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The Southwest Portland Post

Volume No. 25 Issue No. 11 www.swportlandpost.com Portland, Oregon Complimentary September 2017

After outpouring of support, Gov. Brown decides not to veto Capitol Highway funding

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

It's been a nail-biter the last few weeks for community members who have been working on the planning for Southwest Capitol Highway pedestrian, bicycle and stormwater improvements.

At the end of the Oregon legislative session, which adjourned in July, lawmakers approved over \$2 million in state funds for Capitol Highway from Garden Home Road south to Taylors Ferry Road.

Community leaders praised legislators for the additional funds which would complete the project and were awaiting Gov. Kate Brown's signature. No one expected what might happen next.

In early August, Brown announced she would veto the \$2.2 million line item from the transportation bill.

"The funds are needed to complete all components on Capitol Highway

from Multnomah Village to Barbur Boulevard," said Chris Lyons, chair of the Multnomah Neighborhood Association's Capitol Highway subcommittee.

"We had been assured by our state representatives that funding would be included in the budget."

The wheels of activism then began in full force with letters from a variety of individuals, elected officials and local organizations giving Brown an earful.

The City Council wrote a unanimous letter of support. Congressman Earl Blumenauer, a former city commissioner and longtime bicycling advocate, also sent a letter to the governor.

"Since the veto threat was issued on Aug. 8," Lyons said, "we witnessed an unprecedented groundswell of support for Capitol Highway including numerous residents, and a diverse array of stakeholders."

"This coalition was instrumental in demonstrating the importance



City officials, planners and Southwest Capitol Highway subcommittee members tour the project site last summer. (Post file photo by Erik Vidstrand)

of the project to the governor, and ultimately was successful in making sure that the project will receive the \$2 million in state funding."

The governor decided not to veto the project's funds. Brown wrote a letter on August 15 to Secretary of State Dennis Richardson explaining her decision.

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Hillsdale community playground under construction at Rieke School



Adam Light helped lead volunteers to build a new playground at Rieke School. (Post photo by Jack Rubinger)

By Jack Rubinger
The Southwest Portland Post

About a dozen parents, volunteers, and friends showed up on a hot August morning to help shovel, rototill, dig, rake, move dirt and catch up on summer plans at Community Care Day at Rieke Elementary School.

The goal was to help start building the Hillsdale community playground at Rieke School. There are about 300 families with children attending Rieke School.

The goal was to get all the sod laid before the playground equipment arrived and before school started. At 9 a.m., huge rolls of sod were already on site.

"The students will be super excited to play on the new turf field," said Principal Sarah Lewins. "Rieke is so fortunate to have such a supportive community. The dedication of the playground committee is noteworthy."

"They had a vision and got input from all the stakeholders, raised the funds, partnered with Portland Parks and Recreation, and did a great deal of the labor themselves. This project benefits not just Rieke students but the wider community who will have this to play on for years to come."

Adam Light has kids in the first and third grades. "Meet Merry Tiller, the roto-tiller," said Light.

A self-described do it yourselfer, Light helped conduct the "Suburban Symphony" which included a

revving roto-tiller, clanking shovels, casual chatter and a loose array of rakes raking.

Volunteer parent Jim Meurer who has two students at Rieke School, a 2nd and a 5th grader, has been championing getting things started for several years.

Meurer and others raised a lot of money for operations which started last year. Almost \$125,000 was raised in a year.

The idea is to add to the current playground with structures that will appeal to both younger children and older kids in the neighborhood.

The new area will include mounds for kids to run up and down, a spinner, a balancing device, slide and several other pieces of equipment. There will be room to add other things if and when additional money can be raised.

Volunteer parent Laurie Hayes was involved in the design of the new playground and said she was excited that her two kids would get to play there this year.

On a day where temperatures were expected to get up into the 90s, it was a good turnout and enthusiasm was high. "We're grateful to have this space," said one volunteer.



An artist's rendering of the new playground at Rieke School. (courtesy Adam Light)

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