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The Southwest Portland Post

Southwest Portland's Independent Neighborhood Newspaper

Candlelight vigil
honors New Yorker
killed on
Barbur Boulevard
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Wilson Area Arts Council rings in the holiday season

By Polina Olsen
The Southwest Portland Post

The weather outside was frightful but the crowd didn't care as they gathered around the carolers outside Food Front Cooperative Grocery in Hillsdale on December 5.

Accompanied by music teacher, Jeanne Berg, Panache, Robert Gray Middle School's advanced choir, entertained as spectators warmed up with designer hot chili complements of Food Front and their culinary-gifted employees.

Meanwhile, others kept busy insuring events like this keep on keeping-on. Today kicked-off the Wilson Area Arts Council Instrument Drive.

The program will make participation in school music programs easy for kids whose families might not otherwise afford them. Do you have an orchestra or band instrument gathering dust in your closet? It could be time to find it the perfect new home.

The WAAC provides grants to Southwest Portland public schools, explained Lisa Broten who set up a fundraising booth at the nearby Hill-

sdale Farmer's Market.

"We help the schools with exposure to the arts by being available and donating funds. We give grants as they are needed. So, a teacher can write in and say, 'I need help with our sixth grade class art project.' The drama club at Gray asked for a grant to help fund the play Dracula."

Like so many non-profits, the WAAC relies on donations and clever fundraising events. "We collected 600 purses over two months for a fundraiser at O'Connors" Broten said remembering the successful In the Bag: Benefit for the Arts that ran in mid-November.

Even celebrities like Storm Large, Joan Rivers, and Jean Auel donated purses. The WAAC distributed the \$4500 they raised to the Wilson High School choir, orchestra, band and musical theater.

Broten emphasized local business support. "Multnomah vendors provided gift certificates for In-the-Bag," she said. "Paloma Clothing always donates money." Food Front and the Hillsdale Farmer's Market are helping the instrument drive by providing

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Lisa Broten (tuba), Raichle Dunkeid and Nicola Bachman collect donations for school band instruments. (Post photo by Polina Olsen)

Capitol Highway project planning complete, except for funding

By Lee Perlman
The Southwest Portland Post

The Capitol Highway improvement project is essentially complete.

In December a Citizen Advisory Committee unanimously approved a program of improvements designed to provide better and safer car, bike and pedestrian movement along Southwest Capitol Highway between

Multnomah Boulevard and Taylors Ferry Road.

Now all that is needed is the money to make it all real.

The most recent design calls for one 11-foot and one 12-foot travel lane for cars, a six-foot bike lane on each side, two six-foot pedestrian paths, and two 4.5-foot "stormwater furnishing zones" with trees and other vegetation.

On most of the roadway the pedestrian paths will be inside the furnishing zone, the bike paths outside of it. On significant upgrades – mostly on the southbound side of the road – the bikes will be inside the furnishing zone separated from the pedestrian paths by a three-inch curb.

In some places this scheme will be modified to deal with local conditions. A late addition to the plan is to provide more open asphalt at all intersections to provide more visibility.

Committee members had expressed concern about auto, bike and pedestrian conflicts due to this issue. An earlier proposal to have bikes share the right of way with either cars or pedestrians at certain points was dropped.

CAC members endorsed the plan, but agreed with Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. Transportation Committee chair Marianne Fitzgerald: "It's absolutely critical that this be funded and built, not just sit on a shelf. This is our highest priority."

CAC member Jim McLaughlin agreed, and complained about the amount of money needed to build the furnishing zones. The projected cost of the project is \$19.1 million, up from an earlier \$12 million.

Part of the cost increase is based on the need for sewer improvements (\$3

million) and "off-site enhancements" to handle the added stormwater runoff (\$2 million).

City experts found that local soils have an unusually poor capacity to absorb water, necessitating other ways to deal with runoff.

City officials had previously earmarked \$2 million from local construction System Development Charges for the project, and were seeking 10 million in federal transit funds. There is no strategy yet for raising the remaining \$7.1 million.

However, Project Manager Ross Swanson of the Portland Bureau of Transportation told the Post that, contrary to rumor, a Local Improvement District assessment of adjacent property owners was "not on the table at this time."

Another CAC member, Roger Averbek, said he looked forward to a related project: the redesign of the I-5-Capitol Highway-Barbur Boulevard interchange on the south end of the Capitol Highway project.

Swanson said it is possible to do this, but warned that it would cost millions of dollars. A new multi-phase traffic signal, a key element of such a venture, alone would cost \$500,000, he said.

About 90 people attended a final open house on the project last month. Aside from local concerns, most echoed the need to implement the project, and do it soon.

Swanson said that although a City Council review of the project is not specifically required by regulations, "It's inconceivable that this won't go to Council." No date for such a hearing had been set as *The Post* went to press, but it will probably occur this spring.



Capitol Highway street plan illustration - Capitol Highway and Lobelia facing North. (Courtesy Portland Bureau of Transportation)

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