

The Oregonian

Charlie Hales' Pembina manipulation: Editorial Agenda 2015

*By The Oregonian Editorial Board
November 2, 2015*

Three of Portland's five commissioners – Nick Fish, Steve Novick and Dan Saltzman – will have a chance Wednesday to impose a small measure of sobriety upon a mayor who seems intoxicated by the freedom from seriousness permitted by his sudden lame-duck status. The opportunity, ironically, is a resolution supporting Charlie Hales' most irresponsible official act: his betrayal of Pembina Pipeline Corp. Could saying "no" possibly be more necessary?

When Pembina proposed last year to build a \$500 million propane export facility in the Port of Portland, Hales gushed in a statement about the "great news." Portland, he said, "is committed to growing our economy on the land we already have, and holding industry to very high environmental and public safety standards. This proposal meets these goals."

But only eight months later, following opposition from environmental and neighborhood groups, the mayor said he would not bring the proposal before City Council and urged Pembina to go away. By helping to move a fossil fuel from its source to its users, the thinking went, the project would have contributed to global warming and was, thus, inconsistent with the city's environmental values. Forget that Pembina had spent millions of dollars on preparations with the mayor's encouragement and that the project would have employed hundreds of people temporarily, dozens permanently and produced ongoing revenue for local governments. Some of the propane also might have replaced dirtier fuels.

Any one of Hales' colleagues could have brought Pembina's project before the Council, but no one did. They ducked while the controversy consumed the person who'd invited it. Call it clever, passive-aggressive or principled, Wednesday's resolution will bring the ducking to an end.

Introduced by Hales and Commissioner Amanda Fritz, the resolution pledges that "the City Council will actively oppose expansion of infrastructure whose primary purpose is transporting or storing fossil fuels in or through Portland or adjacent waterways." To that end, city bureaus are to "examine existing laws" and "develop proposed code changes" – in other words, stockpile monkey wrenches for use against the next Pembina.

The naivete and hypocrisy of this resolution are difficult to overstate. The targeted fossil fuels – oil, natural gas, propane, whatever – will find their way to markets even without added infrastructure in Portland. Hales' and Fritz's ordinance will do nothing to change the climate. Meanwhile, Hales and Fritz should be at least secretly grateful that people elsewhere understand the value of the sort of infrastructure they supposedly abhor. Otherwise, those of us who heat our homes and cook with gas (or with electricity generated by gas turbines) would be cold and hungry. Heading out to a warm restaurant for a burger would be much more difficult, too, as most of Oregon's road fuel is refined in Washington.

Hales and Fritz, it seems, would like to pretend that Portland somehow floats above the sometimes dirty workings of the global and regional economies that make modern life possible, especially in cities, which produce little of what they consume. Even without the Pembina debacle, we'd like to think Fish, Novick and Saltzman would consider this resolution too vapid to support.

But Pembina did happen, and the episode transforms what otherwise might be a sweeping statement of values into something very specific: an endorsement of Hales' shabby treatment of a company that proposed to invest in Portland. The staff report that accompanies the resolution even mentions the Pembina project by name. Should his colleagues support the resolution, Hales will be able to shrug at critics of his Pembina reversal and say, "my colleagues agree with me. I just provided the leadership necessary for them to say so."

And for all any business eyeing Portland will know, he'll be right.

The Portland Tribune

Housing, salary budget requests prompt City Council debate

By Jim Redden

November 2, 2015

The City Council will grapple with two large new budget commitments on Wednesday — Mayor Charlie Hale's recent promise to spend \$10 million more for affordable housing and a unionization drive following a May arbitrator's ruling that a large number of seasonal parks workers are unpaid by a total of \$2 million.

Both issues will be considered during the council's annual fall budget adjustment process, when relatively small amounts of money are historically shifted among bureaus in response to changing needs since the new fiscal year budget took effect on July 1.

The two commitments are larger than most historic adjustments and took up much of the council's time discussing the requests during an Oct. 27 work session. The City Budget Office (CBO) had proposed increasing the Portland Housing Bureau's (PHB) budget by \$10 million in anticipation of adding the addition money after new revenue projections were available. And it had reserved \$900,000 from the city's contingency fund to fund some but not all of the pay increases.

The CBO also recommended all city general fund bureaus expect PHB prepared budget for next year with 5 percent cuts to help free up money for more affordable housing. Hales is likely to direct all bureaus except the PHB to submit budgets with proposed 5 percent cuts for next year, according to his spokesman, Dana Haynes. The memo on next year's budget submission is scheduled to go out on Nov. 18.

The proposals did not sit well with Commissioner Amanda Fritz, however, who is in charge of Portland Parks & Recreation (PPR). She said PPR could not absorb the balance of the money the arbitrator ruled it owes the underpaid employees. And she wondered whether the council

would hold the Portland Police Bureau and Portland Fire & Rescue harmless from any 5 percent budget cuts — as it has in the past — increasing the pressure on other General Fund bureaus.

"Actually, it's an awful exercise," Fritz said of requiring bureaus to prepare budgets with 5 percent reductions. "It's stressful on all our partners."

Commission Steve Novick said one General Fund bureau he oversees, the Bureau of Emergency Communication, could not absorb any cuts.

"Employees there are working forced overtime now," said Novick.

Other requests include \$598,000 for the Portland Police Bureau to hire 11 more background investigators to screen applicant to fill 35 officer vacancies in the Portland Police Bureau and an additional 40 vacancies expected to be created by upcoming retirements.

A previous Portland Tribune story on the police bureau request can be read at portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/278230-152093-hales-seeks-546000-to-speed-up-police-hiring.

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

The Portland Mercury

Mayor Charlie Hales Wants To Spend \$1 Million Turning An Old SW Portland Army Center into a Shelter

*By Dirk VanderHart
November 2, 2015*

Mayor Charlie Hales is making good on his pledge to put millions towards the city's housing "state of emergency." At least, he's hoping to.

A supplemental budget [pdf] the mayor's bringing to Portland City Council on Wednesday would dedicate \$2.75 million toward stemming the tide of homelessness in the city. Among the proposals: Hales wants to spend \$1 million dollars to potentially ready an old army building off SW Barbur as shelter space.

As first reported by the Mercury, Hales and Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury toured the old Sgt. Jerome Sears US Army Reserve center on September 22, a day before Hales surprised Kafoury and many of his colleagues by signaling he'd like to declare a state of emergency to more easily site homeless shelters in the city.

The mayor's office has since said there could be pushback from the federal government—which sold the reserve center to the city several years ago, but still has some say in how it's used. The city's long-term plans are to house an emergency planning facility in the building, located at 2730 SW Multnomah. But that's not stopping Hales from asking his colleagues to spend money on the site, which city Budget Director Andrew Scott confirms would be used for making the facility "shelter-ready."

Also included in Hales' budget ask: A brand new request for \$1.26 million that'd be used on homeless shelters, though no one's offering specifics on that money. And Hales is recommending approving requests from Commissioner Dan Saltzman and the Portland Housing Bureau to bolster housing vouchers (\$425,000) and help prevent evictions for domestic violence survivors (\$60,000).

Hales' office hasn't responded to our inquiries about the budget asks—one of two yearly "supplemental" budgets in which the city squares up its finances, putting excess cash toward (mostly) one-time uses and infrastructure fixes.

Portland's part of an ever expanding group of cities around the country deciding their homeless problems have reached emergency status.

The latest addition? Seattle Mayor Ed Murray this afternoon followed in the footsteps of LA and Portland by declaring a homelessness state of emergency. Murray's proposing the same essential deal as Portland, though he's recommended far fewer dollars—\$7.3 million as opposed to the \$30 million proposed here.

Seattle's homeless figures are actually well worse than Portland's. According to our sister paper, *The Stranger*, county officials report 35,000 people become "newly homeless" in King County each year. That's insane. In Multnomah County, the group A Home For Everyone (HFE) estimates "inflows" of around 5,300 into homelessness on a yearly basis, with a near equal "outflow" of people securing housing. HFE says roughly 9,650 people a year experience homelessness in Multnomah County.

Seattle's also having a harder time managing the growth of homelessness. King County's seen a 21 percent increase in people sleeping outside, while Portland's homeless count suggests our growth is relatively flat.

GoLocalPDX

Portland City Council Considers Further Restrictions on Fossil Fuels

By GoLocalPDX News Team

November 3, 2015

On Wednesday, the Portland City Council will consider a pair of resolutions that would see the city officially oppose any projects or initiatives that would formally oppose any new fossil fuel export facilities and the transport of crude oil on the city's rail lines.

The initiatives were introduced by Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Amanda Fritz and will be considered by the council on Tuesday afternoon. They call for severe limits to the oil industry, just weeks after the City Council divested from fossil fuels, citing risks to public and environmental health.

“The rapid development of fossil fuel resources in the western United States and Canada has resulted in numerous transportation and infrastructure projects, proposed to transport coal,” and other fossil fuels, the resolution says. “Fossil fuels pose risks to safety, health and livability.”

The City Council promised to discuss a fossil fuel export policy when it adopted an update to the Climate Action Plan earlier this year. The resulting resolution says the city will oppose “expansion of infrastructure whose primary purpose is transporting or storing fossil fuels in or through Portland or adjacent waterways.”

The measures do not distinguish between various types of fossil fuels, meaning that shipments of crude oil, coal and other fossil fuels will be treated the same way. In spite of this, the resolution took aim at coal transportation, particularly on open-air train cars that leave coal prone to leakage.

“Serious risks are caused by oil-by-rail projects including but not limited to delayed emergency vehicles, adverse health impacts of train noise, oil fires, oil spills, oil explosions resulting from train derailments, increased air pollution, increased water pollution, and contributions to climate disruption-induced injuries and diseases,” the resolution reads.

The impact of the resolutions on proposed Pembina Pipeline project remain unclear, although Hales has opposed the pipeline project previously. He blocked the project last year, refusing to let the City Council consider the project.

The resolutions also take aim at “fracking,” the process of injecting liquid at high pressure into subterranean rocks, boreholes, etc., so as to force open existing fissures and extract oil or gas. Fracking is now the main method used to extract natural gas and oil on land in the United States, and is considered especially harmful to the environment.

The impact this resolution will have on the oil industry in Portland also remains unclear. Fossil fuel distributors enjoy vast federal exemptions and protections. Those considerations would override any municipal statute such as the pair of resolutions proposed by Hales and Fitz.

What Would the Gas Tax Be Used For?

*By Brendan Murray
November 3, 2015*

As GoLocal reported, Portland Commissioner Steve Novick has proposed ballot initiative for the May elections that would enact a gas tax to pay for badly needed repairs to the city’s streets. A spokesman for Mayor Charlie Hales initially told GoLocal the Mayor was against such a tax, but Hales ultimately came out in favor of the measure a few weeks later. Now, Hales is suggesting that the tax may not be used to fund street repairs, but instead to pay for raises for the city’s seasonal workers.

At a union-organized town hall meeting last month, Hales told the assembled crowd that he supported raises for the city’s seasonal workers. When asked how he would fund the pay increase, Hales pointed to the proposed gas tax.

Novick Says Street Repairs Still the Plan

As GoLocal reported, Novick released a list of potential projects that the tax could be used to fund in September, along with polling results that he claimed show that Portlanders embraced the idea of a gas tax. It included major street repair projects, funding for safe routes to school throughout the city, and traffic safety improvements in high crash corridors.

In that breakdown, \$32.5 million would be used for paving projects, including more than 30 lane miles of busy street paving. \$7.2 million would be used for safe routes for school projects, which including school crossings, paths and missing connections, sidewalks, traffic calming, and bicycle route connections. \$6.3 million would be used to repair the city's busiest sidewalks.

The remaining \$12 million would be split among other projects, including improvements to bike lanes, crosswalks and high crash areas.

Bryan Hockaday, a spokesman for Commissioner Novick's office, told GoLocal that Novick still intends to use the tax to fund street repairs in the city. Portland officials have struggled with the question of how to fund repaving projects for the city's cracking roads, which have long been a concern.

"Additional transportation revenue would be dedicated to transportation safety and maintenance improvement projects," Hockaday said.

Hockaday also said that any additional revenue that is left over after planned street repairs have been completed would be directed to other street safety projects, rather than to other departments or uses, such as pay increases for seasonal workers.

Wheeler Weighs In

Ted Wheeler, the leading candidate to become Portland's next Mayor after Charlie Hales bowed out of the race last month, is in favor of the gas tax.

"Reversing the years of neglected maintenance to our streets will depend on the public's confidence that we are spending their money wisely," Wheeler told GoLocal. "I am glad that Commissioner Novick is looking to take a proposal to the voters, something the Mayor should have advocated for from the beginning. A gas tax should be on high on the list for consideration."

Jake Weigler, spokesman for the Wheeler campaign, said that while Wheeler continues to support the gas tax for the purpose of replacing the city's streets, he is opposed to using as tax revenue for other uses.

"Ted has consistently made clear that we need to give the public confidence in how their tax dollars are being spent," Weigler said. "That is why he believe that any revenue from a gas tax should be directly tied to making the needed repairs and improvements to our streets."