



The Portland Observer

Established in 1970
Committed to Cultural Diversity

www.portlandobserver.com
Wednesday • April 5, 2006

Week in The Review

Midwest Storms Leave 28 Dead
Thunderstorms packing tornadoes and hail as big as softballs ripped through eight states last weekend, killing at least 28 people, injuring scores and destroying hundreds of homes in the South and Midwest. Tennessee was hit hardest, with tornadoes striking five western counties Sunday and killing 23 people, including an infant and his grandparents and a family of four.

Academy Withdraws From Jeff
The staff of a proposed alternative school has withdrawn its program on the Jefferson High School campus. The Academy of Character and Ethics, a nonreligious program aimed at at-risk students, was proposed by Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, but concerns from Jefferson parents about religious issues entering the curriculum led the academy's staff to look elsewhere.

Red Cross Cleans House
Facing criticism after Katrina, the American Red Cross is relinquishing control over some aid dollars and cracking down internally on waste and abuse. The nation's largest charity promised the changes in a statement to a Senate panel Monday, following its acknowledgment last year that its \$2 billion response to the Gulf Coast storm fell short. See story, page A2

Portland School Closings Tarnish Image

School doors are slamming shut, chipping away at Portland's status as one of America's most "livable cities", the Associated Press reports. They said the school system's sizable deficit and drop in enrollment is an impetus for parents moving toward lower-priced housing in the suburbs.

Hollywood Films Sold Online
"Brokeback Mountain" and "King Kong" will be the first major movies available to own online, as Hollywood studios will start selling digital versions of films on the Internet this week. The films can't be burned onto a disc for viewing on a DVD player, but six studios said Monday that sales will begin through the download Web site www.Movielink.com

Focus on Warming Disasters

An ad campaign from the advocacy group Environmental Defense hopes to convince Americans there's still time to do something about global warming, but many scientists aren't so sure it can be avoided. "I'm not sure that anyone can stop it," John Walsh, who studies global change at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks.

Seven Portland Schools Will Close

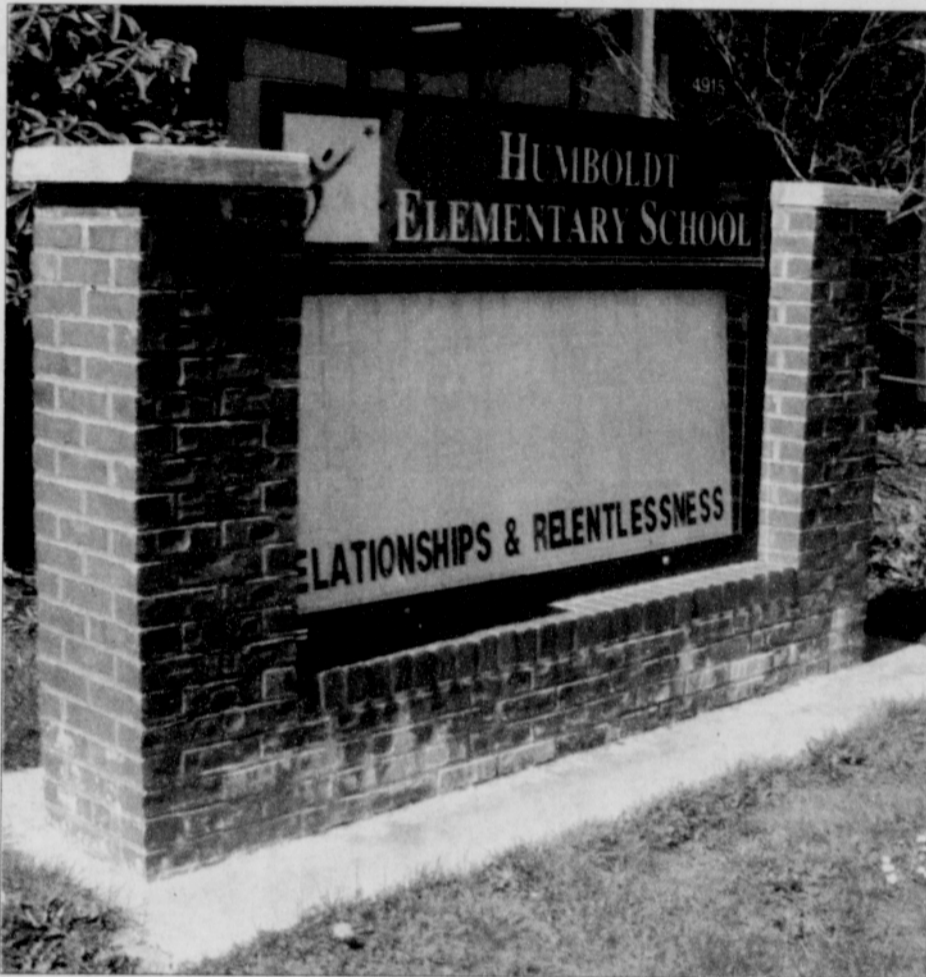
New budget
means 17 schools
expand to K-8

BY SARAH BLOUNT
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Portland Public Schools Superintendent Vickie Phillips proposed \$7.2 million in cuts and \$6.6 million in new spending at a budget proposal Monday. The following morning, Phillips announced a four-year district plan to close seven schools: Rieke, Humboldt, Hollywood, Clarendon and Rose City Park elementaries, Kellogg Middle School and an undecided southeast elementary. 17 elementaries will reconfigure into Kindergarten through eighth grade. Phillips said closures will be phased in over multiple years — we'll see little movement this fall, and more dramatic movement next year. School sizes will stay the same, around 400-600 students.

2006-07 budget proposals include: no wage or health benefit premium increases for PPS employees. Preserving Outdoor School and high school athletics, but making further cuts in central administration and services, saving almost \$8 million. They'll reduce custodial costs by 10 percent, and eliminate most non-mandated school bus routes.

The budget proposal does not continue one-time priority funds approved last year.



District-wide closures and reconfigurations mean students at Humboldt Elementary (4915 N. Gantenbein) will soon move to the expanded Ockley Green Middle School (6031 N. Montana) PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The school district will redirect dollars to invest in textbooks and curriculum materials, staff to help principals and supports for special programs.

The additional revenue will allow Portland Public Schools to phase in the school reconfiguration plans.

In north and northeast Portland, Rose City Park will close and students will move to Gregory Heights, expanding to K-8. They'll phase out Portsmouth and close Clarendon elementaries, and expand Astor and Peninsula elementaries to K-8.

Humboldt Elementary will close, and students will move to Ockley Green Middle School. The district will phase out and annex Hollywood Elementary, moving students to Fernwood Middle School and expanding to K-8, also expanding Laurelhurst and Irvington elementaries to K-8.

They'll close Rose City Park Elementary and expand to K-8 at Gregory Heights elementary.

In southeast Portland, plans are to expand to K-8 and add programs to Bridger Elementary, phase out the current Binnsmead Middle School program, and expand Clark and Marysville elementaries to K-8. Kellogg Middle School will close and students will move to Hosford Middle School. The district will close either Duniway, Grout, Lewis or Llewellyn elementaries.

In west Portland, Rieke Elementary will close and Skyline Elementary will expand to K-8.

Publicly Funded Candidates Join Council Race

Voter owned
elections introduce
grassroots contenders

BY SARAH BLOUNT
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The size of a candidate's political campaign typically depends on the size of their wallet and reputation, often leaving little room for low-profile contenders. This year's race for two seats on City Council could break through all the "typicals" of elections, with three candidates having qualified for the experimental Voter Owned Elections.

Also referred to as Public Campaign Finance, Commissioner Erik Sten's ambitious voter reform is designed to attract candidates without the capital to launch a major campaign. On his website, he calls it a "people-powered" process, getting back to our democratic roots.

The taxpayer-funded system has its share of opposition, but eluded a repeal attempt spearheaded by the First Things First committee, backed by the Portland Business Alliance.

The deadline to qualify for public funding for the city elections was March 30, for primary elections on May 16. Three candidates qualified to receive public funding — Amanda Fritz for Commissioner number three (running against commissioner Dan Saltzman), and Emilie Boyles and Erik Sten and for seat number two.



City Council hopeful Amanda Fritz was among the first to become a publicly funded candidate. Fritz is part of the new "voter owned elections" system that levels the playing field in city political races.

Lucinda Tate, who's running for number three, filed her request just before Thursday's deadline; her request is under City review.

It's too early to tell how the process will work, but in theory, here is an explanation: The candidates decide to participate, agreeing to run their campaigns using only public funds and allowed in-kind contributions (goods or services with monetary value). After they voluntarily sign a Declaration of Intent to Participate, candidates must prove they can rally community support by collecting 1,000 contributions of \$5 each.

At the beginning of their campaign candidates may also accept private contributions, limited to \$100 from any source, but no more than \$15,000.

Once qualified, they're eligible to receive an initial primary allocation of \$150,000 for their campaign.

If non-participating candidates outspend certified candidates, the city will provide matching funds up to \$150,000 per office, divided and distributed equally to all eligible candidates.

Two of the qualified candidates are grassroots citizens who may not have had a chance in the old system. Amanda Fritz is a perfect example. With a casual, non-politico appearance, the OHSU nurse and longtime

continued ▼ on page A3

Courting A Sense of Community Housing site sees better days ahead

BY SARAH BLOUNT
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Between Jefferson High School and North Sumner Street sits a cluster of four aging public housing developments. The courtyard's failing infrastructure provides bleak dwellings for 85 households in the Humboldt neighborhood, but residents face big plans for their outdated homes.

Iris Court has needed some love and attention for many years, which made it an ideal candidate for the Housing Authority of Portland's second round of public housing revitalization. The housing authority was awarded a \$16.9 million HOPE VI grant from the department of Housing and Urban Development in October 2005. A total of \$40 million will go toward a renovation of the 1940's complex that suffers from a disproportionate number of concrete slabs to trees and greenery.

The housing authority expects to complete the physical transformation by fall 2008, with 129 very-low to mod-



Humboldt Gardens residents Claudia Rhone (far left) and Azzie Winston (third from left) join community builder Myriam Demezas (second from left) and site manager Felicia Poe (right) at the north Portland complex formerly known as Iris Court.

erate income housing units and a new name — Humboldt Gardens.

21 affordable homes adjacent to the site will attract households at or below 80 percent of the area median family income.

An on-site mixed-use building will include rental housing and ground floor space, reserved for a Neighborhood Network Center providing computer and Internet access, a Head Start Center, a Community Policing contact office, and a management office.

Humboldt Gardens follows on the heels of New Columbia, a larger, 80-acre community in north Portland.

Mike Andrews, the director of community revitalization with the housing authority, said this new project will be a modest change compared to the \$153 million HOPE VI project at New Columbia.

"It doesn't lend itself to such a comprehensive alteration of land-

continued ▼ on page A2

PRESORTED
US POSTAGE
PAID
PORTLAND, OR
PERMIT
NO. 1610



University of Oregon
Knight Library
1299 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403-1205