

The Oregonian

Why Portland is giving developers a reprieve on fee hikes

*By Brad Schmidt
May 21, 2015*

Portland homebuilders and developers will receive a yearlong reprieve in proposed fee hikes to pay for city parks.

The City Council on Wednesday unanimously agreed to postpone higher parks fees until July 2016, a full year beyond the original timetable. The proposal would double and in some cases nearly quadruple parks-related fees.

A final vote is set for May 27.

The increases, initially proposed by Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who oversees Portland Parks & Recreation, have come under fire from the business community and homebuilders.

Fritz initially proposed an effective date of July 2015 but later offered an extension to January.

Mayor Charlie Hales on Wednesday proposed an additional six-month extension, to July 2016. Hales said the delay would give builders financial certainty for projects in the works.

Fees are assessed when a building permit application is deemed complete.

Hales also said the delay would allow city officials to consider more sweeping changes to fees citywide. "I am concerned about the total fee impact," he said, noting rising home costs.

Asked if that broad review would include reconsidering the same parks-specific increases the City Council is about to approve, he said, "Everything's on the table."

The proposed parks increases would affect residential and commercial development. As an example, the system development charges -- fees charged on new development to pay for parks and other infrastructure -- for a home outside the central city would increase from \$8,594 to as much as \$13,049, while central-city costs for an office would climb from \$1,087 per 1,000 square feet to \$2,370.

Parks officials say they need to increase fees to meet the city's long-term needs for new parks and improvements to existing facilities. Projections suggest Portland could collect \$552 million from development fees over 20 years.

Justin Wood, a homebuilder who worked as the lobbyist for the Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Portland until last month, said an extension is welcome but that the increases are still unpopular.

"We think this SDC is extremely flawed, and I'm almost certain it's going to end up in the court system," he said.

With Mount Tabor reservoirs vote looming, Portland officials say 'bully tactics' won't be allowed

*By Andrew Theen
May 20, 2015*

Protesters successfully shut down two Portland City Council meetings in recent weeks, and on Wednesday, city officials said they would eject citizens who display "disruptive behavior" in future meetings.

"People will be warned to stop engaging in disruptive conduct or face expulsion. If they do not stop, they may be subject to future exclusions," Jen Clodius, Office of Management & Finance spokeswoman said in a statement.

Wednesday's statement is a calculated one, coming less than a week before the City Council will vote on a proposal to disconnect the Mount Tabor reservoirs from service, a fight dating back more than a decade. Water Bureau officials say they're simply following a long-standing federal rule.

Disconnecting the famous reservoirs is one of the most contentious issues facing the City Council. A vocal band of Portlanders argue, among other things, that the city hasn't done enough to fight the federal government.

Last week, water advocates briefly shut down the City Council vote on a plan to demolish structures at Washington Park, another project tied to the federal regulations.

Even after that vote, the protesters continued to boo and scream during a presentation from the City Auditor's Office's Independent Police Review Division.

Dana Haynes, Mayor Charlie Hales' spokesman, said those yells lasted for 20 minutes. He said all the elected officials inside City Hall expressed concern about the lack of decorum during last week's meeting. "That sort of behavior really can't be tolerated," Haynes said, calling the activity "bully tactics."

Portland has a five-page "Rules of Conduct" governing behavior on city property – with sections devoted to roller skating inside city buildings, dogs, smoking, and visitors being expected "to wear proper attire."

But potentially threatening verbal or physical behavior is the top concern.

In November, Commissioner Nick Fish and Amanda Fritz attended a public meeting on the future of the reservoirs that drew hundreds of protesters.

Protesters chanted at various points throughout the meeting. "Wagging your finger and lecturing me doesn't get you any points," Fish said at the time during one testy exchange.

Fritz cancelled a subsequent meeting where she intended to announce future plans for the reservoirs.

Several staffers inside City Hall described last week's protest as uncomfortable, and the crowd is expected to be much larger next week for the Mount Tabor decision.

Haynes said while security is present at all meetings, the city asked staff and police officials to be "on alert."

Portland should lead on 'ban the box' policy (OPINION)

*By Guest Columnists Nkenge Harmon Johnson and Tom Chamberlain
May 21, 2015*

Every community is different. And often, our greatest opportunity to create real change is at the local level. That's why Mayor Charlie Hales is moving forward on a city "ban the box" policy — because it's an opportunity to work hand-in-hand with local business owners and local communities to meet the unique needs and values of Portland.

The Oregonian/OregonLive's May 14 editorial ("Hales should let legislators lead on helping ex-offenders in job market") dismisses the importance of local dialogue and disregards the diverse communities, impacted workers and business supporters who have been actively involved in this very important conversation happening here at home. The editorial board got it wrong by suggesting that the state should trump our local government. After all, we have a finger on the pulse of our community and understand it well. We are best suited to make local decisions that protect and empower our citizens.

Community groups have worked hard to ensure that African Americans and other working Portlanders are engaged and have a voice at the table. For all of us who have been taking action to support the local "ban the box" policy — from nonprofit organizations and business owners to faith leaders and the people and families most affected by the weighty challenge of seeking employment after serving one's debt to society; waiting for legislators in Salem to decide what is best for our community is not the answer.

One thing is clear: Punishing people for a lifetime is not working. The Portland policy will remove the box about criminal history from job applications and ensure that when background checks are required, they are used fairly. It will give people with a prior arrest or conviction a fair chance to get back to work and rebuild their lives. This is especially important for African Americans and other people of color whom the criminal justice system convicts and incarcerates in numbers that are five times the percentage of their state population.

Why should you care about this issue? Without the opportunity to gain employment, these men and women, who are willing and able to work, are far more likely to re-enter the criminal justice system; rather than paying taxes they will be supported by tax dollars.

In March, the Fair Chance For All Coalition — a group of more than 50 organizations — presented to City Council more than 7,000 petition signatures from Portlanders who are behind the local effort to ban the box. In addition, supporters turned out in droves to share their stories and have their voices heard. Among those were several business owners who expressed their support to City Council because they think this is a straightforward, common-sense recommendation for all employers to adopt.

The March hearing was a fine example of democracy at work, a showing of how the process works best when local communities are engaged. Civic engagement is one sign of a vibrant, sustainable and supportive community. It leads to more efficient and effective decisions that keep our communities thriving.

It is hard enough for communities of color to have their voices heard. They do not need more barriers to engagement when they're already underrepresented in the decision-making process. Instead of discouraging people from participating in this core principle of democracy, we should be creating more opportunities for deliberation and dialogue.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission endorsed removing the conviction question from the job application as a best practice. Cities as varied as Buffalo, New York and Seattle have enacted their own "ban the box" policies.

When it comes to banning the box from Portland job applications, the Urban League of Portland, the AFL-CIO, and the Fair Chance for All Coalition will keep fighting and mobilizing within our communities to make a local impact where we live and work, in the places that we know best.

Willamette Week

The Portland Thorn

Steve Novick charmed voters with his prickly brilliance, gumption and wit. The bloom is off.

*By Beth Slovic
May 20, 2015*

Back when Steve Novick was in grade school, teachers were still allowed to spank troublesome students.

Novick was in fifth grade when his teacher asked his mother for permission to paddle the boy. "He just disrupts the class with too many questions," the teacher said.

His mother said no. Bill Trotter, a family friend who recalls the episode, says the young Novick was supremely confident in his own abilities.

"Things would be a lot better if I were emperor of the universe," Trotter remembers Novick, who was about 12 at the time, telling him. "We'd be much better off if people were robots and did what they were supposed to."

Today, Novick, 52 and a first-term Portland city commissioner, is no less confident. He's also often frustrated when others don't follow his lead. Novick remembers the teacher wanting to swat him. He also remembers having preadolescent thoughts about wanting to be emperor of the universe.

As he often does, however, Novick quibbles with the fine print of the narrative: He denies ever saying people should be robots. "I refuse to believe that's an accurate quote," he says.

But one denial isn't enough. After an initial interview, Novick called WW again to insist that the 12-year-old him would have never, ever made the robot comment.

"That makes me sound like a Bond villain," he says. "I am not now nor have I ever been a Bond villain."

And then he again denied having ever wished other people could act like robots.

It was a classic Steve Novick moment: He's at once brilliant, vexing, grandiose, disarmingly witty, argumentative and pedantic—and insistent on having the last word.

Always.

Novick's progressive ideals, rabbit-quick wit and willingness to speak his mind charmed a lot of voters when he came from nowhere to run a strong campaign for the U.S. Senate in 2008. He lost the Democratic primary but set himself up for his successful City Council run in 2012.

A Harvard-educated lawyer, Novick brought a wealth of policy work, campaign experience and strong relationships in politics. He campaigned for the City Council, calling for affordable health care, better preparation for a big earthquake and smarter investments in public schools.

He established an offbeat, winning brand: Steve Novick, the anti-politician, gutsy and nerdy, looming large at 4-foot-9 and with a hook for a left hand.

Today, however, the Novick brand is in trouble.

In his first 2½ years in office, Novick has taken on some of the city's most stubborn and vexing problems and scored some small victories, and he remains one of the few politicians to speak his mind, whatever the cost. (See sidebar, below.)

He has also ignited voter anger, antagonized colleagues, lowered policy debates into personal attacks, brushed off simple political niceties and lectured citizens on why they need to pay more taxes.

Novick's manner might be all right if he were also effective. Despite a few small successes, he hasn't been, and the style that defined him is wearing thin.

No one at City Hall advocates that government plays a bigger role in our everyday lives more than Novick. Yet no one has done more in the past two years to generate antipathy toward city government—and seems more unaware of his impact.

While Portlanders are still sore about his efforts to pass a street fee to pay for fixing roads, one of his bureaus is considering requiring parking permits for all Portland streets without meters. (State law would need to change first.)

"He waded in and made big proposals," says Jewel Lansing, a former city auditor and author of a book on Portland history. "He's had a hard time showing what he can do."

Three months ago, according to political insiders, polls showed Novick's unfavorable rating with voters had jumped to more than 40 percent—an almost unheard of degree of unpopularity for an incumbent city commissioner, and numbers that make him vulnerable as he seeks re-election in 2016.

In an interview with WW, Novick acknowledged polls show his popularity is falling, largely because he and Mayor Charlie Hales bungled their plan for a street tax to finance road repairs and maintenance.

His slide comes just as he is building a re-election campaign, and his long-time backers—primarily unions and progressive activists—wonder what's happened to him. He fought the invasion of Uber, the ride-sharing app giant, likening the company's name to the Nazis. Then he flipped and sided with Silicon Valley billionaires.

"I have a lot of respect for his intellect and his accomplishments," says Mark Sturbois, legislative chairman with Communication Workers of America Local 7901, which represents drivers for Union Cab. "I don't understand how he can turn his back on working people, as he has on this Uber deal."

A year ago, Novick told WW he could not think of anything he would have done differently in office, and saw no need to change. Since then, he's been sipping humility to see if he can acquire a taste for it.

Novick acknowledges he has a habit of needing to win every argument, making him difficult to work with. He says he made a New Year's resolution to control his anger. At the same time, he doesn't think his intemperate outbursts—often witnessed by those around him—have been the problem.

"I stew about things too much," he says. "It's about controlling the anger in the world inside my brain."

Novick says the real issue for him is that he has taken on long-standing, even intractable problems, such as street repairs and budget inefficiencies.

"I'll just keep on doing my job," he says. "Hopefully we will have enough accomplishments to keep me in the job."

In Novick's second-floor City Hall office hangs a portrait of Robert F. Kennedy. Disheveled stacks of newspapers fill a window seat, and thick, open binders with policy papers cover his meeting table. A note from conservative radio host Lars Larson, calling Novick his "favorite pinko," dangles from a bookshelf. In

a back corner, a small dog bed awaits Novick's two corgis, Pumpkin and Checkers (the latter named for Nixon's cocker spaniel).

From this perch, Novick spends his days mulling city problems: the lack of affordable housing, poor academic achievement among high-school students, and the threat posed by greenhouse gas emissions.

Novick studies up for most issues as if preparing legal briefs. Staffers get emails sent at 2 am with links to newspaper articles or studies about whatever is on his mind.

Colleagues respect his desire to tackle big issues. "He's a very smart person," says City Commissioner Nick Fish, "who is often most comfortable at 30,000 feet looking at policy issues."

The City Council may be the wrong fit for a political activist who, in the words of one city official, "clearly has enjoyed being a one-man band."

In Portland's unusual form of government, commissioners run bureaus in addition to casting votes. And that's also been difficult for Novick, who for years as a political activist and consultant talked about his ideas but rarely had to be responsible for making them work.

"It went from him yelling at people," says his chief of staff, Chris Warner, "to people yelling at him."

Novick acknowledges his limitations in the position. "Any kind of political job is a struggle between the things you want to work on and the things you have to work on this minute," he says. "I knew that was going to be a struggle, no matter what. There's always the crisis of the day."

Novick oversees the Bureau of Transportation as well as the Bureau of Emergency Management and the Bureau of Emergency Communications, the agency that runs 911.

Those are nuts-and-bolts assignments for a man more accustomed to writing white papers and designing partisan electoral strategy. Novick, in effect, now has to make sure the streetcar runs on time.

Carmen Merlo, director of the Bureau of Emergency Management, says Novick has never canceled one of their every-other-week meetings, no matter how immersed he was in other matters. "He cares deeply about the work that we do," she says. "He's always made time."

That was clear on a recent, gloriously sunny Sunday afternoon, when Novick came to Friendly House in Northwest Portland to talk with residents in the Willamette Heights neighborhood about earthquake preparedness. The neighborhood is prone to landslides and has few options for getting emergency vehicles in or out. Novick was scheduled only to make opening remarks, but he stayed and listened for two hours. "He wanted to hear neighbors' concerns," Merlo says. (Novick's wife, Rachel, whom he married last year, works as a staff assistant in Multnomah County's Office of Emergency Management.)

Novick's playful sense of humor comes through in press releases. After Gov. Kate Brown took office in February, Novick blasted the news media with a message for Brown: "Get a corgi." "Governor Jerry Brown of California owns a Pembroke Welsh corgi, Sutter, who has played a key role in his administration," Novick wrote. "The lesson is clear: If you're the governor of a Pacific Coast state, and your name is Brown, you'd be crazy not to get a corgi."

Earlier this month, Fish announced he'd hired Michael Jordan, a career Oregon bureaucrat and former director of the state Department of Administrative Services, to run the city's Bureau of Environmental Services. Novick didn't miss a beat. He sent a press release urging Fish to hire Scottie Pippen to run the Water Bureau. "The utilities should work together as a team, and with Jordan and Pippen you get a championship team," Novick said.

On May 6, the City Council held a perfunctory vote to issue permits for this year's Rose Festival. Ten Rose Festival princesses, wearing identical gray suits and colorful blouses, arrived and stood before the council, each giving a brief speech about her interests.

Hales smiled. So did City Commissioners Fish, Amanda Fritz and Dan Saltzman, all attentive and polite.

On the far left, Novick stirred. He looked away. He yawned.

When it came time to vote on the permits, Novick suddenly engaged and used a tough-guy tone with the festival's CEO, Jeff Curtis.

"I want you to take note these are revocable permits," Novick said. "If the Rose Festival starts acting up and causing trouble, we can take them away."

He was joking. "It was just me being silly," Novick says now. At the time, only a few people laughed.

It's the street fee, however, that has defined Novick. And it's an ugly tale.

Novick and Hales last year pushed to introduce a street fee to raise as much as \$46 million a year for the Transportation Bureau.

The battle Novick took on was enormous and difficult. Portland streets face a \$1 billion backlog in repairs. Yet even a city willing to tax itself to put art teachers in schools has resisted paying more for roads.

A previous transportation commissioner, Sam Adams, beat down doors across the city in 2007, explaining in exhaustive detail the benefits a transportation tax would bring. He didn't succeed.

Still, Adams' failure left the door open for another try, in part because Adams had worked to build a base of support for the idea.

Not Novick. In a series of town-hall meetings, Novick lectured as much as he listened. Len Bergstein, a longtime City Hall lobbyist, described Hales and Novick's attitude this way: "We need money, and who cares if you're not going to come along on this? We're going to do it. Here's your spinach. Eat it."

Hales and Novick made a political mistake that politicians with their experience shouldn't have made: You need three votes on the five-member City Council to get anything passed. They launched into their campaign for a street fee without that third vote.

Fish and Saltzman said they would support a plan that went to the voters. Fritz wanted a fee that didn't unfairly hit low-income Portlanders. Adding either provision would have given Novick his majority.

Instead, he and Hales proposed a flat \$144 annual residential fee with no referral to voters. The move all but guaranteed they wouldn't get the third vote.

"They were a little too timid about not trusting voters," Saltzman says. (Hales declined to be interviewed for this story.)

Novick and Hales had failed to do other important groundwork. When businesses objected to their fee, Novick and Hales suggested imposing one on homeowners and adding businesses later—an idea that struck many as unfair. They quickly retreated.

"It was premature to roll something out," says Corky Collier, executive director of the Columbia Corridor Association and among 24 members of Portland's street fee advisory committee. "It wasn't cooked yet."

Novick himself was ill at ease with what he had signed on to. "For me to support something that's regressive is kind of astonishing," he told WW last July. "I object to this idea with 96 percent of the fibers of my being. But I object to letting the streets continue to deteriorate—and continue to have inequality in terms of pedestrian safety within the city—with 100 percent of my being."

It soon became clear Hales and Novick were improvising. Novick quickly switched to a plan that would base the street fee on income. He says he had a three-vote majority for that plan but lost it when small businesses complained. (Novick won't say which commissioner pledged to support the plan, but it was Fritz. She declined to be interviewed for this story.)

"The lesson is," Novick says today, "we need to have people sign in blood."

The Portland Business Alliance, essentially the city's chamber of commerce, also didn't like an income tax and threatened to refer the street fee to the ballot. Hales and Novick gave up after that.

The street-fee debate revealed Novick's tendency toward personal attacks when he doesn't get his way. When Saltzman appeared to question the need for road funding, Novick threatened to pull his endorsement in Saltzman's 2014 re-election.

Novick used some wit when he went after Fish, who complained that Novick's street-fee plan lacked low-income discounts. Novick sent Fish a letter that starts "Dear Captain Renault." It was a reference to the film *Casablanca*, in which the hypocritical, corrupt French officer Renault pockets his roulette winnings and then shuts down Humphrey Bogart's bar because he is "shocked—shocked—to find that gambling is going on in here."

Novick's point in labeling Fish as a corrupt and hypocritical Vichy official was to highlight that Fish's own bureaus, water and environmental services, also lacked low-income discounts. "I was not going to let Nick get away with making arguments against the street fee that applied equally to his bureaus," Novick says.

Fish wonders about Novick's willingness to make policy debates personal.

"You don't burn bridges," Fish says.

It was Novick's response to the Portland Business Alliance that made people at City Hall wonder if he had lost his way.

"The Portland Business Alliance and its allies," Novick said on Dec. 17, 2014, "would rather burn the city to the ground" than adopt anything remotely resembling an income tax.

Novick says the remark looked off the cuff but was a calculated quote aimed at getting attention. It did, further alienating business leaders. "When people are opposing me on something, I might use more colorful language," Novick says.

He now regrets the statement—after his mother took him to task for it. "Even if it's true," Novick recalls his mother telling him, "you don't want to sound like you're at war with people all the time."



Novick spent many years a lone champion of his best causes and as someone who became accustomed to standing out.

He was born Steven Sobol—no middle name—in 1963 to Becky and Isaac Sobol, students at Antioch College, an Ohio liberal arts school whose motto is: "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity."

Novick spent the first six weeks of his life in Newark, N.J., where his parents had gone for a college work-study program. He was born without a left hand or fibulas in his legs. He underwent surgery at age 3 to straighten one leg. When he was about 4, the Sobols divorced, and Novick rarely had contact with his father.

Novick's mother later married Bob Novick, founder of an underground newspaper in San Francisco. Bob Novick says his adopted son has always figured out how to deal with his physical limitations. "It's given him a lot of will and determination," he says. "He's been a fighter in that way."

His mother, who now goes by Becky Harmon, taught Head Start and had Novick in her classroom. She recalls that period as the only time other children teased him about his physical differences. Novick, then 4, decided he had had enough of the other boys' bullying.

"He chased them all, brandishing his hook," Harmon says. "They were laughing, but they were running." She says Novick, who doesn't remember the incident, later befriended the taunting boys, wrote a play for the class and gave them all parts.

The family moved to Cottage Grove, Ore., when Steve Novick was 10. In 1976, the South Lane School District shut down after local voters rejected a tax levy. Novick—who'd been allowed to skip sixth grade—enrolled at the University of Oregon, using federal money available to him because of his disability. He was 14. He graduated four years later and earned a diploma from Harvard Law School when he was 21.

Novick insists he was never made to feel different, despite his standing out, physically and intellectually. If kids made disparaging remarks, Novick says he didn't hear them. "I don't know that I was really all that different," he says. "I was treated well."

As a lawyer in Washington, D.C., Novick spent nine years with the U.S. Department of Justice suing polluters. He returned to Oregon in 1997 and bounced between political jobs, working as a policy aide on statewide campaigns for Govs. John Kitzhaber and Ted Kulongoski.

In 2007, he wrote a cover story for WW called "If I Ran," in which he made the case against then-U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith (R-Ore.). He took himself up on the challenge, and lost a highly spirited race against Jeff Merkley, who went on to defeat Smith in the fall.

His experience running in the 2008 U.S. Senate race showed Novick enjoyed the spotlight. He considered running for governor, state treasurer and Multnomah County chair. He took up causes—the financial cut bars get from lottery games that he considers excessive was a favorite target—and became a go-to source for reporters who needed an informed, witty quote.

But a political mentor, then-City Commissioner Randy Leonard, effectively handed Novick his council seat in 2012.

Leonard says City Hall isn't the easiest place for a first-time politician to learn to be effective. Newbie city commissioners face much more public scrutiny than rookie state legislators, for example, and city commissioners work with only four other elected officials, not dozens. "It is just so critical to go out of your way to work well with people," Leonard says.

It's unusual for Portland City Council members to lose re-election. It's happened only four times since 1984, and not at all since 1992, when a homebuilders lobbyist named Charlie Hales knocked out incumbent Commissioner Dick Bogle.

No big-name opponents have surfaced yet to run against Novick in 2016. Nick Caleb, a Concordia University instructor, challenged Saltzman last year when he campaigned on the \$15-an-hour minimum wage and won about 20 percent of the vote. Charles McGee, co-founder of the Black Parent Initiative, is also considering a bid.

It's not yet clear if the unions that backed Novick in 2012 will do so again or go looking for another candidate.

Novick has repeatedly called into question the amount of money spent on the Portland Police Bureau, sometimes lumping in the city's fire department with the police budget. He once mulled the possibility of closing some fire stations at night when they get fewer calls.

That irks Alan Ferschweiler, president of the Portland firefighters' union, which endorsed Novick in his first City Council race. "You don't have to attack the other departments in the city to get where you want to go," Ferschweiler says. "There was a hope we would have more of a champion."

Novick says the fire station idea came during a time of necessary budget cuts, adding it wasn't something he wanted to do. "If you have to cut something, you should look at the data to see where it's the least irresponsible to cut," he says.

Novick says he knows there are people he worked with as an advocate whom he has let down.

"It's hard to have to disappoint my natural allies and say, 'I actually agree with you, but I have to explore other options because I'm not sure that's going to work,'" Novick says. "It's also hard when your natural allies disappoint you."

But Novick says he will not change one thing: His determination to talk about and try to resolve some of the city's more stubborn issues—fixing streets, making Portlanders safer from natural disaster, fighting inequality brought on by increased development and other forces.

“If that costs me re-election,” Novick says, “then getting people to think about these issues will be my legacy.”

Steve's Job

It's not all been about the street-fee fiasco for City Commissioner Steve Novick. He's had some modest success, and some other struggles, during his 29 months in office.



Vista Bridge

People have been jumping to their deaths from the Vista Bridge ever since the West Hills span was built in 1926. The Northwest Examiner in 2011 drew attention to the need for the city to do something about it. Nothing happened.

In 2013, four people jumped to their deaths off the Vista Bridge, and Novick took action. “It is time—past time—to do what we can to stop the dying,” he said at the time.

The Portland Bureau of Transportation that Novick oversees built a 9-foot-tall suicide barrier—black fences with a curved overhang at a cost of \$236,000.

Some admirers of the historic bridge decried the aesthetics of the barrier. Novick stood firm. Months later, a suicidal man was able to get around the barrier, but emergency responders talked him down. Novick credits the barrier with giving them time to coax the man to safety.

911

Novick charged into office vowing to make health care services less expensive. That's not something a city commissioner has lots of control over. However, Novick does oversee the city's 911 system.

“I have this little piece of the health care system,” he says. “It would be nice to make it more efficient.”

How?

“When we get a medical call, the priority is to send out fire and ambulance right away, and then the ambulance only gets paid if they send someone to the emergency room,” he says. “There’s sort of an incentive to go to the emergency room. In some jurisdictions, they have a nurse triage system when somebody calls 911.”

Novick would like to replicate this. “You ask a couple of questions, and if someone’s not in immediate danger, you might say, ‘Do you mind if I pass you on to a nurse?’”

So far, the idea remains just that—an idea.

Disabled parking permits

Motorists with disabled parking permits enjoyed limitless free parking on metered downtown streets when Novick took office.

And disabled parking permits were about as easy to get as medical marijuana cards, making it easy to abuse the system. The Oregonian reported on thousands of placards statewide issued to dead people but being used by non-disabled drivers in 1999.

And in July 2013, the Portland Tribune highlighted the problem and suggested a simple fix: charge disabled motorists for the placards, eliminating cheaters and freeing up parking for drivers with true disabilities.

Novick took note of the Tribune story. “I had no idea this was such a big issue that other cities were dealing with,” he says. “Then I went on a walk with our parking enforcement officers, and I was like, ‘Good Lord, this is amazing.’”

City Hall officials had been looking at the problem for at least six years, and former Mayor Sam Adams had created a task force. No one could agree what to do.

“I said, ‘We’re going to do something. Let’s figure out what we can do,’” Novick says.

Five months later, in December 2013, the Portland City Council unanimously approved a resolution that required permit holders to pay for parking.

The new rules also made accommodations for disabled drivers, including letting them exceed posted time limits in some cases.

“This is something that had been languishing for six years,” Novick says, “and we were able to get council to approve a framework within six months.”

Uber

When the San Francisco ride-sharing giant crashed the gates of Portland, announcing Dec. 5, 2014, it would offer its services in Portland without city approval, Novick was incensed.

As the commissioner overseeing the Bureau of Transportation, Novick had the taxi industry under his purview, and he hated the idea that a billion-dollar bully was pushing its way into the city illegally.

Novick was on the Dec. 5 conference call Mayor Charlie Hales had with David Plouffe, Uber’s senior vice president of policy and strategy. Plouffe was stunned when Novick roared into the speaker phone, “If you come in and break the law, we’ll throw the fucking book at you.” (“Drive,” WW, Dec. 31, 2014.)

Novick’s outrage helped prompt Uber to back off, but the company essentially got its way.

Critics complained that allowing Uber to flood the market would hurt existing taxi drivers. Novick disputes that, saying the city’s approach to regulating cabs was arcane.

“It doesn’t seem like the existing system is working for the little guy,” he says.

The Portland Mercury

Letting Go Is the Hardest Part

The City's Tired of Running Last Thursday. It's Got a Willing Taker.

By Garrett Andrews

May 20, 2015

THESE DAYS, Michael O'Connor can't walk far on NE Alberta without shaking a familiar hand. In the last year, he's made himself a fixture of Northeast Portland's famous arts district with one idea in mind: putting the beloved but controversial Last Thursday event back in the hands of the people.

"It's been degrading for a while, but that's because Last Thursday is a mess," O'Connor says. "There haven't been any new ideas in years."

Since taking office in 2013, Mayor Charlie Hales has sought to pick up where his predecessor, Sam Adams, left off. In response to complaints and lawlessness, he shaved an hour off the monthly summertime bacchanal and mulled the idea of permits for artists and other vendors. This year he's lopping off two months altogether.

And through it all, Hales' message, like Adams', has been consistent: He wants Last Thursday in the hands of responsible citizens.

O'Connor thinks he's the man to make that happen. He says he now has enough support on NE Alberta to take over the event, and he's pressing the city to loosen the reins.

But with summer nearing, O'Connor's group, Artists United, faces unlikely odds. The logistics are imposing—sanitation and security for crowds of up to 25,000 people and a cost of \$10,000 each month. But O'Connor also claims he's been hampered by Hales' office, the very group trying to rid itself of Last Thursday.

"I appreciate his enthusiasm," says Chad Stover, a project manager in the mayor's office. "But the message that I've tried to convey is that it's not about whether they are serious, it's about whether they are capable. And right now, I've seen nothing from this group that suggests that's what they are."

It's a familiar story.

Five years ago, then-Mayor Adams started cracking down on Last Thursday in response to increasing complaints of mayhem. Behavior like vandalism, public urination, and flagrant alcohol consumption continue to vex neighbors and Alberta businesses—even the bar owners said to benefit most from Last Thursday. (Despite the massive influx of people, many businesses report modest to nonexistent returns.)

Artists and longtime attendees bemoan the "soul" of Last Thursday being trampled by overcrowding, intoxication, and government interference. But wrangling this mess into a workable event has proven troublesome in Last Thursday's nearly 20-year history. The last community group to attempt it was Friends of Last Thursday (FOLT), which disbanded in protest of the city's oversight in 2013 ["The Last Last Thursday?" News, June 26, 2013].

O'Connor, 30, touts his event-planning experience, including two years running an erstwhile art fair called Hump Day in Southeast Portland's Buckman neighborhood, which he says drew about 1,500 people on Wednesdays from June through October. The Beaverton native knows all too well how wild Last Thursday can get: He attended many as a younger man. Intent on helping reform the event, he also attended FOLT's regular meetings for two years, but stopped because of "leadership problems."

His plan, he says, is better.

O'Connor wants to form groups that would target the well-known "nuisance" concerns, which he says he'd quell by staffing more than 100 volunteers to keep watch over the event.

And O'Connor thinks he can pay the event's steep tab. He plans to draw about half of his revenue from vending fees and sponsorships with Alberta businesses, and says he'll look for sponsorships outside the district.

In contrast with FOLT, which O'Connor said was led by many strong personalities, his group would have one person at the top overseeing representatives of the groups most affected: residents, business owners, and artists.

"We aren't going to be arguing about the things they used to argue about—like the law," he said, including a comic beat for emphasis. "I'm not going to debate facts with the police. This is all pretty straightforward. We know what the laws are. We know what we have to do."

Last month, some nine months after setting out, O'Connor addressed city council for the first time, armed with signatures from 56 Alberta businesses (an additional 68 businesses "abstained" from signing, and two outright oppose the effort). Given his sometimes-chilly dealings with the mayor's staff, he said he was surprised to be greeted warmly by Hales, who told him, "I really appreciate what you're doing."

"We've been looking for community-based leadership to manage this event, and for my office to, frankly, work itself out of a job," Hales said at the meeting. "Because [Last Thursday] really shouldn't be managed out of the mayor's office."

There's no sign that's actually going to happen anytime soon.

In March, Hales' office announced further cuts to Last Thursday, an indication city staffers are counting on managing it at least one more summer. The plan now is to scrap the May and September events completely. The move from five months to three should save about 40 percent of the \$75,000 to \$80,000 the city expected to spend on Last Thursday this year, according to Stover.

The mayor's office isn't alone in its doubts of O'Connor's chances. Maquette Reeverts, Alberta Street artist and former FOLT member, said many others have tried unsuccessfully to win over Hales.

"I think [O'Connor] has a good idea. I'm just not sure he has the wherewithal to do it," she says.

But, as Artists United's long list of signatures shows, O'Connor's winning over many on Alberta.

Yosief Embaye, owner of the jazz club Solae's Lounge at NE 18th and Alberta, says he's seen a lot of O'Connor lately. And he's cautiously buying in to a future that may never come to pass.

"He seems to be doing things," Embaye says. "I just hope what he says will happen, because there's positive things that can come out of Last Thursday."

In Other News

*By Mercury Staff
May 20, 2015*

THE CITY OF PORTLAND'S officially taken its first shaky steps toward a \$15 minimum wage. On Wednesday, May 13, city council voted unanimously to pay all full-time city employees and both full-time and part-time contract workers at least that much.

It's progress toward what Commissioner Dan Saltzman has called "the wage floor for all US workers," but it also creates a profoundly unfair situation: Part-time contractors are now paid more than thousands of the city's own part-time employees.

That's a scenario that Commissioner Amanda Fritz—as the parks commissioner who oversees the vast majority of those employees—has sought to avoid ["Starting at the Bottom," News, Jan 7]. Now Fritz is hinting she'll try to improve pay for some of those employees in upcoming budget talks.

"It's not equitable that we pay part-time workers who are contract workers much more than we pay part-time workers in parks," Fritz said at the May 13 hearing. "We have a big challenge ahead of us. We need to start making this down payment to parks workers in this current budget."

City officials already face a tough scenario with some parks employees. They're scrambling to figure out how to handle an arbitrator's May 1 ruling that Portland Parks and Recreation needs to stop giving low-paid part-time workers tasks that are supposed to go to better-paid union members. DIRK VANDERHART SPEAKING OF pay inequity, it's alive and well on Portland City Council, too.

The Oregonian noted in a May 14 story that Commissioner Dan Saltzman reported nearly \$1.6 million in income above and beyond his \$108,643 public paycheck in 2014.

The figure comes from annual statements of economic interest public officials are required to file with the state. They don't have to report all their income—just sources of cash that make up 10 percent or more of their total household income.

Saltzman, whose family owns a good deal of city center real estate, is the only commissioner to have reported money from business interests, the O reports. DVH

A PORTLAND POLICE officer on Sunday, May 17, shot 47-year-old Michael Shawn Harrison in Southeast Portland after Harrison allegedly charged officers while waving a knife.

At 2:15 pm, police received word that a man had cut himself and was wandering the streets in the Brooklyn neighborhood. Cops say he entered an occupied home briefly before the shooting occurred, prompting a woman and her children to hide in the basement and call police.

Police report that when Harrison exited the home they ordered him to surrender. Instead he allegedly ran at officers, not stopping when struck with a "less-lethal" beanbag round. Officer Raelynn McKay then fired her handgun, hitting Harrison several times.

Cops expect the man to survive. It's Portland's third officer-involved shooting of 2015.

Hall Monitor

Inside the Black Box

By Dirk VanderHart
May 20, 2015

PORTLAND PLANNING COMMISSIONER Chris Smith has a term for this part of the city's budget season: the "black box."

Around this time every year, the mayor unveils his budget—this time, it's a \$3.7 billion monster, packing \$49 million more than last year—to the public and colleagues. Then the thing goes underground to be tinkered with via private confabs in closed conference rooms. It emerges, changed, a couple of weeks later, nearly ready for a vote.

This year, things are different.

At the combined urgings of Commissioners Amanda Fritz and Nick Fish, city council sat down at a big table ringed by budget wonks, bureau directors, and advisers on Tuesday, May 19, to bring those typically closed-door discussions into full view.

"We're actually daylighting some of the conversations we'd be having privately," Fish said at the two-hour meeting. "It's good for the public to see how we manage the endgame."

It was actually only sort of good.

Sure, next year's budget is the sunniest Portland's had in a while. It's probably one of the sunniest in Portland history, according to City Budget Director Andrew Scott.

But it's also a finite pool of money, with competing ideas for how to spend it. I sat down in council chambers on Tuesday rubbing my palms together and waiting for the inevitable throwdown, my mind dancing with potential areas of conflict.

How would Fish seek to cleave money from Hales' spending priorities for housing, as he'd signaled he might? Where would Fritz scrounge for cash to pay destitute city parks workers—one of her top priorities? Commissioner Steve Novick thinks horse cops are useless, and that it's dumb Portland dumps millions into a war on drugs that's proven ineffective and unwinnable. Would Hales bristle if his police spending were questioned?

This is a council used to testy exchanges—the least cohesive in years, by some people's reckoning—and there seemed to be endless opportunities for budget spats.

Nope.

Fish called Hales' proposal "one of the most thoughtful and intentional budgets we've had." He did pursue an extra \$2.5 million in housing money, which would bring a city fund with comparatively few restrictions up to a solid \$10 million. Hales said he made a "good case."

Novick, whose Portland Bureau of Transportation stands to gain nearly \$20 million from the budget, talked of how "incredibly grateful" he'd be for its passage, and made special note that he wouldn't be coming after police money this year (though he still doesn't much like the drug war).

Fritz had some interesting tweaks—it turns out she's not a fan of paying \$500,000 for a new, privately run emergency psychiatric "drop-off" center—but also pulled back some requests while she strategized parks funding.

Commissioner Dan Saltzman left early.

Even Hales' proposal to spend \$2 million subsidizing an indoor track and field championship slated for Portland next year brought only minor concerns and looks like it will proceed mostly untouched.

I was slouched in my chair by the end of it.

Sure, it's great this all happened in a public meeting, but Smith's black box, it turns out, doesn't contain all that much.

Then again, it's possible the real conversations happened after the meeting.

Who Represents You?

Portlanders Are Trying—Again—to Get Representation on City Council

*By Shelby R. King
May 20, 2015*

HAVE YOU EVER wondered who represents you on Portland City Council? The answer is: no one, specifically. East Portland resident Collene Swenson wants to change that.

Swenson and her Hazelwood-area neighbors feel slighted by the city, and say their complaints about inadequate sidewalks, not enough neighborhood police patrols, and a general lack of representation at city hall go largely ignored.

So in March, along with two neighbors, Swenson—who lives between NE Halsey and Glisan near 122nd—decided they were leaving... and taking the rest of East Portland with them. The trio started a movement to de-annex 13 neighborhoods from Portland and reincorporate them as their own city.

"When you're dissatisfied with something that's happening, what do you do?" Swenson asks. "You either leave or you change it."

Since filing the original de-annexation initiative—deemed unconstitutional by the city's elections office—Swenson's decided she doesn't want to leave after all. She wants to change things.

"People are mad about the sidewalks, but what I care about are the drug houses in the area and the stripped cars," she said during a Saturday interview at her home, surrounded entirely by a chain-link fence to deter would-be intruders. "We pay taxes so we can be represented and protected under the laws."

Portland is weird in many ways, and proud of it, but perhaps weirdest is the configuration of city hall: The Rose City is the last US city with more than 100,000 residents that uses a commission-style form of government, and it's one of only two big cities that elects an all at-large city council rather than splitting the city into districts.

Proponents of districts, including the American Civil Liberties Union, say local representation is the best way to bring new voices to the table. Probably the most famous example of that theory in action came out of San Francisco and was documented in the 2008 movie *Milk*. In 1977, the city started voting for council members by neighborhood districts. The result of that first election: three women, an Asian American man, and Harvey Milk—an outspoken and openly gay business owner living in the city's Castro neighborhood—joined city council.

"People tend to like districted voting because it gets more minority representation," says Seth Woolley, who twice ran for secretary of state on the Pacific Green Party ticket and is currently active with local campaign efforts. "And districting makes campaigning less expensive and more accessible to people because you're only campaigning in your neighborhood."

But Woolley's got reservations about the new proposal. Swenson's initiative would require that potential councilors live and work within their districts, an idea that Woolley says is impossible to enforce.

Right now, three Portland commissioners—Dan Saltzman, Steve Novick, and Amanda Fritz—live on the west side of the city. Commissioner Nick Fish resides in Northeast Portland, and Mayor Charlie Hales

lives in Eastmoreland. The Oregonian reports that only Randy Leonard, a commissioner from 2002 until 2012, lived in East Portland during his tenure.

Of course, Swenson's proposal is far from the first time a change-up has been introduced to Portland governance. Eight other attempts over the years have failed to win voter support, most recently in 2007.

"Portland City Club issued a big report in 1932 saying the commission-style system sucks," Woolley says. "But for some reason it's stuck around even through other government reform. No one really likes it, but no one has been able to change it."

Swenson, who's originally from Southern California but has lived in Portland for years, said she was shocked when she found out about Portland's weird government style.

"Things here aren't like where I came from, and I think other people are starting to realize that too," she says. "When I tried to get city council members to call me back and got no answer, I realized something needed to change."

Swenson's initiative—which the elections office accepted earlier this month—proposes a change from the current structure of four at-large commissioners and a mayor. If approved, Portland City Council would be made up of seven commissioners elected from districts, two council members elected at-large, and a mayor. Seattle voted up a similar system in 2013.

Swenson must collect more than 31,000 signatures by July 2016 in order to get her initiative on the November 2016 ballot. If voters approve, Portland would be separated into districts based on population. But Woolley and others have expressed concern over the proposed districting strategy, because the initiative's language indicates the council would be in charge of creating district boundaries.

"You'd think people would learn not to ever place district drawing power in the hands of the body elected by such districts," he says. "There are literally no reasonable restrictions on district boundaries here."

That's not the only problem Woolley sees with Swenson's initiative, which says the city budget must be approved "by the mayor and a majority of the council" to be effective.

"This language implies the mayor has veto power over the budget," Woolley says. "That's more power than he has now."

The mayor, under the proposal, could also veto laws he or she doesn't like, but the council could override that veto with a two-thirds majority.

"Vetoes are pointless and undemocratic," Woolley says. "It means now you have to elect a mayor that's more than just an administrator, it's somebody who's going to legislate, too. And now your separation of powers are messed up."

2015 Budget Bloodbath: Follow Along as the Public Gripes About the Mayor's Budget

*By Dirk VanderHart
May 20, 2015*

So here's how this works: Every year, the mayor's office releases a budget, and everyone who's interested takes their best shot at changing it to their own ends. Members of the city council are already doing this—pretty amicably, this time around—but tonight it's the public's turn. It's a packed house in council chambers, and sort of like a Price is Right taping in here, with different groups repping their set via placards and t-shirts.

Firefighters' union is out in force, and I'm guessing they're not happy with a suggestion that would keep 26 jeopardized positions, but leave 13 in question next year. There are guys in hi-lighter yellow safety vests, and I'm wondering if they're here on roads. That would be weird, since infrastructure—and in particular Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT)-managed infrastructure—got a lot of shine in Mayor Charlie Hales' budget proposal. Some people across the balcony from me definitely are advocating safer roads, with "Mind the Gap!" signs that I think advocate wider shoulders on the road? (Hard to see.) One contingent is going to be pushing for more money for the Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI)

"The council has given the mayor pretty high marks," Commissioner Nick Fish tells the crowd. "I'll let you in on a little secret: If it's already in the budget it's a little harder to take it out. If it's not in the proposed budget... that's especially important."

It's the best budget year of Hales' mayoral tenure, with \$49 million on top of the current budget, and \$3.7 billion to put toward city services. So far, the knives haven't come out with any real vigor. Will that change tonight?

VOZ Workers Rights Education Project are apparently the guys in the safety vests. They don't want to talk about Hales' budget, but the Portland Development Commission's, which is also up for discussion. They're asking for \$30,000 in the PDC budget for help with becoming a "more viable organization." VOZ says it can guarantee \$12 an hour for its workers. The city council loves VOZ, and publicly stood by a member of its staff when he was nearly detained by ICE recently. "It's a place people can go," one man says of the day laborers center.

6:53 pm: Heather Hale with Venture Portland is up now, touting her groups help for small businesses and community involvement. She's thanking council for continuing funding to her organization. Feel good stuff. We're still on the PDC's budget. People are checking their phones. One guys got the New York Times splayed luxuriously out in front of him.

6:59 pm: Okay, onto the city's budget. Metro Councilor Bob Stacy is first up. "It would be silly if I were to advise you of how to spend your budget dollars," he says. Instead, he's sort of making promises. Metro is prioritizing Safe Routes to School this year, he says, and there might be a chance for the City of Portland to reap some of those benefits. But we'd need to put something down to match, Stacey says. The current budget has \$60,000 for Safe Routes—which active transportation folks love, and is important. PBOT requested \$300,000. "Very helpful," Hales says.

7:03 pm Bob from Hillsdale wants to see \$15,000 for trails maintenance in SW Portland. He says it doesn't matter that the trails were created without permits.

Next Hales says elementary students get to come up and they being streaming in droves out of the balcony pews. This thing is scheduled until 8:30 pm, but kids are notoriously long-winded. The first bunch wants a better playground in Couch Park. Fantastic work, and matching hats. Loud applause.

I should point out that this hearing could have a big effect on the city's budget. The mayor's office will submit that budget tomorrow. It will be subject of a council hearing next week. Council can still take action to change that document on May 27th and June 18th.

7:11 pm: Still talking about Couch Park. More applause.

Now a group of kids who frequent the Boys and Girls Club. "The club has given us a place to eat, a place to meet new friends, college preparedness, and work readiness," says their spokesman, who's admirably terse. She wants \$2 million Hales has promised to use on increased teen access in community centers to extend to the Boys and Girls Club.

7:17 pm Here's a young man who wants the Youth Pass program, which offers Portland Public Schools students free TriMet service, to extend to more students. It's funded this year, but not available to the other school districts in Portland. "It's not enough," this young man says. He's from OPAL.

And there are more kudos to Hales for a \$2 million initiative that would make some community centers more available to gang-affected teens. That's been thrown into question by labor strife within Portland Parks and Recreation.

7:22 pm: A woman is breastfeeding her toddler as she sits in front of council to testify. Boom, Portland.

7:31 pm Jose Martinez, a student at the SE Works career center, was a dropout. He's turned his life around, and is going to graduate and go to PCC. He didn't explicitly say he wanted momney for SE Works, but we all got it.

Now a woman is touting the \$2 million Hales wants to give to Indoor Track and Field Championships, which are coming to Portland next year whether they have that \$2 million or not. The mayor says the money will be the difference between a so-so track meet and an event that brings "the eyes of the world" on Portland. None of his colleagues have much questioned that premise. Anyway, this woman speaking was a javelin standout back in the day, and she loves track and field.

I know what you're thinking: No one's griping about the mayor's budget, as promised in my poorly thought out headline. Stick with me, though! You never know.

7:35 pm Longtime former commissioner Mike Lindberg in the house. He gets to jump the line because he used to be on council. And all he's saying is he loves the budget, but he wants more money for special projects like the new beach south of the Hawthorne Bridge slated to get \$300,000. But loves the budget.

7:41 Now some folks from, sigh, the Oregon Rail Heritage Center, which restores steam engines and lets the public look at them. "When I first got here they were mouldering on Oaks Bottom," says Jan [didn't catch last name]. Council got the center off the ground with a loan. It's asking for forgiveness on a part of that loan. And Jan says the center's "moment" is coming once the new Max Orange line opens. I'd bet these people get money.

And now Commissioner Amanda Fritz says we might not get to everyone tonight. And the Parks Board is saying they like the budget. I was totally spitballing when I wrote "budget bloodbath," okay?

7:45 pm: Now it's Ken Forcier, who lives in the Concordia Neighborhood. He's got a "Stop Demolishing Portland" shirt on and speaks of "side-yards, gardens, and grand trees" that are the hallmark of his subdivision. Forcier says Vera Katz's administration passed a law that's led to TOO MANY SKINNY HOUSES, and supports a Bureau of Planning and Sustainability study of this kind of reshaping. As long as that study finds the skinny houses can't come to his neighborhood. Side-yards over density, etc.

A woman from Causa says Hales should have funded the Portland Ready Initiative, which assists undocumented people with seeking citizenship or deferred action. "It wouldn't be only beneficial to these immigrant families, but also the city itself." BOOM, a legitimate gripe. Hales says thank you

7:51 pm YES: "SHAME ON YOU COMMISSIONERS," this next guy yells. "YOU'RE LYING TO US. YOU SAID THE STREETS ARE THE MAIN ASSETS OF PORTLAND. NOW YOU'RE SPENDING MONEY ON EVERYTHING ELSE. AND YOU STILL WANT TO PUT A STREET FEE IN." We're rolling! FYI, this is maybe the most general fund money that's ever been spent on PBOT. More than half the surplus is headed that way. But that guy's got a gripe. Don't know his name.

7:56 pm Don Grotting, superintendent of David Douglas School District, wants \$100,000 for College Possible for his district. The money would go toward helping students of color, students who speak English as a second language, and students in low-income homes. Grotting says David Douglas' first-ever Harvard acceptance was this year, and a College Possible participant. Hales was just talking today about how the city needs to be more intentional about its gifts to school districts. I'm not betting on Grotting's request.

8:02 pm Now we've got active transportation advocates Noel Mickelberry (Oregon Walks) and Mychal Tetteh (Community Cycling Center). Mickelberry's praising improvements to 122nd. "Seeing this investment is really important to us." BUT, she says there needs to be full funding for Safe Routes to School. It's been the most-consistent beef from people like Mickelberry. Wonder if Hales will listen. Tetteh is wearing a sign around his neck that I can't see from the balcony. He wants Safe Routes money, too. "Consider the impact that amount of money can have."

Here goes the Fire Union Prez Alan Ferschweiler, and all the union members in the balcony are standing. Told y'all. Ferschweiler calls Hales proposed funding a "bandaid to a bigger problem." He wants permanent, ongoing funding for the 26 positions that are in question. Fish asks if he's speaking for the 30-plus firefighters standing, and he gets more time. "We lost almost 40 budgeted positions two years ago," Ferschweiler says. "Before we look at how we cut further stations and staff, continue to build to what we had before." Applause

There's also a woman (works for Washington County?) who's happy Hales wants to give \$500,000 to a new Unity Behavioral Health Center, a "drop-off" center for people in mental health crisis. It's a \$50 million project, I think, but a privately run conglomeration of various mental health services in town. Interesting thing: Fritz doesn't want to contribute to the center, and she's been heavily involved in helping people in crisis. Fritz notes the center wouldn't increase the inpatient services in town. Useful rundown here.

8:23 pm There are three board members for Lan Su Chinese Garden here, appreciative of city money (\$638,000!) that will help fix a leak in the garden's pond. They are aggressively not Chinese. This thing seems to be winding down.

8:28 pm From up in the balcony you can see the papers that commissioners have in front of them. Hales appears to have a rather elaborate drawing of an old train. It's beneath his notes, but still.

8:36 pm We're over time and a guy's calling the fence designed to prevent suicides on the Vista Bridge "unsightly," though he acknowledges it's stopped the too-frequent suicides there. He wants money to replace what was supposed to be a temporary solution with something lovelier. A net maybe?

8:50 pm. Council chambers nearly emptied, and this hearing is winding up after some last-minute pleas for money for the arts, programs for aging Portlanders, the Nepalese community, and even an off-topic chiding about the proposed propane terminal in North Portland. More important, my laptop battery is flagging.

Will any of this matter? Did I waste more than two hours of my precious life? I truly don't know.

Bad News for Author of Proposed Ballot Initiative

By *Shelby R. King*
May 21, 2015

The City Attorney's interpretation of a proposed initiative to revamp Portland's commission-style government and create voting districts blown a few giant holes in the plan.

In the last paragraph of the ballot title (shown in the screenshot above), the attorney concludes that the language in the proposed initiative—submitted by East Portland resident Collene Swenson—would effectively render the city council impotent in the two year period between when the measure goes into effect and the first year of district elections.

"During (the) interim, Council would not have a quorum, could not act, pass ordinances, adopt a budget or establish districts," the ballot title reads. Whoops.

Collene Swenson, the East Portland resident who organized the Portland Community Equality Movement and penned the initiative's language says the city attorney's interpretation is a "monkey wrench" in her plans. She says she's planning on reaching out for help to rework the initiative.

Even though the plan doesn't appear workable, it could still get on the Nov. 2016 ballot if Swenson collects the 31,000-plus signatures needed. Her options are to either soldier on with this ballot title the way it is, challenge the city attorney's interpretation, or withdraw the current initiative and resubmit a new one.

Planning on Protesting Future Reservoir Votes? Prepare to be Ejected.

By *Dirk VanderHart*
May 20, 2015

Ever since rowdy reservoir-loving activists helped turn city council chambers into a bizarro barnyard last week, there's been speculation on how officials will curb future outbursts. After all, the council's

BALLOT TITLE

CAPTION: Amends Charter: Changes Form of City Government (7)

QUESTION: Shall Portland be governed by nine member Council (seven elected by district) and managed by a Mayor with executive authority? (20)

SUMMARY: Changes City's government from Commission form to Mayor/Council form with distinct roles for Mayor compared with Council. Currently, City government combines executive, legislative branches; Mayor and each Commissioner manage several departments, vote on legislation.

Measure gives Mayor all executive and administrative authority; gives Council all legislative and quasi-judicial authority. Council increased to nine members; two elected at large, seven elected from geographic districts. Mayor would not be part of Council, but has veto power. Council could override vetoes by six affirmative votes. Council appoints Council administrator; Council members entitled to paid staff. Seven affirmative votes required to approve emergency ordinances, sale of property. District Council candidates must be district residents one year before filing for office. Seven district Council members have offices within districts; two at large Council members have City Hall offices. Upon Council or Mayor vacancy, Council appoints replacement until election.

Measure effective date is two years before district elections. During interim, Council would not have quorum, could not act, pass ordinances, adopt budget or establish districts. No cost estimate provided. Other provisions. (175)

MAY21'15 10:12AM
AUDITOR

preliminary May 13 vote to demolish Washington Park's two drinking water reservoirs was merely one in a series of similar decisions on the horizon.

Would city council hold its meetings in a remote location, with testimony also carried out remotely—the public process version of those bulletproof food hatchways you see at some Taco Bells? Or would Mayor Charlie Hales, like his predecessor Sam Adams, eject boisterous people from chambers?

Looks like the latter. The city says its going to enforce its own rules.

"If protesters are disruptive in future meetings, the City will enforce its conduct rules," reads a fresh release from the city's Office of Management and Finance. "People will be warned to stop engaging in disruptive conduct or face expulsion. If they do not stop, they may be subject to future exclusions."

According to the rules OMF attached, disrupting "the normal operation or administration of City business" will earn you a warning from a "Person in Charge" (Hales in this case). Keep acting up, and you'll be excluded from City Hall for a day, or months, or potentially permanently. And Hales' people aren't shy about calling the cops on people with exclusions.

This move, of course, doesn't preclude ugliness. Hales spokesman has said the mayor is reticent to have protestors "dragged off in leg irons so they could have all the video in the world." Is that better or worse than what happened last Wednesday? (Click here and select item 486 for the most absurd council hearing you've ever seen.) Guess we'll find out next week.

Next on the docket? A hearing on Mount Tabor's soon-to-be disconnected reservoirs, scheduled May 28.

GoLocal PDX

Uber Not Living Up to its Promises in Portland

By GoLocalPDX News Team

May 22, 2015

In a very short time Uber has gone from being the next big thing to being a problem for disabled passengers, disgruntled riders and even their own drivers are turning on them. This weekend will mark one month into the 120 day experiment with ride sharing in Portland. Uber and Lyft have been under scrutiny in Portland and afar for their secrecy and business practices. In that time, demand for taxi cab service has remained high and demand for Uber service on the weekends has led the company to offer a minimum hourly guarantee to its drivers. Unfortunately, Uber's style could doom the likelihood of ridesharing permanency, despite the brimming demand.

News first broke this week that Uber is unable to provide adequate wheel chair accessible vans, as pledged as part of their agreement to return to the Rose City after suspending operations in December. Golocalpdx decided to dig a little deeper and learned Uber has a long trail of broken promises, here and afar. Looking at online message boards shared by local drivers shows Uber is seemingly spending very little effort to ensure driver happiness here.

While Uber seems to be getting many more drivers on the road at a much faster pace than competitor Lyft, the worry amongst their drivers is already growing. Uber's model prevents drivers from knowing their riders or connecting with other drivers. The simple app that makes the system work also thwarts the possibility of drivers having an organized voice in the public policy debate.

Uber is a nameless, faceless out of state corporation, but the drivers are largely locals who each have faces and stories that could be compelling. Uber operates in markets around the world. While ceasing business here would be a blow to the company, it would be crushing for the drivers since they are only in one market. While Uber activated its drivers to enable the re-launch last month, there have been no signs they plan to keep them engaged yet are using the rider app to alert riders (drivers use a different app called "Uber Partner" only available for download via a link once you are signed up).

In response to that criticism, Kate Downen, Uber spokesperson provided only this written statement

"Ridesharing is bringing economic opportunities and flexibility to hundreds of over 500-- and counting-- drivers in the Portland area already. We have been grateful for the tremendous support from driver-partners and riders in Portland and across Oregon-- with over 4500 folks signing a petition urging Oregon lawmakers to vote no on HB 2995, a bill that would stifle innovation,

prevent drivers from obtaining additional insurance on top of Uber's policy, and possibly end ridesharing in Oregon."

One Uber driver contacted and read that statement said he didn't remember any such notification but even if he did it "sounds like an online petition, which have seemingly lost value given their ubiquity and ease to 'sign.'"

Perhaps the biggest concern among drivers is pay – both short term and long term. When Uber decides to take a bigger piece of the pie, like they already have in cities where they are well-established, drivers will be forced to either accept a new, lower rate. The concerns of drivers goes on, and even in Portland they've taken note of these practices. Uber is quick to point out the percentage increase is a pilot project exclusive to San Francisco and San Diego. The standard percentage that Uber retains from a fare is 20%, which it is in the Portland market. Should that percentage increase, Uber is under no legal obligation to provide advanced notice to its drivers.

While other problems caused by Uber sound insignificant, they also impact driver's pocketbooks. For instance, some drivers report being summoned to a location where no passenger was awaiting. In some cases the fare was a block away, in others miles across town. The time and mileage to get to the actual start of the trip is the responsibility of the driver. At other times, the app doesn't work well. It doesn't start as it is supposed to, leaving drivers to take an extra step in order to get remunerated. Uber officials claim this is an uncommon occurrence but would not speak further to the issue unless we provided them with the specific driver and trip information. The vast majority of Uber drivers spoken to were reticent to go on record given concerns with the amount of control Uber has over their ability to drive.

Additionally, Uber riders are expected to rate their drivers and leave comments if they choose. Unlike Yelp or other online reviews, if you dip below a certain level, Uber may discontinue using you without ever notifying you why. One driver we spoke with expressed concern over a low rating after refusing to purchase alcohol for high school aged passengers. He was uncertain how to determine what rating they'd left him but they left his car angry and cursing at him.

A bill in the Oregon Legislature Salem could prematurely up-end the entire experiment with ride-sharing. While transportation services like this have historically been governed at the local level, House Bill 2995 seeks to change that. It would require levels of insurance coverage by ride-share companies for their drivers not required of comparable businesses. Uber has signaled it could cease operations should this bill pass, which has a chilling effect on its drivers.