

# Human Rights Commission, Fritz want foul language out of city charter

*Outdated language from a time long ago is set to be looked at by Charter Review Commission*

## BY STAFF REPORTS

Digging into the weeds of the Portland City Charter, the city's Human Rights Commission came across offensive language on "paupers" and "cripples" it wants to see changed.

The commission is recommending to its members who also serve on the Charter Review Commission that the following provisions in the current charter be changed to reflect human dignity:

2-105 (51) – Vagrancy

51. To define what constitutes vagrancy, and to provide for the support, restraint, punishment and employment of vagrants and paupers.

2-105(54) – Exhibition of cripples; begging

54. To prohibit the exhibition of deformed or crippled persons, and to prohibit all persons from begging upon the streets or in public places.

"Particularly why those stand out to the Human Rights Commission is because of the increase in the homeless population," said Donita Fry, chairwoman of the Human Rights Commission. The commission's letter to the Charter Commission members also said that "referring to individuals as paupers and cripples is not appropriate in any setting, much less the "constitution" of the City of Portland."

The letter refers to the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights of the General Assembly of the United Nations, which serves as the guiding document for the Human Rights Commission. "That document underscores the inherent dignity and worth of all members of the human family. The first article states, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

"We ask the current Charter Review Commission to address these two provisions of the charter and to send to the voters a clear choice for addressing these offensive city charter provisions."

The discovery of the language came as the Human Rights Commission is looking to have language inserted into the charter to make the commission a permanent entity within in the city.

"These are two of the housekeeping requests I identified and asked the Charter Commission to correct at the beginning of the year," says City Commissioner Amanda Fritz referring to the language. "I am glad the Human Rights Commission agrees the charter should be amended to remove this offensive language."

Fritz goes on to say that in addition to the foul language on paupers and deformed persons I also asked the Charter Commission and Human Rights Commission to look at language in the charter giving council the power to prevent and suppress

bawdy houses or places where fornication is practiced.

"Given the Human Rights Commission's concern over Human Trafficking, which I share, I hope the commission will consider advising the Charter Commission on how to make this language more relevant to the 21st century," says Fritz.

According to Amy Ruiz with Mayor Sam Adams office, "The City Council convened a Charter Commission this year, and made several requests of the commission. The council's first request was for the commission to prepare a list of housekeeping amendments' to be placed on the ballot in May or November 2011, such as removing offensive and outdated language from the charter, while not making changes with greater policy implications. The Human Rights Commission's letter speaks to that request."

If 15 of 20 Charter Commission members agree on a recommendation, it will go straight to the ballot for voters to decide. If a smaller majority of Charter Commission members agree on a recommendation, it will go to the council to decide whether or not to place it on the ballot.

"The Commission is currently at work on these housekeeping amendments and other issues, and the Mayor looks forward to seeing their recommendations," says Ruiz.

## OOLIGAN

by Jay Thiemeyer

trudging, leaning, shoulders lodged beneath a load,  
a nondescript, his face turned down beneath a rag,  
legs pumping full bore for the road;  
a young man darkened by the air and  
the sun, tramps down the scalding entry way  
to Interstate 90 to insist a ride.

Beside him his gravelly dog,  
panting at his heel, in love.  
On his back, a pack like a mountain  
a hard rock candy mountain.  
On his forearm a tattoo  
of a rail spike inked from elbow  
to gritty black hand, a glove for diving.  
Around his head a black bandanna,  
his tooth-colored water jug bouncing  
like a cork off his rough water thigh  
Again and again as the cars pass by  
each car a universe of one, he salutes  
in the only manner becoming a gentleman surviving  
among thieves-  
property's thieves pass him by, all day  
if they can until he steps with his dog  
into the middle of the road  
and someone stops.  
sun frying morning haze,  
cars crackling past in a skin of light,  
he boards the van on the side of the road  
and disappears just disappears  
down the highway just another forgotten moment  
happened to be spied by this passerby

## GOTTA FIX THE TICKER

By Thomas E. Rust

Phooey! Bah! Bummer!  
Gotta fix the ticker  
wrinkled up  
going  
"Ooooooh"  
beside the moon  
and an adequate  
dollop of whiskey  
with which to  
meet the shadows.  
There's an actual region  
of doubt  
in every fact.  
Merciful heaven  
above or below:  
rent me some space  
in your basement.

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## CORRECTION

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