

# What will be the effect of budget cuts on Southwest schools?

## SCHOOLS SIDEBAR

By Lee Perlman  
The Southwest Portland Post

Last year Portland voters defeated a proposed \$548 million bond measure intended to repair and replace Portland Public Schools' aging buildings. The voters passed a companion \$250 million tax levy that will partially offset budget cutbacks. What will be the effect of all this on Southwest schools?

According to Will Fuller, chair of Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc.'s

Schools Committee, the effect of the bond defeat will be "long-term and indirect." In contrast the budget shortfall, cushioned though it is by the Levy success, will be "immediate and direct."

The bond defeat "means that we won't be able to replace Markham School, and that is disappointing," Fuller said.

The District had determined that this building had passed its useful life, and should be replaced. For other southwest buildings, the proposed improvements "tend to be not so major," Fuller said.

"There are some safety-related

things, some classrooms, repairs to roofs." The buildings will continue to deteriorate and the cost of repairs will grow, but they will not affect this year's operations, Fuller said.

The budget shortfalls are another matter. Here, Fuller said, the District will have to cut "core staff," such as librarians and counselors.

There will be a chance to offset some of these things through the use of contributions to local school foundations, Fuller said, but this method is "uncertain and inequitable."

Stephenson School, for instance, can count on generating more funds than Markham, given their relative

demographics.

The District receives a certain portion of such funds, and redistributes them according to need – which, Fuller says, typically means "the money flows from southwest to northeast."

At best, Fuller said, such funding is a stopgap. What each parent would contribute to a Foundation project "is a fraction of what it would cost to send your kids to a private school," he said.

"But there is a tipping point where you go from adding extras to an already good school, and where the problems are so major the contributions are money down a rat hole."

## Light rail may mean bus cuts for Southwest Portland neighborhoods

As part of Northwest College of Naturopathic Medicine's (NCNM) master plan process the college is seeking to encourage as many student and visitor trips as possible to use means other than cars. However, they may be thwarted by TriMet plans that have implications for a much broader area.

TriMet officials have spoken for some time of transit changes once the new transit bridge, which will carry the new Portland to Milwaukie light rail line, is completed.

Last month TriMet spokesperson Mary Fetch told *The Post* that current plans call for lines 9, 17 and 19, which currently use the Ross Island Bridge, to shift to the

new bridge, thereby shifting service away from parts of the inner southwest that currently receive it.

Fetch shortly afterward called to say that no decisions had been made and discussions of service changes would begin in 2013.

NCNM's Keith North gave a different report. In discussions with the college, he said, TriMet officials have said that west side service on eight of the nine bus lines that provide service to the area would be eliminated, rather than shifted, once the bridge opens, with the aim of utilizing light rail exclusively.

– Lee Perlman

## Construction Bond

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look more tempting, and when people leave, the community suffers, Apenes said.

"The schools are so vital to our community, and I think as the schools are slowly dying the community won't be far behind," he said.

Hillsdale Neighborhood Association member Don Baack got up after Apenes spoke and stood next to the three presenters, so he was facing the about 15 people attending the meeting. Wilson High School principal Sue Brent and school board member Ruth Adkins had stood by during Barnett's presentation, adding their input.

"What our community is about is standing next to each other," Baack said.

Barnett emailed *The Post* a financial update on May 14, saying that, to raise the \$10 million needed to save teaching jobs, school employees are offering to take furlough days and delay raises, and the city could contribute \$5 million. As of press time, the Portland City Council had not approved that financial step, which it was scheduled to consider May 30.

Barnett also said in her email that a recent analysis of the percentage of students graduating in four years changed last year's estimate from 59 to 62 percent, and 2009-10 was 55, not 54 percent. That's a seven percent increase in one year.

"It is really good news, although 62 percent isn't enough," Barnett said. "But, it is a sign that we are on the right track with our students."

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