

## **The Portland Tribune**

### **Improvements aim to make NE 102nd Ave safer**

*July 15, 2019*

**Northeast 102nd Avenue is one of the most dangerous streets for pedestrians, with three fatalities in the area since 2014.**

Work begins this week on a \$697,000 project to improve safety on Northeast 102nd Avenue.

Portland's Bureau of Transportation said the work adds better pedestrian crossings, new bike lanes with more separation between people driving and people biking. It also should make it easier for residents to get to transit stops along the road.

Part of the money for the project comes from the city's Fixing Our Streets program. About half comes from nearby street improvement projects and the city's cannabis tax.

Northeast 102nd Avenue is a high-crash street. It is one of the most dangerous streets for pedestrians. Between 2012 and 2016, there were 258 crashes on the street, nine involving pedestrians and six involving bicycles. There also have been three fatalities on the street in the past five years.

Construction for the two-week project will be done between 3 a.m. and 3 p.m., with lane closures during the work.

## **Willamette Week**

### **Portland's Parks Are a Cherished Gem. But They Can't Make Ends Meet.**

*By Rachel Monahan*

*July 17, 2019*

**Portland Parks & Recreation does a lot of things Portlanders love. Over the past five years, it has wanted to do even more.**

This spring, the Portland City Council passed a record \$5.6 billion budget to fund services and projects across the city. It also shut down Kelsey Owens' home away from home.

When Owens moved to the Sellwood neighborhood in 2017, the nearby Portland Parks & Recreation community center was a godsend, providing low-cost preschool for her 3-year-old son.

But in May, at the same time it passed a city budget that is 3 percent larger than last year's, the City Council said it had no money for the center and voted to close the facility and all its programming on Sept. 1.

In 45 days, either the doors of the center will be locked, or Sellwood residents will have to run it themselves, with their own money.

"I was devastated," says Owens, 33, a stay-at-home mom. "It's going to impact every day of our life."

She wasn't alone. On May 23, the City Council voted to close or alter operations at four community centers and a swimming pool in Portland. It shrank the bureau by 50 employees, with up to 37 layoffs. The council said those cuts were needed to cover a projected \$6.3 million shortfall in what ended up being the parks bureau's \$95 million operating budget.

Portland parks aren't where you'd expect a mess. They haven't drawn the city's attention like the lack of affordable housing, mental illness on the streets, or political extremists brawling.

Portland Parks & Recreation does a lot of things Portlanders love. Over the past five years, it has wanted to do even more. The bureau has raised money by getting voters to increase taxes—most recently with a 2014 property tax bond that will expire in 2021—to try to serve a larger number of Portlanders.

But it couldn't afford those goals—and Portland's leaders didn't enforce any financial discipline.

"This monster of cost exceeding revenues has been growing beneath the surface of the water for some time," says Randy Gragg, director of the Portland Parks Foundation, the private fundraising wing for the bureau. "In past years, we have seen its eyes and its nose, and we now see the whole beast."

For five years, the City Council failed to confront a growing gap between the bureau's ambitious agenda and its limited resources. From 2013 to 2018, parks' expenses grew 34 percent, while revenues grew 13 percent.

During that time, the city built six new parks mostly in the poorest and least-served parts of town, even as its existing facilities aged.

The council didn't grapple with the bureau's reliance on user fees to fund operations—a model that made little sense, because the city also wanted to keep those fees low so families could afford swim classes and nature hikes. And it didn't acknowledge the long-term costs of losing a labor battle with its workers.

Many parks bureau goals were noble: more access to the outdoors, and at a low cost. But the council never forced the bureau to find a strategy to balance its checkbook.

It still hasn't.

A WW review of city budget documents, and conversations with key players at City Hall, show that within four years, Portland Parks & Recreation will look to expand its budget again—by \$5.4 million—to take care of more new parks, even as it hasn't fixed the dynamic that created the budget hole this year.

A memo from the bureau's own budget advisory committee warned in March that the cuts wouldn't fix the problems that caused the deficit. The memo said that closing the community centers would bridge this year's budget shortfall. "It does not, however, offer solutions for the underlying structural problems," the memo continued.

City Commissioner Nick Fish, who was assigned the parks bureau last fall, says he will find that solution.

"We put together a tough-love budget," Fish says. "In two to three years, we'll be a stronger, more sustainable organization. We've bought a couple of years of breathing room."

At another edge of the city, an aging rock star watches all of this in confusion. Courtney Taylor Taylor, frontman for the Dandy Warhols, lives near the Hillside Community Center, another casualty of this year's budget cuts.

He can't believe the city would budget so badly that it has to throw away its public gathering places.

"Is this a trend, that neighborhoods are going to have to buy their own community center?" asks Taylor Taylor. "The next thing will be parks, until only the rich have parks."

Portland's parks are in hot demand.

Parents wake at 5 am to sign up their kids for swim lessons the day they go online. The most popular program the bureau provides is "Penguin" level classes for preschool-age children who have learned to blow bubbles but not swim. Penguin classes can be snatched up within minutes. They cost \$57 per child.

Portland Parks & Recreation keeps its programs reasonably priced. A month of city-run, three-days-a-week morning preschool costs \$207 at Mt. Scott Community Center, for example—a fraction of the cost of private preschool.

But the parks bureau depends on those fees. City Hall required the bureau to generate at least 25 percent of its budget from the fees it charges people to take classes and use facilities.

Not making enough money from ticket sales is an odd problem for government. Spending tax dollars to provide essential services is what government does. Portland Fire & Rescue doesn't charge homeowners to put out blazes. Its budget comes from the city's general fund.

But in many cities across the nation, parks departments are expected to fund their operating costs partly through fees.

Parks budget advisory committee chairwoman Patricia Frobes says this year's shortfall helped the City Council "achieve clarity" about the parks budget crunch.

"I hope what comes out of this is a real examination of how we fund and invest in the parks system," Frobes says. "This an existential threat to that system. If we keep going down this path, we'll have cuts every year. It's not a pretty picture."

## **Portland Antifascists Demand Police Retraction of Milkshake Tweet**

*By Katie Shepherd  
July 16, 2019*

**"The city's irresponsible statement has resulted in many death threats," organizers say.**

PopMob is not enjoying its 15 minutes of milkshake fame.

The antifascist organizers known as Popular Mobilization, or PopMob, sent a letter July 15 demanding the Portland Police Bureau retract and correct a tweet on June 29 that suggested protesters mixed quick-drying cement into vegan milkshakes.

"The city's irresponsible statement has resulted in many death threats and other violent communications being directed at PopMob organizers," says the letter, first reported by The Portland Mercury.

The only evidence Portland police had of the concrete milkshakes before sending the tweet was social media rumors and observations by Lt. Rick Stainbrook, who told other officers he saw a powdery substance on a milkshake cup and thought the frozen concoction smelled like cement.

PopMob says its organizers used cashew milk, coconut ice cream and rainbow sprinkles to make the milkshakes.

The Police Bureau did not respond to a request for comment on the antifascists' demand.

## **Hundreds of New Apartments Are Springing Up on Southwest 4th Avenue. Will Developers Build Crossover Walkways For the New Pedestrians?**

*By Marty Smith*

*July 17, 2019*

### **Or will they just get run over by drivers frustrated by the long wait?**

*Hundreds of new apartments springing up on Southwest 4th Avenue mean thousands of new pedestrians. Will the developers build crossover walkways for them so traffic can get through, or will they just get run over by drivers frustrated by the long wait? —Wannabe Urban Planner*

I hate to be the guy to kill your Tinker Bell, Wannabe, but hoping to get an urban planning job in Portland by slagging on pedestrians is like trying to get a job as a cop by bragging about how much heroin you shot up on the way to the interview.

Unfortunately, your letter demonstrates an attitude that planning wonks would love to eliminate: the tacit assumption that "traffic" means, exclusively, people in cars.

Don't feel too bad; this concept is so thoroughly baked into our culture that you don't even notice it, like the water in a Spongebob cartoon. Pedestrians can't be traffic—they're the enemy of traffic! They mill about in the crosswalk, like cattle, and make us late for stuff. Besides, if they were going anywhere important, they'd be in a car.

This belief—that pedestrians are just a thing that gets in the way of cars—isn't going to be purged from our collective unconscious overnight. Still, you might want to start getting past it, because starting last month, the official policy of the city of Portland is that cars are just a thing that gets in the way of pedestrians.

On June 12, the City Council officially adopted PedPDX, a comprehensive plan for a walkable Portland that will "put pedestrians at the forefront of city policy, investments, and design."

There are scads of good-government reasons to encourage walking over driving, from equity (walking is the most democratic mode of travel), to civil engineering (sidewalks move people more efficiently than roads), to sociology (cars reduce our conversations to one finger). The environmental and health benefits go without saying. Walking: It's the kale of transportation!

Driving a private automobile, meanwhile, is more like bacon—bad for us, worse for the planet (not to mention the pig), but hard to say no to all the same. Still, maybe someday not having a car will be a Portland status symbol—you gotta be somebody if you can afford to live in a walkable neighborhood.

## **The Portland Mercury**

# **Portland City Council Says Its Hands Are Tied on Zenith Oil Trains**

*By Blair Stenvick  
July 16, 2019*

Both city officials and environmental activists could vehemently agree on one thing at Monday night's public forum on a North Portland oil train terminal: It isn't welcome in Portland.

In fact, Commissioner Chloe Eudaly said she'd refused an invitation to tour the site, owned by Houston-based Zenith Energy, before the public forum. Zenith is using the site to load crude oil extracted from tar sands, an especially environmentally harmful method, onto ships.

"I did not tour the facility, because I didn't need a tour to know that tar sand oil is dangerous," she said.

Hundreds of Portlanders attended the public forum to signal their opposition to new development at the Zenith site, and urge the city to push back an expansion.

Zenith first filed a permit application to expand its oil terminal in Portland in 2014. (Technically, that permit application was filed by energy company Arc Logistics, but Zenith now owns Arc.) As OPB first reported in February, Zenith obtained the land to carry out those expansions in 2017, and now has plans to eventually double the number of oil trains that pass through Portland.

In 2016, Portland City Council passed an ordinance effectively banning new oil terminals and limiting expansion on existing ones. (Those changes to city code were appealed, but upheld in court.) But city officials say the new rules don't apply to permits granted before 2016.

In other words: While Portland leaders stand philosophically opposed to Zenith's operations, they say they aren't sure they can challenge it legally.

That point was driven home by an announcement from the Bureau of Development Services (BDS), sent out in a press release just minutes after the forum wrapped up. BDS said the city will grant Zenith a temporary permit, granting the company permission to begin using its new facilities while construction continues.

"Decisions on permit applications are made according to the regulations that are in effect when the application is submitted," said BDS official Terry Whitehill, in the release. "The city cannot change the goalposts now and apply new, different requirements after the applicant has already submitted their permit application and been approved for construction."

At Monday's forum, Eudaly identified three alternative ways Portland could resist Zenith and the fossil fuel industry as a whole: Revising and expanding current city code; making Zenith pay for full insurance so the city would be protected in the event of an oil spill; and expediting Portland's transition to using 100 percent clean energy. The forum was framed as a brainstorming session, so concrete details on these plans weren't given—but Eudaly, Wheeler, and Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty all said they were open to new ideas. (Commissioners Amanda Fritz and Nick Fish were not in attendance.)

After making opening remarks, the commissioners opened the floor to invited and public testimony. A few key themes arose from the comments: That Portland should forbid Zenith from further development or operation in town, and then be prepared to face a legal challenge in court; that the city should be proactive in challenging Zenith in court on the basis that its business

contributes to climate change (similar to the Juliana v. United States lawsuit currently making its way through the court system); and that this issue is an urgent one that calls for bold action.

“What the industry wants you to do is look at piecemeal permits, instead of the whole picture,” one person said. “Treat all permits with the skepticism they have earned.”

“Air quality in Portland is already poor,” said another person, speaking on behalf of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility. She added that the diesel fumes from “several more trains passing through the city each week” would significantly worsen the city's air quality.

One woman who was arrested for occupying Zenith’s train tracks in April also spoke at the forum.

“Was it out of my comfort zone? Hell yeah,” she said, before inviting Wheeler and the other city commissioners to “sit on the tracks with us.”

The Raging Grannies, a protest staple in Portland, chose to submit their testimony in song:

It’s not yet clear what action the city will take next in regard to Zenith. But Wheeler promised the crowd at Monday’s public forum that “this isn’t the last of” the city’s efforts to oppose the energy company.