

The Oregonian

Portland's eastside underserved by Park Rangers as complaints rise

By Andrew Theen

March 12, 2015

Portland's parks rangers, the goodwill ambassadors and friendly faces seen throughout the Rose City's public parks system, are increasingly in demand east of the Willamette River.

The rangers would love to patrol on the eastside more, but park officials say they don't have enough rangers and are bound by "historic commitments" to downtown. That leaves the popular employees as largely a reactionary force, unable to provide a constant presence as complaints about homeless camping and other issues rise.

On Wednesday, the City Council heard an update on how the seven full-time staffers and fluctuating number of seasonal workers are coping with the increased workload and responsibilities.

The Portland Bureau of Parks & Recreation employees are tasked with educating or excluding residents from city parks for any number of offenses -- drugs, alcohol, and homeless people camped out on public property. Rangers responded to more than 1,600 camping calls since January 2014, leading to hundreds of social service and mental health referrals.

They're busy, and most visible on west side of the Willamette River. That's by design.

According to the report, 64 percent of calls for service for ranger-related issues originated east of the Willamette River, but just 14 percent of resources were dedicated to that part of town for patrols. The ranger dispatch line receives roughly 200-300 calls per month.

"While PP&R has used one-time dollars and management discretion to assign ranger capacity to hot spots citywide, this model is not sustainable, not equitable, and needs to be addressed with additional Council guidance," the report said.

Today, ranger resources are dedicated largely to Forest and Washington Parks, as well as all parks in the Central Business District -- such as the Park Blocks, O'Bryant Square and Governor Tom McCall Waterfront Park.

Tim Crail, senior policy analyst in Commissioner Amanda Fritz's office, said the city made a commitment in 2011 to businesses downtown to maintain a ranger presence after the city ended a Clean and Safe contract.

Parks officials presented the City Council with three options: divert some rangers from their "historic commitments" to downtown and the westside (three positions are also funded out of the Washington Park Transportation Management Association), ask for more money, or do a combination of the two.

"If we were to divert from resources we committed to spending downtown, are you OK with that. That's kind of the question," Crail said. "And we're not even saying we should. There's need [for rangers] downtown."

Jennifer Yocom, parks community relations manager, said the bureau tries to respond to calls in order of emergency. Because the bureau purposefully dedicates the bulk of its workforce to the westside, rangers inevitably end up scrambling. "Our calls for service work on the east side ends up being reactive, not patrols & regular presence," Yocom said in an email.

The widening gap between service levels on the each side of the river bears out in survey results that show outer east Portland residents feel their parks are unsafe in comparison to downtown and Central City parks.

Parks officials believe that would change if rangers were a more present force elsewhere in the city.

Now, with more than \$31 million in general fund dollars to spend during the next fiscal year, the City Council could put new money for rangers on the table.

The seven full-time staffers and 18 seasonal workers are responsible for patrolling 212 parks. According to the report, staff costs total \$754,881 in the current fiscal year.

Last year, rangers won a dispute with the city, earning higher wages and collective bargaining rights for both full and part-time workers.

Susan West, a resident in Riverplace in Southwest Portland, presented hundreds of signatures to the council asking for more patrols in her neighborhood. She said river-squatters and homeless campers have infringed on the area. "In the last five years it has gone downhill," she said. "It's gone from a jewel to an armpit."

Fritz, who oversees the parks bureau, said she already requested converting six seasonal workers to permanent status, a \$80,000 request.

"What we really need," she said, "are seven more full-time rangers."

Crail said the parks bureau will ask for more resources, given the budget surplus.

Mayor Charlie Hales said, "we all want" more parks rangers, but he wanted to sort out how to best fund the positions.

Hales said he wants to examine local revenue sharing agreements with business districts. "Good times mean others have more resources, not just the city's general fund," he said.

Michael Graves, who died Thursday, said Portland should 'take care' of his creation

*By Brad Schmidt
March 12, 2015*

Michael Graves, the outspoken architect who designed the city of Portland's polarizing postmodern administrative offices, died Thursday. He was 80.

Graves visited Portland last year to defend his work on The Portland Building, in line for a substantial renovation to fix water-infiltration damage after just three decades in use.

At the time, city officials had been considering demolition as an option. Now, officials are studying a sweeping remodel expected to cost well over \$100 million.

"The whole idea of tearing the building down, it's like killing a child," Graves said in October.

Graves said he'd like an opportunity to get one floor right, by today's standards, if given the chance. "I'd like the chance to do one floor properly - lights, carpets, ceilings, furniture... I'd like to make a place out of it. It's a terrible place to work, I suspect."

And he slammed the condition of his project, often either adored or despised among art critics and the general public.

"It's your city building," he said at the time. "Somebody should take care of it."

Graves died at his home in Princeton, New Jersey.

Architect Michael Graves, The Portland Building's designer, dies at age 80

*By The Associated Press
March 12, 2015*

PRINCETON, N.J. -- An architect who designed modern and whimsical postmodern structures and later household goods sold at Target stores has died in New Jersey. Michael Graves was 80 years old.

Graves is best known in Oregon as the designer of The Portland Building.

Spokeswoman Michelle DiLello says Graves died of natural causes Thursday in his longtime hometown of Princeton.

The Portland Building, designed in 1980 and completed in 1982, started drawing criticism for significant design flaws shortly after it opened. In 1989, the city agreed to share \$200,000 in repair costs for the building.

Two years later, the building's lobby received a facelift after complaints the building was dark and uninviting.

More than two decades later, the Portland City Council is debating wholesale renovations to the building that could total more than \$100 million.

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At the time, city officials were considering demolition as an option.

"The whole idea of tearing the building down, it's like killing a child," Graves said in October.

Graves was born in Indianapolis. He designed buildings including The Portland Building and The Humana Building, in Louisville, Kentucky. He also did a campus master plan for Rice University in Houston and designed the scaffolding that surrounded the Washington Monument during a restoration project.

His buildings often had a sense of whimsy. At 1 Port Center in Camden, New Jersey, he used yellow and blue to liven up an office building.

Graves has had branded lines of housewares including teapots and colanders for sale at Target and JCPenney stores since 1999.

The Portland Tribune

Portland lays groundwork to regulate Uber, Lyft

*By Steve Law
March 12, 2015*

The city of Portland is laying the groundwork to legalize and regulate Uber, Lyft and other new-style taxi services.

The Portland City Council amended the city's taxi regulations Thursday to include a new category of companies called Transportation Network Services. That's the city's preferred term for Uber and Lyft, which enable citizens to turn their cars into taxis, and allow customers to "hail" rides by dialing their smartphones.

City Commissioner Steve Novick, who oversees transportation-related services, said city officials believe they already had the legal authority to regulate Uber and Lyft, but wanted to change the city ordinance to leave no doubt.

The amended ordinance requires those who operate or drive for Transportation Network Services to obtain a city permit before providing rides. The ordinance doesn't specify which regulations such companies must meet.

The debate over Uber and Lyft moves to the next phase on April 9, when the City Council hears preliminary ideas from a citizen task force asked to make suggestions on how the city might accommodate the new taxi services.

Shortly after that, the city expects to launch a pilot program for Transportation Network Services to operate legally in the city, said Bryan Hockaday, Novick's policy adviser for taxi issues.

The city now caps the number of taxis that can legally roam Portland streets and fixes their prices. The city also conducts background checks on drivers, requires them to carry commercial-level insurance, and requires that at least one-fifth of each taxi fleet be set up to accommodate people in wheelchairs, so that disabled people are not stranded.

The freewheeling Uber/Lyft model is sharply at odds with that regulatory scheme.

Uber started serving Portland last year but suspended operations after being sued by the city for not following existing taxi rules.

The company now threatens to begin offering rides in Portland again as of April 9. However, the city is in discussions with Uber and the existing taxi companies, Hockaday said. It's possible that Uber will agree to participate in the pilot project, under the city's terms.

Lyft has said it will wait to see what regulations the council adopts before deciding on whether to enter the Portland market.

Novick has hinted the city might be open to a new approach on limiting the number of taxis and setting prices. That may be what the city has in mind for the pilot project, to test the impact on the overall taxi market.

Novick and Mayor Charlie Hales, as well as traditional taxi drivers, have stated they don't think Uber and Lyft should be treated differently from existing taxi companies.

However, Novick said Thursday that he doesn't think Uber could comply with the wheelchair-access rules, and he tossed out a possible alternative: charging the company a fee in lieu of that requirement, with funds used to provide other handicapped-access services.

Commissioner Nick Fish said he's concerned that current taxis must provide service to anyone who calls, even when it's not going to generate a profit. That's in contrast, he said, to "people inclined to cherry-pick which rides they would take," an apparent reference to Uber.

The citizens task force, led by veteran retired state manager Mike Greenfield, expects to keep meeting after April 9, Hockaday said, and devise more formal recommendations this summer.

Planning and Sustainability Commission to hear about potential explosions at proposed propane terminal

*By Steve Law
March 12, 2015*

A Canadian company hoping to build a half-billion-dollar propane export terminal in North Portland will try to convince the Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission that the plant is safe on Tuesday.

Pembina Pipeline Corp. will unveil its long-awaited assessment of potential explosions and other accidents on the site, who those might affect, and how the company will prevent them from occurring.

The commission will meet in a 3 p.m. work session, largely to review safety issues at the controversial propane terminal, at 1900 S.W. Fourth Ave. in downtown Portland.

Pembina met in an all-day workshop on safety issues Tuesday with about 35 technical advisers and representatives from the city, Port of Portland and nearby North Portland neighborhoods. Pembina didn't release any maps of potential hazard zones, said Tom Armstrong, supervising city planner working on the proposal.

Such hazard zones — of keen interest to neighbors on Hayden Island — will be presented to the Planning and Sustainability Commission next Tuesday, said Eric Dyck, Pembina's local project manager. Information on those hazard zones will be based partly on feedback received at the all-day workshop, Dyck said.

The hazard zones are part of a required Quantitative Risk Assessment being prepared by Pembina consultant DNV GL, an Oslo, Norway-based company that does safety evaluations for the world oil and gas industry.

Ron Ebersole, a Hayden Island resident who attended Tuesday's workshop, declined to discuss what he heard, because he is preparing to present his assessment at next Tuesday's work session. Armstrong invited a panel of residents to present their views.

Ebersole assisted on a "white paper" issued by Hayden Island residents who believe they are at risk from explosions and other accidents at the site.

One thing Ebersole was willing to say, though, was that Pembina dodged questions about the safety of propane being shipped by rail here from Canada. "They talk only about their site," Ebersole said, and say rail safety is the railroad's responsibility.

Safety issues will dominate Tuesday's work session. If there's additional time, Armstrong said, the Planning and Sustainability Commission may address other issues, such as: Pembina's commitment to buy green power to offset its electricity usage at the site; its pledge to restore the shoreline habitat along the terminal, which fronts the slough between West Hayden Island and the Port of Portland's Terminal 6; a proposed Community Advisory Committee; and a proposal to offset carbon emissions traced to the propane plant.

Other than invited testimony, there won't be time for public comments Tuesday.

But another standing-room-only crowd is expected at an April 7 public hearing before the Planning and Sustainability Commission. At that point, commissioners may make their final recommendations on the project to the City Council, which makes the final call.

Hales' plan to retool urban renewal nears final approval

By Steve Law

March 12, 2015

The Portland City Council cleared the decks Thursday to approve Mayor Charlie Hales' sweeping plan to reorganize the city's urban renewal districts, but it'll take one final vote.

That vote was set for 11 a.m. Wednesday, March 25 on the entire package, which figures to rank as one of Hales' signature accomplishments as mayor.

To get this far required a year's worth of negotiations and several rounds of political maneuvering.

"This is the first comprehensive reform of urban renewal in the history of urban renewal" in the city, Hales said Thursday, as city commissioners vetted some of their final concerns about the proposal.

The package is designed to put more property back on the tax rolls and direct more property taxes to schools and local governments, while allowing more money to spend on newer redevelopment opportunities in the South Waterfront and inner eastside.

Over the next few decades, the plan will shift an estimated \$197 million in property taxes to schools and local governments, instead of spending it on urban renewal. However, much of that money won't come for many years. Next year, only about \$6 million will be redirected to local governments.

The deal will downsize two of Portland's hugely successful urban renewal districts: Airport Way and the River District, which includes the Pearl District, putting large chunks of both back on the property tax rolls. Hales' plan also shifts most urban renewal funds remaining in the River District to support Old Town/Chinatown projects rather than subsidize more Pearl District developments.

Two urban renewal districts that never really got off the ground, the Willamette Industrial district and the Education district downtown, would be terminated, also freeing up that land for the tax rolls. The Willamette district was designed to support a Wacker Siltronic expansion that never occurred. The Education district was largely done to support Portland State University, a priority of former Mayor Sam Adams. But Hales, Adams' successor, has other priorities. Some of the land near PSU was added into the North Macadam Urban Renewal Area in the South Waterfront. Hales is shifting the emphasis to redevelopment of PSU-held properties around the new MAX Orange Line that starts service this summer.

Hales also won an extension of the North Macadam district — keeping it off the regular tax rolls longer — to allow more funds to subsidize the Knight Cancer Research Center on the waterfront and the Zidell waterfront property north and south of the Ross Island Bridge.

Lastly, Hales won a small expansion and extension of the Central Eastside urban renewal district, largely to take advantage of new development opportunities at the Clinton Street MAX station on the new Orange Line there.

The League of Women Voters raised sharp objections to several parts of the Hales plan, and affordable housing advocates lobbied for more housing funds for the South Waterfront.

Under pressure from both groups, Hales agreed to develop one apartment building for low-income people in the South Waterfront area. The city also may seek to designate more affording housing in the Zidell property.

The Portland Business Journal

Michael Graves, architect of multi-colored — and many-layered — Portland Building dies

By Andy Giegerich

March 13, 2015

An architect who clearly made his mark on Portland's skyline has died.

Michael Graves designed the Portland building, the oddly layered and multi-hued structure that houses Portland's administrative departments, was 80. The purveyor of postmodern design died at his home in Princeton, New Jersey.

Graves visited Portland last October and, according to the Portland Tribune's Joseph Gallivan, defended the Portland Building's look. He said estimates that it would cost \$90 million to update the structure were "bulls--t."

Former Business Journal reporter Kristina Brenneman, in a 2000 article on what made Portland unique at the time, noted that the building has its fans despite its appearance, which she called "a candy-boxed shape structure."

Our sister paper in Minneapolis also noted Graves' passing. Graves was known for lending a look to a line of Target household goods.