

Portland City Council Agenda
Written Testimony - Item 1007

Agenda Item	Name or Organization	Position	Comments	Attachment	Created
1 1007	Virginia Ehelebe			Yes	11/19/24 10:14 AM

DATE: 19 NOVEMBER 2024

TO: MAYOR WHEELER AND COMMISSIONERS RYAN, RUBIO, MAPPS, AND GONZALEZ

FROM: VIRGINIA EHELEBE, FOR CONCERNED CITIZENS

SUBJECT: CITY COUNCIL PROPOSED RESOLUTION 1007 - PP&R LEVY

The Concerned Citizens urge the City Council to amend proposed Resolution 1007 by deferring the date for a Parks' referral on a replacement levy. Specifically, we recommend the Bureau ask for such a referral in advance of the November 2025 or May 2026 elections rather than the one in May 2025.

PP&R's budget picture is too opaque and complex and the Bureau's policy choices too high stakes to expect the new Council to decide the merits of a levy shortly after assuming office in January. Since the current levy will not lapse until June 2026, there is time for new Council to gather information on PP&R's funding challenges before voting on a referral.

— The reemergence of a potentially sizable PP&R operating deficit only five years after the Bureau confronted a serious cash crunch suggests Parks has yet to find—quoting a 2019 Willamette Week article— “a strategy to balance the checkbook.” The CBO earlier this year deemed Parks' current expenditures “untenable” and pressed the Bureau for a long-term plan regarding levy usage.

—Parks, moreover, has not yet published a plan for dealing with its \$591 million major maintenance backlog, even though the Bureau has warned that the backlog—if not remedied—could force the closure of one in five park assets during the next 10-15 years.

Given Portland's need for fiscal discipline in the years ahead, the new Council members deserve time to get up to speed on the City's overall budget challenges as well as the Park Bureau's budget and policies before being asked to decide whether to approve or reject outright (or alternatively to require policy changes before approving) a referral to voters.

— The Concerned Citizens believe PP&R should commit to plans—with specific metrics—for eliminating the major maintenance backlog and for boosting performance before asking voters to approve a new levy. The possibility that Parks may ask to double the levy rate while only maintaining current service levels makes such commitments especially important.

Portland City Council Meeting
Wednesday, November 20, 2024 - 9:30 a.m.
Verbal Testimony

	Agenda Item	Name
1	1007	Suzanne Bishop
2	1007	John Nicholas
3	1007	Stephen Kafoury