

Replacement bond opportunity to support Portland Parks

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Commissioner.

On ballots right now, Portlanders have the opportunity to vote on the Parks Replacement Bond, Measure 26-159. Please turn over your ballot, and vote yes on Measure 26-159 on the reverse side.

For the past 100 years, bonds and levies have been the standard mechanism to fund parks construction and operations. This is the normal way Portlanders help pay for parks. Portland's last parks bond—passed in 1994—will be paid off in 2015. That means that voting yes on the replacement bond will help keep our parks safe and open, without increasing tax rates from what they are today. I know many Portlanders are still struggling to recover from the recession, so I chose to keep the requested tax rate the same, rather than ask for more.

Measure 26-159 is a wise investment. If the measure passes, it will provide \$68 million to replace aging playgrounds, preserve access to open space by repairing trails and bridges, repair community pools and prevent emergency closures, remove barriers to access for people experiencing disabilities, update park restrooms, increase worker safety and efficiency at our maintenance facilities, fix structural problems at Pioneer Courthouse Square (Portland's living room), and much more. Bond spending will be reviewed by a citizen oversight committee and audited.

If the measure doesn't pass, annual property taxes paid on the typical home with an assessed value of \$152,890 could decrease by about \$13. We will risk emergency closures at our pools and other facilities because we don't have other funding for systems that need major maintenance or replacement. We won't have

funding for major repairs, and we will see more closures like Mt. Tabor Park restrooms in Southeast Portland, the Rieke regional soccer field in SW Portland, Couch Playground in Northwest Portland, and the Maple Trail in Forest Park.

As your parks commissioner, I'm proud that Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) has a long history of using taxpayers' money wisely. The bureau, which manages 209 parks on 3,445 acres plus about 7,800 acres of natural areas, stretches every existing dollar—with grants; local business support and sponsorships, and with close to 500,000 volunteer hours each year.

Still, the needs of Portland's parks system far exceed its annual general fund budget. PP&R receives just \$1.5 million each year for major maintenance in all 209 facilities. That's double the major maintenance allocation when I became parks' commissioner last year, but still grossly inadequate. Volunteers can't fix swimming pool filtration systems, remove ADA barriers that limit some Portlanders' use of parks facilities, or patch roofs on our community centers.

More than \$365 million is needed to perform major maintenance upkeep in Portland's park system over the next 10 years. That's in addition to \$400 million needed to address park development needs in parks-deficient areas, to reach an equitable level of service in every part of the city. To address deficiencies in parks access, I'm allocating system development charges—fees on new construction, paid by developers—toward projects like Thomas Cully Park, Kunamokwst Park, Spring Garden Park, trails in Pier Park, two new parks in East Portland, and Gateway Green. Maintenance money for these new facilities

is incorporated into the City budget. But state law says developer fees cannot be used for repairs in older parks.

Earlier this year, Portland Parks & Recreation's citizen budget advisory committee advocated for a stable, long-term, supplemental funding strategy to address the significant backlog of major capital repair needs. The budget advisory committee recognized that \$1.5 million per year from the general fund is not enough. The parks replacement bond is a strong and prudent start to addressing our major maintenance needs—a start our budget advisory committee urged the City Council to refer to voters—without increasing the tax rate.

Please join me in voting yes on Measure 26-159. Providing this funding for parks maintenance will ease pressure on the general fund, allowing more City allocations to be allocated to support affordable housing and homes for people living outside. Visit FixOurParks.org to learn more. Add your name to the supporters list, and follow the campaign on Facebook and Twitter. Together, we can keep the legacy of great parks in Portland well-maintained for the next few years, and the next generation. Same tax rate, safer parks. Measure 26-159 is responsible government partnering with responsible citizens.

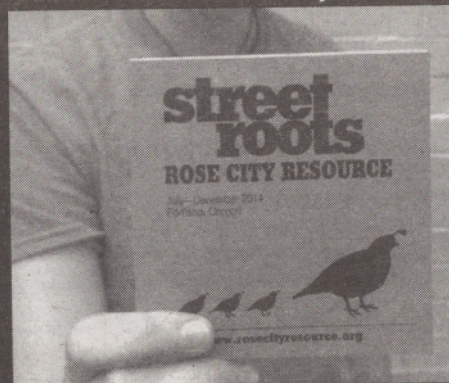
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