

Portland Housing Bureau

The following questions were asked during the bureau's budget work session. Responses are included in the attached packet.

1. Can you provide comparable homeless and housing data from other cities?
2. Please provide answers to Don Wood's (citizen advisor) questions that were emailed earlier in the week.
3. Identify models for employment rate-adjusted rates of homelessness.
4. What is the capacity for expanding women's shelters?
5. How might the HUD seismic requirements for public housing impact the City's public housing portfolio? (*note: question was originally asked of PBEM during Emergency Preparedness work session*)

Portland Housing Bureau

1. Can you provide comparable homeless and housing data from other cities?

This table, http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/a18b62e5f015e9a9b8_pdm6iy33d.pdf, compiled by the National Alliance to End Homelessness, compares rates of homelessness among the 100 most populated U.S. cities in 2011.

2. Please provide answers to Don Wood's (citizen advisor) questions that were emailed earlier in the week.

Don Wood – Questions for Housing 2014:

- a. Your budget report begins by stating that the most significant issue facing the Housing Bureau is declining revenues but your proposal asks for additional staffing. Why would you propose an increase in staffing when revenues are declining?

The Bureau reduced staffing in both FY 2010-11 and FY 2011-12 (going from 75 FTE to 54.90 FTE) to address staffing appropriately for declining revenue. The Bureau was awarded a HUD Continuum of Care planning grant during FY 2013-14 to address new grant management, monitoring and data requirements for the Continuum of Care funding received by the City, County, and several local not-for-profit agencies. This planning grant funds two limited duration positions (bringing the bureau to 56.90 FTE for FY 2014-15). As limited duration positions, if the grant funding ends, the Bureau can eliminate the positions.

- b. I always like to look at Organizational Charts. This year org. charts were not included in the provided notebook so I went online to review the housing bureau chart. With approximately 57 employees, the housing bureau has an assistant director and yet bureaus that are multiple times larger (transportation, water, OMF, and others) do not have an asst. director. Why would such a small bureau need and asst. director?

At the Portland Housing Bureau, 94% of the Asst. Director's job is to manage all of the delivery functions of the bureau – homeless programs, homeownership programs, asset management and development. The position is similar to a COO in other organizations. A small percentage of the job is acting in the stead of the Director, although the Asst. Director is expected to have a Bureau-wide view.

- c. I went online and expected to see all of the projects in which the housing bureau was participating and/or going to participate. First, it was difficult to understand and, second, I expected to be able to see each individual project with details such a

total expenses, cost per square foot, was it over budget, was it on time, etc. I could not find any such data so I could not compare the cities costs to the current market costs. Shouldn't the taxpayers who actually fund the cost be able to go to your website and look at details behind every project to ensure that it is being managed properly and within the ranges of market costs? I am concerned that the failure of the total transparency contributes to a lack of confidence even if it is not warranted?

We report some data you requested online but we agree that it could be more clear and transparent. We are in the process of redesigning our dashboard to improve transparency and for the public to be able to drill down for more detail from there. We will use your suggestions as we refine what data is valuable to include. Meanwhile, you can find dashboard data here: <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/phb/57417>. You can find quarterly and annual reports about single- and multi-family investments and loan servicing here: <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/phb/60307>. You can find fact sheets about some of our largest projects (Bud Clark Commons, Gray's Landing, the 11X13 Preservation Project) here: <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/phb/60717>.

- d. Starting on page 5 under the heading "decision package) there are requests for additional sums related to "vulnerable populations, homelessness, emergency preparedness, youth, title IX, and neighborhood investment. I divided the requests by the number of people being helped and found that number quite high in some cases. I then looked for some data that would support your request and found none. My first conclusion is that this is someone's guess; there is a need for concrete data showing the number needing helped and how they are going to be helped and exactly how the money will be spent.

Clarification:

- How do these costs compare to past programs that provided the same type support and were successful?
- How do the costs compare with the other cities trying to provide the same service?

The costs for Decision Packages were based on existing programs serving similar clients. In some cases, there is not a direct 1:1 (client: dollar) formula. For example, Decision Package #3 is expected to increase shelter capacity for 135 individuals and expand 24/7 operations for 211. While 211 will serve hundreds of additional callers with this expanded capacity, we didn't include a proposed figure in the package.

Decision Package #1, "Permanent Housing & Access for Vulnerable Populations," is based on existing street outreach/housing placement programs that PHB funds to house chronically homeless households. These are individuals, couples or families where at least one member has a permanent disabling condition and the household has experienced extended (a year or more) or repeat (four times in the last three years) periods of

homelessness. Most of the households that are chronically homeless don't have sustaining incomes at entry and the cost to house them and connect them to ongoing services is typically \$5,000/household in the first year. This is why we estimated that 250 individuals (approx. 200 households) would receive services.

Based on conversations with colleagues in other cities, we know that the programs we fund are very cost effective. Direct comparisons are challenging because every community has different situations, opportunities, and leveraged support. For example, a shelter bed in New York may cost more due to higher rents than Portland and may come with a different level of services and intended outcomes than those we fund. We compare costs within our community to ensure that our investments are cost effective.

Fair Housing and Title IX - request \$100,000

The fair housing projects will assist over 960 individuals at a cost of \$104 per individual. The program includes, in part, the walk-in clinic serving 360 clients, and time intensive follow up with 600 hotline participants.

Community Alliance of Tenants operated a similar letter writing self advocacy support program for 11 years with a track record of 80% measured by retention or reasonable accommodations made. PHB plans to apply this model to a walk-in clinic. We evaluate the cost effectiveness of this program by comparing the cost of hiring an attorney at a rate of \$150 (or more) per hour to the cost of employing an advocate at approximately \$25 per hour.

Municipalities in California offer a wide array of legal services, including advice and advocates, because attorney fees applied to every legal issue can be cost prohibitive. We know in Portland that there is also a need to make a better match between the service user and the service provider to preserve very limited legal aid resources. As an example, our current legal aid resources can only serve 50 to 70 clients per year. We have limited that assistance to fair housing issues, but even some of those fair housing cases could be resolved through a less expensive mediation model.

The requested \$25,000 in translation costs are based on the current language services contract between the City and Language Fusion. We plan to create a translation fund because current subrecipient contractors are under an unfunded mandate to provide language-specific outreach.

- e. How much does the Housing Bureau spending on the homeless each year and do you have any data that would show how the taxpayers are willing to spend? I have been told that no one in the city tracks this expenditure but that a back of the napkin calculation (excluding police and fire) suggests that the city spends about \$40,000

per homeless individual. Using a figure of 1,895 as the homeless number, that amounts to approximately \$76,000,000. Since every bureau has its own analysts, there are 12-13 employees in the budget office, and OMF has 645 employees, shouldn't the city produce consolidated reports showing how much the city spends on such things as the homeless, affordable housing, domestic violence, not for profit support, etc, so that the taxpayer has total transparency?

PHB has a Homeless Services budget (funds contracted with providers) of \$14.7 million for FY 13-14 Revised, and \$14.7 million for the FY 14-15 Request. Last year, with City (\$12.3M) and other leveraged funds, the programs PHB supports helped 11,687 children and their parents, unaccompanied youth, veterans and disabled men and women – preventing and ending their homelessness, supporting their transition to greater housing stability and enabling them to secure permanent homes. This averaged \$1,052/person.

3. Identify models for employment rate-adjusted rates of homelessness.

This article provides a great summary by Richard Florida about correlations between homelessness and crime, weather, unemployment rates and other economic conditions. <http://www.theatlanticcities.com/housing/2012/03/homelessness-us-cities/1352/>
According to the article:

“As for economic conditions, our findings were mixed. The main economic factor that plays a role in homelessness is unemployment (with a correlation of .36). But we found no correlation between homelessness and productivity, income, human capital, poverty, or inequality, and just a weak positive correlation between homelessness and wages.

Unsurprisingly, one of the strongest correlations of all was between warm winters and homelessness. The correlation between homelessness and mean January temperature is .47, the highest of any in our analysis.”

4. What is the capacity for expanding women's shelters?

PHB doesn't currently have plans to expand women's shelter. However, we will continue to invest in programs that help prevent eviction for low income women at-risk of homelessness, or move from the streets or shelters back into housing. This year, a special appropriation of \$300K helped move more than 100 women out of homelessness in its first five months.

5. How might the HUD seismic requirements for public housing impact the City's public housing portfolio?

PHB confirmed that HUD does not have seismic requirements separate from local code.