

The Oregonian

Mayor Charlie Hales, police chief listen to host of concerns voiced by Roosevelt High students

*By Maxine Bernstein
September 19, 2014*

After the controversial arrest of a teammate last weekend in Portland, Roosevelt High School senior and varsity football captain Richard "RJ" Bryant was hurt and angry.

He said he and his teammates made a pact to try to avoid police as much as possible by staying off the streets.

"We have to get ourselves in the house early," he said.

Bryant, 18, was able to take his concerns directly to Portland Mayor Charlie Hales and Police Chief Mike Reese at a school assembly Thursday. So did others on the team, who shared their own accounts of being harassed by police while walking home from practice and complained of being stopped for no reason or what they called "WWB" -- walking while black.

They were among about 25 students who spoke out during the assembly. School officials and counselors convinced Roosevelt High School students upset by the arrest of a 16-year-old sophomore not to hold a downtown protest.

Instead, students-- led by sophomore class president Alexis Cannard -- invited the mayor and police chief to address the student body.

Before a packed auditorium at the high school, the students took turns, venting their frustrations. Hales, who serves as police commissioner, and Reese, who had graduated from Roosevelt High School, sat on two chairs set up on the stage for about an hour and listened.

The first boy to stand tried to start an expletive-laden chant against the police, but others didn't follow. Authorities said the boy wasn't a Roosevelt High School student and was escorted out.

Senior Natasha Green, 17, stood up next. She apologized for the intruder's rant and urged those who wanted to speak out to do so respectfully. She then relayed her own experiences with police.

"We don't feel safe when we're walking the streets, and we see a police car pull up," said Green, who is African American. "We don't know if they're going to ask us to check our backpacks or if we have our hoods on the wrong way."

Green and Bryant shared their comments with The Oregonian on Friday. No media were allowed to attend the school assembly.

Green, who plays varsity basketball, said she's been stopped by police while walking home from practice, in her gym clothes, sweaty, with her hair a mess.

"I shouldn't be stopped for no reason whatsoever because you feel that I may have something to do with a crime that happened two or three blocks from where I'm walking," she said she told the mayor and chief. "If there is probable cause and you can explain to me what probable cause there is, then we can have a respectful conversation. But for you to walk up to me and say nothing at all and accuse me of being a criminal, that's just not right."

Bryant said Roosevelt High's football team called a special meeting last Sunday after 16-year-old Thai Gurule's arrest early that morning. The members set a goal to lead a disciplined life, whether that's in school, on the field or outside of school.

"All we can do is be responsible for ourselves. We got to stay doing the right thing," Bryant said. That means, he said, players agreed to go straight home after practice, rest or ice their injuries, eat and get ready for the next day, even if it means not visiting a friend or going out to party.

The mayor and chief promised the students that they heard their concerns and take them seriously.

"It takes a lot of courage to stand up, speak out, and be honest," Hales said Friday. "These students were honest. I'm grateful."

The mayor said he didn't want to discuss the specifics of the 16-year-old's arrest because it's under review by police. He talked about some other incidents where police have acted to protect students, noting the efforts of Wilson High school resource officer John Romero, who was in a shootout with a man suspected of stalking students in southwest Portland, and of officers who have talked people down from committing suicide and de-escalated crises.

Hales, according to his spokesman's notes, told the student body that their concerns are well-founded: "There is institutional racism. This isn't just a fantasy. We, as a city, are focusing on equity because that has to be a priority. It has to be. Equity issues are things we -- everyone, everywhere -- need to focus on."

Reese told the students that it's important to officers to have a good relationship with local youths. Also attending was Portland police Capt. Chris Uehara, who supervises the bureau's Youth Services Division, school police Sgt. Tim Sessions and several school resource officers.

Bryant and Green said they felt the assembly was productive. "They actually came to hear us talk, which actually opened up some of our eyes -- that not every cop is the same," Bryant said.

Green said she was pleased the mayor approached her after the assembly, thanked her for setting the right tone and asked about her future goals. "We just needed to know that the mayor and police chief cared," she said.

Police had arrested Thai Gurule while investigating vandalism calls in North Portland. Three officers and Gurule ended up in a scuffle, and a sergeant fired one Taser shot at Gurule as bystanders screamed at police and videotaped the scene.

The district attorney's office on Thursday filed a formal petition charging Gurule with assaulting a peace officer, attempt to assault a peace officer, two counts of attempted strangulation and resisting arrest.

The police chief has pledged a full internal review of the arrest and police use of force, and the city's Independent Police Review Division also has opened an inquiry after receiving complaints.

Roosevelt Principal Filip Hristic, a native of Serbia who moved to the United States when he was in seventh grade and has been principal at Roosevelt High for three weeks, said, "Regardless of what people think of Gurule's arrest, I think everyone would agree that it was a troubling, concerning incident. For our school and our city to respond to try to engage in a constructive dialogue, I think is worth highlighting."

Hristic, though, said he's disturbed that his students are fearful of being stopped while walking home from school or practice.

"I hope we get to a point where our students of color don't have to make these decisions that they need to go straight home from practice for fear of being stopped by police," Hristic said. "There's something messed up about the world that we live in if these are thoughts that some of our high schoolers have to have."

Portland street fee: Top earners would pay \$2,400 per year under new income tax proposal

*By Andrew Theen
September 19, 2014*

A residential income tax costing some Portlanders as much as \$2,400 per year has the support of a committee recommending how the city should raise money for street maintenance and safety projects.

Single tax filers with adjusted gross income up to \$25,000 and joint filers up to \$30,000 would be exempt.

The concept gained widespread endorsement Thursday at the final meeting of a street fee advisory panel representing non-profit and low-income interests. The City Council is expected to vote on a funding plan in November.

The income tax plan backed by the advisory committee looks very different from the street fee Commissioner Steve Novick and Mayor Charlie Hales proposed in May.

The earlier plan called for a maximum fee of \$11.56 per month for Portland households, with discounts for apartment dwellers and low-income residents. The plan pulled from City Council dockets in early June included a phase-in approach that would ultimately lead to \$12 per month by the third year.

Both of those proposals represented just the residential half of a plan to charge all street users, including nonprofits and businesses. The goal: roughly \$53 million per year in gross revenue.

City officials regrouped, creating two new citizen advisory panels in addition to another group that has met throughout the year to advise Hales and Novick on funding proposals. One consisted of business people, the other represented low-income stakeholders.

During the last three months, the committees were presented with very different-looking new proposals with diminished expectations for revenue.

As of this week, both the business and low-income groups were deliberating on plans that would raise \$20 million. After administrative costs and low compliance rates, the city expects \$30 million per year in net revenue.

The bracketed tax plan would cost \$500,000 - \$900,000 in one-time set up costs plus \$850,000 to \$1.3 million each year to administer and collect from taxpayers. City officials expect roughly 270,000 tax filings each year.

Novick, who decried the controversial arts tax as "beyond regressive," said he heard from many residents who felt the same way about the street fee.

In addition to the complete exemption for low income households, the income tax now under discussion would include \$3,000 deductions per dependent, prior to calculating the precise tax bracket.

How much would you pay? Take a look at the table and share your thoughts in the comment section.

Residential income tax - 'Bracketed Capped Tax' Proposal	
Adjusted Gross Income, joint tax filers	Yearly fee (capped at \$200 per/month)
\$0-\$30,000	\$0
>\$30,000 - \$50,000	\$18
>\$50,000 - \$75,000	\$48
>\$75,000 - \$100,000	\$96
>\$100,000 - \$175,000	\$144
>\$175,000 - \$250,000	\$300
>\$250,000 - \$500,000	\$1,020
>\$500,000 and up	\$2,400

(Data provided to committees by PBOT)

The Portland Tribune

Neighbors want more details about city land-use plan changes

*By Jim Redden
September 22, 2014*

A neighborhood association in Southwest Portland is asking the city for more information and time to respond to proposed land use changes that will result in new development.

The Multnomah Neighborhood Association committee has sent a letter the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability asking for details on proposed mixed-use and institutional campus zones in the draft comprehensive land-use plan update.

According to the letter, the draft update would create new mixed-use and campus institutional zones where growth will be concentrated, but it does not define them.

"It is important that the hearings be extended because the new zones are slated to accommodate 80 to 90 percent of the projected residential growth in Portland during the next 20 years. The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability wants to adopt the Comprehensive Plan and then define the zones, but we maintain that the new zones must be defined before the Planning and Sustainability Commission ends its hearings on the comprehensive plan," the association's Land Use Committee wrote in a Sept. 20 email to neighborhood residents.

According to the email, the number of households in the Multnomah Neighborhood could increase 28 percent under the proposed update, from an allowable 5,894 now to a maximum 7,557 at full build-out. But, the email says, not enough information is currently available to understand the potential effects of such a changes.

"The citizens and neighborhoods need enough time to understand implications of the proposed changes and to respond to them in a public hearing before the plan is approved," the email says.

The letter also asks that public comment on the draft plan be until 90 days after the zones are defined. That is not scheduled to happen until next year. But the final public hearing on the draft Comp Plan is scheduled for Nov. 4. After that, the Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission will vote in early 2015 to send a recommended version of the update to the City Council for approved.

The comp plan update, as it is common called, is required by the state to guide growth in Portland for the next 20 years. The new comprehensive plan map will be the basis for future updates to the city's zoning map and zoning code.

Public testimony on the draft update will be accepted at the following four public hearings:

- Tuesday, Sept, 23, 5 to 9 p.m., 1900 Building, room 2500A, 1900 S.W. Fourth Ave.
- Tuesday, Oct. 14, 5 to 9 p.m., Parkrose High School student center, 12003 N.E. Shaver St.
- Tuesday, Oct. 28, 5 to 9 p.m., Portland Community College's Southeast Campus community hall, 2305 S.E. 82nd Ave.
- Thursday, November 4, 4 to 8 p.m., 1900 Building, room 2500A, 1900 S.W. Fourth Ave.

The City Council is expected to hold hearings and vote on the new comprehensive land-use plan by mid-2015. The council will likely hold hearings and vote on corresponding zoning changes by the end of 2015. The new plan must be approved by the State Land Conservation and Development Commission.

PBOT wants public help choosing new parking meters

*By Jim Redden
September 21, 2014*

The Portland Bureau of Transportation is asking the public to help test two brands of parking meters that the city is considering purchasing.

Two companies are currently competing for the purchase. Residents can test the new meters and help the PBOT decide which contractor to select.

The purchase will be the first large acquisition of parking meters since the bribery conviction of the former PBOT supervisor responsible for recommending them several years ago. Former city parking manager Ellis McCoy has pleaded guilty to federal charges of accepting \$164,567 from two unnamed meter executives. He has yet to be sentenced.

Four test pay stations, two from each of the companies that made PBOT's short list, are available. Meters made by Parkeon and Cale America are located on Southwest Salmon Street, between Third and Fourth avenues, just north of Lownsdale Square, and on Southwest Third Avenue, between Taylor and Salmon streets.

Those using the meters can give PBOT feedback at an online survey found at bit.ly/PBOTmeters or by filling out a postcard available at the meter. Questions include: How easy was it to use the pay station and was your transaction completed as fast as you expected?

The meters will be available until Oct. 14. Public comment will be accepted until 5 p.m. that day.

After receiving public input, PBOT's selection committee will choose which will supply about 300 parking meters in the new Northwest Portland parking meter district, expected to be installed in early 2015. The established price agreement will also be used for future purchases.

Both pay station options can accept payments by credit card and support the adoption of payment by mobile phone in the future.

Visitors to the test block are reminded that normal parking fees, time limits and periods of enforcement are in effect during the test period. If you are unable to purchase a ticket from one of the test meters, be sure to purchase a ticket from an existing pay station to avoid receiving a citation.

The Mercury

Hall Monitor

The Cops Nod to Transparency

*By Denis C. Theriault
September 17, 2014*

THE COPS pretty much knew—when they saw not just one viral video of officers scuffling with and Taser-ing a 16-year-old from Roosevelt High, but two—that they had an "oh shit" moment on their hands.

That lightning bolt didn't wait long to hit, either. It was Sunday night, just hours after Thai Gurule, a sophomore football player, was taken to a hospital and then charged with resisting arrest.

The recordings of the encounter, which erupted in downtown St. Johns a little after midnight early on Sunday morning, flooded social media nearly immediately—with dispiriting talk about cops targeting young black men and plans brewing for a community protest this Wednesday, September 17.

And it wasn't long before that outcry—louder than ever in a post-Ferguson America—reached the cops' ears, too. They started looking for ways to turn down the heat.

Monday morning, with the story of what happened to Gurule still absent from Portland's news sites, the police bureau made its move. In an unusual departure from protocol, the bureau not only released a summary of the incident and announced a formal review, but it also proactively shared 911 audio, police reports, and links to both eyewitness videos.

We learned that officers had been called about a group of teens who'd been making threats and messing with property in St. Johns—and that officers said they were trying to calmly detain Gurule for questioning when, they say, he refused to be handcuffed. We even learned that the officers all reported injuries.

But we also learned—troublingly—that officers didn't know for sure that Gurule and his friends were the same kids from the 911 calls, even if they thought so because they matched a description. Gurule's

brother, Giovanni, who also scuffled with cops after watching his skinny brother being punched, kneed, and Tasered, later told reporters they were headed to a skatepark.

The bureau has issued disclosures like this before—like the time it shared footage of officers Taser a man with mental illness in Whole Foods before reporters got wind of it. But all of that information at once, accountability experts say, was unprecedented.

"This is very unusual," says Dan Handelman of Portland Copwatch. "I can't think of any case where, within two days, we saw this kind of paperwork."

It's smart media management—and it's an encouraging nod to transparency. While the reports and calls don't answer whether the cops who stopped Gurule were within policy—in fact they may raise more questions—their release short-circuits potential criticisms about the bureau circling the wagons and clamping up in the face of controversy.

"We've come to a point in the world where people share things on social media and they go viral very quickly," says Sergeant Pete Simpson, the bureau's lead spokesman. "When the incident involves the police bureau and has the potential be very inflammatory, we want to get as much information out as quickly as possible."

Simpson says the bureau doesn't have any reason, yet, to believe the officers violated policy in tangling with Gurule: "It's a distinct possibility that if his actions were those of a calm young man, we would have walked away."

But he said the bureau wants to continue showing more of its cards and sooner, no matter what they reveal. He invoked an expected shift toward body-mounted cameras, for hundreds of patrol officers—and suggested an interesting pledge.

"That may be the new standard," Simpson says. "We don't move as fast as social media. I don't think we're going to try. But we're going to take opportunities when we can to provide context."

What Does A More Walkable, Bikeable Old Town Look Like? Find Out Next Month.

*By Dirk VanderHart
September 19, 2014*

As we report in this week's Mercury, bar-heavy Old Town has had it with the weekend street closures the city's thrust upon it since late 2012. Three separate groups—a bar coalition, the neighborhood association, and a task force convened by the mayor—have now recommended the closures end.

But then what?

It's too early to say how the recommendations will be received by Mayor Charlie Hales and the rest of city council, but pretty much everyone agrees there's no going back to uninhibited auto access to the so-called "Entertainment District" (NW 3rd from Everett to Burnside, and NW Davis and Couch from 2nd to 4th). Because even though the barricades bring issues (reduced business, high numbers of tows, and an eerie ambiance to name a few) cops also say they've helped cut crime by something like 30 percent [pdf].

As a middle ground, the groups looking at the problem have suggested, among other things, leaving a single lane of NW Third open during peak bar periods, and providing more food and seating options in the lanes that remain closed. Those proposals bear a likeness to a "street festival" atmosphere talked up by Mayor Charlie Hales last year—one that's so far failed to materialize.

If all goes well during a trial period, Old Town stakeholders say they'll push for permanent fixes to the district: narrowed streets, more crosswalks, better bike lanes—much of which they hope will be paid for by the city. A more pleasant, more walkable Old Town/Chinatown, they say, can spur some of the positive change the neighborhood has long been seeking.

As to what that looks like in practice: We're about to get a taste. The Old Town Hospitality Group (that bar-owner coalition I've been talking about) is teaming up with local transportation activists Better Block PDX early next month to give Old Town a sense of what more-livable streets might look like.

From the morning of Friday, October 3 to the night of Sunday, October 5, Better Block plans to cut NW Third down to one lane between NW ~~Everett~~ Davis and SW Ash (it's currently three lanes). The group will create a bike lane protected by planters in the space, bring out seating for public use, and install at least one temporary crosswalk. All with the city's blessing, of course.

"It's really an opportunity to reimagine what that district can look like," says Boris Kaganovich, a TriMet engineer and Better Block member who's running point on the project. More importantly it's a way to show Portlanders how better planning can improve the urban landscape in a way that's temporary enough to not draw the usual bluster about lost parking spaces and special treatment for cyclists. And, Kaganovich says, the group will be recording key intersections throughout the area all weekend, amassing evidence for how a redesign would affect traffic patterns.

If all goes well, Better Block will have ammunition to lobby for permanent changes in Old Town as the city prepares to pour redevelopment money into the area. And it will have a new model for spurring positive change in Portland as a whole.

"This isn't just Old Town," Kaganovich says. "Part of what we're trying to come up with is a new way to do street redesign."

The Daily Journal of Commerce

North Williams Avenue upgrades under way

*By Inka Bajandas
September 18, 2014*

Construction started this week on a \$1.5 million project to improve increasingly traveled North Williams Avenue, where development has surged.

"Considering how much development that's been happening on North Williams, we're changing the street design," Portland Bureau of Transportation spokeswoman Diane Dulken said. "So Williams is getting safer."

The safety improvements are expected to ease travel for bicyclists, pedestrians, bus drivers and motorists between Northeast Broadway and Killingsworth Street. Plans call for new striped crosswalks and curb extensions to improve pedestrian visibility, widened bike lanes separated from bus traffic and a new traffic signal at the busy intersection with North Cook Street.

Many of the improvements were driven by North Williams Avenue's popularity as a bike commute route; each day approximately 4,000 bicyclists travel on it alongside 8,000 motorists, Dulken said. Bike lanes will be widened from between 5 and 6 feet to 12 feet and moved to the left side of the street away from bus stops on the right. This will eliminate the need for bicyclists to weave between buses along the corridor, she said.

In addition to installing the signal at Williams Avenue and Cook Street, crews will improve the pedestrian crossing, Dulken said.

"Cook (Street) is so busy – there is so much going on so that will bring so much more safety," she said.

PBOT officials designed the streetscape improvements after an extensive 16-month community outreach effort, Dulken said.

Construction is scheduled to finish in December.