

The Oregonian

Mayor Charlie Hales talked cities, streetcars, granola bars, on Al Jazeera America: Portland City Hall Roundup

By Andrew Theen

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales visited Washington DC late last month for the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

While in DC, Hales joined the Democratic mayors of two other mid-sized American cities on Al Jazeera America to give a status report on his city and talk about the rejuvenation of urban areas in general.

Why are we just getting around to this now?

Video from Hales' appearance on Inside Story with Ray Suarez isn't available online, but we tracked down the producers and watched the 30-minute news show.

Portland's mayor appeared alongside Oakland Mayor Jean Quan and Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto.

Here's a breakdown of Hales' main talking points from his appearance on Al Jazeera America's Inside Story:

Hales on Portland's recovery

Hales said Portland felt the economy downturn "like most cities did" but added that Portland has recovered "economically to where we were." He said Portland's "quality of place" gives the city a competitive edge in attracting young people, citing the transit system and bike network. Portland, he said, is experiencing a "pretty significant immigration of talent and youth, and that bodes well" for Portland's future.

On the Urban Growth Boundary

Hales touted Oregon's urban growth boundary requirements as helping Oregon and Portland in particular. He said driving outside the UGB you hit "real farmland, it's not just waiting for the next subdivision."

On Portland's Economy

"We're an exporter of food and wine and beer, and we can count on that," for the future, Hales told Suarez. He said those industries attract young, professional urban dwellers. "They want to live that way," Hales said, citing many who want to live without an automobile. "It fits with the fundamental bedrock values that they have," Hales said of Portland's urban amenities, adding it's not just because the city has a "cool" factor and national brand.

On whether cities can build big things without federal cash rolling in

"I think not," Hales said. The conversation centered on whether the federal government is withdrawing its support. Hales said some cities believe the federal government is "devolving into a health care company with an army. I don't think it's quite that bad." Hales believes the federal government is moving to being more of a limited partner with cities. But, he touted the Oregon State Legislature for "stepping up" and giving \$1 billion to public education. "We couldn't do that on our own."

On streetcars

Mass transit projects are still in the wheelhouse for obtaining federal funds, according to Hales. He said cities are still getting a 50 percent federal match on some projects, which can help build streetcar lines. "There are streetcar projects under construction all over the country: Cincinnati, Salt Lake City, Tucson, Portland, where the federal government stepped up with a modest amount of money," Hales said. The mayor, who worked in the private industry to help spread the streetcar gospel, said the Obama Administration has been "tactical and smart" in finding targeted ways to support city projects. "I think the new normal is for all of us that we will have to be more creative and more independent."

On granola bars and immigration

Hales said he thinks increased immigration to Portland is a good thing. "It's really enriching Portland in terms of our culture and our economic life," he said. Hales went on to tell a story about a tour of Bridgetown Natural Foods in November.

Here's the vignette: "I was just recently at a local business, a company that makes granola bars. How Portland could that be? They're growing fast, they're hiring from the neighborhood, and the biggest challenge on the factory floor for them is communication, because they have so many different languages spoken among their workers. It's a great problem to have; they're working on finding lead workers who can also be translators. That's a strange and wonderful new territory for us at Portland," Hales said.

Hales said he supports immigration policies that create that kind of "uplift and that kind of opportunity for people to come to America."

The Portland Tribune

Sources Say: Mediation fails, but both sides in city land sale call victory

By Jim Redden

The battle over the pending sale of surplus Water Bureau property in Southwest Portland has taken several twists in recent days.

After Water Commissioner Nick Fish proposed mediation, the neighbors fighting the sale agreed but the purchaser, Renaissance Homes, did not. The Multnomah Neighborhood Association then filed a writ of mandamus against the city of Portland in Multnomah County Circuit Court to stop the sale, which was scheduled to close on Jan. 31. A judge set a hearing for that day, but Renaissance requested and was granted a two-week delay to prepare its response. The sale was put on hold until the judge rules on its legality.

The opponents, who call themselves Woods Park Advocates, take this as good news. An email to supporters called the delay requested by Renaissance, "an encouraging sign of the strength of our cause."

The Mercury

Let's Get Ready to Rumble

Novick—Pleading for Police Cuts—Lands First Punch in Budget Fight

By Denis C. Theriault

COMMISSIONER Steve Novick has thrown the first jabs in this year's brewing city budget fight—issuing a strongly worded memo to his colleagues, obtained by the Mercury, that calls for deep cuts to the traditionally untouchable Portland Police Bureau.

With city commissioners forced to haggle over nearly \$6 million in new revenue for ongoing programs, and just \$3.3 million for one-time projects, Novick's bold ask is a bid to scare up millions more for the three major bureaus he oversees: the Portland Bureau of Transportation, the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management, and the Portland Bureau of Emergency Communications.

He's proposed eating up more than half of that combined surplus, and with something of an apology.

"You will see that we are asking for what may seem like a lot of money," Novick wrote.

But with the council deciding last year to focus on emergency preparedness among other priorities, he says it's worth it.

Novick wants to furnish the city's still-unusable Westside emergency operations center, add more 911 dispatchers, and spend \$1 million building pedestrian safety improvements in East Portland.

To help make up the difference, Novick suggests taking a red pen to the police bureau's \$175 million budget. His wish list would include the end of the bureau's controversial mounted patrol, preserved last year at the 11th hour by Mayor Charlie Hales and community supporters.

"When the mounted patrol was restored in the last budget," Novick told the Mercury, "my joking comment was you need four horsemen for the apocalypse. But when the apocalypse comes in Portland, it will be in the form of a large earthquake. And the emergency operations center will be a lot more useful than the horsemen."

His list also would see command ranks thinned out (something Novick says would please the rank-and-file Portland Police Association), and the bureau's drugs and vice division severely reduced. Novick equates the unit's mission with "the failed national 40-year effort to interrupt the supply of drugs."

"I am asking that the city reprioritize a small fraction of its massive public safety budget to focus on what should be major public safety priorities," Novick wrote.

Novick's memo dropped just as the city's budget office began posting bureau spending requests to its website—the beginning of the city's months-long budget process. And even if Novick gets his wish to vote this spring on a budget with deep police cuts, his bureaus will have stiff competition.

A Mercury review of the requests that had been posted as of press time shows nearly \$12 million in ongoing asks. And many fit neatly within the council's budget goals for the coming year. Despite Hales' general call for "stabilization" budgets, the city council approved three priorities for new spending: emergency preparedness, homelessness, and neighborhood livability.

The Portland Housing Bureau, saved from cuts in past budgets, has put in for \$1.85 million in new ongoing funding. It's hoping to restore money for youth shelters, continue providing targeted services to

homeless veterans, women, and minorities, and increase the city's infrastructure for helping the homeless deal with extreme cold.

The parks bureau is asking for more than twice that much in ongoing cash, \$4.1 million, in part to slow what's been a growing maintenance backlog at the city's parks.

And the Portland Office of Neighborhood Involvement, which doesn't usually get a chance to stick its hand out for money, is making the most of the council's orders by asking for nearly \$2 million.

The city's budget office said on Monday, February 3, that it would work on totaling every bureau's budget request. But that figure wasn't available by press time on Tuesday, February 4.

Conspicuously small, however, is the police bureau's budget request. And it's a sign that sentiments similar to the ones Novick shared in his memo have been quietly bubbling in city hall.

Back on January 9, the Oregonian—citing Chief Mike Reese and others involved in crafting the police bureau's budget—warned the council it could expect \$5 million in new funding requests from the cops. It was an eye-popping report, filled with expensive proposals like a reopened Southeast Precinct, extra school resource officers, and plans to put cameras on every police cruiser.

And it opened eyes in city hall, among sources who wondered how the requests fit with priorities, like, say, earthquake safety and ending homelessness.

Instead, less than a month later, the bureau turned in a list worth just \$471,000—more than half going to restore the traffic division's night team.

Those other big-ticket items were still mentioned, just without dollar amounts. What was left read like a list of frustrations: an increase in calls at schools, fewer detectives working than ever, and other operational grievances.

Asked if Hales, as police commissioner, had stepped in to whittle things down, his office confirmed he had.

"With the help of the mayor's office," says Hales' spokesman, Dana Haynes, "we took a very sharp pencil to that request and every request. That \$5 million is not there."

Reese was out of town and unavailable for comment. But his spokesman, Sergeant Pete Simpson, called the apparent reversal part of "a healthy debate."

"The budget process is just that—a process," says Simpson. "The police bureau understands that there are a variety of thoughts and ideas on what to prioritize in public safety."

And what about Novick's suggestion that Hales consider even deeper cuts to the police bureau—presumably to help pay for sidewalks and earthquake preparedness—as the mayor assembles his first draft of a city budget this spring?

"The mayor and the commissioner talked about this," Haynes allowed. "It's part of the dance."