

The Oregonian

Portland police shooting: Man dead, officer wounded in shootout near Wilson High School

By Maxine Bernstein

A Portland police officer was wounded and a man lay dead in a Wednesday afternoon shootout in a Southwest Portland neighborhood across from Wilson High School.

Witnesses and students from the school heard between five and six gunshots and then dozens of patrol cars racing to the Hillsdale scene, lights flashing and sirens whirring.

Paramedics led away a uniformed school resource officer, his hand bleeding, as homicide detectives arrived, followed by the mayor, Central Precinct's commander, a chief deputy district attorney, deputy city attorney, the police union president and later the police chief.

The officer-involved shooting was the first in Portland since last March.

The injury to the Officer John M. Romero, an eight-year bureau member who serves as school resource officer for Wilson High and its feeder schools, wasn't life-threatening and he was taken to OHSU Hospital for treatment, police said. He was released from the hospital between 7 and 8 p.m. Wednesday, a hospital spokeswoman said.

The suspect shot and killed by the officer collapsed on Southwest Cheltenham Street, his head in the street and his legs on the west sidewalk, witnesses said. Police found a gun beside him.

"There was an exchange of gunfire, and the officer was shot," Police Chief Mike Reese said. "Our officers were here to protect our kids. It's obviously shocking when an event like this happens near any school."

Romero was among a group of police from Central Precinct and the bureau's Youth Services division who had been conducting extra patrols in Southwest Portland on the lookout for a suspicious green van following schoolkids or approaching them and slowing down over the past few days. The Police Bureau distributed a flier at Central Precinct's roll call Wednesday morning on the van, with a license plate described as similar to the suspect vehicle's.

The chief said police don't know if the dead man is the suspect they were searching for in recent days.

The shootout unfolded as police responded to a call at 3:53 p.m. of a suspicious vehicle parked near the Hillsdale library branch on Southwest Dewitt Street.

Bryce Canda, 16, and his dad, John Canda, were walking back to their parked car on Southwest Cheltenham Street, after having lunch at the Hillsdale Subway. As they walked north on Cheltenham, they saw a man walking toward them, followed by a uniformed Portland police officer who had turned the corner from Southwest Dewitt Street onto Cheltenham.

The officer was yelling at the man, described as in his 30s, to stop and take his hands out of his pockets, the younger Canda said.

The man sat down on what looked like a bench or concrete ledge outside a martial arts gym and "still had his hands in his pocket," Bryce Canda said.

"The man stood back up and the officer fired at him" as the man appeared to take his hands out of his pocket and was holding something, Bryce Canda said. The man had a gun, he said.

The officer and the man were standing about 15 feet apart, he said.

"Me and my dad just ducked," he said, pointing to a parked car they crouched behind.

"I just didn't want to get hit with a bullet," he said.

The teen said he heard five to six shots.

John Canda said he saw a uniformed officer appear about 15 to 20 feet behind the man and shout: "Stop right there, hold it right there!"

"The man stopped and sat down on a retaining wall," near the Westside Academy of Kung Fu on the west side sidewalk, said the elder Canda, former head of the city's Office of Violence Prevention and a longtime gang outreach worker in Portland.

"The guy stood up and turned toward the officer, and that's when we saw the officer fire shots," John Canda said. "We ducked behind a red car. We were right in the line of fire."

John Canda said he hadn't seen the man carrying anything until he saw him lying dead. A gun was beside his body, he said.

"The officer was still standing. He was functional," said John Canda. Canda said he didn't realize the officer had been shot until later. He said he couldn't tell who had fired the first shots. "It was instantaneous. It sound like it was all together."

He said he heard the officer shout into his police radio, "Shots fired! Shots fired! Suspect down!" and within seconds heard police sirens swarming the area.

Canda said he and his son and family were in the area because his father-in-law, who was at the nearby Hopewell hospice house, had passed away Wednesday morning. He and his son had just stepped away to grab something to eat, he said. John Canda said he has witnessed a gang-related shooting in the late 90s, "but my son has only heard the stories. I was worried about him."

Bruce Margetich said he was at the corner of Dewitt and Cheltenham when he heard five gunshots.

"I didn't know what to do," Margetich said. He later saw an officer being walked away by paramedics, his arm bleeding, he said.

At the RE/MAX store at the corner of Cheltenham and Capitol Highway, sales representative Lynne Cohen said, "Everyone inside was saying, 'Lock the doors! Lock the doors!'"

Motorists stuck in traffic rolled down their windows to ask what was going on and seemed surprised to hear a shooting had occurred in what's typically a quiet neighborhood.

Wilson High students couldn't help but notice the chaotic scene and mob of police.

Ian Sloan and fellow Wilson High theater cast members were outside after school reading the script for "A Midsummer's Night Dream" when their acting teacher suddenly ran out and summoned them into the school.

The teacher was yelling, "Everyone inside! There's been an emergency!"

They were led to the drama room and locked the door. "It was pretty scary," Sloan said. "To have it happen right near you."

Wilson High varsity baseball players Perry Taylor and Alec MacDonald-Factor were at practice on the school field when they heard the shooting.

"We heard five gunshots ... it didn't register at first," Taylor said. "Then we heard police cars coming in from all over."

Chief Reese had been in Eugene attending his daughter's Wilson High volleyball playoffs game. The game had just ended when Reese was inundated with calls, texts and pages from the Police Bureau. He said he drove back to Portland to get to the scene, but not with his lights or siren on.

"Obviously, for me, one of the most important things I can do as chief is be here," Reese said. "These are very difficult events for all of us."

Portland's last police shooting occurred March 4, 2013, when police fatally shot Santiago, who ambushed them atop a Lloyd District parking garage.

Portland police shooting: Man shot and killed was wanted in a Clackamas County kidnapping

By Maxine Bernstein

The man shot and killed by a Portland police officer Wednesday afternoon in Southwest Portland was wanted for an alleged kidnapping in Clackamas County earlier this year and had an extensive criminal record.

Portland police did not release the man's identity, pending an autopsy to be conducted later Thursday.

But sources said that Portland police identified the man fatally shot on Southwest Cheltenham Street through the use of a mobile fingerprint device.

Clackamas County sheriff's deputies and the U.S. Marshal's Service had alerted law enforcement in the metropolitan Portland region and beyond to be on the lookout for the man after he was suspected to have been involved in a stranger-to-stranger pistol-whipping and kidnapping of a woman working alone at an Oak Grove-area tanning salon in January. The woman, who was bound with duct tape, was able to jump from the suspect's purple minivan and get away, police said.

The 49-year-old man had prior bank robbery and firearm convictions, and was considered to be armed and dangerous, according to Clackamas County law enforcement.

Just a day before the Southwest Portland shooting, a federal indictment was issued for the man's arrest in connection with three alleged bank robberies - two in Milwaukie and one in Portland from November and December 2013, according to federal court records.

The man has in the past lived in Northeast Portland, Milwaukie, Oak Grove, Estacada and Molalla.

The medical examiner's office is scheduled to conduct an autopsy on the suspect Thursday.

Portland police Officer John Romero, who was wounded in the shooting, was treated at OHSU Hospital Wednesday and released between 7 and 8 p.m. Wednesday, a hospital spokeswoman said. He's been placed on administrative leave, a routine step taken as Portland homicide detectives investigate the shooting.

Romero, who joined the bureau in March 2006, serves as the school resource officer for Wilson High School and its feeder schools, and often attends local neighborhood meetings.

He's well-known in the Southwest Portland community. Several Wilson High School students who lingered near the scene of the shooting Wednesday said they knew Romero, called him "cool," and said he had recently judged a school talent show. He also plays trumpet, and was featured in the Police Bureau's "Play It Forward," campaign last spring with The Snowman Foundation, an effort to encourage used musical instruments to be donated to schools and students in need.

The shooting occurred about 4 p.m. after Portland police were called to check out a suspicious vehicle near the Hillsdale library branch. Witnesses said they saw an officer turn the corner from Southwest Dewitt Street onto Cheltenham Street, calling out to a man walking ahead of him to stop and take his hands out of his pocket.

The man, witnesses said, sat down on a concrete ledge on the west sidewalk of Cheltenham Street, with his hands still in his pocket. Then, the man suddenly stood up and turned toward the officer, who was about 15 feet away, according to Bryce Canda, 16 and his father John Canda, two witnesses.

The man looked like he was taking his hands out of his pocket and holding something, and the officer fired shots, the Candas said.

The man collapsed, his head in the street and legs on the sidewalk. He was pronounced dead at the scene. The officer was still standing, but seen with blood on his hand, and was led away by paramedics, witnesses said.

Romero was among several Central Precinct and Youth Services officers doing extra patrols Wednesday after police had received multiple reports in the last few days of a suspicious van driver following school kids or slowing down alongside students as they walked to or from school in the areas of Robert Gray Middle School and Wilson High School.

Chief Mike Reese Wednesday night said police did not know if the man shot and killed by police was the motorist who officers had been looking for in response to student complaints.

Steve Novick, Nick Fish tout \$250,000 'innovation' grant, with hopes of coordinating road, utility work: Portland City Hall Roundup

By Andrew Theen

Portland Commissioner Steve Novick is excited.

"I'm frankly jumping up and down, turning cartwheels excited," Novick said during City Council on Wednesday.

What has Novick so excited?

The Portland City Council authorized a \$250,000 grant Wednesday that Novick, Commissioner Nick Fish, and city transportation officials say could ultimately save taxpayer money and improve coordination between the city and public and private utilities.

What's the end result for taxpayers? The thought -- perhaps neighborhood streets and arterials won't be torn up in rapid succession for utility work, often several times in the same year.

The Portland Bureau of Transportation says they've heard the complaints from the public, and they're not off base.

"The public tells us it's a problem," said Dylan Rivera, PBOT spokesman. "They're tired of seeing repeated disruptions of the same stretch of roadway over and over in the space of weeks and months."

Those disruptions could be for any number of projects: road paving, an apartment complex paying for sidewalk construction, an electric utility upgrading infrastructure, etc.

Rivera said it's not your imagination.

Multiple "cuts" into the same roadway could happen several times in a given year, especially if the road is in good or poor condition. Rivera said PBOT could issue three permits in a city block allowing cuts into a road anytime during a 12-month period. Rivera said, though, the city doesn't currently have a method to know when those projects fall. That prevents the city from coordinating construction work and saving money and headaches.

PBOT Director Leah Treat proposed the utility coordination study, saying that a similar program in Chicago, where Treat also served as a transportation official, saved that city millions of dollars.

It could take six months to a year before Portland has an idea of possible next steps, even then, the system will cost an as yet unknown amount of money to implement.

Last year, Portland Mayor Charlie Hales asked bureaus for submissions as part of a \$1 million innovation fund challenge. PBOT's request was one of seven approved by City Council on Wednesday.

The \$250,000 will allow Portland to study how to best implement an online database that would connect all the various public and private utilities that do work in the public right of way.

The system would "alert the various agencies of potential conflicts and/or opportunities for coordination," according to a press release. Rivera said that could allow city officials to have one disruption in one week, rather than several disruptions stretching across multiple months.

Major utilities that do work in the city include Portland General Electric, PacifiCorp, Northwest Natural, Comcast and CenturyLink.

Novick and Fish, who oversees the Water Bureau and Bureau of Environmental Services (think sewer projects in Overlook and other neighborhoods), are already talking to the utility companies.

Rivera said Northeast Skidmore Street in the Sabin neighborhood provides an example of where better coordination could've pay dividends. The city used FOG seal to rehab the roadway, then a few months later, a utility came in and tore up some of the same recently revamped roadway.

Rivera said that creates a "perception of lack of coordination."

The takeaway, River said: fewer cuts into the city's already beleaguered road network could pay off. "Our hunch is that will leave our roads in better condition."

The Portland Tribune

Mayor Hales' push for innovation at City Hall gets council nod

By Steve Law

As Mayor Charlie Hales puts it, local government bureaucrats often are afraid to take risks by doing things differently, in contrast to their private sector counterparts.

To spur more creative thinking at City Hall, Hales put \$1 million into his first city budget for an Innovation Fund, and invited city bureau managers to submit ideas to spend a piece of the money.

On Wednesday, the Portland City Council approved the first six projects to share that money, chosen from among 24 put forth by city managers and selected by a five-person Innovation Task Force empaneled by Hales.

The winners:

- Portland Fire & Rescue: \$108,000 to train citizens in CPR and buy PulsePoint, a smartphone app that notifies citizen volunteers that a cardiac arrest has occurred near them, and alerts them to the nearest defibrillator.
- Revenue Bureau: \$295,000 to set up direct exchange of taxpayer information with the IRS, making it easier to file the Portland Business License Tax, Multnomah County Business Income Tax and the new Arts Tax forms. The city figures it could raise general fund revenues by \$780,000 to \$2.3 million a year,

plus more for Multnomah County and the Arts Tax, by identifying taxpayers who should have filed taxes or filed them incorrectly.

- Portland Bureau of Transportation: \$250,000 to set up a web-based app to track and map all city agencies' capital improvement and maintenance plans. The city hopes to enlist cooperation of private utilities, so when one entity needs to tear up a street, for example, it could be coordinated better with others. PBOT Director Leah Treat brought the idea from her former job in Chicago. "She said the city saves million of dollars," said City Commissioner Steve Novick, "and I have no doubt that the private utilities did as well."

- Portland Housing Bureau: \$48,000 to develop software to share data such as income eligibility and demographics between bureau and housing providers.

- Portland Development Commission: \$80,000 to create an Early Adopter program, so city bureaus can be a "living laboratory" and early adopter of locally created tech products and services. PDC promised to match that amount of money.

- Bureau of Planning and Sustainability: \$90,000 to buy new detailed maps of landslide risks, which are produced by Light Detecting and Ranging (LiDAR) data, an airplane-based sensor using infrared laser light.

Tom Simpson, a member of the Innovation Task Force and government affairs director for Standard Insurance, said the proposals submitted by bureau managers have the potential to cut city costs and improve services. "However, very few of the proposals were truly innovative in nature," Simpson said.

Some of the proposals made so much sense that task force members wondered why city bureaus weren't just enacting them, he said. "They have the capacity and the resources and they should just do it."

Commissioner Amanda Fritz questioned spending money for the CPR/PulsePoint project. "Why is this a priority item for us to spend \$100,000 on?" she asked.

Kayse Jama, the executive director of the Center for Intercultural Organizing and another Innovation Task Force member, said he liked that proposal because it combines new infrastructure and mobilizing citizen volunteers in a new way.

Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue has been using the app, reportedly resulting in three or four successful citizen interventions so far to aid people undergoing cardiac arrest. The city hopes that Gresham will adopt the system next.

Fritz also questioned a seventh proposal on the list submitted to the council, a \$35,000 project to develop a paid parking system using variable pricing in the South Waterfront area. Fritz wondered why the city chose one of its most affluent neighborhoods to test that new way of paying for parking, rather than other neighborhoods.

Hales explained that South Waterfront is the most viable place where the concept might prove useful to maximize city revenues.

But Hales also acknowledged that he added that item to the list "at the last minute," and it was the only one of the list that hadn't won the blessing of the Innovation Task Force. (That may explain why the mayor's staff balked at releasing the task force recommendations when requested twice by the Portland Tribune.)

Hales agreed to pull the item from the list, and bring it back to the council later for consideration.

The six approved projects come close to totaling \$1 million, which Simpson said was coincidental.

It's not clear if the Innovation Fund has enough support to become an annual item funded by the city. But Hales, who called the program's rollout an "imperfect success," hopes it will.

In the spectrum of ideas between innovative and same-old, same-old, Hales said, “there’s a place in-between which may be called government working smarter,” he said. “We want to tell managers we want you to try something new.”

The Mercury

You Can't Unhurt a Chief's Feelings

Tension Erupts Between City Council and Police Bureau Over City Report

By Denis C. Theriault

POLICE CHIEF Mike Reese wasn't happy when it came time for two city commissioners to wrap up a study calling for deep cuts to the police command staff—part of a wonkish effort to true up Portland's supervisor/employee ratios and potentially save up to \$2.5 million.

The controversial report, first posted by the Mercury on March 5, found more than 33 police supervisors with three or fewer underlings. And it also gave the bureau a still-pending April 1 deadline to better justify those arrangements—something other bureaus had already done.

Worse, it took a nudge from the police commissioner, Mayor Charlie Hales, for the bureau to cooperate even as much as it did.

"We got to a point where we were supposed to have issued the report a long time ago," says Commissioner Steve Novick, who presided over the report along with Commissioner Nick Fish. "We concluded we couldn't wait any longer."

But in a memo delivered to Novick and Fish this month, Reese refused to take his lumps. And in the process, the chief revealed some of the deep political undertones—tension between the council and mayor's office, and also between the council and police bureau—silently throbbing under what was supposed to be a bloodless budget exercise.

Following through with the report's harshest recommendation—eliminating 23 command-level positions and reassigning six others—would "severely impact accountability and oversight of bureau operations." It would also run, Reese wrote, "directly counter" to a reform deal in place between the cops and the US Department of Justice.

Reese harrumphed, instead, that the bureau should be allowed to finish its own internal staffing study, which he optimistically suggested would be completed by the end of 2014.

The police chief's chilly reaction wasn't entirely unforeseen—not after a year that's seen an unusual strain in the bureau's relationship with city hall.

The bureau, for the first time in memory, wasn't spared steep budget cuts last year. The drumbeat of headlines over federal reform has sapped morale. Hales' office is in the midst of a bid to decertify the union that represents the bureau's command staff.

And commissioners, especially Novick, have been willing to question the bureau on policy and spending. Novick has been famously loud about cutting command positions and other specialty squads, like the bureau's vice unit and cherished mounted patrol. Having Fish along on this particular effort, however, suggests that this is more than another shout through Novick's bullhorn.

"It may be that they're feeling picked on," Novick says. "But they went through the same process everyone else did. They just provided a different level of information."

The vigor and tone of Reese's response dropped jaws in city hall all the same. Most curious was that it seemed to be tacitly endorsed by Hales' office. Hales' spokesman, Dana Haynes, personally sent out Reese's statement, alongside comments that thanked the chief for his thoughtful response.

"Obviously, more debate is called for in regard to the Portland Police Bureau and other bureaus as well," the mayor's office said.

City sources say they were especially troubled by inconsistent messages from within the mayor's office and chalked the statement up to another instance of that pattern playing out. Some of the sensitivity involved the timing of Hales' efforts to break up the Portland Police Commanding Officers Association (PPCOA).

Messages left with the PPCOA's president, Captain Bryan Parman, were not returned as of press time.

Novick wouldn't comment on Hales' remarks. But he did confirm meeting personally with Hales "a couple of weeks ago" and telling him that the report was going to be harsh. He also confirmed that Hales' office, at one point, offered a "cosmetic" wording change meant to keep the cops' feelings from growing even more tender.

"The mayor said he understood we needed to finish the process," Novick says. "He did not ask us not to do it. He understood what the report was going to say and he didn't object."

Haynes, when asked to comment, said he didn't immediately know whether the final report reflected Hales' input or not.

"He was pleased the two commissioners took on this issue," Haynes says. "As for actual details, that's going to head into the annual budget dance."

The report's examination of the city's workforce, politics aside, raises several interesting questions. It turned up dozens of "bosses"—mostly in the police bureau, but also in the city's sewer and water utilities—who only boss around three or fewer employees. And, in some cases, one or none.

As part of this examination, the city is looking at how it defines its job titles and their responsibilities. In some cases, bureaus have given supervisor status to valued employees as a way of bumping pay and keeping them from fleeing to other cities or the private sector.

Novick's still hoping the cops pony up the detailed information he and Fish have called for—sending a letter to Reese, obtained by the Mercury, making his wishes very clear. He's still puzzled, for example, why precinct commanders need a captain between themselves and the lieutenants they oversee. Or why both a captain and a lieutenant run certain specialty units.

"To the extent that they have lieutenants and captains who clearly are not supervisors," he said, "we need to change the classifications."

Meanwhile, no one's holding their breath about the bureau's promise of an independent staffing review. The last time the bureau did something similar—contemplating a major shakeup in patrol shifts in 2011, also to save money—it went nowhere. How come?

Because, according to the Oregonian, Reese thought it would hurt "morale."

Suspect Killed, Cop Injured in First Police Shooting in More than a Year

By Denis C. Theriault

Police officials have confirmed that a shootout outside Wilson High School in Hillsdale this afternoon left a suspect dead and a police officer injured—ending the city's second-longest stretch without a police

shooting in more than 20 years. The shooting may be tied to police warnings earlier today about a suspicious brown van that had tailed students in the area.

Today, March 12, 2014, around 4 pm, Portland Police Youth Services officers and Central Precinct officers were responding to the area of Wilson High School on reports of a suspicious vehicle. Officers arrived in the area and a confrontation ensued. The investigation is still ongoing but one officer suffered non-life-threatening wounds and the suspect was shot and killed.

More updates will follow.

Update 8 PM: The bureau released another statement following a short press conference by Police Chief Mike Reese. It explicitly ties the shooting to stepped-up patrols for the suspicious vehicle, but doesn't say whether the man who was shot is the same person police were looking for.

The bureau did say—notably early in the process—that a firearm was recovered and that the suspect definitively shot the officer who was injured. But it's still not clear, at least based on my reading of statements and reports, whether the officer who shot and killed the man is the same officer who was injured.

The Oregonian talked to John Canda, the city's youth violence outreach coordinator, and his son, Bryce, who happened to be on scene. And though they said they saw an officer shoot a man who had pulled his hands out of his pockets, they didn't say they saw the suspect shoot that officer. Or that the officer was bleeding. The paper said another witness saw "another officer" being led away by paramedics.

Here's the latest statement:

Earlier today we reported that officers from Central Precinct and the Youth Services Division had taken reports of a suspicious male driving a van (see the earlier flash alert) in the area of Wilson High School. In response to these reports officers were providing extra patrol in the area.

At about 4:00 p.m., an officer assigned to this detail was shot and sustained non-life-threatening injuries. The subject who shot the officer was also shot and killed. At this time we do not know if the subject is the suspect from the earlier suspicious person reports.

A firearm was recovered near the subject and the investigation is ongoing.

Portland Police Bureau Detectives responded as did the mayor, the chief, members from the Independent Police Review and the Police Bureau's Internal Affairs Division, the City Attorney's Office, the District Attorney's Office as well as detectives from other police agencies to assist in the investigation. The Portland Police Bureau is committed to transparency and will release additional information as soon as possible. The name of involved officer will not be released for 24-hours to provide time for notification to family.

Original post resumes: Earlier today, an hour or so before the shooting, the police bureau put out a notice that a suspicious brown van had been spotted near Wilson High, and that the driver, a man, had followed students. Cops said they planned to investigate, but that no crimes had been reported yet.

According to KGW, citing a spokesman for the Portland fire bureau, the man the officers confronted was shot in the head. The injured officer was shot in the hand, the station reported, and taken to Oregon Health and Sciences University Hospital.

The Oregonian said "a witness heard an officer yell at a man to take his hands out of his pocket. He then said the officer fire five or six shots at the man and also saw the officer bleeding from the arm." The paper also said the shooting happened at a RE/MAX real estate office, and that "a suspect fired at a police officer."

The last police shooting involving Portland officers was March 4, 2013—when Santiago Cisneros III, a despondent Iraq war veteran, started firing a shotgun at two officers who'd planned to meet atop a parking garage in the Lloyd District. Copwatch says that stretch of time, one year and eight days, marks the city's second-longest stretch without a shooting in the 22 years it's been keeping records.