

EDITORIAL

Salem needs to deliver small, but critical bump for housing

The latest Street Roots reports that "when legislators convene in Salem for the Legislature's month-long session, scheduled to begin Feb. 3, they are likely to focus on economic development, job growth, continuing to fund and reform education, and pass legislation that didn't quite make it during the 2013 session." (See, "Poverty issues to mostly take a back seat in Salem," page 3).

Street Roots is excited to know that many people experiencing homelessness and poverty will now have the opportunity to access health care. It's our belief that if health care reform maintains its course, homelessness could be curbed dramatically in the years to come. Time will tell.

"Housing is fundamental to accomplishing so many of the goals the state has set — health care reform, education, jobs growth, etc."

It's also true that prioritizing economic development and job growth is a step in the right direction. Access to living-wage jobs would have a

dramatic effect on individuals and families experiencing poverty, including homelessness. It's yet to be seen if a focus on job growth and a projected economic recovery actually offers relief for low-income people, or if it's smoke and mirrors.

The reality is we need more living wage jobs to bring people out of poverty. Without strategically engaging blue-collar workers and people experiencing poverty — we will fall short in Oregon if the only job growth we see is service industry jobs and jobs that people without an education can't obtain.

On the housing front, advocates are hoping for small gains.

Elected officials have the opportunity to offer a measly \$2 million increase for the second half of the biennium into the Emergency Housing Account and State Homeless Assistance Program to prevent and end homelessness (\$4 million over the biennium). We know that isn't enough to solve the local problems plaguing many communities.

We're cautiously optimistic that elected officials can put politics aside and give working individuals and families a small bump in the up-and-coming budget. It's the least the legislature can do. Oregonians around the state continue to struggle to maintain a safe place to call home.

Street Roots knows housing is fundamental to accomplishing so many of the goals the state has set — health care reform, education, job growth, etc. Without housing for Oregonians with low incomes, none of that can happen successfully.

Legislators have a real opportunity to deliver on the emergency housing account — signaling to Oregonians that Salem does care for its most vulnerable citizens and are willing to go to bat for those less fortunate.

Friendship and generosity abound

George has been a Street Roots vendor for more than a year. He sells papers in front of a local coffee shop in Northeast

Portland. George is well known and respected by the businesses owners and shoppers in the neighborhood.

Last week, one of George's regular customers gifted him a \$500 gift certificate to a local grocery store.

This kind of generosity is not uncommon for Street Roots vendors around this time of year. Vendors come in and tell us story after story of readers kindness. It's these outstanding acts of friendship and generosity that give vendors and Street Roots hope.

These stories lift us up and inspire us, and remind us of the incredible community we call home. This coming year, there are a few things readers can do to help Street Roots grow.

The first thing is simple: keep purchasing and reading the newspaper. In January and February sales drop for vendors, but the winter continues. Your support will go a long way in giving people on the streets selling the newspaper a hand up.

You can also help spread the word. For

die hard Street Roots fans don't underestimate the power of getting a newspaper and leaving it in a break room, or at your local coffee shop and/or bank. Introduce Street Roots to your peers.

Street Roots has grown over the years through word of mouth and by having people simply stumble upon the newspaper. Introducing new readers to Street Roots means introducing your peer network to helping vendors improve their quality of life. It's a win-win.

From all of us at Street Roots, we thank you for the love this holiday season. We were blown away by the amount of support we received and continue to receive.

We thank the many individuals and families that gave to us over the holidays.

We thank you for joining the Street Roots team and making this year a special year for Portland and for grassroots media.

We thank you for giving back. Have a great new year and we look forward to building towards our goal of going weekly over the next year.

Your lasting support means the world to all of us at Street Roots. Cheers.



DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

Israel Bayer is the executive director of Street Roots. You can reach him at israel@streetroots.org or follow him on Twitter @israelbayer.

LETTER

Your lengthy interview with Audubon Society Conservation Director Bob Sallinger contained one major error and many odd assumptions.

The interview is about the proposed "Portland Public Water District" ballot initiative, but it is instead labeled with the title of the OTHER ballot initiative running later in 2014 — the "Portland People's Water Trust". This is a major reporting error.

From reading Bob's words, you would never know that this ballot initiative would do most of the things that environmental groups like his would normally support! This initiative would ban the corporate takeover of our public water supply and transmission system. This initiative would ban the co-mingling of our currently pure Bull Run watershed water supply with not-so-pure Willamette and Tualatin River waters, which is a plan that has been on the table now for a long time among regional planners. This initiative is being co-directed by Floy Jones, a neighborhood activist who has been fighting incompetent and illegal city government decision-making about our water for many years. Though you wouldn't learn any of this from Bob Sallinger.

Finally, the new water utility board would be elected by zone. Seven seats, each

representing 1/7th of the city's population. To win, you would only have to convince the residents of your zone to elect you, which means that lower income folks who don't have access to rich people's money would have a greater chance of winning these seats. This is more democratic than the way the city council gets elected. Public water utility boards have existed in Seattle, Los Angeles, and elsewhere for many years, and serve the public well.

All Bob Sallinger seems to be able to focus on is the fact that the initiative is being funded by large companies. Is it possible that they're doing so simply because they, like most residents, are sick and tired of unethical and stupid decisions being made by the current city government structure, which has driven water rates through the roof? I believe we should follow the money, but sometimes large companies want the same thing the public wants, but for different reasons.

I am not yet certain that I will vote for this ordinance, but I do know for certain that Bob Sallinger is barking up the wrong tree, acting as if this ordinance is evil. I urge everyone to read the ordinance, and then decide.

— Paul Cienfuegos

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send letters to the editor to the Street Roots office, 211 NW Davis St., Portland, OR 97209, or e-mail to joanne@streetroots.org

Our mission

Street Roots creates income opportunities for people experiencing homelessness and poverty by producing a newspaper and other media that are catalysts for individual and social change.

Street Roots publishes every two weeks, launching on Fridays, and is available exclusively through our street vendors or by subscription. We are proud members of the North American Street Newspaper Association and the International Network of Street Papers.

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Street Roots Rose City Resource

Street Roots publishes the Rose City Resource, a comprehensive booklet of services for people experiencing homelessness and poverty. To inquire about getting guides, call 503-228-5657. Resources are also available online at www.rosecityresource.org.

Vendors

Street Roots vendors buy the newspapers for 25 cents each and sell them for \$1, keeping the 75 cents in profit for themselves. In order to keep the cost low to our vendors, we receive additional support from donations and in-kind contributions.



75¢

goes directly to the vendor who sold you the paper

25¢

goes toward printing costs

Vendor orientations are at 1 p.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at the Street Roots office.