

The Oregonian

Charlie Hales' taxpayer-funded puff pamphlet: Editorial Agenda 2015

*By The Oregonian Editorial Board
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Most Portlanders learned in early March that Mayor Charlie Hales had decided to run for a second term, but few were surprised. The mayor had been seeking campaign contributions since at least January, when he was still in maybe mode. And in December 2014 his office began work on a curious 20-page pamphlet, which was completed just in time to be distributed at his Jan. 30 State of the City address, held at the Sentinel Hotel.

The mayor's speech that day may have been about Portland, which is overseen by a five-member City Council, but the pamphlet ("Priorities and Accomplishments: Mayor Charlie Hales, 2014-15") was all about the soon-to-be-official candidate, who appears in 17 photos sprinkled spread over 20 pages. His name appears more than 80 times, which is about 20 times as frequently as those of his colleagues ... combined. Amanda Fritz's name appears twice, and those of Steve Novick and Nick Fish appear once apiece. Commissioner Dan Saltzman is nowhere to be found, perhaps an unintentional comment on his spotty attendance at City Council meetings.

We mention this pamphlet now because a reader sent us a copy, asked who paid for it and wondered whether it was appropriate to spend public resources on what looks like campaign literature.

First things first: Taxpayers footed the bill. The pamphlet was written and designed by staff in the mayor's office and printed at a cost of \$4,293, according to spokesman Dana Haynes. That sum produced 1,000 copies, upon which the mayor's office spent a little extra to ensure the use of all-recycled material.

The publicly funded printing job was done by Portland-based Morel Ink, which also has done printing work for Hales' campaign. In fact, the Charlie Hales for Mayor committee reported a Jan. 28 expenditure to Morel Ink of \$690.20 for literature, brochures and printing. Morel Ink owner William Dickey has contributed money to Hales in the past, just as he has to many other candidates, largely Democrats.

However, the fact that a publicly funded puff pamphlet was produced by a company that also serves a candidate's campaign does not make any of it improper, notwithstanding the owner's generosity. It's just, you know, cozy.

Besides, says Haynes, there was no candidate at the time the Hales hagiography was produced. The mayor may have been soliciting money, but he hadn't announced his intention to seek re-election yet.

As for the legality, well, nothing in the law prohibits the mayor from spending public funds on material that bathes him in a flattering light. If he'd blown through thousands of bucks sending "Re-elect Charlie Hales" postcards to voters across the city, or ordered employees to create or distribute them, he'd have a problem. But indulging in vanity and campaigning are two different things, even though you could imagine a political campaign producing something very much like "Priorities and Accomplishments: Mayor Charlie Hales, 2014-15." There's a photo of the mayor paving streets, a photo of the mayor walking the beat, another photo of the mayor walking the beat, and, because why not, a photo of a photo of the mayor appearing on the cover of Willamette Week.

And then there's the gushy language.

This on the leader who's "OPENING DOORS FOR ALL PORTLANDERS": "Mayor Hales is working to defy the conventional wisdom that says the dream of advancement, the American Dream, is becoming a fantasy." He had us at "OPENING DOORS."

But why, if not to provide a jolt to his pending campaign, does the mayor's office say it spent thousands of taxpayer dollars and hours of public employee time on this?

Haynes takes credit for the idea, which he says he swiped from Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter. In years past, says Haynes, he'd been forced to trim great chunks from Hales' State of the City speeches in order to achieve the necessary brevity. The pamphlet, he says, provided a vehicle for all of the stuff that would have been slashed from this year's address.

Taxpayers can decide for themselves whether the puff pamphlet amounts to campaign literature designed to fit through the eye of a legal needle (we recommend the "quack like a duck" test). Perhaps the more pertinent question, however, is why they should pay thousands of dollars (even more, including staff time) publishing what would have been scraps on the cutting room floor. Is the city really that flush?

The Portland Tribune

Residential [sic] deconstruction program headed to City Council

By Jim Redden

June 1, 2015

The City Council will consider creating a pilot program to encourage more contractors to deconstruct homes targeted for redevelopment on Wednesday.

The resolution submitted by Mayor Charlie Hales is partly a response to concerns raised by neighborhood activists that hazardous materials like asbestos and lead-based paint chips are released into the air during the mechanical demolition of homes. All of the waste is also hauled to landfills instead of recycled into new building materials.

The number of demolition projects has increased in recent years as the economy has recovered and existing homes have been redeveloped into new housing, especially in popular close-in neighborhoods. The resolution says there were 350 demolitions of single-family homes in 2014 and the number is trending upwards.

The resolution would establish a program to provide incentives, training and technical assistance to promote voluntary deconstruction as an alternative to the demolition of homes to be replaced with new housing. The request for the program was put together by a Deconstruction Advisory Group within the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.

The resolution can be read [here](#).

Despite the environmental benefits, deconstruction is more expensive than demolition in most cases. The advisory group heard the additional cost averages around \$5,000, although that amount can be reduced if the recovered material is sold or donated to a non-profit recycling organization.

An Impact Statement submitted with the resolution predicts some neighborhood activists will testify the construction should be mandatory not voluntary at Wednesday's hearing.

If the resolution is approved, BDS staff would develop the program and return to the council for funding, probably during the annual Fall 2015 budget adjustment process. BDS has already identified \$50,000 in its Solid Waste Management Fund Reserves as a possible source of funding.

The money could be distributed as grants to existing recycling organizations or to contractors who want to gain experience deconstructing homes. BDS would report back to the council on the program in September 2016.

BPS has already created a website with information to encourage deconstructions at recyclingnutsandbolts.com.

Fish submits ordinance to create Portland Utility Board

By Jim Redden

May 29, 2015

Commissioner Nick Fish filed an ordinance Friday to create the Portland Utility Board to help oversee spending by the Water Bureau and Bureau of Environmental Services.

The ordinance contains key recommendations presented to City Council by the 11-member Utility Oversight Blue Ribbon Commission chaired by former U.S. Attorney Dwight Holton. Fish and Mayor Charlie Hales promised to appoint the commission during the unsuccessful ballot measure campaign to transfer control of the bureaus from the council to an independently elected board.

The council has already authorized a contract with the independent Citizens Utility Board to review the budgets of the two agencies.

"Today we are following through on a commitment to bring forward the BRC's recommendations to improve public oversight of our public utilities," Fish says. "In concert with a unique partnership with the Citizens' Utility Board of Oregon, the PUB will bring a new level of accountability and transparency to our utilities."

The ordinance can be read [here](#).

The BRC submitted its final report to the council at a work session held in December 2014. The report recommended the formation of a year-round community oversight body, with dedicated professional staff under its direction, to be actively involved in upstream deliberations on utility bureau budgets, capital spending, policies, and programs.

Under the proposed ordinance, nine new board members will be appointed by the Mayor this summer. The goal is to have the PUB up and running for the next utility budget cycle.

The proposed ordinance will be considered by council at 10 a.m. on June 3. If approved, the new PUB will replace the existing Public Utility Review Board and the individual utility Budget Advisory Committees, and will report directly to the council.