# Parks bond stall raises questions for housing levy

BY AMANDA WALDROUPE
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

On April 14, City Commissioner Nick Fish and the Parks Bureau's director, Zari Santner, announced that a $200 million bond measure for capital improvements to Portland's parks would not be put on the November ballot for voter approval.

The recession, in a memo to Parks Bureau staff, was cited as the reason. "The economic climate makes it too difficult to successfully move forward with a bond measure at this time," the memo said.

The bond measure was two years in the planning and considered a much-needed solution to improving the infrastructure of Portland's parks, which staff admit are in dire need of it. The bond, says Parks Bureau public information officer Beth Sorensen, also may have paid for the construction of a community center in inner Southeast Portland. That is an area of Portland currently without a community center. "It's disappointing," Sorensen says of the delay.

The memo said it is not a matter of "if, but when" the bond measure will be put on a future ballot. In an e-mail to Street Roots, Fish said, "It will go on the ballot as soon as possible." Fish, who is the commissioner-in-charge of both the Parks and Housing Bureaus, would not be more precise about a date.

The bond's delay and the recession's role in that delay brings to the fore concerns for housing advocates who want to see a levy paying for housing for homeless or low-income renters. One of the worries advocates spearheading levy or bond campaigns frequently have is how their levy or bond will perform if the ballot is crowded with multiple bonds or levies that would raise property taxes.

Beginning in January, a group of housing advocates, including Street Roots and policy makers, including Fish and County Commissioner Deborah Kafoury, has been meeting regularly to explore the potential support of a housing levy.

In a speech given at the outreach agency JOIN's grand opening at its new location on April 16, Fish said that Kafoury is taking the lead on that campaign.

Kafoury did not return a call to Street Roots by press time.

"No decisions have been made," Fish said, regarding how much money will be requested or what the money would be used for, although construction for affordable housing and possibly funds dedicated to bolstering Multnomah County's mental health system are candidates.

A levy would generate revenue through property taxes, collecting a certain amount of money per $1,000 of assessed property. Bonds raise revenue by borrowing against the future, essentially. Any revenue raised through bonds must be paid back by revenue generated through future taxes. Bonds have certain limitations, including a limitation that the money can be spent only on capital projects by publicly owned entities.

PHOTO BY ISRAEL BAYER

# Nature called: wants better toilets

STAFF REPORTS

The contraption above is just one example of a low-cost, low-brow, environmentally responsible, waterless urinal for people who need or want just such a thing. It's a simple design but goes to the root of the group PHLUSH's effort to get people's minds in the toilet.

This model from Cloacina is an $8 gender-neutral urinal for the home. According to Cloacina, it holds about 40 "events" and needs to be emptied every three to seven days. But otherwise, it's odorless, it's designers say.

On Tuesday, April 27, PHLUSH – which stands for Personal Hygeine Let's Us Stay Human – hosted a reception to thank supporters and update them on the latest in their work to make public toilets more accessible in Portland. In December, co-chair Carol McCreary attended the World Toilet Summit in Singapore. The reception was held at fellow co-chair Lan Nguyen's shop, Orchid Salon, in Old Town/Chinatown. PHLUSH serves on the Technical Advisory Committee led by the International Code Council and the World Toilet Organization to prepare global guidelines for public toilet design and operation.

There's even an effort underway to bring the 2011 World Toilet Summit to Portland.

PHLUSH was formed several years ago to work for better designed and more effectively managed public restrooms as part of the infrastructure of a healthy society.

For more information on PHLUSH's work, visit phlush.org. For more information about the Cloacina project pictured here, visit www.cloacina.org/blog/.

## A special thank you from Vendor Tommy Pearcy

Hello,

My name is Tommy Pearcy and I wanted to take a minute to say thanks to all my regular customers. I appriciate the kind people that have really impacted my life.

I would like to list a few things I have purchased with my Street Roots money: toothbrush, socks, nice dress shirts and, best of all, a phone to keep in touch with my son. Thanks a bunch. I really do appreciate all the help people have given me. Thanks, for giving a little hope to the ones that want to better their life.

– TOMMY PEARCY

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