

METRO Life

The Portland Observer

SECTION B

"Bridging Portland's Communities"

Community Calendar

Friends of Trees

On Saturday, June 8, Friends of Trees fans will celebrate the end of this year's planting season with a party and silent auction at Poppybox Gardens, 7295 S.W. Dartmouth, in Tigard. The Springwood 2002 event is from 7-10 p.m. and will feature live music by "Tall Jazz" as well as specialty desserts, hors d'oeuvres and a no-host bar. Call 503-282-8846, ext. 16 or go online to www.friendsoftrees.org.

OHSU on Women's Health

The Oregon Health & Science University's Center for Women's Health is sponsoring a brown bag discussion series on health care issues. The next one will be given by faculty member Anne Nedrow, M.D. She will be speaking on health problems that can be diagnosed and treated with both conventional and alternative forms of medicine. The talk will be given on Thursday, May 23, 1 p.m. at the OHSU Hospital, Room 8B-60. Call 503-494-0515.

Portland Farmer's Market

The Wednesday Portland Farmer's Market calendar will grow by three weeks this season, running May 15 through Oct. 16, from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. This bustling mid-week market, located in the Park Blocks near the Portland Art Museum, treats Portland's business community and downtown residents to just-picked edibles for lunch and other treats.

Dishman Dollar Night

The Matt Dishman Community Center's spring term Dishman Dollar Night will be held on Friday, May 31, from 6-9 p.m. at the Matt Dishman Community Center, 77 N.E. Knott Street. Dishman Dollar Night includes indoor play park for toddlers, face painting, arts & crafts, game room play, a clown and Open Play Swim in the pool. Call 503-823-3186.

Water Conservation Workshop

Learn how to take control of your water and sewer bills. The upcoming Water Conservation Workshop will be held at the Peninsula Park Community Center, 700 N. Portland Blvd. on Wednesday, May 15, from 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m. Call 503-284-6827.

continued ▼ on page B6



Collecting signatures for an initiative to raise the minimum wage, State Rep. Diane Rosenbaum (right), meets with Jessica Hollingshead outside the Starbucks on Hawthorne Boulevard. Hollingshead, a food service worker, says she would love it if her wages were raised.

PHOTO BY DAVID PLECHL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Campaigning To Raise Wages

Initiative would raise minimum to \$6.90 an hour

BY DAVID PLECHL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Oregon Needs a Raise.

That is the rallying call of State Representative Diane Rosenbaum and supporters of this year's initiative to increase the wages of Oregon's lowest paid workers.

Initiative 88 would raise Oregon's minimum wage from \$6.50 an hour to \$6.90 an hour, effective January 2003. Wages would increase every January thereafter in accordance with rising costs of living. Oregon's last increase took effect

three years ago after a 1996 vote guaranteed the raise. As many as 177,000 workers received wage increases between 1998 and 1999.

Supporters of this year's initiative say at least 100,000 low-wage workers are not earning a living wage.

Rosenbaum points out that Oregon has the lowest wages on the west coast, with California earning 25¢ more an hour and our neighbors in Washington earning 40¢ more an hour.

"It's a small step we can take," she says. "While inflation has raised the cost

of living 6 percent, wages have stayed the same."

Rosenbaum is working closely with the Portland based advocacy group, Jobs for Justice. She is confident they'll have enough signatures by the July 5 cut off date to get the initiative on the ballot.

"We are calling July 5th Economic Independence Day," she says.

Rosenbaum thinks too many adults in Oregon are working low wage jobs.

"Fifty nine percent of low wage workers in Oregon are women," she says.

Traditionally some restaurants and

consumer groups have opposed wage increases, arguing that the cost will only be passed on to consumers.

On this point, Rosenbaum cites Oregon's last increase and says, "Big increases did not occur."

"When the cost of the staples of life goes up, it's only fair that wages rise too," she says. "This will help families on the lowest rungs of the economic ladder put food on the table and a roof over their heads."

To contact Jobs with Justice, call Geri Washington at 503-236-5573

Budget Leaves Little for Housing

Urban renewal districts priorities strapped for cash

BY LEE PERLMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The Portland Development Commission must make some hard decisions on how to spend a dwindling amount of urban renewal monies; funds that could help local neighborhoods.

The Interstate Renewal District in north Portland has been particularly hard hit. Aside from the Max light rail project, there will be only \$1.2 million next year to spend on programs to aid low-income housing development, promote business and job growth and combat the effects of gentrification, less than half the \$3 million originally proposed.

The shortfall stems from a recent court decision in favor of Shilo Inns, reducing the amount of taxes paid to urban renewal districts.

PDC has budgeted \$460,000 for housing programs for the Interstate district. Of this, \$100,000 will go to repairs for owner-occupied housing and \$300,000 to development of rental housing.

Some have suggested that the money should be spent on rent subsidies, but according to Sheila Holden, chair of the Interstate advisory committee, Urban renewal funds can only

help pay for projects leading to physical improvements, not for ongoing programs.

Another issue may be whether money should be transferred from one district to another.

Ultimately, urban renewal funds must be spent in the district in which they are generated, but districts can "borrow" from each other provided that the funds are paid back, with interest, within five years.

The Oregon Convention Center Urban Renewal District, which includes properties on and near Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard as far north as Lombard, has already lent more than \$2 million to the North Macadam District.

PDC officials conceded it is unlikely the Macadam district can generate enough money to pay back the loan within the prescribed timeline, thus requiring borrowing from some other district.

Public testimony will help the commission, and later the Portland City Council, formulate an urban renewal budget for the city. A hearing is scheduled for Wednesday, May 8 at 5:30 p.m. at the Multnomah County building, 501 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd.

Helping People Find Houses, Apartments



Former City Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury navigates Portland's new "Housing Connections" website during last week's official launch of the e-government system at the North Portland Branch Library, 512 N. Killingsworth. The site was created to help residents find quality affordable housing, a major issue in the city. Landlords who wish to list their units and anyone with access to the Internet can find the site at www.housingconnections.org.

PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER