

## The Oregonian

### Portland agrees to pay more parks employees \$15 an hour

*By Brad Schmidt  
February 17, 2016*

The Portland City Council voted unanimously Wednesday to unionize additional positions in the Portland Parks Bureau -- and ensure a \$15 minimum wage for those employees -- in a move that may cost the city \$4.4 million for the next fiscal year.

The agreement was lauded by both labor and politicians but its full impact isn't yet known.

That's because the City Council has yet to set next year's budget. If officials don't set aside enough money to meet the financial obligation, parks services could be cut, warned Commissioner Amanda Fritz.

"Funding these positions is a huge priority in our city budget for me this year," said Fritz, who oversees the parks bureau and has asked the City Council to fund the full \$4.4 million.

"Any reduction in the request will have significant impacts on the level of service because parks does not have a choice about complying with the agreement," she said.

The wage increase stems from a long fight over the city's use of temporary, casual workers who didn't receive the same wages as unionized employees. After the city lost a key ruling last May, officials agreed to hire the equivalent of 51 full-time positions with unionized status and higher wages. Officials set aside about \$1.6 million to pay for those positions for only the current fiscal year.

Wednesday's decision added to that with 47 more full-time-equivalent positions needed by Oct. 1. To pay for everything, Fritz wants the City Council to promise \$4.4 million for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

But Commissioner Steve Novick said increasing the salaries may ultimately come at a cost, either to service or positions in other bureaus that rely on money from the city's discretionary general fund.

Mayor Charlie Hales, who will propose a budget later this spring, indicated support.

"This is a good day," he said. "Doing more of the right thing for more people."

Erica Askin, business manager for Laborer's Local 483, praised the City Council's decision.

"We're setting an example for all employers in our city and state," she said.

The newly unionized jobs are: aquatic, pottery and "generalist" recreation leaders, and facility support technicians.

Fritz said the city's latest budget forecast projects \$4.4 million in new-found revenue -- exactly the amount she needs.

"It's going to be a very challenging budget session," she said.

## The Portland Tribune

### City gas tax ballot measure title challenged

*By Jim Redden*

*February 17, 2016*

Opponents of Portland's proposed 10-cent-a-gallon gas tax have asked the Multnomah County to reject the city-prepared ballot title and ballot summary.

The City Council wants voters to approve the four-year tax at the may Primary Election. But Paul Romain, director of the Oregon Fuels Association, has filed a court challenge saying the title does not accurately represent the measure.

And Romain says the city-prepared ballot summary includes information — such as a list of projects to be funded by the measure — not allowed by state election law.

"The title is basically just a campaign slogan and the summary includes things that aren't even in the measure," Romain said.

But Commissioner Steve Novick, who introduced the measure, defends the title as accurate.

"The proposed title is accurate and informative. Paul Romain wants a title that says nothing about the fact that the money would be used to fix the streets and make them safer. He has made it clear over the years that for some reason, he is opposed to ANY effort to fix Portland's streets. His attack on the title is just a reflection of that," Novick said in an email to the Portland Tribune.

The title prepared by the city reads, "Temporary Motor Vehicle Tax for Street Repair, Traffic Safety." Romain says it should read, "Temporary Motor Vehicle Tax, Exempts Heavy Trucks."

Romain admits the court cannot legally amend the ballot summary, so he is asking that it simply be thrown out.

Novick also said that he and Portland Bureau of Transportation officials are working on a plan to tax heavy trucks.

"We are exploring a new way to make the heavy trucks pay, a 'load fee,' which Romain has said he will oppose. So he's highlighting the exemption of heavy trucks (which was based on the belief they will simply bypass the one truck stop in Portland anyway), while saying he himself will oppose making the heavy trucks pay." Novick said.

Romain's challenge was filed on Feb. 5. City officials have until Feb. 23 to respond, and Romaine has until Feb. 29 to reply. The court hearings is set for March 3 before Multnomah County Circuit Judge Karin Immergut.

# The Portland Mercury

## Hall Monitor

### For Mayor, the More the Merrier

*By Dirk VanderHart*

*February 17, 2016*

TO PEOPLE who've attended most of the forums held so far in Portland's still-young mayoral contest, it may well seem like a two-man ballot.

State Treasurer Ted Wheeler and Multnomah County Commissioner Jules Bailey are the most prominent and seasoned candidates in the race, and so they're getting invited to share their thoughts with union members, bar goers, and arts enthusiasts.

There's logic in this approach. Bailey and (in particular) Wheeler are raising the cash that history tells us is necessary to gain office in Portland. They have carefully cultivated academic pedigrees, and actual experience as elected officials. To the extent that event organizers feel their time is best spent questioning candidates with a shot at gaining office, Wheeler and Bailey are the obvious choices.

But if you attended the mayoral forum on homelessness last Friday at Union Gospel Mission, you watched that rationale quickly disintegrate.

For the first time, the forum presented an opportunity to see the mayoral race's most vocal candidates side by side, answering questions about what has emerged in recent months as one of the city's central issues. Wheeler and Bailey were present, of course, but so were Sean Davis, Sarah Iannarone, David Schor, and Jessie Sponberg—hopefuls who've clamored for a little light while sitting in the shadow cast by the "top two" candidates.

The forum was far better for their inclusion. What might have been a recitation of the largely comparable positions on homelessness Wheeler and Bailey have been offering for months—summary: it's terrible, housing and shelter are desperately needed, and organized camping is a slippery slope—was instead a punchy discussion, full of ideas and the occasional sharp elbow.

Opinion polls might well favor Bailey and Wheeler (though such polls have been remarkably few and far between, so far), but in the eyes of a crowd containing homeless people, advocates, and other interested citizens, Sponberg and Schor seemed to shine the brightest.

Sponberg, in particular, routinely got the evening's loudest applause, with answers that were very, very short on policy proposals, but long on a history of assisting homeless Portlanders.

"What's the most tired you've ever been in your life?" Sponberg asked the crowd, ordering them to look out of the mission's windows, at the homeless people traversing West Burnside. "What's the most exhausted? But somehow you just keep waking up."

He mocked Bailey, who'd offered a campaign-style vignette of serving breakfast to homeless youth, and scoffed at millionaire Wheeler's insistence that "any one of us in this room could find ourselves... homeless."

Schor, an assistant attorney general with the Oregon Department of Justice, won audience enthusiasm for repeatedly excoriating the practice of criminalizing homelessness—which the city's done for years.

Iannarone and Davis had their moments, too. So did Bailey. So did Wheeler.

Instead of a pissing match, what emerged with the full slate of candidates was an honest-to-god conversation about the city's homelessness crisis.

No matter who emerges as the city's next mayor, it's the kind of thing this race should aspire to more often.