

City Council votes 5-0 in favor of affordable housing for Sears Armory site

By Don Snedecor
The Southwest Portland Post

When I got to the ad-hoc meeting at the Multnomah Center on July 7, the room was bulging with neighbors, many of whom were in favor of a Portland Office of Emergency Response facility at the Sears Armory—an Army Reserve base scheduled to be closed by 2011—instead of affordable housing.

A group of next-door neighbors had just given newly-elected City Commissioner Nick Fish a quick tour of the Sears Armory site (2730 SW Multnomah Blvd). They explained at the meeting that there had been an earnest effort to find an alternative space in Southwest for affordable housing.

Fish defended a June 18 joint reso-

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

lution, co-sponsored by Mayor Tom Potter, which recommended redevelopment of the Sears Armory into a “mixed-income, rental and ownership housing development that includes permanent and supportive housing for homeless single adults and homeless families with special needs.”

The resolution designated Community Partners for Affordable Housing as the preferred developer of the Sears site.

But Commissioner Fish and his staff listened to neighbors’ concerns. Among them were: impact of traffic and parking in the neighborhood, lack of bus service on Multnomah Boulevard, the fact that emergency services were not directly available on the West Side.



Stephanie Mohler introduces the new Gabriel Skatepark to skaters while Mayor Tom Potter and Commissioner Dan Saltzman look on. (Post photo by Don Snedecor)

Traffic along Multnomah Boulevard was a concern of immediate neighbors, as was access in and out of the property.

Other concerns included a need for some kind of buffer zone, the need to reuse existing facilities instead of tearing down what is currently available, as well as the possibility of sharing affordable housing and emergency response on the same parcel of land.

“The intent of the base closing was for housing,” said Fish. “And generally, a larger site with mixed use is economically a better choice.” Apparently the City Council agreed with him as two days later they voted 5-0 in favor of the Potter-Fish resolution.

At the end of the meeting Fish pledged to involve immediate neighbors in the planning and development

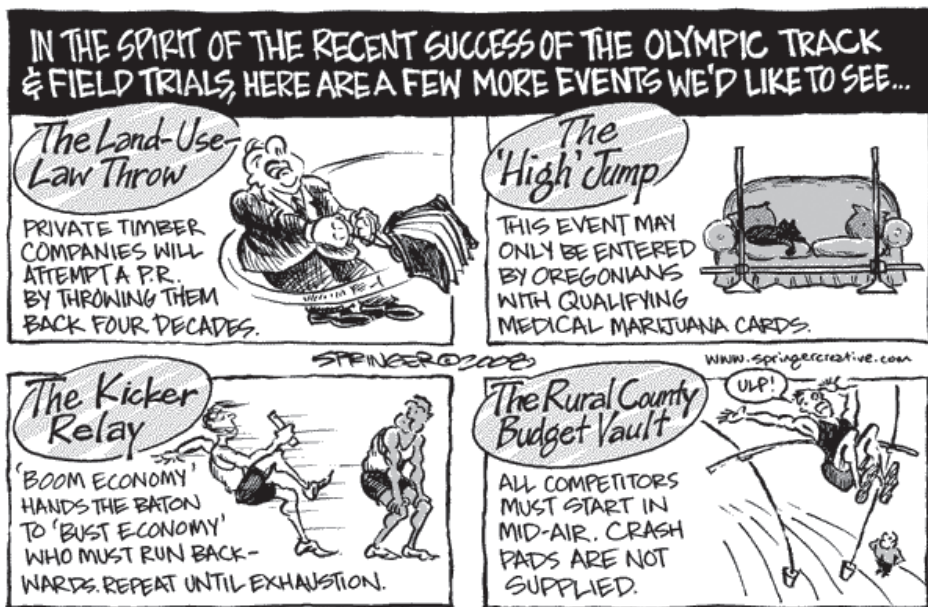
of the Sears site. “I’ve never seen a mixed use development not enhanced from the community being involved,” said Fish.

Despite the City Council vote for affordable housing, it was only a recommendation. The final decision rests with the Department of Defense, the property owner.

Gabriel Skatepark grand opening marked by hot sun and low turnout

After listening to people gripe about skateboarders (read:teenagers)—and the mythological noise, alcohol, drugs, gang violence, graffiti and vandalism—it was a pleasure to find none of the above at the grand open-

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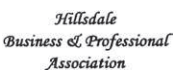
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