

# PortlandTribune

## Council pleased with Adams' proposed budget

*Priorities funded despite nearly \$9 million in cuts*

BY JIM REDDEN

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### **Some Portlanders are not happy with parts of Mayor Sam Adams' proposed budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1.**

Supporters of the existing water system are upset that it funds projects they believe are unnecessary — including some that would help the city comply with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rules that threaten the city's open reservoirs.

Some North Portland residents and businesses owners object to consolidating the Portland Police Bureau's five precincts into three — a merger that will convert North Precinct into the headquarters for the training division.

And some parents will undoubtedly be upset to learn that fees will increase for a number of parks programs.

But the budget Adams unveiled on May 1 largely satisfies one important constituency: the rest of the City Council, the four commissioners' votes are necessary to pass it without significant opposition.

"Sam did an excellent job with the budget," said Commissioner Randy Leonard. "I'm very impressed with it."

Under Portland's system of government, each member of the council is in charge of a number of city agencies. According to Leonard, Adams gave each council member one or more of their top priorities in his proposed budget.

### **BUDGET HEARING**

The council has scheduled a hearing on the proposed budget at 6 p.m. on Thursday, May 21, at Mt. Tabor Middle School, 5800 S.E. Ash St.

Leonard believes this is all the more remarkable because the budget cuts close to \$9 million out of existing programs because of decreasing city revenue caused by the recession. Despite the cuts, the budget funds a number of new programs that were championed by some of the commissioners, Leonard said.

The good will on the council created by the budget was evident at the press conference where it was unveiled. Commissioners Leonard, Amanda Fritz and Nick Fish appeared with Adams and lavishly praised

aspects of his proposed budget.

"Public safety, housing and individuals generally are the winners in this budget," said Fish.

"It keeps our city whole," said Fritz, who noted that 40 city employees will still be laid off, however.

Although Commissioner Dan Saltzman did not attend, his staff said he was satisfied with it.

### **Working with commissioners**

Based on interviews with council members and city employees, some of the key items in Adams budget are:

- Keeping all fire stations open and all fire rescue units funded. This is especially important to

Leonard, a former Portland firefighter in charge of Portland Fire and Rescue. According to Leonard, he assumed the budget cuts meant that at least one fire station would have to close and two fire rescue units would be mothballed. But Adams more than satisfied Leonard by finding cuts in other programs instead.

- Including \$1 million for the operation of the Regional Access Center, which the council hopes to build later this year. The center is intended to provide housing and services to the homeless in the Old Town area. It is a top priority of Fish, who is in charge of the city's housing programs. At the press conference, Fish said the funding means the center will not become another Wapato — the jail Multnomah County built but cannot afford to open.

- Adding funds for the recently-created Human Relations Commission, a top priority of Fritz. She believes it is necessary to promote civil and human rights in Portland.

- Enacted Police Chief Rosie Sizer's precinct consolidating plan. It was supported by Saltzman to save more than \$2 million in police bureau funds without forcing any employees to be laid off. At Saltzman's request, Adams and the rest of the council unanimously authorized the merger plan on April 29, two days before the proposed budget was unveiled.

Adams said the city will also help Multnomah County build a replacement Sellwood Bridge if the 2009 Legislature approved Gov. Ted Kulongoski's proposed transportation funding package. According to Adams, if the city receives at least \$15 million more in state gas tax revenue a year, it will give the county \$8 million a year to support \$100 million in bonds for the new bridge.

Adams directed agency directors to begin preparing for budget cuts shortly after he took office in January. He asked all agencies to submit proposed budgets that included cuts of 2.5 percent and 5 percent, then began negotiating with each commissioner on budgets for their agencies. As Leonard said, Adams then managed to accommodate each of the commissioners on some of their priority issues while still proposing a balanced budget, as required by law.

Although the budgets cuts \$8.8 million from existing programs, that is less than Adams was facing as recently as March. Since then city budget officials determined that one-time revenue would be \$12.3 million higher than expected.

The additional funds result from increased savings in the current fiscal year, higher than expected business license fee projections and bond interest savings.

At the same time, Adams' proposed budget cuts many agency budgets five percent, including the offices of each council member, the parks bureau, the Office of Management and Finance, the City Attorney, the office of Government Relations and the Portland Office of Emergency Management.