

The Oregonian

Portland City Officials Ask for More Police Positions, Money For Renter Services, Less Graffiti Spending

*By Jessica Floum
January 31, 2018*

In the run-up to creating the city of Portland's budget for the coming year, officials from the city's 27 bureaus submitted budget requests Monday that spell out positions, programs and equipment they would like to add.

They also proposed cuts to their departments' spending to comply with Mayor Ted Wheeler's directive to name which 5 percent they would put on the chopping block for fiscal year 2018-2019 in anticipation of a deficit.

Scroll down to read about some of this year's asks and proposed cuts.

Housing Bureau

Commissioner in charge: Wheeler

The Housing Bureau, whose profile has risen amid the housing crisis, asked for \$800,000 a year to run a new Office of Renter Services. The mayor promised during his campaign to create an office to help mediate disputes between landlords and tenants, but not much has materialized, aside from a name change for what used to be the Office of Landlord-Tenant Affairs.

Bureau officials also asked for \$1.2 million in one-time funding to pay for culturally- and language-specific outreach to inform Portland renters of all backgrounds and languages of the renter protection rule the council adopted in February 2017. According to the budget request many renters of color are unaware of the rule, which requires landlords to pay \$2,900 to \$4,500 to renters they evict without cause or who must move as a result of a rent increase of 10 percent or more.

The bureau also requested \$500,000 in ongoing funding to help vulnerable low-income homeowners stay in their homes. This money would be used to offer home repair grants to homeowners fined for code violations that threaten their ability to stay in their homes. The request said the grants would provide an average \$6,000 worth of home repairs to 83 low-income homes. Bureau leaders predict 80 percent of all homeowners served would be able to stay in their homes at least a year after receiving the repairs.

The housing office proposed contributing \$29 million to the city and county's Joint Office of Homeless Services.

Police Bureau

Commissioner in charge: Wheeler

The Police Bureau requested \$12.3 million in part to pay for 93 new sworn officer positions and nine other positions, new computers for emergency response vehicles, and new training space that complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Of the new positions, 21 are intended to help the bureau create "walking beats" and other community-based policing roles that take officers out of their cars and get them talking to and interacting more with community members.

Portland Parks & Recreation

Commissioner in charge: Amanda Fritz

The parks bureau took advantage of a recent ruling on a lawsuit that accused Portland's Water Bureau of mispending ratepayer funds on non-water related services. A judge ruled in January 2017 that the water bureau could spend ratepayer money on decorative fountains. Now, the parks bureau is suggesting handing off the operational costs of park fountains to the water bureau. That means water bills, not taxes, would pay for the estimated \$620,000 of annual maintenance.

Parks officials also put the Sellwood Community Center, Woodstock Community Center and the Fulton & Hillside Community Centers on the potential chopping block for about \$371,000 in total annual savings.

And they proposed eliminating a \$200,000 annual program to remove invasive species in natural areas.

Fritz made clear in her letter accompanying the budget request that she really really really does not want to cut the parks and recreation bureau's budget.

Bureau of Emergency Communications

Commissioner in charge: Wheeler

The Bureau of Emergency Communications requested \$450,000 from the general fund to replace the 911 recording system. A 2016 report found that more than 18,000 calls to 911 went unanswered and unrecorded after a screening system meant to filter out accidental cell phone calls lost them.

It also requested \$750,000 to buy a new system that would help dispatchers better prioritize responses to medical, fire and police calls.

The bureau also wants to pay a new administrative support professional \$72,000 per year, including benefits, to help with clerical work, data maintenance and call response timekeeping. The bureau knowingly reported false wait times for years, a July report found.

"We must ensure that as we implement a much-needed quality assurance program, that it is focused on the quality of work we're providing not just as individual call-takers and dispatchers, but as a bureau as a whole."

To comply with the mayor's direction, the bureau also suggested cutting 11 positions.

Office of Neighborhood Involvement

Commissioner in charge: Chloe Eudaly

The neighborhood office's proposed cuts involve spreading their workload across other bureaus and organizations. Bureau officials proposed reducing their spending on the city's graffiti abatement program by about \$400,000, suggesting that the police, transportation, parks & recreation and environmental services bureaus also have "critical roles" to play. This program is of particular interest to Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who previously managed the neighborhood office.

The office also suggested ending a \$165,000 10-year contract with Elders in Action so that the bureau can explore working with more diverse groups to meet multicultural and multi-generational needs.

The neighborhood office's biggest request is \$750,000 for public safety, emergency preparedness and community resiliency. City officials are exploring a strategy to unite communities through emergency preparedness.

These budget requests lead off a six-month long budget process, during which the city council holds public work sessions, hears individual commissioners advocate for their bureaus' needs and debates the merits of cuts.

The mayor ultimately submits his proposed budget at the end of April. The council then continues to review and debate that plan and ultimately adopts a finalized form, in June.

Proposing the city's budget is one of two unique powers afforded to the mayor beyond the typical commissioner duties of running bureaus and voting on policy. The other is assigning commissioners the bureaus to run.

The Portland Tribune

City Threatens to Evict Campers from Natural Area

*By KOIN 6 News
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Mayor Ted Wheeler says Village of Hope cannot remain in the Big Four Corners area by the Columbia River Slough.

The city posted these eviction notices at the Village of Hope on Tuesday. Organizers call it the Village of Hope, but city leaders are saying the people living at a homeless camp located on a city-owned piece of land in Northeast Portland have to go away.

On Tuesday, the city posted notices, saying the camp inhabitants have to clear out. The camp is in a natural area by the Columbia River Slough near Northwest Marine Drive and 170th Avenue that is owned by Parks & Recreation.

But for the people there — who have set up tents on raised platforms, a kitchen and other services over the past few days — the village of hope is a chance to build a life somewhere. They said they're tired of being chased from everywhere they camp.

"All we're asking is a place to be where we can get from where we are to where we want to be," one camper known as "Thumper" says. "Like off the streets. (You) can't set up (an) appointment for social security then are forced to move so you are moving and (you) forget about appointments and have to start all over again."

In a written statement, Mayor Ted Wheeler says that rigid structures should not be constructed on public environmentally sensitive lands. But camp supporter Elspeth Tanguay-Koo notes the property is actually zoned industrial.

"The location of the Village is not within an 'environmentally sensitive' public lands property," Tanguay-Koo said in a Tuesday email.

Tanguay-Koo also charged the city has not been maintaining the property, claiming that campers collected 20 garbage bags of litter and refuse while moving in on Sunday.

But city documents say the property was purchased for environmental reason. It is intended as a buffer between the slough and industrial businesses in the area near Portland International Airport.

The camp is in a 165-acre parcel known as Big Four Corners. Some of the final 115 acres were purchased by the Bureau of Environmental Services from Catellus/ProLogis, a distribution company, in the fall of 2005 for \$200,000. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board granted

BES \$150,000 for to restore wetland functions, add streamside vegetation, and improve water quality in the Columbia Slough. The parks bureau, which agreed to own and operate the site as a natural area, contributed another \$40,000. Catellus/ProLogis donated the remaining parcel, valued at over \$208,000.

"Big Four Corners is one of Portland's core habitat areas. It provides important habitat for deer, coyotes, river otter, and a variety of birds and amphibians. More than 175 species of birds use the Columbia Slough Watershed. Water quality benefits include protecting cold water sources to the Slough and providing the opportunity for restoration work to shade the Slough," a BES publication said at the time of the purchase.

The BES publication can be read at www.portlandoregon.gov/bes/index.cfm?&a=129798.

Willamette Week

Seth Woolley Has Appointed Himself the Traffic Cop for Portland's Next Election

*By Rachel Monahan
January 31, 2018*

Filing complaint after complaint against County Commissioner Loretta Smith has earned him mixed reviews.

Seth Woolley sat with his MacBook on the comfy green couch of his Northeast Portland home Jan. 26 and prepared to launch his latest fusillade at city politics.

Woolley, 37, has had a busy winter. In the past two months, he had filed three complaints with state officials, one complaint with Multnomah County, and one lawsuit—all of them alleging violations of Oregon elections law.

Most of the infractions he's spotting are as common as breaking the speed limit. Woolley has accused 83 Oregon candidates, including Secretary of State Dennis Richardson and Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, of failing to disclose which office they were seeking while fundraising.

But it's Woolley's watchdogging of the race to replace Commissioner Dan Saltzman on the Portland City Council—the first open seat on the council in a decade—that may prove most significant.

He has focused a magnifying glass on County Commissioner Loretta Smith's campaign fundraising practices. He is pressuring state and county officials to force Smith to resign her county seat—something he says she should have done months ago, when she announced her intention to run for City Hall.

That's the subject of the complaint Woolley sent from his couch last week: It demanded that the state rule on whether Smith must resign her county job. (State officials have declined to do so, and the county has declined even to investigate the issue.)

"There are a chain of people who should be doing their jobs," he says.

In the absence of that, Woolley has become Portland's self-appointed elections watchdog.

It's a role Woolley first assigned himself in the 2012 mayoral race, when WW raised questions whether then-candidate Charlie Hales met the residence requirements to run. But Woolley has stepped up his activity this cycle.

Woolley's complaints against Smith—and, to a lesser degree, her opponent Stuart Emmons, whom he's also accused of a violation—have received mixed reviews.

Smith and her supporters say he's a persnickety gadfly who has singled out a black woman for scrutiny.

"I always tell my children to assume good intentions," says state Rep. Barbara Smith Warner (D-Portland), who has endorsed Smith and is one of the 83 officials Woolley has complained about. "This complaint is all about assuming bad intentions about the innocuous stuff. I don't entirely understand what he's trying to do, other than prove he's smarter than everybody else."

But longtime Portland advocates of campaign finance reform say Woolley is the only figure holding candidates accountable to the rules.

"The election law—in particular, campaign finance law—is very difficult to get enforced because the enforcement mechanism runs through politicians," says public interest lawyer Dan Meek. "Somebody needs to enforce this. Seth is performing an important role."

If Woolley succeeds in his mission, he will draw more attention to a campaign fundraising system he sees as broken. He could also undermine Smith's candidacy—an outcome he would also like to see.

"My No. 1 concern is educating people about campaign finance reform," he says. "The rules of the game need to be fair and consistently applied."

Woolley, whose floppy brown hair falls over his glasses, combines a zeal for ethics with the computer skills of a Silicon Valley programmer.

A political foe once derided Woolley as a Dungeons & Dragons nerd filing ballot measures from his mother's basement. No dice, he says. His childhood home was a trailer in rural Snohomish County, Wash.—no basement.

As for D&D: "I've never played," he says. "Everyone I know has."

He's an officer in Oregon's Pacific Green Party, which fights corporate influence in politics. That's a strange match with his day job: He works on maps and navigation systems for Uber, the ride-hailing company that muscled its way into Portland in 2014, getting elected officials mired in ethics complaints in the process.

In fact, Woolley says he was preparing to file an ethics complaint related to Uber in 2015, when Uber bought the mapping company that employed him.

Woolley started politics early. At age 18, he read the platforms of every political party and decided to go Green. It was 1999—and consumer advocate Ralph Nader was about to run for president on the Green Party ticket.

Woolley studied computer science at Willamette University and has been a leader in the Green Party in Oregon ever since. He ran for Oregon secretary of state in 2008 and 2012 and drew roughly 3 percent of the vote.

He also filed two other lawsuits related to elections law.

His most high-profile target: Hales. He sued then-Secretary of State Kate Brown in 2013 for failure to address an alleged violation of elections law—Hales had filed Washington state tax returns while voting in Oregon. The lawsuit was dismissed.

Mark Wiener, Hales' political consultant, now praises Woolley, saying he is providing a valuable service. "Election-law enforcement in Oregon is a complaint-driven system," Wiener says, "and unless there are people who are willing to take that kind of action, the system lacks accountability."

In 2015, Woolley joined a group of activists who supported limiting campaign contributions to \$500 per donor in Multnomah County races. A ballot measure passed in November 2016, with nearly 89 percent of the vote.

Last September, when the measure went into effect, Smith's fundraising caught Woolley's eye. She had been seeking donations and telling people she planned to run for the City Council—but she hadn't resigned her county seat or changed her campaign committee's registration to reflect she was running for City Hall.

Woolley filed a complaint against Smith in November. It placed her in an apparent catch-22: Either she had violated the county limit on campaign contributions by raising too much money, or violated the county charter by running for city office before Jan. 1 without resigning her seat (Woolley says both).

Smith says she walked a delicate line without violating the rules. She also says Woolley is applying a "double standard" by scrutinizing her more closely than onetime County Commissioner Jules Bailey, who did the same thing in 2015.

"I won't speculate on Mr. Woolley's serial filing practices," Smith says in a statement to WW.

She was more expansive on OPB's Think Out Loud on Jan. 17. "Jules Bailey did the same thing," she told them. "I've seen these kind of publicity stunts done when people want to get attention. I think this is nothing but nonsense."

Smith Warner defends Smith on the same grounds. "How is it not a problem when the white guy did it," she asks, "and now it's a problem when the black woman does it?"

Woolley says his allies in campaign finance reform left him to fight this battle alone, fearing the racial dynamic of taking on Smith.

"Most of the other people don't want to be on record," he says. "I imagine it has to do with her reputation for calling people racists."

Woolley admits his complaints may harm Smith's campaign, and he is OK with that.

The other four candidates in the City Council race—Emmons, Jo Ann Hardesty, Felicia Williams and Andrea Valderrama—all say they supported the county's campaign finance measure and will support a possible city measure. Smith opposed the county change during a review in summer 2016, calling it unfavorable to women and people of color because they have less access to traditional donors.

"There is at least one candidate in the race that is in favor of campaign finance reform," Woolley says. "There is at least one who is not in favor of campaign finance reform. I am happy to go after anyone who is against campaign finance reform."