selected O'Dea to succeed Mike Reese as chief, without conducting formal interviews or a national search process. He said he was confident that O'Dea was the best person for the job. The mayor said that national searches are "occasionally doable," but can be destructive as well.

On Thursday, Hales urged bureau members to remember the words of former United Kingdom prime minister and policing luminary Sir Robert Peel: "The police are the public and the public are the police."

"He got it right. We are working everyday to get it right," Hales said.

Hales expressed support for the bureau, called the relationship between the police and the community in Portland "sound" but said there's room for improvement.

O'Dea has said his immediate priorities will be carrying out U.S. Justice Department reforms, drafting a police budget, overseeing the anticipated changeover to a new regional police database in April and hiring a new equity and diversity manager.

He anticipates some structural staffing changes in patrol, he said. He's considering broadening patrol districts into larger sectors covered by teams of officers to have more flexibility to fill in when officers are off. He also wants to make sure there are enough officers assigned to patrol operations before staffing specialty divisions, such as gang enforcement or street crimes.

After the swearing-in ceremony was done, the six Rosa Parks students in the front stood and reflected on their visit.

Treveyontae Charity, 11, said he expected to see the police in uniform, but most were in their civilian clothes for the event.

"I liked how they talked about how they work to keep this place safe," said Arianna Rice, 11.

And Isaac Salcido had clearly listened to the new chief's words closely.

"I like that he took his mom's advice," Salcido said, "and that he's here and he has a good career."

## **The Portland Tribune**

### **Street fee advisory measure could be spendy, not that helpful**

*By Jim Redden  
January 8, 2015*

As the City Council prepared to consider a possible advisory ballot on the proposed street fee, it appeared such an election could cost Portland hundreds of thousands of dollars and not accurately measure which option city residents prefer.

Although Hales has proposed an advisory measure on the May 19 special election ballot, it was unclear what it would involve. But such a vote could cost a lot of money and not be all that helpful.

State election law has already set May 19 as a "special election," primarily for special district board members, but also for measures that any government wants to put on the ballot.

For elections held in Multnomah County, the cost of such elections is usually around \$400,000. The biggest factor is how many voters return their vote-by-mail ballots. The higher the return, the more temporary workers the county has to hire.

The final cost is split proportionally among those governments with candidates and measures on the ballot. Larger governments pay more, and costs also increase with the number of candidates and measures each government places on the ballot. No other jurisdiction within the city limits has placed a measure on the Portland ballot yet.

Portland's cost could be between \$100,000 and \$200,000, according to Deborah Scroggins, the city's elections officer. But Scroggins says the final figure depends on many factors that won't be known until after all the votes are counted.

It is hard to predict how many Portlanders would even vote on the street fee measure. May elections in odd-numbered years do not generate as many votes as those held in even-numbered years, when state, regional, county or city candidates are on the May primary election ballot.

A good example is the May 2009 special election where LaVonne Griffin-Valade ran unopposed to replace City Auditor Gary Blackmer, who had resigned. There were about 314,000 registered voters in Portland at that time. Only 38,681 actually returned ballots in the race, however, or about 12 percent.

But participation was much higher in the May 2013 special election because a controversial measure on the ballot — fluoridating Portland's water supply. There were about 331,000 registered voters in Portland then and over 164,000 voters returned ballots, nearly 50 percent.

Although the street fee is also controversial, the proposed ballot measure would only be advisory. In contrast, in 2013, Portland voters actually repealed the fluoridation plan approved by the council. If participation is closer to 2009 levels, even the most popular option might be supported by less than 10 percent of all registered city voters.

And Portland could spend between \$100,000 and \$200,000 to get that result, according to Deborah Scroggins, the city's elections officer. The cost will depend on how many other candidates and measures are on the Portland ballot. The cost is paid for by the different jurisdictions that have candidates or measures on the ballot.

## **Final street fee vote postponed again**

*By Jim Redden  
January 8, 2015*

The final vote on the Portland street fee apparently will not happen on Jan. 14 — not even just the advisory ballot measure Mayor Charles Hales proposed for the May 19 special election ballot.

The Jan. 8 evening hearing had been billed as the final public hearing on the proposal. But once it began, Hales said a Jan. 20 council hearing has been tentatively scheduled to discuss what options would be included in the measure.

And the council also voted to send the nonresidential portion of the measure back to Commissioner Steve Novick's office for further work, meaning a final version could not be considered by the council for at least another week — and one more week would be required before a vote could be held on it under council rules.

Hales and Novick proposed the fee in May 2014 to raise around \$50 million a year for maintenance and safety projects. It has been revised many times and now includes residential and nonresidential portions that would each raise around \$23 million a year, or \$46 million total.

As the hearing opened, Hales said the council only wanted to hear what options witnesses want to be included on the ballot. Early ideas included a gas tax and a payroll tax similar to the one TriMet is authorized to collect to fund transit services.

But perennial critic Joe Walsh called the advisory vote "toilet paper that is only useful if you go to the bathroom."

## Willamette Week

### Portland Cab Companies Prepare to Fight Uber with the "Transportation Fairness Alliance"

By Aaron Mesh  
January 8, 2015

Mayor Charlie Hales is hoping to solve the dilemma posed by ride-sharing giant Uber with two months of deregulating the cab industry—an era nicknamed "Taxis Gone Wild." Instead, the cab companies have gotten organized. Five taxi companies announced today they've formed a lobbying group called the Transportation Fairness Alliance.

The group—which includes Radio Cab, Green Cab, Portland Taxi Cab, Union Cab, Broadway Cab and its subsidiary Sassy's Cab—will be visiting newspapers next week to argue why Uber needs to play by the same rules as licensed taxis.

The alliance is an effort at solidarity from a fractious industry.

Existing cab companies have for decades lobbied City Hall for more permits for themselves—while asking to bar new companies.

Meanwhile, cabbies have said the way the industry currently operates (with drivers paying their companies for access to cabs) keeps them from making decent wages. And those drivers have tried to block any new permits, which they argue could destroy their livelihood.

Cabbies objected to the launching of both Green Cab and Union Cab—but both these companies are now part of the unified front against Uber, which lets drivers turn their own cars into de facto taxis.

Uber is also doubling down on its political power, hiring two government insiders in New York, where the company is trying to keep from turning over its trip data to regulators. (Portland hopes to get similar data this spring.)

Fast Company reports:

*The company's recent activities in New York are indicative of its headaches and tactics. In the last week, the company has hired two well-connected political insiders to join its New York policy and communications team: Matthew Wing, Governor Andrew Cuomo's former press secretary, and Michael Allegritti, a failed congressional candidate and former director at the Partnership for New York, the city's most influential business association.*

## The Portland Mercury

### LIVE BLOG! The Street Fee! The Kobayashi Maru Edition!

By Denis C. Theriault  
January 8, 2015

No-win scenarios don't have to be no-win scenarios. Assuming you have the wits to change the rules binding that scenario before you lose. In the beloved Star Trek universe, that's how Captain James T. Kirk escaped the famed Kobayashi Maru test back when he was a feckless cadet.

And now, in the somewhat less-beloved universe of Portland City Hall, that's what Mayor Charlie Hales has just done to reset the conversation on the bedeviled street fee proposal he and Commissioner Steve Novick have been wrestling with since last spring. Last night, lacking a third vote for that proposal, Hales announced that he was scrapping half of the plan—a residential fee—in favor of a May 2015 advisory vote in which voters would be asked to choose which funding mechanism they'd prefer best.

Which means tonight's 6 pm hearing—a rare event in city hall—isn't about what we thought it'd be about. Instead of mostly hearing about a plan to levy an income-graded gas-consumptioj fee, Novick's last effort announced late last month, we'll be hearing about an income tax, a flat user fee, that same gas fee, and a straight-up gas tax. It'll still be a hard sell.

We've also heard about the need for new money—with Hales holding up copies of an audit from 2013 that damned the Bureau of Transportation for spending less on paving as it paid for bridges and light rail and streetcars, and the council for not spending more on transportation priorities as it spent on several other priorities and navigated budget cuts in recent years.

"I've brought copies in case anyone needs a refresher," Hales said.

The first speaker is Robert McCullough, a deep skeptic of the street fee, an economic consultant (google "Enron"), and president of the powerful group of Southeast neighborhoods known as SE Uplift. Keep reading! McCullough's group sued for supportive documentation, paying big bucks for it, and now that group won't sue anymore.

### **6:13**

The business fee, deemed less controversial, isn't going to be scrapped. McCullough's poring through SE Uplift's analysis of that plan, all the same, detailing questions and identified potential inconsistencies. He wants PBOT's "transportation" section in its supporting documents to boot a tattoo parlor and include Union Pacific and an airline. He also says a colonic cleaning company run by three women is listed as the city's largest employer.

### **6:16**

McCullough's point in chronicling errors is that those mistakes will wind up skewing revenue estimates and maybe require litigation.

"Obviously there'll be time now" to fix those glitches, Hales said, "before we take this back up." Hales says he hopes McCullough would volunteer his time—and Novick joked that PBOT's new year's resolution was "to spend more time" with McCullough.

After that, the business fee was referred back to Novick's office. It will come back and be paired with whatever other measure emerges.

### **6:21**

Hales says he only wants people to talk about which revenue option they're for, or that they want to vote on. He doesn't want to hear about which ones people don't like—they can campaign against that one. And if you have general budget concerns?

"If you're concerned about how we spend the transportation dollars we already have ... that is not the subject of tonight's hearing," Hales said, reminding everyone that the budget forums this spring are a great place to have that discussion.

Whatever makes the ballot will have to raise the \$23 million the scrapped residential/fee tax would have raised. Hales also said the plans floated in May won't need to have every detail fleshed out. They'd need to know how what rate structure each tax or fee would contain, for example, but not details. Hales also seems to be foreclosing on a blend of approaches, which has been suggested before, dismissing a bicycle registration fee as incapable of raising \$23 million.

"What we're asking you tonight is what you're for."

### **6:25**

Novick's also mentioned a property tax bond, floated by the Oregonian's editorial board and a sales tax, which he says would be deeply unpopular.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz asked Hales to clarify whether he planned to hold a meeting, as he's discussed with his colleagues, on Tuesday, January 20. That would be when plans for the ballot would be firmed up. In somewhat good news, some 27 people have signed up to testify—many fewer people than in past hearings.

McCullough's back up briefly. He's leaving for his anniversary dinner, "with a much more beautiful person."

Fritz just clarified again that the plan in May is to refer several ballot items, not a list of suggestions on one ballot item.

### **6:31**

Gary Sargent, the second speaker, just invoked a recent audit of the streetcar system as proof people lack trust in how government funds transportation. "PBOT has serious issues in reading that audit," he says. "That's very concerning as a business man."

He suggested a payroll tax—which Hales wasn't terribly quick to embrace while noting that it's been a major revenue source for Trimet. Sargent also thanked the council for agreeing to work with McCullough.

Craig Rogers, another frequent street fee critic/city hall visitor, was quick to come back with what he's "for": He wants a vote, not city council action, on whatever emerges. And a sunset provision. He also wants money for unpaved streets. Hales asked him which method he preferred, and Rogers said he wants a gas tax.

Fritz asked him if he'd like to see whatever came back from the advisory vote to then go back before voters again all by itself. "Yes I would."

### **6:35**

Frequent city hall visitor Joe Walsh says the council should just screw up its courage and pick something that's honorable and put it before voters on its merits. He knows the city needs to pave its roads. But an advisory vote?

"An advisory vote is toilet paper," he said. "That's what it is. It's useless. Unless you have to go to the bathroom."

### **6:38**

Drink for your first "what we have here is a failure to communicate."

This same fellow, reading from carefully written and lyrical remarks, is also describing bicyclists as "kamikazes" and he wants us all to know that "bicyclists are not royalty." He wants bike fees as "part of a total funding package"—and he wants to hold the lack of that fee over riders' heads with a promise not to build any more bike infrastructure.

### **6:43**

A woman is "for the city having some skin in the game." Hales is challenging her about the guidelines he sketched out. She doesn't want Barbur Boulevard improvements or light rail. "Why don't you just put some things on hold? Why do citizens have to pay for this again." Her property taxes are more than \$8,000 a year.

Additional money for streets without new revenue, it should be mentioned, would have to come from the parks bureau, the police bureau, the fire bureau, the housing bureau. Fritz is reminding her that the \$4 billion budget for the city includes utility funds. The general fund is \$400 million, Fritz notes.

"But we all know you made exceptions when voting for Randy [Leonard's] cockamamie things," the woman says.

"We don't get to revisit the past," Hales says. "Look at our budget, tell us what to cut, and tell us what you'd like to spend more on."

### **6:53**

Another speaker wants to talk about how money for streets would be spent more than on which mechanism is best. He lives on 130th just off Powell Boulevard, and he's grateful that "safety projects" have been a large part of the conversation. But then he says what he wants most: a "progressive income tax."

"People who can afford to pay for these services need to pay for these services," he says. "People making \$9.15 an hour can't afford to be nickel-and-dimed with user fees and gas taxes."

Next is someone who doesn't "buy the premise of your question" that we need money. He says PBOT Director Leah Treat shouldn't make any more money than the same job in Chicago, which is bigger. And he's dubious about a posted job in which PBOT's seeking to pay as much as \$100,000 for communications director. He also doesn't trust Hales with his tax dollars after hearing that Hales' office's diversity training last year was done at a resort (which is true!) and not somewhere pedestrian in town.

He wants an option on the ballot in which people can just say they want the city to cut money and "this is not okay."

"Let's try cutting something. Let's cut from the streetcar. Let's see if people desire it."

**6:59**

Ann Sanderson, the salon owner who runs Stop the Street Fee, reminded everyone that the city already did a poll last year asking which options were popular and which weren't. And, after that, the city convened working groups to refine something based on that work.

She asks why a straightforward campaign was too expensive but an advisory vote isn't. She says don't do anything. She's not anti-tax, "I'm anti-bad tax.... Until you come up with something that works, you should vote for nothing at all."

Hales asks what Sanderson's suggestion is. She doesn't have one. "Now you're punting. And punting's not good enough for a leader."

Hales says the city's been punting for 14 years. Sanderson says she spent her summer on a working group. "You only want to hear what you want to hear." She says everyone ignored her ideas months ago. Hales said to "please send them."

The speaker after Sanderson wonders why we can't have a question in May asking voters, also advisory, whether they want to formally bless whatever wins the popularity contest. He wants a gas tax. Hales says the numbers aren't firm, but could be as high as 20 cents a gallon.

Novick says it could be 13 cents, depending on whether Multnomah County would waive existing revenue-sharing agreements for the new revenue or not.

**7:05**

Hales is finally asked how much a special election might cost. Depending what else is on the ballot, he says, it'll cost \$100,000 to \$300,000. The election will already have Portland Public Schools and some other races.

He also says he was told today that the Goldschmidt administration once did an advisory ballot.

Fish asked if the cost would be far lower if the city waited until a dense ballot like November 2016's. Hales says that would be the case.

What if the results in May are inconclusive, Fish asks. That's likely, and anticipated by Hales' office. The same speaker says he'd support a "cocktail" of mechanisms, as Fish puts it.

**7:16**

Hales is back to the audit, pointing out to one speaker that the city's long term spending on paving has been in decline. And he's quibbling with a 2009 decision, since rescinded, to focus money on arterial streets and not residential streets. He then walked over to the speaker and handed over a copy—a moment I better see on the news tonight.

Fish is asking if Portland's unique in its crumbling state. Novick says we're not. Los Angeles came short, he says, of the two-thirds threshold California requires for revenue measures. Novick also mentions the decision in the 1980s to divert utility license fee from transportation to other bureaus, like parks, to offset Measure 5's effects on property taxes. Hales remembered that the hope in Measure 5 was that Oregonians might finally approve a sales tax. [crickets]

And how about the gas tax—which has grown "less robust," as Fish notes, thanks to conservation and fuel efficiency gains. He's not picking a side yet, he says. But he's airing a legitimate concern when it comes to relying on a local gas tax to pay for funding.

"The primary revenue source has not kept pace with inflation," Fish says, explaining why the city's asking for revenue.

"We've been having this discussion in the city of Portland for 14 years," Hales says, recounting failed attempts to persuade Salem to raise the state gas tax and failed attempts (by Hales in his commissioner incarnation and Sam Adams in his) to levy a local street fee. "We've not been totally unaware of this problem. We have been unwilling to face it squarely."

**7:26**

A list of "should we stop wasting money" questions. On things like bubble curbs, speed bumps, bike lanes, urban renewal, the planning bureau, energy efficiency, etc. Some of those things, except for urban renewal, were equated with danger and lost lives. The rest were equated with cronyism and corruption and waste.

Next, though, someone follows the rules of a sort, saying what he's "for." It's the fellow who comes to all of these meetings suggesting Chicagoland-style city registration stickers that would put on windshields.

*Revenue from the Chicago City Vehicle Sticker Sales Program funds the repair and maintenance of more than 4,000 miles of Chicago streets.*

*All Chicago residents using his or her vehicle in the City must have a Chicago City Vehicle Sticker, regardless of where the vehicle is registered. Failure to do so can result in a minimum \$200.00 ticket and additional fees. Tickets can be issued every day until vehicle is in compliance with the Wheel Tax.*

*Motorcycles and mopeds are also required to pay the "Wheel Tax." The City Clerk's Office sells special motorcycle medallions that must be affixed to the rear license plate. These are only sold at City Clerk Offices and online.*

*Vehicle stickers are valid upon purchase, meaning when you get your new vehicle sticker, remove your old sticker and replace it with the new one. Your expiration month and year is printed on your vehicle sticker.*

*Vehicle stickers expire on the final day of the expiration month.*

Fish says the council should probably explain the advice it's been given. It's been construed as like a vehicle registration fee, and "we're preempted from doing a vehicle registration fee. Only the county can do it. It's an elegant solution in my mind."

Hales says it might be worth getting a "formal opinion" on whether Portland could do it all the same.

"I'd like to be sure it's something we can do," says Novick, explaining it wouldn't be good enough if "the city attorney's office says it's a crazy idea but that it just might work."

"Let's get a good solid look at it," says Hales.

**7:37**

Fish presses someone complaining about trust to stop being negative and offer up a solution. He's now done that as much as Hales has—gestures that seem to be trying to put up a tent around the entire council moving forward instead of just three commissioners.

The speaker, Hiram Asmuth, says he might like a vehicle tax, then.

Asmuth asks why the city's out to take over state-managed roads like Powell and 82nd, which Hales calls "orphan highways" in the city. Hales says Market downtown and Sandy have both been converted before and that it makes sense for safety and livability reasons. But first he wants ODOT to put those roads in good shape first—maybe through a higher state gas tax. Powell alone will cost millions to fix up, Hales says.

"That's the theory," Hales says. "There's been a huge hue and cry from neighbors" upset that ODOT wants to treat potential main streets "like a state highway."

Fish brings up the Multnomah County-controlled Willamette River bridges, which Adams tried to talk about taking over a few years back.

"We couldn't do any worse than ODOT on a couple of these roads," Fish says. "We shouldn't have multiple players providing basic services."

A lot of speakers are receiving free dispensation to go over their allotted three minutes, in light of the back and forth with commissioners on policy points and questions.

**7:50**

Novick found the email from the city attorney's office explaining why, in that attorney's mind, a vehicle tax is too much like a pre-empted vehicle registration fee. The following words stuck out in state law: "The recording of a vehicle for use within a jurisdiction."

Fish and Hales both insisted on taking a fresh look at the vehicle sticker all the same.

Fritz defended the city's budgeting by noting that her bureau, which just saw a successful bond renewal last fall, also has endured cuts and deferred maintenance.

"It's not just transportation which doesn't have enough money," says Fritz. The parks bond is worth some \$68 million, but that's "\$68 million out of \$365 million."

After that, an elderly homeowner is complaining about his rising property tax bill, and his confusion about things like compression and decompression. "And I'm a former Navy diver, so I know something about decompression."

The speaker says he maybe likes a gas tax, but worries it won't capture people who live on the edges of the city and can fuel up just over the border. "Somehow they should contribute." Fish agreed that's one of the problems with the gas tax, for the second time publicly identifying a flaw with that mechanism. Which means? If it somehow comes out on top this spring, he probably won't be going along with Novick and Hales' promise to back the top choice.

The same guy says he also over-paid his arts tax as a PERS retiree. Revenue Director Thomas Lannom handed him his card at Fish's urging. He says he doesn't mind paying it, because he likes the arts. "I don't want the money back. I think everybody ought to pay."

### **8:00**

TMI? Maybe? Too bad. I just got back from a bathroom break. I'm listening to a woman quibbling with the business fee documents and how home-based businesses would fare. Earlier, she apparently asked why PBOT and government utilities don't maintain a central database to avoid expensive conflicts. Fish is complimenting Novick for getting that work done, at least with the city's water and sewer utilities.

Novick says PBOT director Treat is actually leading on that. And, he notes, small home-based businesses with \$50,000 less in revenue are already exempt. Fritz told the speaker her issues, raised in email, were very, very helpful.

The next speaker reluctantly endorses a property tax increase. "It's painful. But I don't mind paying taxes if I get services."

### **8:22**

We seem to be down to the final speakers. First up among the likely last three is the new president of the Hollywood Boosters. (He's also on the board of Venture Portland, the umbrella group for the city's official neighborhood business districts.)

He thinks the income tax would have the "less impact" on people on fixed incomes. He's not pitching that in his official capacities. But he'd like to see the income tax coupled with efforts to bring TriMet and other government partners into the conversation. Or maybe some discussion about getting neighborhood to pay for local improvement districts to pay for road increases in their immediate areas.

"The businesses that have terrible roads, they could make a push to raise the revenue to improve their roads," he says. "That could be a win-win for all parts of the city."

The next speaker asks what the criteria will be for choosing which option will be the one chosen after the vote. Will it be the one with the most votes?

Hales says "that's the basic idea."

Fish says "each of us will give it the weight we think is appropriate. The harder question is what happens when" none of the items wins majority support. That was the speaker's real issue, he says. Fish says that's why it's just an "advisory vote." The speaker favors a fee based on road wear.

Now comes the last speaker, who lives "on 16th and Ash, in Southeast." He says the sewer projects near his home sometimes reflected good work, but otherwise "ruined" things. Fish, noting the joint work between BES and PBOT, asks if the man might give him specifics after the meeting. "If there's substandard work, I'd like to know about it."

The man says "the other issues I have are futuristic issues." Honda, he says, is coming up with new fuel systems using hydrogen, further hobbling the gas tax. And studded tires. Ditch 'em. Hales says the council has beseeched Salem for more local control on limiting their use.

"They cause a huge amount of damage," says Hales, lamenting the "trenches" they create in overtaxed highways.

Novick says studded tires maybe cause \$5 million in damage in Portland, out of \$40 million statewide.

Given the "last word," the man say let's not have a "hodgepodge" of ideas. "Let's keep this as simple as possible."

Except he's not the last speaker. One more speaker, Lightning, comes up. He gets Novick to smile by referencing a Billy Preston song "Will It Round in Circles." Lightning says the city should hire McCullough as a consultant.

Novick and Hales both joke that the city can't afford his rates... but Hales allows that McCullough, as SE Uplift president, might be willing to volunteer his expertise a little bit more than he has. Lightning just doesn't want any litigation.

Novick promises "we won't bill any businesses based on the estimates we've made." If the city adopts the fee, Novick promises, businesses would have to submit all kinds of new information they hadn't previously submitted, meaning there's an excellent chance that actual tax billings would reflect actual and accurate data.

"Even with what we're asking for, we're not even stopping the bleeding," Novick says when asked why the city doesn't consider asking for less money.

**8:23**

Hales says he wants to refer the fees to Novick's office and wants to come back the week of the 20th, so in two weeks, with language for a resolution or resolutions on the language for whatever advisory ballot questions the council decides. It's all over now. Meeting adjourned.

## **Amanda Fritz Sounds Cautionary Notes Over New Street Fee Advisory Vote**

*By Denis C. Theriault  
January 8, 2015*

The immediate political upheaval triggered by Commissioner Amanda Fritz's Monday dismissal of Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick's latest stab at a street fee plan seemed to have settled down last night. That's when Hales' office announced it was ditching the residential half of the package, for now, in favor of an advisory vote in May asking residents to choose what they'd like instead.

But the endgame put forth by Hales and Novick—the council ostensibly enacting whichever option receives the most votes, even if none receives a majority—still may not come to pass. Because it won't be that easy.

Fritz is reserving her ultimate judgment about the advisory vote until tonight's hearing at 6 pm. But she tells the Mercury she "would not commit to doing whatever the most popular option says," echoing a similar comment from one of Commissioner Nick Fish's aides in the Oregonian last night. Those options could include a gas tax or a user fee as well as an income tax.

"I'm not going to support a regressive option," she says, noting that city code makes clear that the results of the advisory vote, no matter what they are, are not to be seen as binding. "I'm not going to support anything that doesn't exempt low-income people."

Fritz's initial announcement came days after Novick and Hales swapped out a residential income tax (already seen as not progressive enough by some) for an income-graded user fee that was supposed to be tied to gas consumption. Fritz said she wanted a tax—and that she wanted it on the November 2016 ballot, to coincide with a more liberal, higher-turnout presidential general election.

Her comments, given last night, indicate that's still the course she prefers. She's worried that an election this May would see "abysmal" turnout and be driven by a more conservative electorate.

And then there's the question of what happens if and when none of the options put before voters receive majority support. Hales' office says it's expecting that to happen (in fact, they've had this in their back pocket for months, sources say)—but Fritz wonders how that outcome would be any different from where the council is right now.

One of the complaints raised by Novick and Hales is that even though most people agree there's a funding problem for roads, it's hard to find majority support for any one solution. That's why they've refused to pick something themselves and refer it to the ballot—instead struggling to find compromises milquetoast enough that their colleagues can support without irking enough voters and business groups that an insurgent ballot challenge materializes.

That problem could easily replicate itself in an advisory vote. The top option may only have tepid support, Novick and Hales may struggle to win a third vote, and whatever's enacted may yet wind up referred by angry citizens.

"I'm not convinced that an advisory referendum is helpful," Fritz says, reminding everyone that the city's already looked for this kind of guidance and balked at the choice presented: Novick polled voters on several options last June and found that an income tax focused on the wealthy received almost supermajority support.

Fritz also explained why she's backtracked from comments back in June insisting the street fee didn't need to go before voters.

"It's become clear that no matter what we do," she says, "it's going to be referred to the ballot."

She argues that being proactive about referring something, instead of crossing one's fingers in hopes no one gathers enough signatures for a citizen referral, keeps the council with the upper hand. The council can choose which election it wants. The council can also write its own ballot title.

Says Fritz: "We should do what's right."

## **Street Fee Reset! The Residential Fee Goes Away. Instead, Hales Wants to Know Which Funding Mechanism You'd Prefer**

*By Denis C. Theriault  
January 7, 2015*

The residential portion of the Portland Street Fund (née street fee) is dead.

After trying and failing with Commissioner Steve Novick to win three votes for a combined \$41.8 million set of residential and business fees, after months of wrangling and changes, Mayor Charlie Hales has announced a new plan ahead of a planned hearing set for tomorrow night.

The city council will proceed with a vote on the business fee, deemed less controversial and having won the grudging acceptance of the Portland Business Alliance and other groups. But in what's billed a first for Portland—taking a page from cities like Seattle that have used advisory votes to shape policy—Hales will ask his colleagues to send an array of possible non-business proposals before residents this coming May—with voters asked to choose the one they like best. The business fee wouldn't be implemented without whatever companion measure emerges.

According to a statement released at 5 tonight, the mayor's office says those options "likely will include an increased gas tax; a progressive income tax; a local-option property tax levy; and other mechanisms."

"This vote will identify the city's answer to public funding for street maintenance and safety," Hales says in the statement. "From the beginning, I've said the options are 'Do this, do something else, or do nothing.' And 'do nothing' isn't acceptable. That hasn't changed. We will ask the voters to pick from the array of funding options, and we'll adopt the one with the most 'yes' votes."

Hales also gave the Mercury a fresh quote:

"Other City Councils have been stymied by the issue of paying to fix our deteriorating streets. For me, this hasn't been 14 months of hearings, it's been 14 years of hearings. We can't kick the can down the road. This proposal accepts the reality that our streets need funding, and the reality that all funding mechanisms draw criticism. We cannot let that lead us into saying, 'oh, well. We tried. Next City Council: Good luck to you.'"

City hall had been abuzz all day Wednesday that something major was in the works leading up to tomorrow's hearing. But details were held tight about what kind of shift might be in the offing, other than fingers pointing up to the mayor's office—which took another beating this week at the hands of the Oregonian's editorial board. And, indeed, it's telling that Hales' name is on the new proposal, and not Novick's.

As I wrote in this week's Hall Monitor, Commissioner Dan Saltzman loomed as the last, best chance to save the proposal Hales and Novick had worked up late last month—an income-graded gas-consumption fee that replaced an income tax sought by several advocates and former likely third vote Commissioner Amanda Fritz.

Wooing Saltzman was an uncomfortable place to be, given his previous insistence that whatever came forward go to voters first. But it became necessary after Fritz, on Monday, announced her opposition to the new gas fee. Turns out, a promise to refer the street fund to voters in 2020 wasn't enough of an enticement for Saltzman, whose staff closed shop early today for an off-site event.

I'll update with reaction. Read the full statement from Hales here (pdf).

Update 5:20 PM: I'm told Hales spent much of Wednesday shopping the new proposal around to his colleagues. After tomorrow's hearing, Hales' spokesman, Dana Haynes, says the mayor's office will work with Novick's office and the city's revenue bureau and attorneys to craft the options that would be included in the advisory vote.

Novick also has since sent out a statement saying he endorses the plan, reminding everyone that when a constituent once suggested something similar, he said it was "an intriguing idea."

He name-checked some of the more vocal critics of the dashed plan, SE Uplift president Robert McCullough and economic consultant Eric Fruits (and the O) and said the genius of the advisory vote is that it solves the problem of the council choosing one option and everyone else with a different favorite option making common cause against it.

*My concern about a public vote has been that I know that most Portlanders agree we need more money for transportation, but I'm not sure a majority can agree on any particular solution. There are people, however, who believe passionately that their favorite option would get a majority if it only went to a vote. This gives people an opportunity to campaign for their favorite options. For example, Messrs. Robert McCullough and Eric Fruits can campaign for their favorite, the gas tax. The Oregonian editorial board can campaign for its favorite, the property tax. The progressive groups, such as AARP, Oregon Walks, and the Coalition for a Livable Future, can campaign for their favorite—and my favorite too—a progressive income tax."*

Update 5:40 PM: One thing that's not yet certain: Whether Hales and Novick's colleagues will agree to anoint whatever option emerges from a 2015 advisory vote. That's especially going to be an issue if none of the three to six options listed receives majority support—because it may not leave the council in any better shape than it is right now.

But Hales is likely to get his way on having the vote all the same—a clever end-run around what looked like dead-end, keeping the dream of new transportation revenue alive and possibly setting up some other kind of change we haven't seen coming yet. Just like the last few times that's been the case.

## Daily Journal of Commerce

### City projects on tap to reduce polluted runoff entering creeks

By Inka Bajandas  
January 8, 2015

The Portland Bureau of Environmental Services is wrapping up design of concurrent projects on two Southwest Portland streets to convert ditches into swales.

Planned improvements to approximately 2,760 feet of ditches along Southwest Stephenson Street, between 35th Avenue and Boones Ferry Road, are intended to reduce stormwater runoff into nearby Tryon Creek and increase pedestrian safety with the addition of 4-foot-wide, paved shoulders, said Amin Wahab, BES Fanno-Tryon watershed manager. Similar improvements are planned for 920 feet of ditches along Southwest Hamilton Street, between 45th and 47th avenues, to reduce runoff into Fanno Creek. Combined, the projects are estimated to cost about \$330,000, Wahab said.

Currently, the ditches on Hamilton and Stephenson streets carry stormwater directly into the Fanno and Tryon creek watersheds. BES staffers identified the two streets and other side roads with unmanaged runoff as contributors to high levels of pollutants entering the waterways, Wahab said.

"We went through a process of identifying where those streets were, so Hamilton and Stephenson came to the top," he said.

Converting both streets' ditches into swales should reduce the amount of pollutants carried by stormwater into nearby creeks, Wahab said. This includes infilling the ditches and planting a combination of grasses and shrubs that filter runoff.

Construction is scheduled to start in spring or summer and wrap up by fall.

## **The Portland Business Journal**

### **City denies Gerding Edlen's bid to demolish NW historic building**

*By Jon Bell*

*January 9, 2015*

In what might seem a rare stand against one of Portland's most high-profile developers, the Portland City Council formally denied Gerding Edlen's request to demolish a historic building in a historic northwest Portland neighborhood to make way for a six-story apartment building.

As Oregon Public Broadcasting reported, the council this week adopted city staff recommendations against tearing down a nearly 100-year old building at 1727 N.W. Hoyt St. The council made a tentative decision in December to deny Gerding Edlen's request and made the official adoption of staff recommendations this week.

The Buck-Prager building, originally constructed as the Women's Hospital of Portland, was listed as one of the contributing resources in the Alphabet Historic District's National Register of Historic Places listing. Because of its role in the listing, demolition required city council's approval.

"These do not come to us very often," said Commissioner Nick Fish, "but I think we got it right this time."

## **GoLocalPDX**

### **10 Ways to Fix Portland City Hall**

*By Cornelius Swart*

*January 9, 2015*

Political insiders and community leaders say dysfunction at Portland City Hall has never been higher. GoLocalPDX spoke with over a dozen former city hall players, current insiders and activists in order to hear their ideas on how to get the Mayor and City Council back on track.

Wednesday night's announcement by Portland Mayor Charlie Hales that he would refer an advisory vote on the Portland Street Fee to voters in May has left many throwing up their hands in frustration.

The new, new plan is to let voters decide how to fund street maintenance and repair through a range of options including local levies, a gas tax, and more metered parking. The most popular option would then be voted into law by the full City Council, following the May special election. The advisory vote is the fourth city proposal on the issue since May 2014.

#### **Slides Below: 10 Ideas for Fixing Portland City Hall**

The details of the proposal are still being fleshed out, according to Dana Haynes, spokesman for the Mayor. A Thursday public hearing at City Hall offered citizens the opportunity to voice their ideas on how to generate roughly \$46 million in new revenue, but Hales and Transportation Commissioner Steve Novick offered few details on the plan announced Wednesday.

While many of the night's 27 speakers expressed their distrust of council, Hales repeatedly told speakers the purpose of the session was to hear suggestions for the street fee, not budget commentary.

"You had the money and you squandered it," said speaker Betty Sagala, who called the street fee process thus far a "terrible shame."

## **Dysfunction impedes progress**

"They have ideas that are not fully thought out," said Sandra McDonough, executive director of the Portland Business Alliance. "We never get the full details on any plan."

The alliance and others expressed vexation with the on again, off again proposals for new revenue. While voters express their distrust of City Hall and the street fee campaign, inside the building the situation may be just as bad. Critics say that the eight-month long public wrangling over the street fee is a reflection of a more intractable problem at City Hall: No one gets along.

Most attribute the problem to a lack of communication between the Mayor and other commissioners. Portland's unique commissioner formed government -- essentially a city council made of five mayors -- is driven by consensus and relationship building.

City Hall's strongest critics say the whole system is dysfunctional, and yearn for a system in which a chief executive has total control over the city bureaucracy.

"You need a strong leader. There's too many chefs," said street fee critic, lobbyist Paul Romain. "It's a structure problem that needs fixing. You need a strong mayor."

## **Strong Mayor in a Commissioner System**

While voters have rejected strong mayor forms of government in the past, many say that what Portland needs is a strong mayor who is also a consensus builder.

Hales spent the day talking up commissioners in Wednesday's run up to his latest street fee proposal. But other than that, many say the Mayor has been remarkably absent from even basic discussions about his agenda.

Gone are the days when mayors use to "work the second floor" (where commissioners' offices are) day in and day out, trying to get one proposal or another through. When that kind of work doesn't go into a proposal

More than one expert who spoke to GoLocalPDX Thursday held out the hard nosed Vera Katz as an example of a Mayor who although tough, worked with fellow commissioners to cut deals and get things done.

"Vera Katz at times had that kind of drive," said political consultant Len Bergstein. "Both Katz and Neil Goldschmidt had a clear and intentional agenda, and they worked with their fellow commissioners. Neil knew how to harness the talents of his commissioners. "

Today, however, commissioners often feel left out of the loop, sometimes first hearing about proposals from media reports and not their colleagues, sources say. The result is proposals that fall flat at council, leaving the public scratching their heads.

One need look no further than the street fee for an example. Following Thursday's special session of council, city staff will work on options to go on the May 15 ballot, which will be discussed at a Jan. 20 hearing.

Where the street fee is concerned, Commissioner Amanda Fritz has already stated she has no intention of voting for something she doesn't agree with.

"Amanda wouldn't vote for something just because it has the highest percentage [in a poll]," said Fritz's Chief of Staff Tim Crail.

The Mayor has said he doesn't expect to obligate the council to the result of the poll. But Hales' proposal was met with less than enthusiasm from other commissioners.

"We're not quite sure what it looks like yet," said Jim Blackwood, policy advisor to Commissioner Nick Fish.

Novick's office differed GoLocalPDX's questions to the Mayor. Dan Saltzman's office did not respond in time for publication.

## **Council chemistry**

Others said that the current crop of city commissioners were particularly uncompromising and not prone to making alliances.

"The chemistry of this city council is particularly interesting," said Bergstein. "The personalities of this council lead to a lack of direction."

But there were times when a clique of three commissioners could set the agenda at City Hall and carry it out. A decade ago, commissioners Sam Adams, Erik Sten and Randy Leonard banded together and effectively ran the city, even overturning budget decision made by then Mayor Tom Potter.

The Mayor has worked a strategy of "plus one" during his term so far. He's worked with single commissioners on single issues. Most notable was his work with Nick Fish on preventing the Water Bureau from spinning off into an independent utility district.

However, that strategy has yet to bare fruit with the pairing of Novick and Hales on the street fee campaign. Ultimately, the voters, not five members of council, must be won over on the issue. But, when City Hall is acting more like Congress some say it's no wonder voters are distrustful.

Bergstein says, ultimately, the problems in City Hall are part of the ebb and flow of the commissioner style of democracy. So, get use to it.

"City council has always been on the verge of dysfunction," Bergstein said. "It's set up that way."