

Parks

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school districts that are struggling. What we said was long term we have to develop a number of those parks and fulfill a promise we made to the families of East Portland.

We used mostly our existing workforce – and we did it on a shoestring. The Council appropriated \$500,000 in 2011 and we pledged to match that with other funds. And we ended up spending a total of \$800,000

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which was \$200,000 short of our original estimate.

We made our report to council and what we said was that this is a building block. We have honored our commitment to do these small scale improvements. Now we have to move forward with the next bond measure and allocate funds for the bond measure to actually build out parks that East Portland families deserve.

TSN: Did you say “new bond measure?”

CF: Historically roughly every 10 years the city has gone out to replenish a bond. Our last bond ends next year so it's already embedded in your rates. Gearing up to go to the voters this November to ask for a renewal of the bond — that's my plan. Obviously there are a few steps I need to go through. Mayor Hales is fully supportive of our aspiration and if we're successful in renewing the bond we'll have money to improve some of our children's play areas, make

some of our buildings seismically stronger, do some important work in Forest Park, upgrade some of our existing facilities and build out new parks in East Portland.

And so as part of a bond addressing East Portland equity, I actually don't think equity is the right word. I think the right word is justice. When you have 40 percent of your families with children in one geographic part of the city and they are underserved by Parks, I think justice requires that we invest in the kinds of parks and amenities that the rest of the city enjoys.

TSN: We're learning that Mayor Hales actually supports a lot of stuff but he's still going to turn around and cut funding for them. How are you going to argue to voters and your fellow commissioners to justify the significance of the investment?

CF: The budget cycle is going to be tough. But the E205 funding from Council came even while we were feeling the economic downturn City-wide and is a testament to City leaders' priorities and commitment to equal justice.

I don't believe we'll resolve our problems through cuts alone, any more than I think Congress is going to go to sequestration. Across the board cuts are irresponsible.

We're going to have to look at a variety of approaches. One is better coordination with the county. Two is shared sacrifice with our labor partners. Three is new revenues. Four is targeted cuts. Five is bridge financing for some of the things we care about.

Last year we won the gold medal for the best park system in America — 150 years in the making and we achieved the gold medal because Portlanders have invested in building this great system over a 150 year period.

Going forward I am not going to allow



Commissioner Nick Fish, center, has pledged to continue investing in East Portland parks no matter what cuts the current bad budget climate seem to require. “And that means continuing investment, expanding services to underserved parts of our community, and leveraging public resources as effectively as we did on E 205,” he says.

this to become a bronze medal system. And that means continuing investment, expanding services to underserved parts of our community, and leveraging public resources as effectively as we did on E 205.

TSN: Can you comment on Park Rangers Sam Sachs and Asa Arden, who helped the police catch a rapist in Washington Park who was convicted this week?

CF: I'm a big fan of Sam and Asa, and I think the Rangers have made a difference. You remember how much flack I took for that. I was targeted in the editorial pages, targeted by the Portland Business Alliance. Everyone was jumping on our backs saying

don't expand the Ranger program at the expense of the security program the PBA ran downtown.

And I said our Rangers are problem solvers, they're our eyes and ears in the parks, they perform a different mission. I think we can actually have safer parks if we do it our way, and I think it's been born out.

And Sam is a shining example of why the Ranger program is succeeding. I get emails all the time from people saying they now have a relationship with their local ranger, and that they're helping to solve problems, And that was what we hoped for.

Pot Law

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on the conflict between state and federal marijuana laws and has urged an end to federal “mandatory minimum” sentences that lead to long prison stints for drug crimes.

“We're seeing enormous political momentum to undo the drug war failings of the past 40 years,” said Bill Piper, director of national affairs for the Drug Policy Alliance, who has been working with lawmakers on marijuana-related bills. “For the first time, the wind is behind our back.”

The Justice Department hasn't said how it plans to respond to the votes in Washington and Colorado. It could sue to block the states from issuing licenses to marijuana growers, processors and retail stores, on the

grounds that doing so would conflict with federal drug law.

Blumenauer and Polis are due to release a paper this week urging Congress to make a number of changes, including altering tax codes to let marijuana dispensaries deduct business expenses on federal taxes, and making it easier for marijuana-related businesses to get bank accounts. Many operate on a cash basis because federally insured banks won't work with them, they noted.

Blumenauer said he expects to introduce the tax-code legislation as well as a bill that would reschedule marijuana under the Controlled Substances Act, allowing states to enact medical marijuana laws without fear

that federal authorities will continue raiding dispensaries or prosecuting providers. It makes no sense that marijuana is a Schedule I drug, in the same category as heroin and a more restrictive category than cocaine, Blumenauer said.

The measures have little chance of passing, said Kevin Sabet, a former White House drug policy adviser. Sabet recently joined former Rhode Island Rep. Patrick Kennedy and former President George W. Bush speechwriter David Frum in forming a group called Project SAM -- for “smart approaches to marijuana” -- to counter the growing legalization movement. Sabet noted that previous federal legalization

measures have always failed.

“These are really extreme solutions to the marijuana problem we have in this country,” Sabet said. “The marijuana problem we have is a problem of addiction among kids, and stigma of people who have a criminal record for marijuana crimes.”

“There are a lot more people in Congress who think that marijuana should be illegal but treated as a public health problem, than think it should be legal.”

Project SAM suggests people shouldn't get criminal records for small-time marijuana offenses, but instead could face probation or treatment.

Weems

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she was around 15 or 16 years old.

Weems says her interest in social justice came from her relationship with her father.

“Early on my father influenced how I looked at race, class and gender because my father was so eloquent and so hip,” she says. “He gave us a great sense of the importance of our own humanity and the insistence that we had a right to be who we were and that there's no one better than you. That sense of coming from a family like that, with a father that taught me from the earliest age I can remember, had a profound impact on how I thought about life.”

Although her work is internationally recognized for exploring subjects like race, gender and class, Weems doesn't want her art to be reduced to “race relations.”

She insists that Black subjects can be used to express more than just the idea of Blackness, as evidenced by two of her series, “Family Pictures” and “The Kitchen.” When we see white actors and actresses in popular media, we automatically assume they represent more than whiteness, she says. By making her subjects more three dimensional, she aims to challenge power dynamics.

“I want my subjects to stand in for more than themselves -- shifting the balances of power, engaging the audiences in a new way, asking them to think about not just the work but themselves in a new way,” says Weems. “To the extent that you can get people to move beyond their own narrow confines and to a new dimension, is to the

extent that work can be powerful and to that (extent) it can change your life.”

Power is a recurring theme in Weems' work. She likes to unpack it, both in terms of individual relationships and on a larger societal level.

For example, in her series “From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried,” Weems looks at power in photography. Specifically, she looks at the three intertwining stories of the history of photography, how Blacks have been depicted historically and the history of Blacks in America, in general.

One particular photo of an elderly Black man reads, “Descending the throne you became footsoldier & cook.” Another photo of a Black woman reads, “You became mammie, mother & then, yes, confidant –

ha.”

Weems says the questions of who holds the power is especially profound in that series.

As she reflects on both her work and her days protesting, Weems notes that she is on a journey to understand the possibilities of life and this historical moment. In particular, she is interested in how this generation of youth engages with social justice, noting that her generation's radicalism was sparked by the turbulent events of the 60s.

“What made us possible were all the assassinations that took place,” she says. “The assassination of Kennedy. The assassination of Martin. The assassination of Malcolm. That's what made you and I sitting at this table right now possible.”