

The Oregonian

Portland arts funding: City Council celebrates money for Regional Arts & Culture Council

*By Andrew Theen
February 25, 2015*

The Portland City Council held an arts and culture love fest Wednesday, complete with a poetry slam reading, impromptu performance by the Portland Opera and mini-concert by elementary school students.

"In my humble opinion, this was the best presentation we've ever had," said Commissioner Nick Fish, who is the council's arts commissioner.

The occasion: The Regional Arts & Culture Council presented its annual state of the arts report. RACC issues millions of dollars in grants throughout the metro area each year to support nonprofits, arts organizations and performing arts centers. The city of Portland by far contributes most of RACC's funding.

"This is why the taxpayers of Portland invest money in the arts," Commissioner Amanda Fritz said after the presentation. "It is part of who we are, and it provides jobs."

Wednesday's meeting was both a celebration of RACC's widespread influence in the metro area and a chance for politicians and arts advocates to praise the city's heavy arts investment.

Eloise Damrosch, RACC's executive director, thanked the City Council for the money, which accounts for more than 60 percent of the organization's total budget.

During the current fiscal year, RACC will receive more discretionary cash from the city's general fund than several city offices and bureaus - including the Office of Equity & Human Rights, the Bureau of Emergency Management, the City Attorney's Office, the City Budget Office and the Office of Government Relations.

RACC, celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, is the successor to the Metropolitan Arts Commission, a former city agency that gave way to the not-for profit RACC in 1995.

"I'm privileged and pleased to steward our city's investment," Damrosch said. Private companies contributed \$1.3 million last year, according to the annual report. RACC acquired or commissioned dozens of public art pieces during 2014 as well, spending more than \$1.1 million.

RACC is one of the beneficiaries of the Arts Education & Access Fund, commonly known as the arts tax. The arts coalition expects more arts tax revenue in the 2014-15 fiscal year, as much as \$840,000, a more than fourfold increase over the previous fiscal year. Jeff Hawthorne, RACC's director of community engagement, said increased taxpayer compliance and "more aggressive collection" efforts by the city Revenue Bureau helped increase RACC's arts tax share.

But the bulk of arts tax revenue goes to Portland Public Schools to help maintain arts, music and dance teaching positions at elementary schools.

"One day maybe the arts tax will be on par with" other contributions from the city, Damrosch said.

The City Council's support for RACC is evident throughout the budget cycle.

During the fall budget adjustment process, the City Council decided to give an additional \$600,000 to RACC to fill a gap in expected revenue from the arts tax.

Increased collection and revenue from the arts tax is helping RACC get closer to its goal of providing 5 percent of the annual operating support for some arts organizations. Its report said the average recipient now gets 3.8 percent.

RACC awarded \$2 million in grants during the past year, according to the report, reaching 126 not-for-profit groups, 11 schools and 125 artists.

Beyond the in-house performances, the City Council heard testimony from an elementary school principal, high school slam poetry champion and an independent and struggling artist who thanked the city for backing the arts.

Joe Walsh, a frequent critic of the City Council also testified in support the council's arts funding. "The arts are a pathway to the soul," Walsh said, wearing a T-shirt decrying Mayor Charlie Hales as a dictator. "This makes us human."

Fish praised his City Council colleagues for their support. "We have always found the resources," Fish said, "in good times and bad, to fund arts."

Last week, city officials sent out a reminder that the voter-approved \$35 arts tax is due April 15.

City of Portland's Support For RACC		
Source	2013-14 Fiscal Year	2014-15 Fiscal Year
General Fund	\$3.6 million	\$3.6 million
Percent for Art Ordinance	\$857,090	\$145,000
Arts Tax	\$188,329	\$840,000
Work for Art Ordinance	\$200,000	\$200,000
One-Time Requests (fall budget adjustment, request to restore grants)	--	\$850,000
Total:	\$4.8 million	\$5.6 million

Uber in Portland: Despite ban, a third of suburban ride-share trips end in city

*By Joseph Rose
February 25, 2015*

Despite voluntarily pausing operations in Portland two months ago, Uber said Wednesday that one in three of its ride-share trips starting in the surrounding suburbs still end in Oregon's largest city.

Although Portland currently bans drivers who are using their private cars as taxis from picking up riders in the city limits, Hillsboro, Vancouver, Beaverton, Tigard and Gresham allow people to use Uber's smartphone app to hail such rides. Nothing in the law prevents those customers from being dropped off downtown, at Portland International Airport and in the parts of the city.

The bottom line, according to data shared by the \$40 billion San Francisco startup, is that Portland's ban has, as expected, failed to keep ride-share drivers off its street.

Of course, that may not be the most interesting part of the Portland area ridership data posted on Uber's blog on Wednesday.

About 70 percent of all Uber rides originating in Hillsboro, Beaverton, Gresham and Tigard actually end in neighboring towns. The company said that shows that thousands of people in the Portland area are increasingly relying on ride-sharing for every day commuting between communities.

"Uber is not only helping connect communities, but is an option thousands of residents have come to rely on," said Brooke Steger, Uber's Northwest manager. "While big population centers like Beaverton and Hillsboro lead the way in the volume of trips requested, they account for half of the picture."

In fact, Uber's "trip flow" data show smaller cities such as Lake Oswego, Happy Valley, Tigard and Wilsonville made up 50 of demand in the Portland area in January. Smaller population centers are "just as reliant on Uber to get around," Steger said.

"Whether you live in a small town or major city," she said on the blog. "Uber is making it convenient for communities of all sizes to explore and connect with their neighbors across the region like never before."

In late December, after two weeks of illegally picking up riders in Portland, Uber agreed to hit the brakes on its controversial UberX ride service -- which allows residents to hail and pay for private rides with the push of a smartphone button -- for three months.

UberX contracts with drivers who use their private vehicles as de facto taxis, which is illegal in Portland.

Of course, for suburban customers currently using Uber to get into Portland, the biggest challenge is finding a ride back home.

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales has promised Uber that a citizen task force will submit new for-hire transportation rules that will allow it to resume operations by Apr. 9.

However, with a little more than a month to go, the citizen Private For-Hire Transportation Innovation Task Force has just started drafting the new rules that will somehow balance the interests of existing cab companies with emerging app-based ride-share services.

Last week, city transportation planners conceded that the rapidly approaching deadline has become "a concern."

The task force has also scheduled a public hearing for Thursday that will allow Portlanders to have their say on the city's taxi service and ride-sharing companies. It will be held at 6 p.m. on the second floor of the Portland Building.

Portland Children's Levy relies too heavily on Dan Saltzman, audit finds: Portland City Hall Roundup

*By Andrew Theen
February 25, 2015*

The Portland Children's Levy, the voter-approved fund that pays for abuse prevention and other child-centric programs, is well managed but heavily reliant on Commissioner Dan Saltzman and his staff, according to an audit released Tuesday.

The Children's Levy, established in 2002 and renewed in 2008 and 2013, is Saltzman's brainchild. The fund awards about \$10 million a year to nonprofits that provide services such as child-abuse prevention, early childhood education, after-school mentoring and family hunger relief.

Auditors found the levy grants money to worthy programs and manages its finances well, holding administrative costs to 5 percent or less. But the City Auditor's Office also documented "ongoing challenges in program structure and grant decision-making."

In 2003, the city inked an intergovernmental agreement with Multnomah County to set goals and share responsibility for administering the program. That deal expired in 2008. "Much of the decision-making for the Children's Levy has shifted from the City Council to the Allocation Committee and the Commissioner of Public Affairs [Saltzman]," auditors said.

The County Board of Commissioners still has a representative on the allocation committee, and continued to approve grants as an elected body through 2012"before that practice was discontinued"

Despite the county presence, "in practice the Chair [of the committee] has been the City's Commissioner of Public Affairs since the Levy began," auditors said.

Information about the levy can be difficult to find, because it's not listed on a specific bureau's website. "There is a risk of the loss of staff expertise and institutional knowledge if the City does not have a defined structure for administering the Levy," auditors said.

Auditors also recommended more transparency on how the allocation committee selects which programs to fund, noting that the process "seemed unpredictable" to some community members.

Other cities studied by Portland auditors had larger and "more representative" committees to award grants, an interview process to clarify application details and an appeals process for applicants that were turned away.

Auditors recommended a review of decision-making to make sure the process is fair and transparent, focusing on the scoring process and goals tied to contracts to communities of color. A more explicit framework for how the City Council interacts with the program, sets goals and oversees and staffs the allocation committee is also a priority.

Saltzman and Levy Director Lisa Pellegrino said in a statement that accompanied the audit they agreed with the recommendations and are "in the process of creating recommendations for change to future funding processes."

The Portland Tribune

Audit: Keep spending levy money wisely

*By Jim Redden
February 26, 2015*

The voter-approved Portland Children's Levy is living up to its goals of providing millions of dollars to proven programs that benefit young people with little administrative overhead.

However, an analysis conducted by the City Auditor's Office says that the council should play a stronger role in setting priorities for how the money is spent. Although the council approves the grants, the recommendations are made by a volunteer citizens committee that is not well known.

The analysis conducted by the City Auditor's Office did not find fault with how the millions of dollars of public funds have been spent over the years, but it did find that the spending recommendations have been made with little council oversight, and it questions whether the public is aware of who made them and how.

"A framework adopted by the City Council for the Children's Levy would do two things: specify the city's goals and desired outcomes for the levy, and clarify roles and responsibilities," the audit says.

The Portland Children's Levy is unique in city government because it does not appropriate money to an agency that provides service. Rather, it raises property tax dollars that are then provided to existing nonprofit organizations that serve children. It is currently funding 59 different programs for children age birth through 24.

The programs are located throughout the city and run the gamut from Friends of the Children to Neighborhood House, Albina Head Start, Meals on Wheels and Self Enhancement Inc. Their services are found in preschools, home-based childcares, elementary, middle and high schools, community centers, nonprofit organizations, soccer fields, basketball courts, music auditoriums and parks.

The spending recommendations are made by a five-member volunteer Allocation Committee chaired by a single council member — Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who has sponsored all the ballot measures. The committee staff is based in Saltzman's office, but staff members are paid by the program and are not city employees. The audit says this situation could cause problems.

"Information on the Children's Levy could be hard for a resident to find — it is not listed as a bureau on the city's web page, and residents must know to look to the commissioner's web page to find a link. Under the city's commission form of government, commissioner assignments may change at the mayor's discretion. It is not clear whether the existing staff would follow a change in assignments. There is a risk of the loss of staff expertise and institutional knowledge if the city does not have a defined structure for administering the levy," the audit says.

Saltzman proposed the first levy to the council in early 2001. At the time it broke with the relationship that had been established between the city and Multnomah County. Under an earlier agreement called Resolution A, city government was supposed to provide urban services such as water and sewer, and the county was supposed to provide social services. But Saltzman did not think enough was being done to

help children, especially low-income children, and he persuaded the council to place a levy on the Nov. 5, 2002, ballot to raise millions of property tax dollars for existing nonprofit children's programs.

The voters agreed with Saltzman and approved the levy — formally known as the Children's Investment Fund — by a margin of 106,604 to 83,380. The margin of victory increased with the two renewal measures, culminating in the passage of the November 2013 measure by a margin of 119,026 to 40,115. According to the audit, the program has distributed \$57 million to organizations that provide services to children over the past five years. Administrative costs have averaged 5 percent a year, as required by the levy language.

At first, the city had an agreement with the county to cooperate on the allocation of the funds.

According to that audit, the agreement "provided the initial framework in 2003, with goals, criteria for selecting grants, and defined responsibilities for Children's Levy staff, the Allocation Committee, City Council and County Board of Commissioners." That agreement expired in 2008, however, and was not replaced with a similar framework.

In its absence, the Allocation Committee has developed its own goals and strategies to guide funding decisions, the audit says. Although the audit does not find fault with any of the decisions, it says the council should show more leadership.

"(W)ithout long-term goals adopted by Council, it may be difficult to ensure funds address the highest priority community needs, or to document the levy outcomes over time," says the audit, which also calls for more transparency of the funding decisions.

Saltzman says he supports the recommendations and notes the Allocation Committee spent much of its most recent meeting discussing how to increase public involvement. It will soon seek public comment on recommendations to ensure that the programs it funds serve all children effectively, Saltzman said in a Feb. 12 letter to City Auditor Mary Hull Caballero co-signed by Portland Children's Levy Director Lisa Pellegrino.

Portland is not the only local government with such a program. They also exist in Seattle, Oakland, San Francisco and two Florida communities, Jacksonville and Broward County. Some were inspired by Saltzman's example.

Portland police to rejoin FBI task force on terrorism

*By Steve Law
February 25, 2015*

The Portland City Council, despite strong concerns about potential civil liberties violations, formally agreed Wednesday to have the Portland Police Bureau resume working with the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force.

By a 3-2 vote, the council approved a memorandum of understanding that commits the city to resume collaborating with the FBI-led task force, by assigning two Portland police officers to work under its direction.

Mayor Charlie Hales, who once opposed Portland's involvement in the Joint Terrorism Task Force, reversed course and supported the move, along with City Commissioners Dan Saltzman and Nick Fish.

Commissioners Amanda Fritz and Steve Novick voted against the idea. The ACLU of Oregon and other civil rights advocates also opposed the move, citing potential rights abuses by the FBI and concerns that Portland police might be required to act contrary to the city's values.

Fritz said the FBI's definition of terrorism, which includes efforts to influence government via coercion or intimidation, is so expansive it might encompass actions by protesters or corporations. She cited fears the FBI-led task force will trample on citizens rights, and that Portland police serving on the task force would be obliged to work at the federal agency's behest.

Hales said he will rethink the city's role in the Joint Terrorism Task Force in the future if some of opponents' fears are realized.

City gets two new Street Seats applications, 13 renewals

*By Jennifer Anderson
February 25, 2015*

The city's Street Seats program has attracted just two new applicants this time around, despite recent efforts to encourage more interest.

Bamboo Izakaya on Northeast Alberta Street and Bunk Bar/Water Avenue Coffee on Southeast Water Avenue are the two new businesses that have applied.

The Bamboo Izakaya proposal includes a base made from a cedar deck, weather-sealed for durability.

The tables rise up from the deck and cantilever out at various lengths and angles. According to their design submitted, "The concept is to create a dynamic space that is unique and catches people's attention."

The space includes 18-inch high planters that follow the angles of the tables, and can be benches. They'll be filled with plants of Japanese origin with recommendations from the Portland Japanese Garden.

Under the tables are basins of river rocks that allow water that collects in the table channels to filter down onto the street.

The Bunk Bar/Water Avenue Coffee proposal is a bit simpler, consisting of four square tables covered by a slanted roof made of corrugated galvanized metal and translucent carbon fiber, occupying 24 feet in front of both businesses on Southeast Taylor Street.

Both are pending internal review by the Portland Bureau of Transportation, which oversees the program.

Earlier this year, PBOT extended the application deadline to Feb. 4 and lowered the annual permit fee from \$500 to \$250.

In addition, 13 existing Street Seats applicants are seeking renewal.

The public can view all of the applications and comment on any of the proposals through March 10 by email or postal mail.

Portland Streetcar ready for expansion in September

*By Steve Law
February 25, 2015*

The Portland Streetcar system will expand in September, with more cars, more operating money and more miles of track.

Starting Sept. 12, when the Tilikum Crossing bridge formally opens, Portland Streetcar will be able to make a complete loop through downtown and the inner-east side, on both sides of the Willamette River.

The system will grow to 17 streetcars, 76 stops, and 14.7 miles of track, according to an annual report presented Wednesday to the Portland City Council.

"Streetcar ridership is high, and it's growing and exceeding expectations," said Dan Bower, who took over last April as executive director of the nonprofit that runs the system.

Though the system has had more than its share of growing pains, including delays in getting new streetcars deployed, five other cities around the country have embarked on new urban streetcar systems since Portland started the trend in 2001.

Next fiscal year, Bower said, Trimet will boost its funding for the system, in recognition of its increasingly important role in urban transit. Trimet will contribute \$7.2 million to operations in the 2015-16 budget year that starts in July, up from the current \$4.2 million.

Mayor Charlie Hales, an avid streetcar booster, endorsed moves to grant streetcars more of a priority status in central city streets, in recognition of their growing transit role.

Daily ridership is now about 14,740 on weekdays, jumping to about 20,000 during the summer, and 11,000 on Saturdays.

The Portland Mercury

Behind the Scenery

The City's New Olive Branch to Parks Workers Belies a Two-Year Labor Fight

By Dirk VanderHart
February 25, 2015

WELCOME TO THE ERA of \$15 an hour, Portland.

As expected, Portland City Council made local history on February 18, voting unanimously to enshrine that nationally famous minimum wage into city policy for all full-time city employees and contract workers.

"Fifteen dollars an hour is being recognized now as the wage floor for all US workers," said Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who wouldn't commit to that amount last year when faced with a political challenger who forced the minimum wage issue. "It's where the climb out of a low-wage reality begins."

The sentiment is more sweeping than the reality. The new policy will affect a little more than a dozen full-time employees, and around 150 janitors, security guards, and parking attendants who contract with the city ["\$15...for Some," News, Feb 18]. More than 1,800 non-full-time workers will remain at lower wages.

That's hardly the point, according to city hall staffers. They say the vote was just a start—a good faith, this-is-what-we-can-afford-now sort of statement that will be the first of several changes to come. This being Portland, there's already a new committee in the works to study how to help the hundreds of workers who toil for well under \$15 ["Starting at the Bottom," News, Jan 7]. The city's elected leaders say that's a top priority.

"We know there are a lot of workers who won't be affected by this first step," Mayor Charlie Hales told a crowded room at the hearing. "There are more steps we want to take, particularly to deal with our seasonal and part-time workers."

But there was something no one at the meeting, including Hales, bothered to mention: If the mayor is serious about helping out seasonal workers, there's an obvious place to start.

Since 2013, Laborers' Local 483—a union that already represents several groups of parks workers—has been trying to win extra protections and increased wages for hundreds of employees under an existing contract with the city. The union contends about 270 seasonal parks workers, many of them paid low wages, do essentially the same work as full-time union members who not only earn more but also collect benefits.

The only difference? The low-wage workers' positions are classified as "casual." Most are allowed to work only 1,200 hours a year (an average of about 23 hours a week). Because of that, the city insists, those workers aren't subject to the contract. Local 483, in a complaint filed in April 2013, has argued that's an unfair, illegal distinction.

"They're not supposed to be excluded from the contract, because they're doing our members' work," says Erica Askin, the union's business manager. "They can be doing the same work side-by-side with our members, year after year."

It's unclear what the shift would cost, but folding these so-called "recreational support" employees into the union contract would get even more city employees up above \$15 an hour. Union representatives—and some of the food-stamp-reliant city employees who'd benefit from such a change—argue this is precisely the sort of "what-we-can-do-now" effort Hales and other leaders are talking about.

Instead, the city is fighting the grievance every step of the way.

JUDITH PULMAN is an example of the type of worker Local 483 is fighting over.

Pulman loves her job at the city's Multnomah Arts Center (MAC), a popular parks-run instructional center in Multnomah Village. She just wishes it didn't make her feel ashamed.

The 31-year-old Montavilla resident has worked for MAC since 2010, helping visitors at the front desk on some shifts, coordinating workshops during others. The job began as side work while she pursued a

master's degree. Then it became something aspirational—Pulman figured if she did a good job for long enough, the city would find her a full-time position.

Now, Pulman's position at MAC—one of several she's forced to keep to make a living—has become a source of bitter disappointment.

"It seems like we're not any kind of priority to the city," she says. "It's really shameful, in all honesty, the secret that all these parks workers are getting food stamps and on Medicaid and relying on social services to stay at the city."

Pulman has varying duties at MAC, which pay varying rates. She can work at the front desk and make \$12.50 an hour. If she's helping coordinate courses and programs at the center, she makes far more: \$17.50. No matter the position, she's still allowed just 1,200 hours a year. Pulman says it's unfair she gets paid two rates for the work, given her tenure with parks. Unionized employees do similar work, she says, and their wages don't shift. Plus, they get benefits.

"My skills and my qualifications don't put me in a different class than those people," she says.

Pulman's far from alone. One of her coworkers, Mari Paulus, has worked at MAC since 1999. She's still paid less than \$15 when she works the front desk.

"How do you call someone who's been committed for 15 years a seasonal worker?" Paulus asks.

At the February 18 hearing, city commissioners heard from another MAC worker, Sarah Kowaleski, a five-year parks employee who described being reliant on food stamps and turning to food banks to eat.

"I'm living in poverty," Kowaleski said. "I am counted on by my supervisor, but what I did not count on in my years of service is that I would struggle to feed myself."

SEVERAL THINGS contribute to Kowaleski's situation. First, of course, are the low wages paid to support workers within the parks bureau. As the Mercury's reported, parks accounted for 97 percent of the more than 1,800 city employees making less than \$15 an hour—many less than \$12. Most of those parks workers are seasonal.

The second is the "casual" designation these employees work under, a classification that denies access to benefits and steeply limits how much they can work.

If Local 483 prevails in its grievance, that hour limit would disappear for staffers doing the work of union members. And the wages, in many cases, would rise. The lowest-paid employees under the union's current contract make \$16.71 after just six months of employment. They're paid more than \$20 an hour after three years.

But the city has dug in its heels. When the union first filed the grievance in 2013, officials sent a response asking Local 483 to specify exactly which employees were performing the same work as union members, and what that work entailed.

"They basically filed a grievance about a concept," says Jon Uto, a labor relations coordinator with the city. "Typically people tell us who, when, and where, and we can go investigate."

But Uto also acknowledged that casual workers perform some of the same work as unionized employees—tasks as wide-ranging as acting as a receptionist at community centers, answering questions about programs, scheduling classes, and collecting money from the public. The system has operated like this for decades, he says.

For the city, the key factor in whether an employee should fall under the union's contract is the number of hours they work. Since Kowaleski and others work 1,200 hours a year or less—and don't have the formal title of "recreational lead" or "recreational coordinator"—they can be left out.

"For us, that's the clear line," Uto says. "These types of people have been doing the same types of work as [union-represented] employees for years. People have been doing this work since the '70s."

According to the union's contract with the city, though, such overlap between union and non-union employees' work is supposed to be kept to a minimum.

The contract says "support" employees will be assigned to support work "and will not normally be upgraded to classifications covered by the contract except on an incidental basis as required by day-to-day work flow."

The city's also offered another argument against the grievance: that it's unnecessary. Uto and other staffers say the workers in question could vote to be represented by Local 483 and negotiate their own contract with the city. (Not that it would be so simple: The city, for example, tried to squelch an ultimately successful attempt by Portland park rangers to organize with Local 483.)

Uto says some staffers suspect the union is using its grievance over the seasonal workers to circumvent the prescribed route for organizing new workers.

"That's a very different way of doing things," he says—and the city's not even sure it's allowed.

The fight will be decided soon. The parties went before an arbitrator in late January to argue their cases. Both sides are supposed to file detailed summaries of their arguments by early March, with a binding decision expected soon after.

If the union prevails, it would mean an order for the city to stop paying support personnel on the cheap for work that's supposed to go to union members.

"There's no way they can cease and desist because they need these people," says Askin, the union business manager.

That means the ruling could amount to a raise for those workers—forcing leaders to take another step toward what they now say is a top priority: a higher minimum wage. But those leaders aren't talking about the union dispute and its consequences.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who oversees parks and has championed creating more full-time positions in the bureau, said she didn't know enough to comment. And a spokesman for the mayor, who oversees the human resources bureau and labor relations team, said he couldn't talk about the case. Instead, spokesman Dana Haynes repeated the mayor's sunny pledge of persistent, incremental change.

"This decision to increase the minimum wage is a floor, not a ceiling," Haynes said of the new \$15 policy. "It was not the mayor's intention to address that in one fell swoop."

Hall Monitor

For Hales, Earnestness Pays Off

By Denis C. Theriault
February 25, 2015

ANY REAL DRAMA over Portland City Hall's looming vote on whether to embrace—but hopefully reject—entreaties to rejoin an FBI-led anti-terrorism task force after a decade of national iconoclasm vanished pretty quickly on Thursday, February 19.

Only one more city commissioner needed to side with Commissioners Dan Saltzman and Nick Fish, resolute supporters for rapprochement with the federal Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), to put the city back in. And Mayor Charlie Hales, master of ceremonies during council hearings, used the privilege of that post to explain where he stood almost immediately after the meeting began.

"We should participate," said Hales, who helped feed the city's initial JTTF rebellion with a lone vote to pull out in 2001 (the rest of the council voted to get out in 2005). "But with some very clear caveats."

Yes, Hales allowed, the FBI and the federal government have starred in some shame-worthy episodes over the years.

And yes, he still has concerns that Portland officers working for the FBI could be given work that violates Oregon's strict civil liberties laws—investigating and producing federal records about people in mosques and at protests who haven't committed crimes.

But just as weighty, he said, were a recent profusion of smaller-bore terror attacks, neighbor-on-neighbor massacres that looked nothing like September 11. He mentioned Copenhagen and Paris and the Boston Marathon. He said Portland had to face facts about "the radical evil in the world."

"I don't know how many people think Portland is in a bubble, and we're not part of that world. Maybe you could have maintained that notion after 9/11," he said in his office after the vote, noting the grander ambitions in the smoke over the Pentagon and World Trade Center. "But what's world dominant about the

Boston Marathon? Or a Copenhagen [synagogue or café]? Nothing. There's nothing to distinguish those places from a sidewalk in Portland."

It was the mass shooting in Copenhagen, just days before the vote, that tipped him over the edge. Ironically, if Hales had held the vote just a week sooner—instead of adding extra time for JTTF critics to keep plying the council with arguments—he likely would have sided with Commissioners Steve Novick and Amanda Fritz and kept the city out.

"It was always a close call," he said when we met.

Hales was careful to tell the Oregonian he wasn't thinking politically, noting the outcry in the council chambers over a vote he admitted might not be popular in skeptical, idiosyncratic Portland (see: fluoride and vaccines).

But that doesn't mean Hales won't see some political gain. The Portland Business Alliance—its members deeply upset over Hales' handling of the street fee—were thrilled with his vote. Their wallets might open a little more easily next year (assuming Hales finally announces he's running for re-election).

And Hales even got to fire an unexpected zinger at one of his rumored rivals, retired Police Chief Mike Reese. Reese, you'll recall, flirted with a run against Hales in 2012 with notions he'd be the law-and-order darling of the business community.

Hales' reluctant comfort with the JTTF rests, in large part, on his faith in his new chief, Larry O'Dea—tasked with choosing officers willing to fink out the feds if Oregon laws and values are called into question.

I asked the mayor if he'd still feel so comfortable if Reese were chief.

"No," he said, "in a word."

It's as pointed as Hales has ever been about Reese. And it's proof that most decisions—even when they're earnest—remain wrapped in layers of intrigue.

Required Reading: Amanda Fritz's Speech on Why Portland Should Have Kept Out of the JTTF

*By Denis C. Theriault
February 26, 2015*

Commissioner Amanda Fritz was perfectly clear last week when explaining her vote against Portland's reunion with a federal anti-terrorism task force, unpersuaded by the promised gains in safety and lamenting an inevitable diminishing of community trust once we send two of our cops over to work with the FBI on a full-time bases.

"We had an opportunity to create more confidence within the community. I don't believe with this action we are doing that," she said during that hearing.

Of course, she was railing against what was already a foregone conclusion. Mayor Charlie Hales, a potential swing vote along with Commissioner Steve Novick, had led off the afternoon's proceedings with a long and earnest explanation of why he'd decided to be the third vote in favor of rejoining the Joint Terrorism Task Force.

And so it was again when the council met yesterday to make things official, signing—without amendments, which the FBI had told the city it wouldn't even consider—a memorandum of understanding essentially serving as Portland's contract with the feds. Hales hadn't changed his mind. And neither had Commissioners Nick Fish or Dan Saltzman.

This time, though, Fritz really let go, reading from prepared remarks that crystallized some of the best arguments against joining the JTTF again.

The word "security" is an easy concept to stand behind because then you can justify just about anything, surveillance, tracking citizens, profiling them, collecting data on them, keeping that data forever as an indictment of criminal intent whether it was, or not and arresting people for no other crime than for being poor or simply peacefully expressing their dissatisfaction with government policies.

We have become a society that uses the same techniques on its citizens that we rail against in other countries. Every single one of us is subject to the power of fear in a mortal world. This includes FBI agents, mothers, fathers, police, corporate CEOs, corporate CEOs' husbands and wives.... You and me and so on.

While it is assumed that all parties to these investigations are operating in the best interests of the citizens of the U.S., there are numerous examples nationally of stings, setups, surveillance, profiling, arrests for civil protest, manipulation and intimidation of and by the media, and arrests for simply researching and disseminating information about public policy, that makes this often a messy affair and one where public trust continues to be eroded.

Fritz has since linked to a copy of her speech on her blog, after requests from myself and some other community members. I've copied the whole thing below. (The printed version's slightly different from the one she read aloud, with some minor ad-libs). It's worth a couple of minutes of your morning to read it over.

I have here an article posted on the American Civil Liberties (ACLU)'s Human Rights Watch web site, entitled "US: Surveillance Harming Journalism, Law, Democracy"

The report is 121 pages long. I considered reading it into the record today, but decided to refrain. I ask you to keep that in mind as I make this other statement, which is long but not 121 pages. The FBI's definition of a Terrorist is a person or organization that is known to "influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion".

- *This could be applied in many ways ...to citizens who peacefully express their objection to government policies, by Corporations through their lobbyists, by Wall Street through its engineered defaults and domestic law enforcement agencies through their own interpretations of what is a public right.*

- *The FBI interprets terrorist in the broadest manner and that is "a presumption that an individual may commit a crime". All of us could be put into that category at one time or another, and not even know it.*

I have been told that I do not have the right to make amendments to this agreement, which defeats the purpose of the Council considering the MOU on our Agenda. So while I am unable to propose changes sought by the ACLU, I will read the problems identified in their letter into the record.

[See paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 in letter posted here]

- *The fact is, the MOU is a template used by the FBI for all jurisdictions wishing to enter the JTTF and that it cannot be changed.*

- *This of course was part of the problem with the previous negotiations with the FBI where we tried to craft an agreement at that time that would be representative of our collective community values of free expression and information sharing.*

- *With that agreement I hoped we would have some ability to observe and interact with the FBI in a way that was more transparent and knowledgeable for Council, the Mayor and the Chief of Police and more constructive for the community.*

- *We attempted to get annual reporting, we attempted to get secret clearance for the Mayor and we attempted to have more control over our officers and their allegiance to the City and State laws. We failed on at least two of these three goals.*

- *It could be said*

- * *that the Mayor will get reporting from the FBI at least what they want to share, and*

- * *that there is no need for top secret clearance because we trust those involved to be upholding the "law" and*

- * *that our officers will uphold state law even though they are under the direct supervision of the FBI,*

- *We find now and probably already knew that good transparent communication is just not what the FBI does. And even our own Police are put in the position of NOT communicating everything to us because it ostensibly jeopardizes our “security”.*

The word “security” is an easy concept to stand behind because then you can justify just about anything, surveillance, tracking citizens, profiling them, collecting data on them, keeping that data forever as an indictment of criminal intent whether it was, or not and arresting people for no other crime than for being poor or simply peacefully expressing their dissatisfaction with government policies.

We have become a society that uses the same techniques on its citizens that we rail against in other countries. Every single one of us is subject to the power of fear in a mortal world. This includes FBI agents, mothers, fathers, police, corporate CEO’s, corporate CEO’s husbands and wives.... You and me and so on.

While it is assumed that all parties to these investigations are operating in the best interests of the citizens of the U.S., there are numerous examples nationally of stings, setups, surveillance, profiling, arrests for civil protest, manipulation and intimidation of and by the media, and arrests for simply researching and disseminating information about public policy, that makes this often a messy affair and one where public trust continues to be eroded.

If there was a perfect world where people had what they need that there wasn’t such a massive difference between those who believe they have the right to laud their wealth over the 99%, where gun production and use was not so prevalent for the accumulation of that wealth and the proliferation of that fear, then we probably would not be in this situation where we as human beings often cannot communicate with each other about our collective needs and that we must turn against our neighbors our citizens, to “fight” each other. The meaning of the word fight is indicative of our problem... it means—to struggle, to keep in check, to control, to stifle, to confront, to combat, to quarrel with, to argue with, all of which keep us further and further from peaceful constructive solutions, and each side digs in.

When it comes to the actual reality of terrorists, secrecy may be needed to stop a violent crime in our community. I understand there are some bad people out there and to catch them we must be smarter than them which includes some level of secrecy. Unfortunately we all get caught in the wake of that deception and fear. But the City of Boston’s participation in the JTTF did not prevent the Boston Marathon bombing.

We should acknowledge the advice of our own duly appointed Portland Human Rights Commission, who said,

“Federal Guidelines Governing FBI Operations expanded to grant greater permissions and flexibility to the FBI for surveillance and investigation activities. The “new guidelines have loosened previous restrictions, allowing greater agency discretion and permitting intrusions that erode civil liberties in the interest of protecting national security..... The absence of oversight, accountability, and transparency inherent with a JTTF collaboration will exasperate longstanding tensions stemming from racial profiling, use of force, and negative perceptions about Portland’s police.”

With the passage of this MOU, we officially enter the world where information is purposely hidden from public view, and the City of Portland agrees to be complicit with that deception.

I believe that gaining the public trust first starts here at home.

As evidenced by the need for the DOJ agreement, we have a long ways to go to gain that trust. With approval of this agreement, we are taking a step back from any progress made.

As I said at the hearing, when the IRA was terrorizing England with bombs and attacks in pubs and hotels, we pulled together, we united as communities, we worked for greater trust. The biggest threat we have is lack of trust in our police. I cannot condone this approach and therefore I respectfully vote NO.

Daily Journal of Commerce

\$1 million available for affordable housing projects

*By Shelby King
February 25, 2015*

The Portland Housing Bureau has up to \$1 million available for developers to tackle affordable housing efforts.

The bureau on Tuesday announced the availability of money to cover costs associated with construction or rehabilitation, land acquisition or other forms of site control. The money may also be used as partial financing to purchase multifamily housing for the purpose of restricting rents that previously were market rate.

“One of the benefits of the Opportunity Fund,” PHB spokeswoman Martha Calhoon said, “is that it offers more flexibility than the way we typically put out money, and allows us to move more quickly on opportunities outside of our regular funding cycle and outside of urban renewal boundaries.”

The bureau is “encouraging the speedy deployment” of dollars, and hoping to have recipients chosen by March 31.

PHB officials identified six priorities that potential developers should try to integrate into projects, stating that those that meet more would be considered stronger applicants. Those priorities include implementing low-cost strategies, leveraging the current multifamily building boom by buying into existing apartments with unrestricted rents, pursuing projects that include mixed-income and mixed-use, preventing displacement in at-risk neighborhoods, creating family-size housing and creating housing for veterans and other vulnerable populations.

The PHB intends to begin awarding money as applications are received and evaluated, and will do so until March 31, or until the dollars are gone.

For more information, visit www.portlandoregon.gov/phb/66124.

More apartments coming to North Portland

*By Shelby King
February 25, 2015*

A Portland developer has plans to add 104 apartment units in North Portland, slightly south of a 206-unit building under construction.

The Bureau of Development Services on Feb. 20 issued a construction permit for a five-story apartment building with at-grade parking and ground-level retail space at 3270 N. Vancouver Ave., near the intersection with Cook Street.

The property owner, according to information filed with the city, is Portland-based Cook Street Lofts LLC. The Oregon Secretary of State’s business directory names Lance Inouye as a registered agent of Cook Street Lofts. Inouye is chief financial officer at PREM Group and formerly was CFO at Gerding Edlen Development Co. LLC.

The owner has hired Vancouver, Wash.-based Gaither & Sons Construction Co. for the \$9 million project. Jordan Gaither of Gaither & Sons did not want to comment on the project without the developer’s permission, but city records indicate that the largest apartment will measure 788 square feet.

Across Cook Street from the project site – the former site of a Wonder Bread bakery – the 206-unit Cook Street Apartments is nearing completion. Sierra Construction Co. is building five stories of studios, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units over ground-floor retail space with underground parking for Lake Union Partners, a Seattle-based company that previously developed The Addy apartments at Northwest 18th Avenue and Northrup Street.

The Portland Business Journal

Tell Portland officials what you think about taxis, Uber and Lyft

*By Malia Spencer
February 25, 2015*

The official process for opening Portland roads to on-demand ride services such as Uber and Lyft is turning to the public for residents' ideas on improving the city's taxi laws.

The Innovation Task Force, which was convened by Portland Commissioner Steve Novick following the launch of Uber in Portland in December, is holding a public hearing Feb. 26 from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., at 1120 S.W. Fifth Ave, to get community input on what the new rules governing taxis and other for-hire transit services should look like.

Also, this week, Uber, which stopped serving Portland two weeks after its launch but still operates in the suburbs, released some ride data around usage.

According to a blog post by Brooke Steger, Uber's general manager for the Pacific Northwest, 70 percent of Uber's rides begin and end in neighboring cities to Portland. The service can drop off within the city of Portland but can't pick up fares.

"Though roughly 1 in 3 rides still wind up in the Rose City, we also found out that residents in Tigard are far more likely to take Uber to visit a neighbor than to head into the city," Steger wrote.

The company didn't get into specifics, but noted that hundreds of people have signed up to be drivers where the service can operate.

In the two weeks it ran in Portland, more than 10,000 rides were completed within the city.

The city is overhauling its taxi laws and working with the taxi companies as well as services such as Uber and Lyft. The group has met since January and initial recommendations to the City Council are expected April 25 and final recommendations in the summer.

Uber plans to begin operating in Portland in April.