

## The Oregonian

### Portland Mayor Charlie Hales pushes more money to address homelessness 'crisis,' emergency preparedness in 2014-15 budget proposal

By Andrew Theen

UPDATE: This post was updated with additional context and specific programs.

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales' proposed spending plan for the next budget year includes more money for rental assistance programs, youth shelters and preliminary work on a westside emergency preparedness center, according to a proposal released Thursday.

Hales' budget proposal doesn't include a \$1 million request for additional sidewalks in East Portland, or assurances that 26 Portland firefighters will remain employed once a federal grant expires in July 2015.

While Hales said nobody in City Hall is singing "happy days are here again," this budget cycle is a welcome reprieve from the \$21.5 million shortfall last year and subsequent belt tightening.

"We are mostly holding the line," Hales said.

Hales' budget includes spending preferences for \$9.3 million in new general fund revenue available to the City Council this year. His proposal also assumes that a plan to eliminate two urban renewal districts is approved by City Council, putting millions of dollars of property back on the tax rolls and funneling \$1.5 million to the general fund next year.

Hales said City Council will hold a work session on the urban renewal changes next week.

The general fund, the city's discretionary checkbook filled largely by property taxes and business license fees, pays for parks, police fire and other essential city services.

Portland's general fund revenue is expected to be \$423 million in the next fiscal year, according to city budget officials.

Hales said he did not include Commissioner Steve Novick's request for \$1 million for sidewalks because of the ongoing discussions on whether to impose a street fee to fund safety and maintenance projects. Hales said approving the \$1 million request could give taxpayers "false hope," that City Council could make improvements to the transit network by moving general fund dollars around.

He said city can't make the necessary improvements "without new money."

"I don't want to give people mixed signals," Hales said.

The mayor directed City Council to funnel budget requests into one of three general topic areas: Emergency preparedness, decreasing homelessness and complete neighborhoods.

The City Council will vote on a proposed budget on May 28.

Here are a few highlights from Hales' budget:

#### Emergency Preparedness

The budget includes \$1.2 million in one-time funding to begin design and a master plan for the Jerome F. Sears U.S. Reserve Center to make the facility an emergency operations center for residents on the west side. Hales said "it's a start," but the city must do more to get ready in the event of a disaster.

Money for a new community emergency notification system, some \$100,000 is in the proposal too. The city recently had issues with its current vendor, FirstCall, during an officer involved shooting and subsequent manhunt in Southwest Portland.

## **Housing and Homelessness**

Hales is proposing \$1.25 million in ongoing general fund dollars to increase rental housing for vulnerable Portlanders, serving at least 250 homeless people, under a \$500,000 portion of those dollars. Another \$500,000 is dedicated to restoring youth transitional shelters, targeting 16-25 year old homeless individuals. Another \$250,000 in general fund would go to short term rental assistance programs. Hales said the city is continuing to find programs with proven results, and the city must address the "crisis" of homelessness.

Another \$1 million in one-time general fund cash would go to boosting rental housing options in the city.

## **Local Organizations**

Many of the mayor's proposals were hot topics at a community budget hearing at David Douglas High School last week.

The East Portland Action Plan will likely get its \$300,000 in one-time funding to support the local alliance of neighbors

SUN Schools will receive another \$740,000 in ongoing funding to expand programming

The budget includes a \$140,000 request for the Office of Neighborhood Involvement's community grants program, which was cut during the past budget cycle.

VOZ Workers' Rights Education Center would receive \$30,000 under the mayor's budget. The day laborer center on Northeast Everett Street already won favor at a recent community budget hearing.

## **Tree Code**

The Bureau of Development services will add four inspector positions to help enforce the city's tree code, which Hales said has been in a "twilight zone," where it's been approved by City Council but never enforced. Hales said the budget proposal is a "somewhat cautious step" toward fully implementing the code overseeing tree regulations citywide.

Water and Bureau of Environmental Services

Hales said he told the bureau directors to "question everything" and to submit 2.5 percent operating cost reductions. He said the city is "far from done" in looking at the bureaus' operating costs and at water and sewer rates.

Rate increases for the sewer and stormwater will likely be 4 percent, while water customers' rate increase is expected to be 7 percent. That equates to a \$2.51 monthly increase for sewer and stormwater, and \$1.93 for water, according to the documents.

## **Park Staff**

The budget includes money to convert 20 seasonal Bureau of Parks & Recreation staffers in city recreation centers from seasonal to permanent positions. Hales declined to approve a request to convert an additional 10 seasonal park rangers to full-time status. "I think we need to better clarify where we're going with the park ranger program before we do that," Hales said. He said there are basic management questions to answer regarding the park rangers prior to addressing that request. For example, Hales said: "What will their work be, contrasted with the police bureau?"

## **Southwest Corridor Study**

Hales also backs a \$650,000 request from Novick to further study high-capacity transit along Barbur Boulevard in Southwest Portland. "Yes, there's been an outbreak of opposition in Tigard," Hales said of

the multi-agency Southwest Corridor Plan, "but that doesn't mean that in Portland there's not huge support for continuing the process."

Hales admitted that there's a "dilemma" in pursuing large capital projects while also shopping a potential street fee, but he said the city needs to kick start the long capital planning process now. "The federal government is still a good partner for building out a transportation system on the transit side," Hales said, in contrast to the rapidly diminishing Highway Trust Fund.

"We ought to stay in that game as long as we have a transit agenda here in Portland," Hales said. "That doesn't mean that the rest of the system is not a mess."

## **Portland mayor's proposed public safety budgets don't deliver chiefs' requests**

*By Maxine Bernstein*

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales' proposed public safety budgets did not deliver what the city's fire and police chiefs sought.

Hales did not provide \$250,000 to restore a four-officer traffic enforcement detail on night shift. Instead, the mayor proposed spending \$152,208 for an equity program manager in the Police Bureau who will report to the police chief.

That would add one staff member to the bureau, bringing it to a 1,170-member bureau with a proposed 2014-15 budget of \$158 million.

"Staffing requests for sworn personnel were not approved, pending the bureau-wide service and staffing report due to Council in the fall of 2014," according to a Police Bureau budget fact sheet the mayor's office released Thursday.

The mayor also proposed money in the Police Bureau's budget for several social service programs, including \$658,000 for Hooper Detox, \$330,000 for the detox van known as Chiers, \$247,000 for Janus Youth, \$100,000 for Lifeworks NW and \$50,000 for the Sexual Assault Resource Center.

The mayor made funding for Janus Youth, Lifeworks NOW and the Sexual Assault Resource Center part of the Police Bureau's budget, essentially turning what had been one-time special appropriations into ongoing general fund spending, according to the mayor's office.

For the Portland Fire & Rescue Bureau, the mayor's proposed spending plan did not include money to cover the 26 firefighter positions now funded through a federal grant. That grant is expected to run out in December 2015.

Portland Fire Chief Erin Janssens had asked the council to restore \$2.6 million for the firefighter positions, lost in the 2013-14 budget.

The Portland Fire Fighters Association had urged the mayor to at least fund half, or 13, of the firefighters at \$1.3 million in the 2014-15 fiscal year, which would make it easier to try to restore the full funding for the following year.

"It just puts a big burden on the 2015-16 fiscal year," said Alan Ferschweiler, president of the Portland Fire Fighters Association. "The money was there to fund some of those positions next year."

"It's clear he's looking at trying to find out how to reduce our on-duty staffing," Ferschweiler said of the mayor. "Clearly, he doesn't intend to retain all 26 firefighter positions. When he talks about complete neighborhoods and emergency preparedness for the earthquake, it doesn't do any good to have new emergency operations centers but not enough firefighters available to truly respond to emergencies."

The mayor directed Portland Fire & Rescue "to explore options for additional revenue," while stating the City Council's intent to restore money for at least "a portion of grant-funded firefighter" positions in fiscal 2015-16.

The council, the mayor noted, wants the Fire Bureau to explore additional revenue potential in emergency medical response by studying services provided by the Fire Bureau, the ambulance company American Medical Response and Multnomah County. The study, which will be overseen by the commissioners who supervise fire and emergency management, is expected to be presented to the City Council by Nov. 17.

"Council intends to set aside ongoing General Fund resources to fund any additional needs in Portland Fire & Rescue as recommended by this study," the mayor's budget note said.

Hales called his proposed plan a "stabilization budget." He said the city held off on adding any firefighter positions.

"We've got a big asterisk on what exactly the Fire Bureau will be doing on the biggest part of their work," Hales said, referring to emergency medical calls.

The mayor said he expects the Fire Bureau to be a "different world" two years from now.

The fire chief had sought to restore funding for the bureau's safety chief position (\$167,430); half of the bureau's dive team (\$70,000), which was eliminated in the current budget; and for training of 15 firefighters to serve as paramedics (\$250,000).

"We're at an all-time low for this skill set, which places us at risk to have advanced life support in every neighborhood across the city," the fire chief said.

The mayor's proposed budget did not include money for any of those requests.

## **Portland Parks covers cost of summer fares on TriMet's No. 83 Washington Park bus**

*By Joseph Rose*

Portland Parks and Recreation has picked up the \$70,000 tab for TriMet's popular Line 83 "Washington Park Loop" summer bus line, which starts weekend service on Saturday.

With the sponsorship of Parks and Rec, taking the bus to hiking trails, the Oregon Zoo and other Washington Park attractions will be free, the transit agency said.

"This is one of our favorite bus lines, providing a convenient way to visit many of the places of interest that make Portland such a great place to live and visit," said Shelly Lomax, TriMet's executive director of transportation.

Offering free rides on the Washington Loop bus will not only cut down on traffic jams in the park but give visitors direct access to multiple attractions in the park, Parks and Recreation Director Mike Abbaté.

Abbaté said Washington Park pay-to-park revenues will pay for the service.

The bus line services several popular seasonal destinations, including:

- Oregon Zoo
- Portland Children's Museum
- International Rose Test Garden
- Children's Play Park
- Japanese Garden
- Hoyt Arboretum
- World Forestry Center Discovery Museum

- Vietnam Veterans of Oregon Memorial
- Oregon Holocaust Memorial
- Hiking trails

Line 83 will run about every 20 minutes from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekends, with daily service beginning Memorial Day through Labor Day.

It returns to weekend-only service after Labor Day through October 26. From August 8 through 15, service will be extended for evening concerts being held in the park, as well as on August 15 for a special movie night, TriMet said.

The Washington Park Loop also connects with MAX Blue and Red lines and other bus service in downtown Portland. Riders can catch the No. 83 across from the Providence Park MAX Station or at the elevator for the Washington Park MAX station.

During Portland Timbers matches, the Line 83 will not serve the stop near Providence Park due to street closures.

## **Portland changes home demolition notification policy: If developer plans to split lot, neighbors will know**

*By Melissa Binder*

The Portland Bureau of Development Services instituted a change Wednesday that limits when developers can avoid notifying neighbors about upcoming home demolitions.

The change comes less than five months after The Oregonian reported on neighbors' growing concerns outrage at the number of Portland homes being demolished without warning.

Demolitions require a permit. City code mandates that neighbors be notified before one is issued, and says a permit cannot be issued until 35 days after application. The development bureau requires the property owner to put up a prominent orange sign announcing that the structure will be demolished.

But that doesn't always happen. There's an exception to the rule that developers have used more often than not in recent years. If a property owner applies and pays for a new building permit at the same time as the demolition permit, that notification requirement can be waived.

The new rule limits that exception. Developers can have the delay and notification requirement waived only if they are replacing the to-be-demolished home with one single family home.

That means neighbors will be notified and the demolition will be delayed 35 days any time a developer plans to split the lot and build two or more homes.

Here's the full language of the policy change:

Effective April 30, 2014, the Bureau of Development Services is applying the Demolition Delay Provisions of the City's Building Regulations, Title 24.55.200, to proposals where the application for the demolition of a single family residence is accompanied by an application to replace it with something other than a single family residence. The other exceptions to demolition delay listed in Title 24 still apply to accessory residential structures and residential structures on commercially zoned lots, which are not subject to the demolition delay provisions.

This change was made following the Bureau's review of the demolition delay provisions of Title 24.55.200(K) (1), and the applicable legislative history of the demolition delay code language. It was determined that the exception applicable only to situations in which the replacement residence is a single family residence. Thus, the demolition delay exception only applies when an applicant proposes to demolish one single family

residence and replace it with one, and only one, single family residence on that site. Prior to this change, the Bureau had an administrative practice of applying this demolition delay exception to include projects in which a residential structure was replaced with one or more residential structures.

The Bureau is constantly evaluating the codes that it administers and enforces as it works with customers and the community through the development review and inspection process. During this process BDS may discover, or become aware of, policies and procedures that need to be re-evaluated, are outdated or otherwise need to be revised. When BDS revises previous applications or interpretations of these codes, we strive to inform our customers and the public as quickly as possible, as we are doing in this case.

## The Mercury

### After Mayor's Budget, Fire Union President Assails "the Priorities of City Hall"

*By Denis C. Theriault*

As we reported earlier today, Mayor Charlie Hales faced some difficult decisions when figuring out which of the \$32 million in city spending requests would get the nod in a budget that contemplates, at best, a \$9 million to \$11 million surplus.

Money spent improving crosswalks, say, in East Portland would have amounted to less money for homelessness programs. Just like money spent on a parks bureau maintenance yard or on arts organizations would have meant less for earthquake preparation.

But one decision stood out in particular. Of all the major bureaus, only one received not even a token funding request: the fire bureau. And fire officials had desperately been hoping for some help with a fairly substantial funding request: \$2.6 million to save some 26 firefighters funded, for now, with a federal grant. Avoiding those layoffs would mean avoiding another round of talks about closing fire stations—including in neighborhoods like St. Johns or Sellwood.

Unsurprisingly, that state of affairs has left the president of the Portland Fire Fighters Association, the union that represents firefighters, a touch disappointed. And maybe even a little betrayed.

"The 0 percent really makes me wonder where the priorities of city hall are on emergency responsiveness and the fire bureau," says PFFA President Alan Ferschweiler. "This was a day that could have reaffirmed how important this is for the city. That didn't happen."

How to handle the 26 jobs has been a hot topic in city hall (pun totally intended) ever since last year's budget. Hales had called for layoffs last spring, but relented after the PFFA and fire bureau managed to obtain a temporary grant and put off any potential pain. Ferschweiler had been hoping some better economic news, like a surplus, would ride to the rescue before the grant expired.

The city got its surplus. But Hales says he's still not ready to return the firefighters to the city's ongoing budget. At a press conference where he went through his proposed budget today, Hales wouldn't come out and say he's bracing for layoffs. Instead, he suggested the fire bureau and city's 911 bureau could figure out a way to start charging insurers for their calls—just like ambulance companies do—as part of the adoption of federal healthcare reform. (That may be possible, and it's something the city should look at. But it's also going to be incredibly complex and may take more than a year.)

"We've got a big asterisk on what exactly will the fire bureau be doing in the biggest part of their work," Hales said. "That's why I'm a little untroubled about the danger we're in of 26 positions being on the bubble again in a bureau of 800 people. It matter. But it will be a different world, I suspect, as we get further into these big changes in the medical system."

Ferschweiler called that a "good theory," but also said "there's no mechanism in place." He'd been hoping for 13 positions to be permanently funded this year, with hopes that good news would continue and that there'd be money to bring along the rest next year. He says he was told last week that wasn't going to happen.

Will there be \$2.6 million in new money next year? Probably not, Ferschweiler says. And even if there was, he says, other bureaus would also lay claim to it.

"It's kicking the can down the road," he says. "The mayor was forthright. They have no intention of keeping all 26 positions no matter what."

## **The Portland Business Journal**

### **Hales: Portland's city budget will 'stabilize' during his second full year**

*By Andy Giegerich*

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales has billed his 2014-15 budget as a "stabilization" effort that he says "eradicated last year's massive shortfall."

That deficit reached \$21.5 million, resulting in the loss of 142 full-time equivalent jobs.

In contrast, the city has \$9 million-plus in discretionary funds for the next budget cycle.

"We're in a much stronger position this year," Hales said in a release. "But \$9 million represents only a little more than 2 percent of the city's budget. Jobs are on the rise in Portland. Our economy is growing stronger. Our livability is the envy of the nation. But we can't be satisfied. My budget drives all of these positive trends even further."

Hales proposals yielded \$1.5 by revamping Portland's urban renewal areas, he said.

He wants to spend \$2.25 million on homelessness programs, \$1.27 million on emergency preparedness and nearly \$2 million on neighborhood programs.

### **How well are Portland's city leaders managing employee turnover?**

*By Andy Giegerich*

While the city of Portland doesn't have an abundance of open positions, it nonetheless could better monitor the vacancies it does have.

City Auditor LaVonne Griffin-Valade's audit of vacant positions found that those jobs aren't remaining open for an inordinately long amount of time.

"However, the City could do a better job overall in managing and tracking vacancies," she said in a release.

Griffin-Valade called for Portland's chief administrative officer, city budget director and human resources director to take more actions "to improve transparency and ensure maximum stewardship over limited resources. "

Specifically, they should better track and limit vacancies, report length and costs of vacancies and craft policies to limit those vacancies.