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Portland Mayor Sam Adams pushes jobs, education, sustainability in State of the City speech

By Janie Har, The Oregonian

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Ross William Hamilton

Portland Mayor Sam Adams delivers his second State of the City address Friday at the City Club of Portland. He highlighted several new initiatives, from college scholarships to new sidewalks. And he reiterated his love of two-wheeled transportation: "We're Portland. We lead the nation in bicycling, because that's how we roll."

Portland Mayor Sam Adams, delivering his State of the City address Friday, pledged free tuition for some students to attend community college and seed money for small businesses.

He announced both programs as part of his overall vision for the city. Starting a second year in office, Adams focused on familiar themes of jobs, sustainability and education, with details to come on how to pay for the initiatives.

"For Portland, being resilient is about being more self-sufficient, smarter and creative, less wasteful," he said, "even more beautiful in our design and more equitable, and at the same time, stronger and more nimble."

The first time Adams appeared before the **City Club of Portland** to deliver this address, he had just confessed to lying to voters in 2007 about a sexual relationship he had in 2005. This time he made no mention of the scandal -- although he was asked about it afterward, unlike last year.

In his 45-minute speech, Adams referred to bicyclists, urban gardeners, people who lack proper sidewalks and people of color.

He announced the creation of a \$33 million development fund that will funnel federal stimulus money into sustainability projects.

Adams on sustainability:

He also pledged \$16 million for new sidewalks in east, North, Northeast and Southwest Portland -- but he warned that a possible citizen initiative could take away that money.

Adams on the economy:

"I had hoped to announce we could do that starting this summer," he said after the speech. "But now I'm sad to say we're going to have to delay until we figure out" whether tax opponents get the initiative on a ballot.

Adams talked up a curbside composting program to start in four neighborhoods this year. As of Friday, the **Bureau of Planning and Sustainability** was working on where to launch it.

The college scholarship fund would take several years to implement but could hit \$2 million a year to send more at-risk kids to **Mt. Hood Community College** or **Portland Community College** for free.

Adams on education:

That could serve about 500 students a year, said Kristin Watkins, PCC's associate vice president of college advancement. Details, however, are not nailed down, she said.

"What we have agreed to is the goal, which is getting more at-risk youth into college," she said.

The city would provide half that money, from various sources, including general fund dollars, Adams said. He said he would earmark \$500,000 in his proposed budget for 2010-11.

The \$500,000 seed fund for small businesses would come from the **Portland Development Commission**, the city's economic arm.

Mayoral spokesman Roy Kaufmann said the point of the State of the City speech is to tell people "this is what's coming down the pike in the next few weeks."

In a 15-minute question-and-answer session, people asked about the council's decision to approve a \$31 million PGE Park stadium remodel for soccer, the 2030 bike plan that didn't pass the council Thursday, and the possibility that the mounted police patrol would be cut from the budget this year.

Adams has asked bureaus to trim up to 4 percent from their budgets for the next year. He did not commit to saving the mounted patrol.

"It sounds like he pushed it off until people show up" and argue for it at budget hearings, said downtown jeweler David Margulis, who asked the question. "He did not give a direct answer."

City Club Treasurer Ted Kaye asked the question not asked last year. Kaye said Adams had countered initial allegations about his conduct with a teenager by saying it was a nasty smear campaign. Then Adams had apologized for lying about that.

"Isn't it appropriate for you to support the recall campaign, in effect have another election now, and let the people either decide not to have you serve as mayor or provide you with a mandate to lead?" Kaye asked.

Adams held to the answer he's given for most of the year. "I've let nothing distract me from my focus, on increasing the graduation rate, increasing the number of family-wage jobs and making the city more sustainable."

Then he used the opportunity to thank his hardworking staff.

Asked to rate the mayor's performance, Kaye said, after a pause:

"I think he did a great job of thanking the people who are helping him do what he's doing for the city."

-- **Janie Har**

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