

The Oregonian

Portland converts 600 restrooms to gender-neutral, 'all-user'

By Casey Parks

September 22, 2016

Portland commissioners will designate 600 city bathrooms as "all-user" on Friday. They will replace "male" and "female" signs on single-occupancy restrooms with signs that show a toilet.

The new signs show "what's behind the door," city officials said, "not who should be using the facility."

Commissioner Nick Fish first proposed the change in December 2015 after people from across Portland asked for it, he said. The new signs will make the restrooms accessible to parents with young children, people with personal attendants and transgender people.

"Fundamentally, we're making the city of Portland a more welcoming place," Fish said. "From a cross section of Portland we heard that it made no sense to maintain arbitrary distinctions on all-user restrooms."

The City manages about 850 restrooms. Almost 600 are single-user facilities, with roughly half in park facilities spread across the city.

Multnomah County and Portland Public Schools have changed their single-stall facilities to gender-neutral in recent years.

"It's a common sense change," Fish said. "I just wish we had done it sooner."

Fish and Commissioner Amanda Fritz will unveil the new signs in Friday at 11 a.m. in Dawson Park, North Stanton Street and North Williams Avenue.

Portland to consider funding seasonal 'Better Naito,' but permanent, year-round version unlikely

By Elliot Njus

September 21, 2016

Portland's transportation bureau is seeking funds to keep the program known as "Better Naito," which turns a northbound lane of Naito Parkway over to cyclists and pedestrians during the summer festival season, going for another five years.

A permanent, year-round version of the installation is also on the table, but far less likely. It would cost \$3.7 million, and as the City Council weighs fall budget adjustments, it's competing for funds generally reserved for critical infrastructure projects.

Instead, the bureau is proposing to run "Better Naito" as a seasonal program for five years. Its proposal calls for the permanent installation of anchors, embedded in the roadway, for plastic posts to separate the bike-pedestrian lane from cars. The posts could be removed after the summer festival season ends.

The \$500,000 budget request would cover the cost of the equipment and city staff to install, maintain and remove the temporary street reconfiguration.

"This would be a little bit more robust application of the same sort of project by investing little more in the equipment, transportation bureau spokesman Dylan Rivera said.

"Better Naito" debuted in 2015 as a project of the group Better Block PDX and some Portland State University civil engineering students. It grew from a few weeks in 2015 to three months this year.

Mayor Charlie Hales told cycling and pedestrian advocates earlier this year that the council would consider a permanent version of "Better Naito" in the fall. At that time, officials said it would cost about \$1.5 million.

Rivera said \$1.5 million to \$2 million would buy a multi-use path, separated from cars by a raised curb. The \$3.7 million version would provide a similar multi-use path, but with separation between pedestrians and cyclists and easier access.

"You could do it sort of low-cost and with less comfort and less return on investment," he said. "Or you could do something more permanent and higher-quality."

The city reported that, in 2015, travel time through the area increased by 45 seconds to a minute during peak travel hours when the lane-change was in effect.

Inrix, a traffic data firm, examined traffic data at the request of The Oregonian/OregonLive and found rush-hour delays closer to a minute and a half in the mornings. In the evenings, average travel times increased by less than half a minute in May but nearly 2 minutes in June, Inrix found.

The delays have made a permanent installation of "Better Naito" controversial, not least among the city councilors who would have to approve it.

Commissioner Nick Fish in July called out the project as an example of a bicycle-pedestrian project where the city should apply a "broader lens" and consider its effect on auto traffic congestion.

"While I now live in a rental apartment and walk to work and have ditched the car, when I am in a car and trying to get from point A to point B, there are huge consequences when we take a lane out of Naito or we close a street," Fish said. "Effectively what it means is that you just can't get from here to there."

The budget request requires approval from the Portland City Council, and the City Budget Office hasn't yet weighed in on the idea.

The bureau's fall budget adjustment wish-list also includes a protected bikeway and dedicated bus lane on the east end of the Hawthorne Bridge. That project includes a traffic signal where the ramp from northbound Naito meets the Hawthorne Bridge, which could help ease traffic on Naito. Traffic bound for the bridge can back up for blocks during rush hour.

The bureau is also seeking \$2.9 million for projects related to the city's Vision Zero goal of eliminating traffic fatalities.

Saltzman's strange U-turn: Editorial Agenda 2016

*By The Oregonian Editorial Board
September 20, 2016*

Portland City Commissioner Dan Saltzman promised a California-based developer an apartment project designed to help community members displaced by gentrification in North and Northeast Portland.

Then, Saltzman changed his mind and gave the \$4.5 million project to a local nonprofit that serves African Americans.

Saltzman told The Oregonian/OregonLive reporter Brad Schmidt that in retrospect, he'd failed to recognize the site's significance to Portland's black community.

Saltzman's statement is nearly as lame as the process that led to his course-correction.

The saga began in late 2015, when the city announced plans to provide \$61.6 million to help build affordable housing across the Portland area. Among an array of housing options, the plan called for a complex with at least 50 apartments on a city-owned lot at Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Rosa Parks Way.

Just consider that address for a moment.

The project was aimed specifically to help families who had been – or were about to be – displaced by urban renewal projects that have sprouted over the past two decades in the historically black neighborhoods of North and Northeast Portland.

Saltzman, who oversees the city housing bureau, is a Portland native who has served on the Portland City Council during the very period that many African American families have been priced out of those areas.

A housing bureau report issued in 2015 was clear whom the city wanted to help. But unfortunately, the 27-page report wasn't clear about who should help make those decisions.

As it turned out, Saltzman made the decisions all on his own – without any public discussion or debate.

The committee assigned to judge the proposals for the apartments at Martin Luther King Jr., and Rosa Parks did not include any African American members.

And while the city has an oversight committee created specifically to help shape development in nearby neighborhoods, the group wasn't included in the apartment process. Oversight committee members said they weren't even informed last April when the decision was made.

In fact, the oversight committee had been formed in 2014 in response to a gentrification controversy following a proposal for a Trader Joe's store at Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Alberta Street. (The group's mandate recently was expanded to include reviewing more of the displacement plan's projects).

Ultimately, the so-call King Parks apartment complex proposals submitted by the California developer and the Portland nonprofit tied. The bureau had tossed aside a 100-point scoring system to help the committees evaluate the proposals. Instead, a bulleted list of pros and cons were presented to Saltzman.

He opted for the California-based developer.

Almost immediately after Saltzman made his decision, Schmidt reported, the local nonprofit pushed back and questioned the process through emails and meetings with the housing bureau and with the commissioner. Despite the fact he'd promised the deal to the developer – and potentially risked a lawsuit if he took it back -- Saltzman changed his mind.

He later explained that as a city commissioner, he gets to "make the final decision, and that's what I did – even though I reversed myself from an earlier final decision."

Saltzman said he made the move after reflecting on his conversations with the nonprofit and with community members – consideration and conversation he should have had before his first attempt at making the decision. It also would have been nice if all of this were done out in the open. But it wasn't. That's how our city works at its worst.

Regardless of which group is most qualified to take on this needed project, the community deserved more thought and accounting throughout this troubled process.

Saltzman may have ultimately made the right decision, yet his method lacked the transparency and fairness all Portlanders expect.

The Portland Tribune

Utility board criticizes City Council over Terminal 1 process

By Jim Redden

September 21, 2016

The Portland Utility Board criticized the City Council for not allowing it to fully evaluate the proposal to use Terminal 1 for homeless services in its first annual report.

The PUB was formed to provide the council with an independent review of issues concerning Portland Water Bureau and Bureau of Environmental Services ratepayers. Terminal 1 is owned by BES, which put the 14-acre parcel of industrial land up for sale after the council declared it surplus.

But when Commissioner Dan Saltzman proposed that the Portland Housing Bureau lease Terminal 1 for a temporary homeless shelter and possible permanent homeless multi-service center, the council did not give the PUB the opportunity to review the idea. Shortly after the council authorized the lease on Aug. 10 on a 3-to-2 vote, BES received bids for Terminal 1 ranging from \$6 million \$10 million.

"Unfortunately, the PUB was not given an opportunity to provide proper public vetting of the Terminal 1 North resolution and its impact on BES. This may have been partially due to the fact that the proposal originated from a Commissioner not overseeing the bureau. The politics and lack of public process that ensued with the Terminal 1 North proposal should not continue if the City is to protect the interests of utility customers. The PUB takes its oversight role seriously and were disappointed that the full Council did not recognize the importance of PUB's role in the thoughtful public process in this decision," reads the report that the council is scheduled to receive next week.

Commissioner Nick Fish, who oversees BES, argued unsuccessfully that the property should be sold to create good-paying industrial jobs and the proceeds should be used to reduce future rate increases. That position was supported during the hearing by representatives of the PUB and the Citizens Utility Board, which also advises the council on ratepayer issues, to no avail.

The idea of using Terminal 1 for the homeless was first proposed by developer Homer Williams. Although the lease is suppose to start in October, PHB, which is overseen by Saltzman, has yet to submit submit its proposed version to BES for review. Williams now says the shelter may not open for another two months, and could be smaller than the 400-bed capacity he had originally discussed.

Much of the rest of the report deals with the history of the PUB, which was recommended by a Blue Ribbon Commission following the defeat of a ballot measure that would have transferred PWB and BES to an independently elected board at the May 2014 primary election. Fish and Mayor Charlie Hales promise the commission would be appointed if the measure was defeated during the campaign. It officially started on Sept. 1, 2015.

According to the City Code, the PUB was created to: “advise the City Council, on behalf of and for the benefit of the citizens of Portland, on the financial plans, capital improvements, annual budget development and rate setting for the City's water, sewer, stormwater, and watershed services. The Board will advise Council on the establishment of fair and equitable rates, consistent with balancing the goals of customer needs, legal mandates, existing public policies, such as protecting water quality and improving watershed health, operational requirements, and the long-term financial stability and viability of the utilities.”

The report says the PUB has also reviewed a report on the city’s existing Low Income Discount Program without agreeing on a way to expand it to serve more people. The program is intended to provide utility rate relief to low-income households.

“The subcommittee identified ten potential options for the bill discount currently administered by the PWB. In their discussions, the subcommittee members voiced concern with the basic structure of the program; not all residents with similar income profiles have access to the program. Access is limited to low-income residents (renters and owners) in single-family households that pay their bill directly. As currently structured, all utility customers subsidize the program through their rate payments. That structure increases the burden on low-income residents who can’t access or choose not to participate in the program,” says the report, adding that the PUB will continue working on the issue.

And the report proposes increasing the size of the PUB from nine to 11 members to reduce turnover caused by its heavy workload.

You can read the report [here](#).

The Portland Mercury

Hall Monitor—The True Price of Hales' Police Deal

By Dirk VanderHart

September 21, 2016

AFTER MONTHS of push and pull, Mayor Charlie Hales found a sweet spot last week with a dollar figure: \$6.8 million.

That's the amount of increased police spending that Portland would commit to under a tentative deal with the city's rank-and-file police union, the Portland Police Association. It's based on a 9 percent increase in pay for union members over three years.

The deal would cost millions less than a past deal Hales had worked out with cops—crucial savings in order to secure the votes of Portland city commissioners, who are always leery that big new expenses will cut into priorities in their own bureaus. But it's not the whole picture.

You, taxpayer, will be paying more than \$6.8 million each year for the deal—though no one's talked about it much.

According to an analysis by number crunchers at the city's Fire and Police Disability and Retirement Fund (obtained by Hall Monitor), the tentative deal would result in millions more in payments to retired cops. It's an involved calculus, thanks to a hodgepodge of rules around police pensions, but the analysis shows escalating costs for more than a decade into the future as a result of the deal.

Two years from now, the fund predicts, payments will be \$1.2 million more than they would have without an agreement. Two years later, they'll be \$2.3 million higher. And so on.

"Contribution costs continue to increase (beyond inflation) for an additional 15 years or so," the analysis says.

Some of this is self-explanatory. Cops, by virtue of getting raises, will finish their careers with higher salaries, and so qualify for larger pensions.

Some of that is a product of a bygone era. The oldest retirees still on the books are part of an old system that actually gives them raises when current cops get raises.

And none of this money would be available to fund the city's other pressing needs—things like paying parks employees, or the \$3.5 million budget hole created by a commitment to homeless services. Fire and police pensions are unique in that they've got a dedicated revenue stream from your (or your landlord's) property taxes.

To be clear, none of this means the deal Hales' office has crafted is a bad thing. It eliminates grievances the police union has filed against the city, and finally rids Portland of the toxic 48-hour rule that gives cops two days after shooting someone before speaking with internal investigators.

The deal also ramps up starting pay in the police bureau, which most people agree is crucial if the city's going to address the police staffing crisis that threatens to gut important specialty units.

There's debate about whether raises for other, more senior cops will convince them to stay put or hasten their departures. And there's no guarantee any of this will solve the staffing problem—a point Hales concedes and that others in the city have grumbled about.

But the deal appears as good as done. Let's just be honest about how much it'll actually cost.

Daily Journal of Commerce

Community Benefits Agreements draw city opposition

By Garrett Andrews

September 21, 2016

City officials are speaking out against efforts to employ a union-friendly policy tool to meet minority hiring goals on city projects.

Community Benefits Agreements, or CBAs, are contracts tying project developers and stakeholders to goals that support a project-affected community, notably the targeted hiring of women and minorities. But not everyone in Portland's minority contracting community agrees they're the best way forward.

CBAs will be the subject of a hearing on Thursday, at 2 p.m., at City Hall to evaluate their effectiveness and whether they should be incorporated into the under-development City Equity and Inclusion Plan, which would apply to all major city projects across all bureaus.

And now Fred Miller, head of the Office of Management and Finance, and Michael Stuhr, head of the Water Bureau, are publicly airing concerns about CBAs, citing issues that emerged during arecent pilot program testing CBAs on two Water Bureau projects.

"While the CBA provided benefits to the projects, the deficiencies identified in this report also had negative impacts on both the Kelly Butte Reservoir and Interstate Maintenance Facility Renovation Projects," Stuhr wrote to the council in a report dated Sept. 2.

Stuhr wrote that the draft model CBA used on the pilot project should not be applied to future projects, citing outcomes identified in an independent report by consulting firm Framework LLC.

Miller listed issues he sees with CBAs when he wrote to the council in a letter dated Sept. 6. They include the appearance of conflict of interest and a \$500,000 line item by the contractor for administration of the CBA pilot program.

Additionally, Christine Moody, the city's chief procurement officer, and her boss, Ken Rust, the city's chief financial officer, are renouncing a report given to the council last week by a volunteer commission supportive of CBAs – the Equitable Contracting and Purchasing Commission.

Moody defended some of her office's equity efforts in a memo sent to ECPC Chairman Dante James, head of the Office of Equity and Human Rights. And she met personally with him Tuesday.

"We think the ECPC presentation included some information that was inaccurate and unclear," she wrote in the letter obtained this week through a records request.

And in an email Tuesday to the city's elected officials, Rust gave an overview of concerns raised in Moody's report.

"We wanted to make sure council was aware of it, because the presentation was very confusing," he told the DJC today.

Rust said he didn't want to take a position on CBAs, but felt the procurement office could have corrected errors in the ECPC's presentation had it had a chance to review it. He suspected the errors were the result of inexperienced staffers transferring complex and incomplete information from one software program to another.

On Sept. 14, nearly a year after ECPC members met for the first time, they painted a dire picture of the city's efforts to increase inclusion. Graphics showed white males dwarfing all other categories and backward movement in key areas.

"CBAs are a powerful tool for promoting the including of underrepresented people," said Nicky Nicholson-Klingerman, an O'Neill Electric project administrator who addressed the council last week on behalf of the ECPC.

A coalition supportive of CBAs issued its own postmortem of the pilot project: "The Community Benefits Agreement: A Proven Tool for Advancing Portland's Commitment to Equity in Contracting and Workforce Diversity."

ECPC member Maurice Rahming told the council at last week's hearing that union hiring halls are better able to respond to calls for a diverse workforce than contractors, who currently aren't being held accountable where diversity is concerned. He said CBAs get better results, as well as detailed data for helping officials understand the depth of the problem.

"If you remove (CBAs) you see almost a non-utilization of women and minorities; the gap is that great," he said. "The reason you see such a drastic drop in the data last year is because the CBA projects were winding down."

Nate McCoy of the National Association of Minority Contractors' Oregon chapter told the DJC that the data the ECPC used in its presentation didn't reflect what he'd seen when he worked as a construction manager in the Housing Bureau.

"We didn't have CBAs and we always hit the numbers," he said. "The biggest overarching issue is that minority contractors that are smaller still have to compete in a big-boy system that is this low-bid process."

Two major city projects now in preconstruction – Washington Park Reservoir improvements and the Portland Building reconstruction – have begun and aren't employing "true" or "pure" CBAs.

This week, city Commissioner Nick Fish told the DJC he supports a modified form of CBA – a community benefit plan – that features heavy union participation but is also open to minority-owned open-shop firms.

Fish, a former labor lawyer, said the timing for focusing on the CBA issue was "perfect," with a new mayor taking over in January and several big-ticket city projects on the horizon.

"I think we have to rethink that commission and bring some new faces in," he said. "I think that will be an opportunity for the new mayor."