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News |

Second Time Around

What the mayor will likely tout in his State of the City Speech.

BY BETH SLOVIC



SAM SAYS: Adams, who's hiring a new arts and culture policy coordinator, will likely push this year for dedicated arts funding.

This Friday marks the second time Mayor Sam Adams will give his "State of the City" address. He'll do so under very different personal circumstances than last year.

In February 2009, Adams was fighting for his political life after admitting weeks earlier he'd lied about a 2005 relationship with then-teenage Beau Breedlove.

Now it appears the mayor is merely battling a persistent flu. As of the end of January, the second recall campaign seeking to force a vote on Adams' political future had raised only \$17,000. Critics now have fewer than 80 days to gather more than 32,000 signatures.

But when Adams speaks before the City Club of Portland on Feb. 5, the problems facing Portland will have changed little in the past 12 months. The economic picture remains glum. The city must trim at least \$15 million, or 4 percent, from its 2011 discretionary budget.

Adams' quest to "make Portland the hub for the global green economy" has brought the city promise of a new headquarters for ReVolt Technology, a European company that makes zinc batteries for electric cars. But the metro area's overall unemployment has increased this year as it has in much of America; in December 2009, the Portland-area unemployment rate stood at 10.6 percent, compared with 8.1 percent a year before.

Even though the city has no direct role in K-12 education, Adams has used the state's Business Energy Tax Credit to buy TriMet passes for most Portland Public Schools high-school students. His effort to cut Portland's high school dropout rate in half by 2013 has so far produced no measurable results.

Here's what you should expect to hear Adams say he's going to do about all that in his City Club address:

■ Education

Adams' plan for his first 100 days included an ambitious announcement that he would seek scholarships to community colleges or four-year universities for 2,500 high-school students. Those 100 days came and went. But Adams has reignited talks about an endowment fund that could help teenagers get that money. Depending on the program's scope, finding money for it will either be a Herculean task or a fool's errand. Adams spokesman Roy Kaufmann didn't return calls seeking comment.

■ Job creation

As of the most recent numbers in August, the city had received \$21 million in federal stimulus money. Under one state formula, that translates to about 300 jobs. But federal rules don't require city officials to determine if those are new jobs or saved jobs.

Separately last year, Adams pushed a \$500 million local "stimulus" project that called for fast-tracking local construction projects with funds the city already had earmarked. An analysis by *The Oregonian* last month showed the city awarded "contracts worth less than half that goal." There is one new high-profile construction project Adams can tout: the rebuilding of PGE Park, which is estimated to generate 200 construction jobs.

■ Sustainability

Adams returned last week from Washington, D.C., without any big checks for the proposed \$120 million Oregon Sustainability Center. But he will most certainly claim to have primed the pump. As an example, he will probably highlight the Clean Energy Works Program, which started in 2009 with \$1.1 million in federal stimulus to spend locally on helping homeowners make their houses more energy efficient.

Erin Flynn, the Portland Development Commission's urban development director, says the program is "teed up" for federal funding that will leverage private cash.

Originally Published on

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