

The Oregonian

Portland Street Fund: Mayor Charlie Hales cancels advisory vote, pledges plan after legislative session

*By Brad Schmidt
January 15, 2015*

In the latest jarring twist to an eight-month political misadventure, Portland's effort to raise local taxes will be sidelined through the summer so Oregon lawmakers have a "clean shot" to pass transportation-funding bills without worrying about the whims of Portland voters.

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales said Thursday that he would no longer seek the May advisory vote he announced last week.

Portland's advisory vote would have had no impact on the Oregon Legislature but could have presented a tricky political predicament, with state lawmakers approving a money measure – such as a gas-tax increase – as voters in the state's largest city slam a similar proposal.

Hales said at a hastily called news conference late Thursday afternoon that canceling the advisory vote gives the Legislature a "clean shot" and won't waste voters' time casting ballots on funding options that could change.

Either way, Hales said, the City Council will pick up the street-funding debate "soon" after lawmakers take action or after the sessions ends in June or July. By then, Hales said, there may not be a need for an advisory vote.

"This session is a chance to have the Legislature do their part in transportation funding to help solve the problem for us," he said. "Then we can see how much of the problem remains, and do we have more tools than we had back in January to solve the problem."

Thursday's reversal represents at least the fifth dramatic change to a street-funding proposal rolled out by Hales and Portland Commissioner Steve Novick in May. The two, seeking more than \$40 million a year for street repairs and safety projects, haven't been able to line up a third vote on the five-member City Council.

It's not immediately clear what impact new state revenues would make on Portland's ballooning paving problem, now nearing \$1 billion in needed repairs.

Hales said Thursday that he doesn't know how much additional money the city could hope to receive if the Legislature passes some of the items on the city's wish list: a new gasoline tax or vehicle registration fee for the Portland metro area.

Critics applauded the decision to call off the advisory vote and were amused by the latest change.

"Never underestimate the ability of Portland City Hall to mess things up," said Eric Fruits, a local economist and vocal opponent. "This is something that could have been done in six months if it was done right, and it wasn't done right."

Even Novick, who has gone toe-to-toe with business groups opposed to various iterations of a funding plan, expressed relief at taking a breather.

"It might be nice to talk to people about some things other than the street fund for a couple of months," he said in a text message. "We'll go back to it, but a bit of a break seems like a good idea."

The street-funding proposal represents Hales' most difficult and controversial endeavor since the first-term mayor took office in January 2013. Now at the mid-point of his term, and with speculation ramping up about his plans to seek re-election, Hales defended the process – warts and all.

"If people want to watch the sausage being made, they will perhaps be amused, perhaps be appalled, perhaps be engaged," he said. "But one way or another, we've got to actually make the sausage and solve the problem."

Hales and Novick remained on the fence about options this week, calling a recess during a City Council meeting Wednesday to take a top-secret conference call. Novick on Thursday confirmed that they spoke with Gov. John Kitzhaber and House Speaker Tina Kotek.

"If we sent out a menu of four things in May, and the Legislature gives us a fifth one, and it's better than the four, what have we done to our voters?" Hales said. "We've engaged in an exercise that has no meaning."

Hales said he's proud state leaders are stepping up to help seek transportation solutions. The Legislature last approved a 6-cent gas-tax increase, taking the current rate to 30 cents a gallon, effective in 2011.

"If you listen to the governor from the election until now, if you listen to the speaker from the election until now, I haven't heard much about transportation," Hales said. "I think that the fact that we've had this big loud debate in Portland has helped elevate the debate statewide."

Kotek, D-Portland, and Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, announced at the Oregon Leadership Summit this month that they would pursue a large transportation-funding package in the legislative session.

Their announcement came Jan. 6, one day before Hales proposed his advisory vote.

Specific projects won't be proposed until sometime after Feb. 2, when the Legislature convenes. The House Interim Committee on Transportation and Economic Development has also put forward a bill to raise the gas tax by 33 cents a gallon to pay for highway projects.

"We are at the point where that pipeline (to fund new projects) is dry in this state," Kotek said at the Leadership Summit.

Kotek spokesman Jared Mason-Gere said the speaker supports Hales' decision. A legislative transportation package, he said, will "meet the needs of communities across the state, including Portland."

A 1-cent increase in the state gas tax would increase state revenues by about \$17.5 million, which would generate about \$1.27 million for Portland, according to Portland Bureau of Transportation estimates shared Thursday by the City Budget Office.

At that rate, lawmakers would need to increase the tax by about 8 cents a gallon to send Portland an additional \$10 million a year. And that's only about one-quarter of what local officials are seeking.

Anything would be helpful, Hales said. He pledged not to drop efforts to raise more money for transportation projects, even if it's unpopular, because the system will continue to crumble without it.

"If people don't like watching the sausage," Hales said, "then they can wait and see if they like how it tastes."

Portland street fund: Mayor Charlie Hales puts funding push 'on pause' to wait for state fix

*By Andrew Theen
January 15, 2015*

Mayor Charlie Hales put the controversial Portland street fund proposal "on pause" Thursday, saying the city will let Salem lawmakers craft a statewide transportation bill during the legislative session first.

Read our updated story on Hales' decision.

Hales announced that he and Commissioner Steve Novick "temporarily halted" their push to secure millions of dollars in new revenue for street maintenance and safety projects. Hales' spokesman said the mayor spoke with Gov. John Kitzhaber and House Speaker Tina Kotek this week and decided to defer to state lawmakers.

"They have each assured me that a statewide transportation package is a top priority for them this legislative session," Hales said in a statement.

The Legislature convenes next month.

Thursday's announcement comes eight days after Hales turned the street funding controversy on its head with a new proposal: to come up with several potential funding sources and send them to voters in May for an advisory vote. That plan drew little enthusiasm from other members of the City Council.

It's the latest delay and wholesale change in a City Hall saga that dates back more than a year.

This week, City Hall officials speculated that lawmakers were concerned that an advisory vote -- say if Portlanders made clear they do not support increasing the gasoline tax -- could hurt their ability to raise taxes.

In an interview on Thursday evening, Hales took credit for bringing transportation to the attention of Salem leaders. "The fact that we've had this big loud debate in Portland has helped elevate the debate statewide, it's also helped show how hard it is to get this done."

City officials were expected to hold a public hearing Tuesday to discuss the ballot options. That meeting has since been cancelled, according to Hales' staffers.

Hales and Novick were pushing up against some impending deadlines to get their advisory vote on the May ballot. According to a press release, the deadline to submit ballot language was at 5 p.m. Thursday. Last week, elections officer Deborah Scroggin said the deadline for City Council was Jan. 22.

The advisory vote could've cost as much as \$300,000 to administer.

Dana Haynes, Hales' spokesman, said the mayor is looking forward to talking about transportation funding options with other Oregon mayors.

"Together, we can represent the needs of cities, all of which will benefit from new options to fund infrastructure at a time when the existing options don't satisfy our communities," Hales said in a statement.

Hales also responded to a question of how to describe the constantly changing fee proposals:

"We're going to keep relentlessly looking for a way to actually solve the problem. That means we'll have lots of debates, we'll have lots of proposals, we'll do it in public if people want to watch the sausage being made. They will perhaps be amused, perhaps be appalled, perhaps be engaged, but one way or another we've got to actually make the sausage and solve the problem. And I want to do that in public. I want to do that now by supporting action at the state level first. But if people don't like watching the sausage then they can wait and see if they like how it tastes."

Tim Nesbitt: Novick's new street tax may be as good as it gets

*By Guest Columnist Tim Nesbitt
January 15, 2015*

As the Portland City Council takes up yet another set of proposals for how to keep the city's streets in good repair and its citizens in relative good humor about how to pay for it all, we might want to stop and ask ourselves where this search for tax fairness on the streets of Portland is taking us.

A little reflection will reveal that we tolerate a lot of unfairness in our tax system in order to get things done. In this "we" I include political activists who worked just as hard to win voter approval for new revenue to help Portland schools when that revenue came from a regressive property tax as when it came from a progressive income tax. In these instances, the issue was less one of "who pays" than of "what matters." Ditto for the Portland Children's Levy and the Portland arts tax. They both earned voter approval for the good things they promised to do rather than the imperfect ways in which they proposed to fund them.

State taxes are another matter. Anyone who has attended a Revenue Committee meeting in Salem knows how carefully lawmakers examine the "distributional effects" of statewide taxes. Oregon's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a good example of what can come from such scrutiny; it not only rewards work but helps to remediate the property taxes and user fees that disproportionately burden low-income working households at the local level as well. In many such ways, our progressive state taxes help to soften the impact of more regressive local taxes. As a result, Oregon regularly ranks as one of the least regressive states in the country for the combined effects of its state and local tax systems, according to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP).

So why has a new street tax that would amount to about 0.2 percent of the average Portlander's personal income generated all this angst about who will pay it? City Commissioner Steve Novick, who has been leading the search for fairness, has a compelling set of facts and arguments to answer this question. Gas taxes and property taxes fall more heavily on low income residents as a share of their household budgets. And the growing discontent about the disproportionate income gains of the top one percent has stoked resistance to the idea that poor and middle class taxpayers should have to shoulder any more of the burden of running their governments. In this environment, it is easy to assert that we – the 99 or 90 or 80 percent – will not support any new taxes for any good purposes unless someone above us on the income ladder picks up the tab. But that kind of thinking would tank every new school funding levy yet to come.

Taxes are only half the story. The other half is what we do with the money. It is possible to have a progressive tax system that underfunds essential services or hampers economic growth, depending on how a government spends its revenues. The converse is also true. Washington state has the most regressive tax system in the country, according to ITEP, but does a better job of funding its schools than more progressive Oregon.

One can argue that tax fairness deserves more attention at the local level. And, if that's the goal, then a city income tax may be the most meaningful way to achieve it – an option that is now on the City Council's fallback list for an advisory vote in May. But all this started with the more modest goal of fixing our streets, not fixing our tax system. And it is beginning to look like trying to combine these two purposes will leave us stuck at the curb in a city that doesn't work as well as it should.

Novick's latest proposal charts a new path forward from the intersection of "what matters" and "who pays." It doesn't exempt any taxpayers, but it creates a reasonable sliding scale for poor and middle-income households. Tax fairness purists can debate just how fair it is. Those who oppose any new taxes will oppose this one as well. But Portlanders who understand that repairing our streets and building sidewalks in the city's low income neighborhoods are compelling public purposes should get behind this plan, just as they did with other less-than-perfect funding plans for our schools and our kids.

The Portland Tribune

Street fee off the table

*By Jim Redden
January 15, 2015*

After nearly nine months of mounting controversy, Mayor Charlie Hales has called off any more deliberations on the proposed street fee while the 2015 Oregon Legislature works on a transportation package,

"Today, I am announcing a pause in our local efforts to fund our streets and safety projects within the City of Portland," Hales said in a late Thursday press release. "Over the past week, I have had conversations with Speaker of the House Tina Kotek and with Gov. John Kitzhaber. They have each assured me that a statewide transportation package is a top priority for them this legislative session."

Sandra McDonough, President and CEO of the Portland Business Alliance, praised the decision.

"We appreciate the city getting behind a statewide transportation package, which is one of our top priorities," says McDonough, whose organization had opposed a progressive personal income tax proposed by Hales and Novick as part of the fee.

The council had been preparing to meet Tuesday afternoon to discuss putting one or more advisory measures on the May 19 Special Election ballot. That meeting won't take place now, and no further discussions have been scheduled.

"We are pleased to know that the Legislature is very interested in a transportation funding discussion this year," Commissioner Steve Novick, the other sponsor, said. "We have said all along that the street fund we have proposed will not address all our needs, and that we are counting on the state and federal governments to step up."

Ironically, Hales and Novick had argued that passing the street fee would put pressure on the 2015 Oregon Legislature to do more to fund transportation projects.

Hales said he also will enlist the aid of mayors throughout Oregon to push for more authority for cities.

"Together, we can represent the needs of cities, all of which will benefit from new options to fund infrastructure at a time when the existing options don't satisfy our communities," Hales said.

Hales left the door open for the council to take the issue up again after the legislative session that starts in earnest in February.

"The completion of this work comes when all three levels of government have acted; when Congress, the Legislature and the Portland City Council have all authorized new revenues to pay for streets and roads. This cooperation between the State of Oregon and local governments gives us, as Oregonians, the best way forward toward that objective."

Hales also said the deadline for Portland to submit paperwork for the May election was 5 p.m. Thursday. County elections officials said the city had months to submit it, however.

Hales and Novick unveiled their street fee proposal in May 2014. It included a flat monthly fee on households and a fee on nonresidential properties based on the number of motor vehicle trips they are estimated to generate. It was intended to raise around \$50 million a year for maintenance and safety projects, after administrative expenses.

The proposal was widely attacked in a series of public forums. Hales and Novick appointed three work groups to come up with different ideas and proposed several different versions of both portions. They could not win the support of a third member of the council, however.

Hales going to mayors' conference in DC next week

*By Jim Redden
January 15, 2015*

Mayor Charlie Hales will be able to spend a little more time in Washington DC next week, not that he's hit the pause button on the proposed street fee.

In addition to his day-to-day responsibilities, Hales had been scheduled to preside over a special street fee hearing on Tuesday afternoon and then fly Washington DC for a three-day gathering of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, which is timed to correspond with President Obama's State of the Union Address on Tuesday.

Now Hales will not have to take the red eye flight to the conference, which officially starts at noon on Wednesday.

Mayors at the conference will respond to Obama's address, and then hold an opening press conference on Wednesday in the Capital Hilton, where they will release the results of a national poll surveying public perceptions of local government.

More than 80 mayors are expected to attend the conference. Other subjects topping the agenda include community policing, the economy, innovation and transportation. Numerous cabinet members are scheduled to speak at the conference.

Hales' office said Government Relations Director Martha Pellegrino is among others going to the conference. The final cost will be determined after all the bookings are made.

The Tuesday street fee hearing would have been special under city rules because it is not happening on Wednesday or Thursday, when the council normally meets. Hales and the rest of the council are scheduled to discuss putting one or more non-binding residential fee proposals on the May 19 Special Election ballot to gauge support for them before drafting the final version.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are nearly 1,400 such cities in the country today, and each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor.

Willamette Week

Another Delay in Portland City Hall's Vote On a Street Fee—And This One Could Last Months

*By Aaron Mesh
January 15, 2015*

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick said late Thursday they are yet again delaying action on a street fee to pay for road repairs and maintenance.

This time, they want to see if the 2015 Legislature first will, as Hales puts it, "give communities the tools to build and maintain critical infrastructure."

In other words: a gas tax.

Hales and Novick proposed floating a series of options to pay for street repairs before voters on the May ballot. The advisory vote, they say, would guide City Council on voters' preferences and point them to which option the city should pursue.

They now want to put that vote off.

Polls have suggested a local gas tax is an option that would get support. But Oregon law prohibits local governments from imposing a gas tax—only the state and feds are allowed to do that.

UPDATE, 5:21 pm: As The Portland Mercury notes and City Hall sources confirm, Hales is also mulling a vehicle sticker fee—and state law limits who can levy those, too.

"Nobody particularly liked the options we laid out, and ones they asked for, we haven't had the authority to do," Hales staffer Josh Alpert tells WW. "Now that the Legislature has shown their interest in making this a priority, we are looking forward to being a part of the conversations."

Hales' statement doesn't mention a gas tax—but indicates he will lobby for a change in state law regarding transportation funding.

Here's the statement from the mayor's office released at 4:30 pm today:

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales and Transportation Commissioner Steve Novick today temporarily halted the paperwork necessary to take an advisory vote to the May ballot, regarding options to pay for city street maintenance and safety.

"Today, I am announcing a pause in our local efforts to fund our streets and safety projects within the City of Portland," Mayor Hales said. "Over the past week, I have had conversations with Speaker of the House Tina Kotek and with Gov. John Kitzhaber. They have each assured me that a statewide transportation package is a top priority for them this legislative session."

The Legislature is set to convene in February. The deadline for Portland to submit paperwork for the May election was 5 p.m. today.

"Because they recognize the importance of efforts to fund transportation infrastructure, they will hear the needs of local governments and ensure they are part of state transportation conversations as they work to give communities the tools to build and maintain critical infrastructure," Hales said.

"We are pleased to know that the Legislature is very interested in a transportation funding discussion this year," Commissioner Novick said. "We have said all along that the street fund we have proposed will not address all our needs, and that we are counting on the state and federal governments to step up."

The city has conducted more than 14 months of hearings to craft a proposal to pay for street maintenance and safety.

"During the passionate conversations we have had in Portland regarding transportation funding, many options were discussed, none of which prove to be popular," Hales said.

"Some options were put forward by Portlanders that we do not have the authority to enact. As your mayor, I will go to Salem to seek that authority."

Hales said he also will enlist the aid of mayors throughout Oregon to push for more authority for cities.

"Together, we can represent the needs of cities, all of which will benefit from new options to fund infrastructure at a time when the existing options don't satisfy our communities," he said.

"The completion of this work comes when all three levels of government have acted; when Congress, the Legislature and the Portland City Council have all authorized new revenues to pay for streets and roads," Hales said. "This cooperation between the State of Oregon and local governments gives us, as Oregonians, the best way forward toward that objective."

The Portland Mercury

Whiplash! Now the Street Fee Advisory Vote's on "Pause" While State Officials Work Up a Funding Package

*By Denis C. Theriault
January 15, 2015*

Ahead of a deadline at 5 tonight to put a street fee advisory vote on next week's council agenda, Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick have just sent word they're pausing their revenue-raising

efforts for several months while Governor John Kitzhaber and legislative leaders work on some kind of statewide transportation funding package.

It's the latest twist in the street fee saga after months of twists—and it marks another dramatic shift just within the past several days.

The plan to seek an advisory vote this May—and then pair the leading option with an already-proposed business fee, to raise \$46 million—was only eight days old. It was put forward after it became clear Hales and Novick didn't have a third vote for their previous plan: an income-graded gas consumption fee that replaced an income tax hated by powerful business lobbyists. But as I reported in this week's paper, the timing and complexity still left as no sure thing.

The announcement, describing the cessation as a "pause" and not a "defeat," references recent conversations with Kitzhaber and House Speaker Tina Kotek. Emboldened by stronger Democratic majorities in both the state House and Senate, as well as an improving economy, it's widely believed that lawmakers see the 2015 session as a good chance to bump up the state's gas tax, among other possibilities. The state tax sits at 30 cents per gallon and last went up in 2011.

"Because they recognize the importance of efforts to fund transportation infrastructure, they will hear the needs of local governments and ensure they are part of state transportation conversations as they work to give communities the tools to build and maintain critical infrastructure," Hales said in the statement.

But Hales and Novick's announcement also indicates the funding conversation could include giving cities permission to levy revenue mechanisms currently pre-empted by state law. That could include a vehicle sticker fee paid by people who park their cars or drive in Portland, whether they live here or not.

Hales and Commissioner Nick Fish expressed interest in looking more deeply at that solution during a hearing last Thursday. Hales and Novick said they hadn't initially considered it because their attorneys told them it was too close to a vehicle registration fee, which is the purview of states and counties.

"During the passionate conversations we have had in Portland regarding transportation funding, many options were discussed, none of which prove to be popular," Hales said in the statement. "Some options were put forward by Portlanders that we do not have the authority to enact. As your mayor, I will go to Salem to seek that authority."

Yesterday afternoon, Hales and Novick recessed a city council meeting to take a sudden, emergency "conference call." But neither office would say, when asked, who was on the line. Hales' office hasn't responded to a question asking if that call was related to today's announcement.

Update 5:30 PM: Novick has confirmed that the call was directly related: He and Hales hustled to the mayor's office because both Kitzhaber and Kotek were waiting on the line. They had spoken with the two earlier in the week about the state's intentions on transportation funding—and they were waiting to hear explicit assurances that transportation would be a top-line agenda item in Salem in 2015.

Those conversations were unfolding even as plans were advancing for an advisory vote, which was supposed to be the subject of a hearing January 20. The council would have needed to approve ballot language by January 22, the city's elections office recommended, to ensure final, challenge-resistant language in time for the May ballot.

"Up until two weeks ago, it wasn't at all clear the Legislature was going to take up transportation funding this session," Novick told me, adding that he "wasn't as optimistic after the initial conversation" as maybe Hales was. "We didn't know it was going to be a focus of the session."

He also said this wasn't wrapping paper around what was otherwise a political loss. He and Hales will wait to see what they can do after the session adjourns before returning to the advisory vote, which Novick said could come as soon as September. Having permission to levy a fee on studded tires, require a city vehicle sticker, or set up unstaffed remote speeding cameras could offer more options than the mechanisms he and Hales were considering.

Of course, he noted, "we have no assurances that they will address any of these things specifically."

Novick sees another upside, he says. He can spend some time on subjects not only including Uber vs. the city's cabbies, but also on emergency preparedness (he runs the Bureau of Emergency Management, not just the Bureau of Transportation) and his old election-year goal of helping lower the city's healthcare costs.

"It might be nice to talk about something other than the street fund for a couple of months," he said.

Police Review Board Strongly Urged "Termination" for Four Portland Cops, All of Whom Resigned, According to Latest Reports

*By Denis C. Theriault
January 15, 2015*

A police bureau advisory panel charged with reviewing officer misconduct strongly recommended four Portland cops lose their jobs over accusations including dishonesty, dodging parking tickets, and a positive test for steroids, according to a new batch of public released late Thursday.

The 59-page document (pdf)—which chronicles discipline cases that closed between June 15 and December 25, 2014—reveals that each of those officers chose to resign in lieu of facing punishment. One of those four, with the steroid test, resigned before the bureau's Police Review Board even met.

Board members also voted to fire a fifth officer, accused of lying about the reason he or she asked a colleague to run a credit check on someone. But members were conflicted about that case and said they'd also support an 80-hour unpaid suspension, especially if the officer were moved to a post where he or she would no longer have access to sensitive data. That's the discipline the officer ultimately received.

The memos are the second to be released since Portland City Council last year approved the Independent Police Review's request to add more detail, including not just the discipline recommended by the board, but also the final discipline approved by the police chief and police commissioner. That had long been an issue. They're the first to come out since the city began using a new "discipline matrix" to help standardize punishment outcomes for various types of misconduct.

Beyond the cases that ended in resignations, the board addressed two fatal police shootings last year, involving Kelly Swoboda and Nick Davis—ruling that both were "in policy" and commending the officers, in particular, who were part of the Swoboda shooting. It urged the bureau, after exonerating a cop accused of hurting a suspect's arm, to seek body cameras for cops and to push anew for Multnomah County jail to resume recording sound as part of its jail intake surveillance system—an issue the Mercury has so far been the only outlet to raise.

It also sought sanction for two officers described as "experienced" and respected veterans who chased down someone making threats despite being off-duty with their families and then punched the man even after he'd been detained, before on-duty officers could respond. Both of those cops received 20-hour unpaid suspensions.

"The entire evening in question seemed to be fraught with peril and poor decision-making," the board's writeup reads, reminding the cops that the bureau's use of force policy was tightened in 2008.

One of the four cops who resigned has already had his troubles aired publicly. KOIN broke the news last April that Officer James Escobar had been investigated by the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office for trying to dodge consequences for parking tickets by making his personal car more difficult to identify. The board's writeup also says Escobar drove for a year without license plates and poked at him for failing to once give his business card to a witness.

But it was the DA's probe and a sense that Escobar brought "reproach and discredit" upon the bureau and city that earned him the unanimous call he be fired. Basically, the board was embarrassed by the news coverage about Escobar and felt he couldn't be trusted to do his duties as a police officer.

Termination (Unanimous)

After significant discussion, the PRB unanimously recommended termination for three recommended sustained allegations relating to avoiding responsibility for parking fines, operating a vehicle without displaying license plates and behaving in an unprofessional manner that brings reproach and discredit to the Bureau and City. Three members said the actions of Employee 1 were consistent with Discipline Category E with aggravating factors and two members said Employee 1's actions were consistent with Discipline Category F. The reasons cited for the discipline categories recommendation were similar. Members questioned whether Employee 1 could be trusted in the future as a police officer to appropriately handle larger, more complicated issues than parking fines. For the members who said the discipline category was E, they said the following aggravating factors were present: The case had to be reviewed by the District Attorney's office for criminal wrong-doing, which affects the Bureau's reputation with the DA's office; the news media covered the story, which affects credibility with the community; other organizations were involved with documenting the violations; and ethical issues have not been fully explained or acknowledged by Employee 1. One member noted that Employee 1 undermined Employee 1's ability to do Employee 1's job and be credible in court. One member who recommended discipline category F said officers have a duty to uphold the law and the evidence does not indicate that this incident would not happen again in another situation. Another member who recommended discipline category F said officers must have a high degree of integrity and Employee 1 appears to have poor judgment and an attitude of arrogance and entitlement.

Two of those four cops were blasted over accusations of dishonesty.

In one of those cases, the officer admitted during a second interview with internal affairs that he or she lied in the first interview. That cop was being investigated over inappropriately touching another employee, a finding that was sustained, and ridiculing that employee for making a complaint about yet another police employee. Four of the board's members argued that the dishonesty rap meant that officer would no longer be able to testify in court—a death blow, normally, to a cop's career.

In the second case, the officer who resigned had been accused of mishandling a child abuse call, failing to promptly dispatch detectives to a hospital and losing out on a chance to bring charges. That may have earned an 80-hour unpaid suspension if that was the only accusation. But, instead, that same cop was found to have inappropriately touched another cop and then to have lied during an internal affairs interview. That last finding earned the termination call.

The remaining cases were more mundane. Officer Kent Scott was suspended for "one workweek" without pay for a drunk driving/reckless driving incident out on SE Division, a suspension the board endorsed 4-1 in part because Scott showed remorse.

One cop received a letter of reprimand after a friend of the cop's married girlfriend's spouse (got all that?) was targeted inappropriately after puncturing the cop's tires during an on-duty visit to the cop's girlfriend's

house. The cop got a letter of reprimand for running the friend, the spouse, and the girlfriend on the police bureau's data systems.

One cop received a 40-hour unpaid suspension after being heard making inappropriate and derogatory comments about women and talking loudly and inappropriately about his or her personal life. The cop tried to argue that the story was meant as a "teaching moment," but the board says it wasn't swayed.

In another case, a cop who was rude during front desk duty was suspended for 40 hours without pay—a fate driven by the discipline matrix's allowance for "aggravating factors." The cop had faced "prior discipline and admonitions." The board wondered whether this cop ought to be moved somewhere away from customer service (never mind that's mostly what all cops are supposed to be doing, to some degree).

And in one more, a cop was ratted out by his or her colleagues after responding to a burglary call via phone, and spending 90 minutes on it—even though a "hot" priority 1 call had gone out in that cop's district. One member noted the officer has received previous discipline and wouldn't ever change their behavior and also "expresses disrespect for human beings."

Daily Journal of Commerce

City to hold off on street fund vote

*By Shelby King
January 15, 2015*

Portland voters won't be asked how to establish a street fund in the May election after all.

Mayor Charlie Hales and Transportation Commissioner Steve Novick in a Thursday news release announced the city opted not to file paperwork with Multnomah County to seek an "advisory vote" on how to raise millions for Portland's street fund, instead waiting to see what moves the Oregon Legislature makes when it convenes in February.

The deadline to submit paperwork for the May election was 5 p.m. on Jan. 15.

"Over the past week, I have had conversations with Speaker of the House Tina Kotek and with Gov. John Kitzhaber," Hales said in the news release. "They have each assured me that a statewide transportation package is a top priority for them this legislative session."

At a Jan. 8 council meeting, Hales asked for ideas from the public and outlined the city's proposals – including a progressive income tax, a gas tax and a local-option property tax levy – saying the council would place between three and six funding options on the May ballot and choose one or more of the most popular options for adoption by the council.

The city needs to raise around \$40 million annually to maintain city streets and begin to chip away at the maintenance backlog caused by the economic downturn.

Downtown parking spaces becoming park space

*By Inka Bajandas
January 15, 2015*

Portland State University architecture students are raising money to build a "parklet" on two parking spaces in downtown Portland.

The students, PSU's Institute for Sustainable Solutions and the SoMa EcoDistrict Steering Committee have launched a crowdfunding campaign to complete the project this spring, PSU assistant architecture professor B.D. Wortham-Galvin said. The goal is to raise \$15,350 by Jan. 31. Donations will cover the costs of building materials and city fees for lost revenue from the former parking spots where the small park will be built near the intersection of Southwest Fourth Avenue and College Street, she said.

Wortham-Galvin last year worked with students to design the park and choose the best location. Approval was granted through the Portland Bureau of Transportation's Street Seats program to occupy parking spaces on Fourth Avenue in front of a block of food carts. In the spring, she plans to teach a course to finalize the design, construct most of the components on the PSU campus and later assemble the park on Fourth Avenue over a weekend.

Ideally, the park will be complete by this summer in time to accommodate food cart diners, Wortham-Galvin said. Currently, the area has few public seats; many customers walk back to campus to eat, she said. Plans call for the park including high tables and stools, low benches with tables and a U-shaped bench.

"It really is meant to be a community gathering space for everybody," Wortham-Galvin said.

Project donations can be made at www.pdx.edu/giving/crowdfunding?cfpage=project&project_id=10999.

The Portland Business Journal

Never mind: No street fee on the May ballot as state may pay for road repairs

*By Mason Walker
January 16, 2015*

On to the next big debate?

After 14 months of back-and-forth on how to pay for a \$45 million gap in Portland's street repair funding, Mayor Charlie Hales has opted to not kick a measure to voters in May following a conversation with Governor John Kitzhaber and state lawmakers. In February, the 78th Oregon Legislature will consider a transportation package that could include the repairs.

According to OPB, Mayor Hales' spokesman Dana Haynes indicates the repairs could be paid for through an increase in the state gas tax, changing the law to allow cities to charge a vehicle registration fee, or a fee on studded tires

Respondents to a still-active poll on the Business Journal website have indicated they favor a user fee over an income tax to pay for the backlog of repairs, however many commenters have voiced frustrations with the process.

GoLocalPDX

NEW: Hales and Novick Punt Street Fee, Look to State Transportation Bill

*By GoLocalPDX News Team
January 15, 2015*

The move to turn the street fee to voters was halted on the last day to submit paperwork for the May election.

In the latest iteration of Portland City Commissioners' plan to pay for road maintenance and repairs, the city will turn to state legislators for an over-arching state transportation bill while a plan to put funding options on a ballot measure -- announced just eight days ago -- is put on hiatus.

The announcement late Thursday comes the same day Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber appointed Deschutes County Commissioner Tammy Baney chair of the Oregon Transportation Commission.

Just weeks ago, Portland Mayor Charlie Hales and Transportation Commissioner Steve Novick announced that Portland residents would decide how the city will pay for its roads, through options on the May ballot, generated by public input. Today, Novick called on the state and federal governments to "step up."

"During the passionate conversations we have had in Portland regarding transportation funding, many options were discussed, none of which prove to be popular," Hales said.

In a statement, the Mayor's office said Hales and Novick "temporarily halted the paperwork necessary to take an advisory vote."

"Today, I am announcing a pause in our local efforts to fund our streets and safety projects within the City of Portland," Mayor Hales said.

Hales said both Kitzhaber and House Speaker Tina Kotek promised to prioritize statewide transportation package for this legislative session. The next Legislative session is set to convene Feb. 2.

"We are pleased to know that the Legislature is very interested in a transportation funding discussion this year," Commissioner Novick said. "We have said all along that the street fund we have proposed will not address all our needs, and that we are counting on the state and federal governments to step up."

Hales said he was turning to Salem because the city does not have the authority to enact options put forward by Portland residents, some of which were heard at a special session of council Thursday.

KATU

New solution for old problem of scrubbing Portland's street signs

By Stephen Mayer

January 16, 2015

PORTLAND, Ore. -- You see them all across town. Crews from "The City that Works," working to repair or replace street signs that have taken a beating.

There's 160,000 street signs city-wide, and up to 64,000 of them are damaged or covered in graffiti. Each year the city spends about \$50,000 replacing those dirty or vandalized signs.

Now the city has a new weapon to help protect their investment at a lower cost: a solvent that cleans the signs and protects them from further damage.

"We are always trying to find new ways to make our lives better here. It's an old school world of just going out to fix things but there's lots of technology out there that can help us today that wasn't there five to 20 years ago," Peter Wojcicki with the Portland Bureau of Transportation said.

Wojcicki helped pitch the idea to city council this week. It's a new protective sealant solution that makes it easier to remove graffiti and stickers to help extend the life of signs.

It's also much safer, he said. The solution preserves a sign's ability to reflect light, making them easier to spot when driving at night.

The old solvent costs about \$14 per sign, the new stuff is half that price.