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LONG WAIT FOR POOL

While welcoming funding for a new aquatic center, community members, like those of Save Columbia Pool, are frustrated by the decade North Portland will be without indoor swimming facilities. Pictured above community members demonstrate outside of a mayoral debate on Feb 2020.

North Portland Welcomes State Funding for New Aquatic Center, Questions Whether Columbia Pool is a Lost Cause

By Saundra Sorensen

Two years after the Columbia Pool was closed indefinitely, the state legislature passed two budget bills that secured $15 million in lottery bond funding for the proposed North Portland Aquatic Center.

The development last week was thanks in large part to the work of two Portland leaders. Commissioner Carmen Rubio, who serves as the city's parks commissioner, last year directed about $11.7 million from construction development fees into the ambitious aquatic center's initial design and public engagement phase. Rep. Travis Nelson (D-Portland) proposed the state allocate $33 million for the proposed indoor aquatic center, shortly after taking over former Rep. Tina Kotek's seat.

"Travis Nelson was part of the group of community leaders that had worked to try to get the swimming pool open or find a new aquatic center, and he's taken that passion and advocacy to being our state rep, and secured some funding," Tyler Roppe, vice chair of the Kenton Neighborhood Association, told *The Skanner*.

Nelson had told *The Skanner* he would like to see partners like Nike and Adidas step in to fill in any funding gaps. Nike wrote a letter to the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction in support of the $33.3 million Nelson requested, stating "Portland Parks & Recreation is a critical partner in creating equitable and inclusive access to play in our local community."

> "This project means a healthier, more robust community

Commissioner Carmen Rubio

"This project means a healthier, more robust community -- and lots of fun for generations of families to come -- and now, that's just a few years away," Commissioner Carmen Rubio said in a statement.

Portland Parks and Recreation has estimated the new aquatic center will cost approximately $50 million to build.

A Long Wait

Portland Parks and Recreation (PPR) has projected 70,000 people will be served by the aquatic center -- of them, 24% are BIPOC, and 14% live below the poverty line.

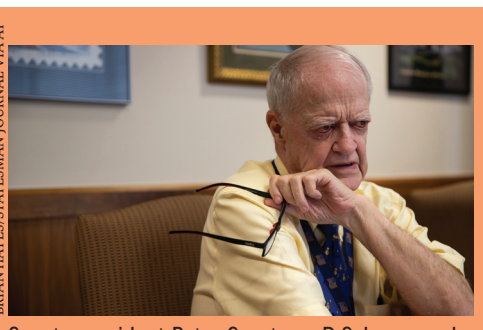
Portland Parks is considering three sites that sit central to the Portsmouth, Kenton, Arbor Lodge, Overlook and University Park neighborhoods: the Charles Jordan Community Center, Columbia Park, and Columbia Annex.

"All three can support a center large enough to serve the estimated 83,000 that will live in the area by 2035," Rubio testified last month.

But the current funding shortfall, and the projected eight-year project timeline, is frustrating community members and leaders who otherwise welcome the construction of such a large exercise and community facility.

"This is a very diverse

See POOL on page 3



BRIAN HAYES/STATESMAN-JOURNAL VIA AP

Senate president Peter Courtney, D-Salem, speaks to members of the press on a conference call after sine die, the final adjournment of the assembly, at the Oregon State Capitol Building in Salem, Ore. on Friday, March 4, 2022.

Oregon Lawmakers Adjourn 2022 Legislative Session

SARA CLINE Associated Press/Report for America

Oregon lawmakers adjourned the 2022 short legislative session Friday after passing ambitious legislation, including overtime pay for farmworkers, $600 stimulus payments for low-income workers and a $400 million spending package focused on affordable housing and homelessness.

"When we first convened— and I ad-

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PHOTO BY SHAWNTE SIMS

L-R: Andrea Vernae, WRICK Jones, Henry Noble, and Victor Mack in August Wilson's "Gem of the Ocean" at Portland Center Stage.

August Wilson's Gem of the Ocean On Stage in Portland

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Ebony's New Podcast Covers Black America

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