

Testimony in support for the James Beard Public Market

House Bill 3450

Transportation and Economic Development Committee

Oregon House of Representatives

April 3, 2013

Chair Read and members of the committee,

For the record my name is Ron Paul, I am the Executive Director of the James Beard Public Market. Thank you for hearing HB3450. I have been involved in Oregon's food industry for over 35 years as a chef and restaurateur on the early wave of discovering the local bounty of Oregon Agriculture. After 15 years helming my own restaurants, Ron Paul Charcuterie (including being the first Oregon chef invited to cook at the James Beard House in New York), I entered the political realm as then-Commissioner Charlie Hales' chief of staff and later as the food policy manager for Portland's Office of Sustainable Development. For the past seven years, while serving as Consulting Director for the James Beard Public Market, I have advised businesses and governments on food systems projects throughout the West.

Since 2000, a diverse and dedicated group of community volunteers has studied, analyzed and pursued the vision of creating a vibrant public market. This included farmers, architects, food writers, chefs, hunger relief activists, Farmers Markets board and staff members, and others interested in creating a vibrant central market. Their work led to the creation of The Historic Portland Pubic Market Foundation in 2003, a 501.c.3 non-profit corporation that was granted tax-exempt status in 2005. Many of those volunteers continued as board members including City Commissioner Dan Saltzman, now-Mayor Charlie Hales, finance advisor David Chen, chef Greg Higgins, retired farmer Marcus Simantel, Deborah Kane, now with the US Dept. of Agriculture, public relations principal Wendy Lane, former Central City Concern and State Mental Health Director Richard Harris, and many others. In 2008, the Market's board successfully negotiated the exclusive and perpetual rights with the New York-based James Beard Foundation to name the Market in Beard's honor.

From 2008-2011, the Market's board work worked tirelessly to secure a permanent site. In partnership with Melvin Mark Development Company the Market prevailed in Multnomah County's Request for Proposals to purchase the West Morrison Bridgehead site. The final agreement, signed in December of last year, allows the Market three years to complete planning and to raise the necessary funds to construct the Market without long-term debt obligations serviced by the Market's merchant vendors. Having non-profit status without dividends to shareholders, and

ensuring that the Market opens debt free, will allow for the most diverse group of vendors to compete on a level basis. This is how successful public markets ensure that rents are stable and realistic, especially for ethnic and immigrant entrepreneurs. This is a key factor to insure improved equity and access to healthy local foods through a diverse vendor and, in turn, shopping base.

Improving the performance of Oregon-owned food and agriculture businesses is the principal reason for creating the James Beard Public Market. ECONWest estimated an increase of at least \$22 million in annual sales of local food—at margins that are superior to those selling through commodity exchanges—and at least 247 new jobs created within the Market; even more important are the more than 101 jobs in the state’s rural areas in support of these increased sales. Without even using a standard multiplier for the economic impact, it is clear that the Market will have a significant role in the state’s food economy.

Education and public health are other key elements in the Market’s design. Planning is underway for a comprehensive program to bring children and grandparents together in an education kitchen to learn the history of where their food comes and their culturally appropriate foodways that now border on extinction. The nation’s Fast Food culture has exacted a toll on public health in many ways and the James Beard Public Market understands the critical role it will play in countering that trend.

During the past decade the Market successfully raised private funding from individuals, corporations, foundations, and the federal departments of Agriculture and Housing and Urban Development, among others. In addition, the Market has been the beneficiary of tens of thousands of dollars in *pro bono* architectural, engineering, legal, accounting and other professional services.

HB 3450 will contribute to the funding for the next essential steps in the Market’s development. Since so few public markets have been built in North America during the past century there is no reliable formula for determining the square foot costs. The Market must have accurate schematic design and preliminary engineering that will allow for realistic cost estimates. Without these essential tools, robust private fund raising cannot proceed at the pace necessary to meet out three-year deadline.

I look forward to answering your questions during the hearing.

Respectfully submitted,

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