

## The Oregonian

### Portland police shooting: Man killed was federal fugitive wanted for kidnapping, bank robberies, stalking students

*By Maxine Bernstein*

The man shot and killed by a Portland police officer Wednesday afternoon in Southwest Portland was a federal fugitive wanted for a kidnapping in Clackamas County in January, three bank robberies late last year and most recently for following students in a van.

Kelly Vern Mark Swoboda, 49, was pronounced dead on Southwest Cheltenham Street after a shootout with school resource officer John Romero.

Romero was shot in the right hand. The bullet traveled up his arm and exited, remarkably without striking bone or major nerves. He didn't require surgery and was released from OHSU Hospital several hours after the shooting.

U.S. marshals had put out an alert in late January to police agencies, calling Swoboda armed and dangerous and seeking his arrest in the pistol-whipping and kidnapping of a woman working alone at the Oak Grove-area Palm Beach Tan salon. The woman, who was bound with duct tape, was able to jump from the suspect's purple minivan and get away, police said.

Just a day before the shootout, a federal indictment accused Swoboda of robbing three area credit unions – two in Milwaukie on Nov. 22 and Dec. 6 and another in Southeast Portland on Dec. 21. He had previously served a five-year, 10-month sentence for a 2006 bank robbery in Portland. Swoboda had lived in Northeast Portland, Milwaukie, Oak Grove, Estacada and Molalla.

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales and Wilson High School Principal Brian Chatard, as well as area students and neighborhood residents, said Thursday they were thankful Romero was alive.

"I want people to know how much we appreciate Officer Romero and how what he did probably prevented something really terrible from happening to a student or any person in the area," Chatard said.

Romero, 36, who will mark his eight-year anniversary with the Police Bureau on Monday, has been placed on administrative leave, a routine step as Portland homicide detectives investigate the shooting. A Multnomah County grand jury will review the results.

Romero was among school resource and Central Precinct officers doing extra patrols Wednesday afternoon in the Hillsdale neighborhood after students from Wilson High and Robert Gray Middle School had reported being followed by a green van while walking to or from school. A brother and sister – both Wilson students – got a good description and partial license plate of the van that approached them on their way home Tuesday afternoon and had reported it to Romero.

With Romero's information, the Police Bureau issued a release about 3 p.m. Wednesday about the van.

At 3:25 p.m., Romero called George Weatheroy, director of security for the Portland school district. "He said they were out looking for the 'creeper vehicle' around Robert Gray Middle School and Wilson High, and wanted me to be aware of it," Weatheroy said.

At 3:53 p.m., someone called 911 to report a suspicious van near the Hillsdale library branch.

Romero, along with Central Precinct Officers Sze Lai and Edgar Mitchell, responded. Mitchell was first to arrive at the library and spotted a van, but its driver didn't match the description that police had from students. The driver told Mitchell he was visiting the library.

As the man walked off, Mitchell noticed the van's front and back license plates didn't match and that the front one included numbers reported by the Wilson High brother and sister. Mitchell and Lai went inside the library to look for the driver, while Romero noticed him walking down Cheltenham Street, police said.

Witnesses said they saw an officer turn the corner from Southwest Dewitt Street onto Cheltenham, 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 witnesses Bryce Canda, 16, and his father, John Canda.

The man looked like he was taking his hands out of his pocket and holding something, and the officer fired shots, the Candas said. Romero was still standing and radioed "Shots fired! Shots fired! Suspect down," John Canda said.

Paramedics treated the officer at the scene and he was taken to the hospital, blood on his upper arm.

Other officers used a ballistic shield to walk up to Swoboda, who was declared dead.

Mark Ziska, who lives on Cheltenham Street, said he was proud that some observant person reported the suspicious van near the library. "Neighbors did what they were supposed to do, because obviously that guy was not a good person," he said.

Brad Carmony, spokesman for Palm Beach Tan, was grateful that the man suspected of kidnapping the salon employee Jan. 27 was caught.

"We're thankful to the local authorities who risked their lives in tracking down this violent criminal," Carmony said.

Wilson's principal praised Romero for investigating the students' complaints.

"As evidenced by what happened, he took these reports and took them very seriously," Chatard said. "He shows real commitment and follow-through."

As Portland police investigated the shooting, another Wilson student reported a strange encounter Thursday morning with a man driving a white- or cream-colored van, Chatard said. The girl said she was approached while walking to school about 8 a.m., ran off and called a parent or guardian and police. Police alerted the high school. Chatard said he didn't know the exact location, and police didn't release it.

Though Portland police are confident Swoboda was the van driver who had been tracking students in recent days, Chatard said he doesn't want students or parents to drop their guard, considering the new report.

"I thought it would definitely be prudent to let people know that something else happened today," he said. "I have no idea whether these are connected in any way, or what to make of it. It's a very odd set of circumstances."

## **The Mercury**

### **Budget Office Raises Dark Possibility: No Surplus This Year After All**

*By Denis C. Theriault*

After a bonanza of funding requests from Portland's varied bureaus last month—some \$32.3 million worth of asks, mostly for well-intentioned, vital, and noble programs—the city's budget office this week has come back with some extremely bitter medicine.

"In total," says a letter by budget director Andrew Scott, "we recommend \$2.1 million in ongoing and one-time spending."

And Scott explains that austere stance with a red-letter warning. Despite what was looking like a healthy surplus—a little more than \$9 million—it could be the city has no extra money to ladle out this spring, a year after closing a \$21.5 million budget hole. Unexpectedly high inflation has dropped that to \$6 million. And weak returns from business license tax collections, if the pattern continues through next month, could wipe out all the rest. We'll know by April 30.

"There is the possibility that there will not be any excess ongoing or one-time resources for FY2014-15," Scott's letter says.

Only five programs earned a nod from the budget office, which has spent weeks poring over requested budgets from the bureaus and developing reports meant to help Mayor Charlie Hales prepare his first pass at a budget and then help the council figure out how to politely tear Hales' draft apart.

Missing, you'll notice, are several high-profile and politically sensitive requests: \$2.6 million to keep from laying off 26 firefighters in two years, \$288,000 to restore night patrols for the police bureau's traffic unit, \$170,000 to add a deputy chief of staff in the mayor's office, \$2.9 million to fix up the city's westside disaster center, and \$1.1 million to convert seasonal parks employees to permanent status.

That's not quite a snub. In many cases, the budget office said no after spending several paragraphs laying out why the request it was rejecting made for prudent policy. It's really a measure of how touchy the city's finances have become. And, in any case, commissioners will still probably find a way to pay for much of those requests. the proverbial push comes to the proverbial shove.

The budget office, it should be noted, has also made some general policy recommendations. One of those amounts to a vindication, of sorts, for Commissioner Steve Novick.

Novick, earlier this year, balked when asked to pay for nearly \$500,000 in ongoing maintenance costs for the long-planned South Waterfront Greenway.

And when he did, it caused a bit of a stir. Despite policy requiring the city to pay for maintenance costs every time it approves building a new park, no one, in this case, had actually built that maintenance figure into the city's current financial forecast. Novick, in complaining about that blank check, was standing against that longtime political-fiscal understanding.

The budget office, it turns out, sees things his way.

## **City aiming to improve coordination of street projects**

*By Jeff McDonald*

City Council on Wednesday allocated \$250,000 to the Portland Bureau of Transportation to set up a "web-based application system" to lay the groundwork for better coordination among bureaus, private developers, utilities and telecommunications companies on street projects throughout the city.

The money will aid efforts to track and map capital improvement plans and management systems so that decisions affecting public right-of-way are coordinated, PBOT spokesman Dylan Rivera said.

"The public tells us they're frustrated when they see one organization block a lane or a sidewalk for work in the street, and a couple weeks later the same block is torn up again," he said. "This gives the perception of a lack of coordination."

The first phase is determining which agencies are using what systems so that their work can be tracked and a solution can be recommended, Rivera said. Currently, he added, PBOT uses about a dozen different databases, and other bureaus use dozens of different databases and software products.

Coordination with different agencies could take six to 12 months, Rivera said. Implementation of a solution could be part of a second phase, if more dollars are granted, he said.

The money came via a \$906,000 package. Ten bureaus in November submitted a total of 23 proposals to the Innovation Task Force; seven were approved Wednesday.

A \$90,000 allocation went to the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability for Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) data collection. The mapping of surface topography and objects in the city will improve, so that design and planning can be more efficient and accurate, according to the city.

Also, more LIDAR data is expected to improve understanding of potential hazards, such as floods, landslides and earthquakes.