

The Oregonian

Portland Building safe from demolition as officials eye big renovation: Portland City Hall Roundup

*By Brad Schmidt
February 03, 2015*

Love it or hate it, The Portland Building appears here to stay.

The City Council on Tuesday will discuss options for the city's downtown administrative building and, preservationists rejoice, demolition is no longer being considered.

Instead, Portland officials now want to do an extensive overhaul of The Portland Building - fixing not only previously identified seismic and exterior problems but also remodeling the interior.

Preliminary cost estimates for the renovation are expected to easily surpass \$100 million but new numbers, once expected by late January, won't be available until March, according to Fred Miller, Portland's chief administrative officer.

Portland's Office of Management & Finance has proposed hiring a construction manager/general contractor in the upcoming fiscal year, tapping major maintenance money to pay for costs. The general contractor, working with a design team, would give city officials a guaranteed maximum price for the project.

Under that plan, the City Council could review total project costs as early as June 2016 and decide to move forward. If approved, The Portland Building could be renovated in about two years, with completion as early as spring 2018.

Portland officials have been concerned about the longevity of the 33-year-old Portland Building because it doesn't meet current seismic standards and the exterior has extensive problems with water infiltration.

In 2013, officials recommended a \$95 million plan to address the seismic and exterior improvements, preferring that option over demolishing The Portland Building and buying or building a new office. That \$95 million price tag included two years' of relocation costs to move employees out of the 15-floor building, known for its post-modern design.

But Miller last spring asked a group of local developers and preservationists - Bob Ball, Ralph DiNola, Roger Roper, John Russell, Bing Sheldon and Tom Walsh - to review options. The advisory group recommended a broader remodel.

Miller has also expressed interest in the city potentially buying the neighboring Multnomah County courthouse, although that concept has gained little traction. Such a move would give Portland three city consecutive blocks of government buildings, with City Hall south of The Portland Building and the courthouse to the north.

Tuesday's City Council's work session begins at 9:30 a.m.

Portland cops could rejoin Joint Terrorism Task Force

*By Brad Schmidt
February 3, 2015*

Portland leaders may assign two police officers to a controversial anti-terrorism task force after a 10-year hiatus with limited or nonexistent involvement.

On Thursday, the Portland City Council will consider recommitting to the Joint Terrorism Task Force with a vote to follow as early as Feb. 11. Portland ditched the FBI-led investigative unit in 2005 but rejoined six years later on an "as-needed" basis that left both sides unhappy.

Portland's potential involvement would represent a striking turnabout to an often-fractious relationship saddled with concerns about public safety, civil liberties and government transparency. Shifting political winds inside City Hall now signal that the City Council may rejoin the task force after indications in December hinted at a split.

As of Monday, Commissioners Dan Saltzman and Nick Fish support involvement. Commissioner Amanda Fritz said she will likely vote against participation, although she wants to hear from the public before deciding.

That leaves Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick as the swing votes. Novick said he's on the fence. How will Hales vote?

"He's not saying," Hales' spokesman Dana Haynes wrote in an email. "He wants the city all in or all out, and he wants to hear more on both counts."

But a deal does appear more likely than it did two months ago. Hales canceled a December meeting to consider "withdrawal from JTTF involvement" and rescheduled it this week with the City Council now being asked to allow the Police Bureau "to become a member" of the task force.

Oregon U.S. Attorney Amanda Marshall expressed optimism Monday.

"In anticipation of a vote, certainly it is my hope as U.S. attorney that the commissioners will do the right thing and vote to come back into the JTTF," Marshall said.

Having Portland police fully embedded in the Joint Terrorism Task Force would help detect threats and respond quickly to apprehend suspects, she said. Marshall pointed to the role local police played for the Boston Joint Terrorism Task Force in helping locate suspects in the Boston Marathon bombing case.

"I'm hopeful thoughtful analysis of the facts will guide the council," she said.

But the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon, which supported the 2011 deal, is opposed to greater involvement.

Executive Director David Fidanque said the FBI operates under its own set of rules that don't match Portlanders' values. He said involvement would be counterproductive to community policing and relationship-building with Arab-American communities.

"It's clear that council needs to not just hear from the public again but to be brought up to date on what little we know of how the FBI operates," he said.

Portland's involvement with the task force has proved controversial for more than a decade. Officials first joined the task force in 1997 and formalized the arrangement in 2000 with little fanfare.

But a year later, after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, then-Commissioner Hales cast the lone vote against participation, citing concerns that it represented "one more case of specialized assignments dealing with the threat of the month, rather than dealing with the consistent issue of community policing."

In 2005, a year after the FBI wrongly accused Oregon lawyer Brandon Mayfield of being linked to a train bombing in Spain, the City Council voted 4-1 to pull out of the task force, with Saltzman opposed.

Portland kept its distance until 2010, when 19-year-old Mohamed Osman Mohamud was arrested and accused of trying to detonate a bomb in Pioneer Courthouse Square during the annual tree-lighting ceremony. The bomb was a fake, part of a terrorism sting, and Mohamud was later convicted.

In 2011, the City Council voted 5-0 to authorize "as-needed" involvement. The half-in, half-out relationship represented a popular political compromise but left both sides frustrated.

Hales has now floated two proposals for Thursday's 5 p.m. hearing.

The first would rescind the 2011 deal and effectively cut ties with federal officials.

The second would commit two Portland officers who would report to a task-force supervisor. If approved, Hales would receive classified briefings from the FBI special agent in charge, Gregory T. Bretzing. But the city would no longer produce annual reports about involvement.

Fish, who played a key role developing the 2011 agreement, said better communication between police and federal officials should increase community safety. He said Hales and Police Chief Larry O'Dea can provide safeguards to ease public concerns.

"I would like us to strengthen our participation in the JTTF, and I think we can do so without sacrificing Oregon values," he said.

Novick, who has expressed frustration about the city's vague annual reports, said he is undecided. Novick said he's interested in the notion that Portland cops could help "keep an eye on the FBI" and protest if investigations cross the line, although he said skeptics think that's highly unlikely.

"I thought that was an interesting argument," Novick said in an email.

Saltzman will be absent from Thursday's hearing. Under typical protocol, the City Council would vote at its meeting the following week, on Feb. 11, although Hales' spokesman said the issue may be delayed.

But whatever the City Council decides, whenever a vote takes place, it's unlikely to be the final time the topic resurfaces.

"It was an issue a dozen years ago at council. It's an issue now," Haynes wrote. "Will it be in the future? Probably."

The Portland Tribune

Southwest transit plans delayed in name of public involvement

*By Jim Redden
February 3, 2015*

The City Council delayed committing \$650,000 to the Southwest Corridor Plan last week to ensure the public is fully involved in the new second phase that is about to begin. The new vote is scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 4.

The planning process being overseen by Metro, the elected regional government, envision some form of high-capacity transit in the corridor between the southern edge of downtown Portland to Tigard and Tualatin. The plan is intended to improve transportation options and spur redevelopment along the route, where traffic congestion is a serious and growing problem. Transit options include a light-rail line and various forms of bus rapid transit.

The council considered a resolution last Wednesday that would transfer \$500,000 general fund dollars to Metro and commit an additional \$150,000 in city staff work to the project. The City Council already has approved the spending, but needs to authorize an Intergovernmental Agreement with Metro about the scope of the work.

The council postponed the vote, however, after Southwest Portland resident Marianne Fitzgerald complained she only recently had learned about the second phase of the project. Fitzgerald has been deeply involved in the project as the former chairwoman of the Transportation Committee of Southwest Neighbors Inc., the neighborhood coalition office that serves many Southwest Portland neighborhood associations.

"I'm not comfortable voting if the neighborhoods are not aware of the agreement with Metro," said Commissioner Amanda Fritz.

The delay is intended to give Metro time to firm up its public involvement process. Ironically, the new second phase was created in part to increase the public's role in the project after voters in Tigard and Tualatin passed ballot measures requiring public votes on new transit projects in their cities.

According to Metro Councilor Bob Stacey, who chairs the project steering committee, representatives from those cities are now insisting that a specific plan be developed that their constituents can discuss. They want decisions made soon on such things as the type of transit, the alignment within the corridor, and the location of new stations.

According to Stacey, many other important decisions already have been made. Redevelopment options along the route were proposed by all the cities in the corridor over the past few years in the first phase of the project.

Called the Shared Investment Strategy, it includes nontransit elements such as road improvements, bike and pedestrian paths, parks and natural areas, and compatible private developments.

They originally totaled \$3 billion, but have been narrowed down to \$500 million.

Portland's proposals are included in the Barbur Concept Plan, which was adopted by the City Council in April 2013. Those adopted by the other cities include Linking Tualatin, the Tigard High Capacity Transit Land Use Plan, and the Washington County Transportation Study.

The big decisions about the transit mode and exact alignment have not been made yet. The committee must decide between light rail and bus rapid transit, a term used for different styles of express bus service with at least some dedicated lanes.

Alignment questions include how to best serve such large employers, institutions and population centers within the corridor as the Oregon Health & Science University, Hillsdale, Portland Community College Sylvania Campus, Multnomah Village, downtown Tigard, and Bridgeport Village.

Several potential redevelopment locations also have been identified, including the intersection of Southwest Barbur Boulevard (Highway 99W) and Capitol Highway, and the Tigard Triangle northeast of the intersection of Barbur and Highway 217. Station locations will be determined after the alignment is decided.

Travel within the corridor is growing increasingly difficult. According to Metro, it should take 14 minutes to drive from Portland State University to Tualatin if traffic is flowing freely. But actual travel time is closer to one hour — especially during rush hour. It also is difficult to travel between such popular destinations as Washington Square and Bridgeport Village without going through Tigard, where some of the worst congestion occurs.

In contrast, Metro estimates that it would take only 37 minutes to travel between PSU and Tualatin via light rail. No bus rapid transit estimate is available.

Metro also estimates a light-rail line could carry 36,900 daily riders within the corridor by 2015. Bus rapid transit could carry 30,800, Metro says. In contrast, the new MAX line between Portland and Milwaukie that opens this September is scheduled to carry 24,700 daily riders.

Despite the promise of transportation improvements, the project is opposed by activists who believe it will be too expensive, reduce the traffic lanes on Barbur, and lead to unwelcome residential density. Some unsuccessfully battled the Portland-Milwaukie MAX project, which is under construction despite Clackamas County voters approving a ballot measure to stop funding it.

After the election, TriMet won a court ruling that said the project had to proceed because county officials has signed legally binding agreements to pay their share of it.

The measures in Tigard and Tualatin passed before funding agreements were signed, however.

Now some activists are working to place a measure on the Washington County ballot to prevent county funds from being used for transit projects without a public vote.

20 chosen to serve on new city panel to oversee police reforms

*By Jim Redden
February 3, 2015*

A 20-member board has been appointed to monitor the implementation of the settlement agreement between the City of Portland and the U.S. Department of Justice to remedy historic police mistreatment of the mentally ill.

A majority of the Community Oversight Advisory Board are racial minorities, sexual minorities, have experienced some form of mental illness, or some combination of the three. Some say their backgrounds — and previous encounters with the police — will help them better relate to the community on the issues to be addressed by the board, which is known as COAB.

“As a woman of color who suffers from mental illness and lives in this community, I approach the idea of police accountability with a level head and a true desire to see change,” said Vanessa Gonzalez, who lives in Southeast Portland.

“The empaneling of this board is a tremendous next step in our ongoing effort in police reform,” Mayor Charlie Hales said. “The advisory board, along with the other steps, will further strengthen the relationship between this police department and the communities it serves.”

The board includes 15 voting members, three alternatives, and five nonvoting representatives of the Portland Police Bureau. They include a former state senator, a retired civil rights lawyer, a rabbi, a psychiatrist, a construction company owner, two emergency hospital workers, and volunteers who serve on numerous organizations advocating for the rights of racial minorities and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Queer/Questioning community.

"I am thrilled with the expertise and range of experiences represented by the members on this important oversight committee," said Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who worked with Hales on the appointment process. "A wonderful Community Oversight Advisory Board has been appointed. Now, the hard work really begins."

Portland signed the settlement agreement after a DOJ investigation found police have a pattern of using excessive force against the mentally ill. The agreement calls for reforms to bureau policies and training, particularly related to interactions with people who have or are perceived to have mental illness.

The agreement also calls for the board to monitor the implementation of the agreement, and to advise the chief of police, police commissioner and the City Council on community relations and police accountability, to inform the community about the agreement and its implementation, and to seek public comments and concerns, including at Town Hall meetings and through surveys.

The board will be chaired by retired Oregon Chief Justice Paul DeMuniz.

He was chosen by Rosenbaum & Watson LLP, a nationally recognized law enforcement evaluation firm.

Portland police want to buy you dinner

*By Shasta Kearns Moore
February 2, 2015*

In the wake of nationwide protests against police use of force, the Portland Police Bureau is partnering with Portland Public Schools to take part in a Race Talks event this Tuesday, Feb. 3.

The event starts at 5:30 p.m. at Jefferson High School with a free dinner and continues with free childcare. The speakers, including Chief Larry O'Dea and Joyce Harris of the Albina Ministerial Alliance, will then lead a discussion on race in community relations with police.

Race Talks founder and director Donna Maxey is spearheading the event.

"Sometimes it gets a little wild," Maxey said, noting the Courageous Conversations format has been used successfully before at PPS. "You just have to set the stage for how you want things to go."

Other invited speakers are from the Human Rights Commission, the Portland Police Union, the Portland NAACP, the Independent Police Review, Creight & Rose PC law firm, and Don't Shoot PDX.

Participants will break out into group discussions before reconvening to pose their questions to the panel of experts. The issues up for debate include:

- What do you think is broken with Portland Police Bureau and community relations?
- What will it take to fix these relations?
- What is your role in fixing it?
- How will we know what it will look like when it's repaired?
- After all of the citywide communities give their input, what are the next steps?

"Portland police will have an opportunity to hear what the community has to say from their own mouths," Maxey said.

The next monthly forum will be March 3 at Roosevelt High School. Maxey said the goal is for the event to be held at all Portland high schools, with a particular focus on those with higher populations of students of color.

"Let's be honest, how many people in Southwest Hills are having run-ins with the police?" Maxey said.

The Portland Police Bureau did not respond to several requests for comment on its participation in the event.

[Read about last year's Race Talks series.](#)

Willamette Week

Did Portland Forge a Kinder, Gentler Uber?

*By Aaron Mesh
February 2, 2015*

For years, transportation app Uber forged a reputation for its unwillingness to compromise as it stormed with its ride-sharing program into various cities in defiance of local taxi rules. In December, however, Uber negotiated a truce with the city of Portland after trying to bring its services here.

Now the company can't seem to stop pacifying the government regulators it once jeered.

Mayor Charlie Hales bragged Friday in his annual "State of the City" speech about the city's deal with Uber making headlines.

"Check out the front page of The Wall Street Journal today," Hales said, "you'll see that we're noticed for working with private, nonprofit [sic] ride-sharing apps like Uber and Lyft."

In fact, both the Journal and The New York Times have taken notice of a shift in Uber's normally combative tactics.

On Dec. 18, Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick wrangled an extraordinary concession from Uber: It would retreat from the city for three months to give city officials time to rewrite taxi rules. That was the first time Uber had voluntarily left a U.S. market after entering.

The Times and Journal stories suggest Uber has taken the retreat as an opportunity to soften its image. The Journal reports the Portland compromise has become Uber's new model:

Instead of defying government officials, Uber executives say their lawyers and lobbyists are increasingly trying harder to negotiate agreements that bring the company into compliance with existing laws, even if it leads to lower profit margins at the company.

In cities where new laws are being written for app-based car services, Uber is more willing to go along with requirements such as providing wheelchair-accessible vehicles and, during emergencies, capping fares charged by its "surge pricing" system. Executives say they are aiming to make Uber explicitly legal everywhere it operates, up from just 22 cities and states now.

Before everyone starts hugging and gleefully driving doughnuts through city parking garages, however, remember this: Portland still has a cab industry that doesn't want the rules rewritten.

Uber is telling Journal reporters it expects to be operating in Portland by April—by which time the city may not have finalized changes to its taxi regulations. And city officials are counting on Uber handing over data on its pick-ups and prices, something the company has been loath to do.

Hales hinted at those obstacles in Friday's speech.

"Now understand," the mayor said, "we will do this only when we can ensure these companies embrace our values that include public safety and equal access."

Daily Journal of Commerce

\$20M affordable housing investment on tap

*By Inka Bajandas
February 2, 2015*

The Portland Housing Bureau is moving full steam ahead with plans to build more affordable housing in North and Northeast Portland.

Since the Portland City Council last week unanimously approved a proposal for implementing Mayor Charlie Hales' pledge to invest \$20 million to increase access to affordable housing in those neighborhoods, PHB staffers have worked on initial steps, said Traci Manning, the bureau's director.

The five-year strategy aims to address concerns about a history of gentrification in the area. The proposal is based on feedback gathered during an extensive community outreach campaign and calls for construction of at least 100 new units of affordable housing.

"The team is churning away as we speak," Manning said. "Creating the affordable homes will take a bit longer, but we'd like to move on those right away."

One of the first projects expected to benefit is a \$4.5 million, 40- to 80-unit affordable housing complex with ground-floor retail space on a 32,400-square-foot, city-owned lot known as the Grant Warehouse site, at Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard between Northeast Cook and Ivy streets. Plans call for larger, family-size units and family-friendly amenities.

Manning said she was unsure when the city will start soliciting proposals from firms interested in designing and constructing the complex, but noted that a project timeline will likely be established in the next couple of weeks.

Another \$3.5 million investment will create 30 to 60 affordable housing units via redevelopment of additional properties owned by the city, Multnomah County, nonprofit agencies or private developers. Identifying these properties will be a long-term effort in collaboration with the Portland Development Commission and the resulting projects aren't scheduled to move forward until 2017, Manning said. At this point, no sites have been selected for future affordable housing projects in the area, she said.

"I have nothing in my sights right now," she said.

The PHB also plans to spend \$3 million to buy more land for future affordable housing projects. The remaining \$9 million will be spent helping homeowners repair their properties and creating homeownership opportunities.

Along with the \$20 million investment, the housing strategy calls for increasing the PHB's goals for hiring minority-owned, women-owned and emerging small businesses to work on affordable housing construction projects. The bureau's current MWESB subcontracting goals are 20 percent of construction costs, but officials would like to increase that percentage for projects in North and Northeast Portland, Manning said.

This goal, along with plans to include construction trade pre-apprenticeship programs on affordable housing projects in the area, will be achieved through a continued partnership with the National Association of Minority Contractors' Oregon chapter, she said.

"It's important to us, but we don't know how we'll work it out," she said. "People want jobs ... The economic benefits that accrue will accrue to the community."

While developing the affordable housing strategy, PHB staffers also worked closely with industry firms with extensive experience in the area, such as Portland-based Colas Construction and Carleton Hart Architecture. Carleton Hart principal Bill Hart said city staffers reached out to him for feedback on the proposal because the firm has designed a lot of affordable housing projects in those neighborhoods.

The mayor's pledged investment in affordable housing stems from concerns raised by community members over the lack of transparency in a November 2013 PDC deal to sell the 1.79-acre lot at the corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Northeast Alberta Street to California-based Majestic Realty.

The developer planned a commercial development that included Trader Joe's as an anchor tenant. Amid the controversy, Trader Joe's pulled out in February 2014. Natural Grocers has since signed a letter of intent to take its place. Colas Construction crews are scheduled to start work on the project this month.

Meanwhile, an oversight committee will be formed by this summer, Manning said. Members will hail from the targeted neighborhoods and oversee all projects that result from the five-year plan. This will help combat a long history of input from North and Northeast Portland residents being left out of city development plans, Manning said.

"The idea of this committee is it is community-based," she said. "Anybody funded under the plan will report to them."

GoLocalPDX

Nonprofit Says Portland Overcharged Them to Impede Public Records Request

By Annie Ellison
February 3, 2015

A non-profit organization claims the City of Portland attempted to obstruct public access to information by charging thousands of dollars for a records request.

The Southeast Uplift neighborhood coalition is planning to appeal \$2,562.32 the group paid for two massive files, the result of a public records saga that brought the Portland Street Fee opponents to Multnomah County court in December.

In one iteration of the city's plan to come up with roughly \$46 million to fund road repairs and maintenance -- now on hold for a statewide transportation bill -- Portland transportation officials looked to massive city data sets to determine how much businesses would need to pay for a tax-based fee. During that time, Southeast Uplift President Robert McCullough requested all work papers used by the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) to make the calculation.

According to a chart provided by PBOT, city staff spent 19 hours preparing the spreadsheets, something McCullough claims was a deliberate attempt to stymie the records release.

"All they had to do was take the spreadsheets, put them on a USB and send them," McCullough said. "There is no legitimacy to this at all."

McCullough said Southeast Uplift will make an appeal to the Multnomah County District Attorney, followed by the Multnomah County Court. McCullough, an energy consultant, wanted to review the data to complete a comprehensive analysis of his own.

The Transportation Bureau maintains the price was warranted, given the amount of staff time that went into fulfilling the request. But the issue brings to light a bigger problem in Oregon, according to Jann Carson of the American Civil Liberties Union. Fees for public records requests are forcing private citizens and non-profits to abandon records requests, she said.

"It has become a significant transparency problem in Oregon, the fees have become prohibitive," said Carson. "I'm glad Southeast Uplift is challenging the number of hours it took to complete that request."

Street fee data

McCullough's employee, Ramon Cabauatan, sent the following records request to the City of Portland's transportation bureau Nov. 12, 2014, on behalf of SE Uplift, requesting the fee be waived in the public's interest:

We request copies of all workpapers behind the Portland street fund calculations for determining the monthly contribution of businesses to the proposed fund; this includes, (but is not limited to) all records, spreadsheets, documents and formulas that are used to determine business contributions.

The city enlisted Innovative Growth Solutions consultant Gary Corbin, along with city staff, to analyze data from sources such as the city's Business License Information System, the Multnomah County Assessor Taxation Database, and City Utility Billing System. The data analysis would help the city estimate the amount businesses and private individuals would need to pay to fund a street fee through tax.

Three files, containing 26 spreadsheets -- one with 131,000 rows and 47 columns of data -- were delivered to McCullough Dec. 23, after he threatened the city with a lawsuit. The spreadsheets show several columns in which each row reads "redacted," and McCullough argues "all they did was copy 'redacted' on to seven columns."

"If any costs were actually incurred, we will be glad to pay them," he said.

PBOT spokesman Dylan Rivera said the bureau did not waive the fee because providing the records did not primarily benefit the general public when considering a number of factors, including what he called McCullough's focus on errors in the data.

As GoLocalPDX reported in December, McCullough found “thousands of errors” in the city’s data, which listed a Northeast Portland enema clinic as the city’s largest employer. However, the issue, he said, is the bureau’s move to bill the non-profit for 19 employee hours.

“It was not appropriate for this already financially challenged bureau to deviate from our ongoing work -- operating and maintaining the transportation system -- to do the analysis needed to provide these records,” Rivera said. “It was very time consuming to extract the data which included large spreadsheets from several different data sources.”

‘The technology is there’

Carson, of the ACLU, argues the city should be gathering and organizing data with the understanding that it is public information, and with that in mind, make it easy to share while complying with privacy laws.

“If everything is being kept on a spreadsheet, how difficult is it to maintain confidential information in a column so it can be easily redacted?” she asks. “The technology is there.”

ACLU Oregon sued the Jackson County Sheriff in 2011 over proposed fees for a records request. The judge ruled in 2012 the cost was unreasonable, forcing the Sheriff’s office to fulfill the request for just over one tenth of the original quote.

Carson said when an agency that falls under the Access to Public Records Act receives a request, the law allows staff to charge if the request will take staff away from their day-to-day duties. Agencies frequently say they have to pay for staff to redact and review confidential or privileged information.

“Often they’ll put an attorney on that,” Carson said. “For a non-profit, it amounts to it being an insurmountable hurdle to make that information transparent.”

By Dec. 9, SE Uplift filed an appeal in Multnomah County Circuit Court asking District Attorney Rod Underhill to provide work papers for the street fee calculation. The city provided McCullough with three spreadsheets Dec. 23.

\$2,562.32 fee

A chart, provided to Southeast Uplift by PBOT, lists the amount of time three staff spent on McCullough’s request, and their rate of pay: 11 hours at \$175 per hour, five hours at \$76.95 per hour, and three hours at \$84.19 per hour for the two files.

Rivera said Corbin, who was paid \$175 per hour, extracted data, while an attorney and a revenue bureau manager reviewed the records to determine which information could be disclosed, and which was private under the city’s Business License Law. The listed wages included overhead, Rivera said, and the bill came in just shy of the city’s \$2,720 estimate.

Carson said ACLU Oregon has bumped up against similar requests for information, and the organization has made the call in the past not to pursue the appeals process. When the organization sued the Jackson County Sheriff’s Office, Carson said it ultimately cost taxpayers because the sheriff’s office had to employ an attorney to debate the cost of the records request, which they ended up lowering.

“Because the fees that are projected to make this information available are prohibitive, unless there’s push back, how do we understand if this is the true cost?” Carson wonders.

She said high fees for public records requests result in many requests being abandoned, something she said undermines having an open records law in the first place.

McCullough said he plans to fight the fee, and claims Southeast Uplift has received multiple offers to help defray the cost.

“Allowing the city to withdraw from Oregon’s open document law is not an option, regardless of how complex the subterfuge has been presented,” McCullough said.