

The Oregonian

Nick Fish names Sonia Schmanski as next chief of staff

By Andrew Theen
March 16, 2015

Portland Commissioner Nick Fish named Sonia Schmanski, a long-time employee who rose the ranks inside his office from receptionist to policy director, as his next chief of staff.

"I have great confidence in her," Fish said Monday. He formally offered Schmanski, 30, the chief of staff position last week.

Schmanski, a Portland native and graduate of Grant High School, takes over for long-time Fish adviser Hannah Kuhn. Schmanski is Fish's fourth chief of staff, the top policy position and chief adviser to the elected official.

Fish described Schmanski as loyal, respected, hard-working and successful at building relationships with people inside and outside City Hall. She's advised Fish on housing, land use, transportation and other key policy decisions.

Schmanski, a graduate of Boston University with a degree in International Relations, said she's thrilled with the promotion. "I feel lucky every day that I get to work in this building, in my hometown for this city," she added.

She first joined Fish's staff in Oct. 2008 as a temporary front desk person, but was eventually moved over to a full-time position. Since then, Schmanski rose the ranks to her previous role as a policy director, advising Fish on Water Bureau issues.

"She's literally homegrown and she's earned this position," Fish said.

In the past month, Schmanski participated in job interviews with outside candidates for the chief of staff job. A couple weeks ago, she said, Fish started discussing the possibility of a promotion.

Schmanski said she's excited to dive into the job as the budget season heats up. According to a press release issued Monday morning, Schmanski is a sixth generation Oregonian.

With Schmanski's promotion, Fish's office remains down one key position.

A Commissioner's chief of staff salary starts at \$84,198 and goes as high as \$111,92, according to city documents.

Big bill emerges for Veterans Memorial Coliseum: Portland City Hall Roundup

By Brad Schmidt
March 16, 2015

Renovating the Veterans Memorial Coliseum may end up costing far more than Portland has budgeted, if early cost estimates are any indication.

New figures show construction costs alone could run from \$37 million to \$89 million, depending on the extent of improvements.

But the Portland Development Commission, the city's urban renewal agency, has budgeted just \$23.3 million toward the effort.

City officials have been struggling with an improvement plan for Veterans Memorial Coliseum since former Mayor Sam Adams tried to push through a \$31.5 million upgrade in 2012 before he left office. That plan would have included a \$10 million contribution from the Portland Winterhawks, which play hockey games in the arena, but the deal fell apart.

Under Mayor Charlie Hales, officials have conducted a far more plotting review of options.

Preliminary cost estimates now show that basic repairs and replacements would run \$37 million, and that doesn't include project management and other soft costs. The improvements would include a new roof, fixes to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and new HVAC/plumbing.

The mid-range option, at \$61 million, would include the basic fixes and also improvements to make the coliseum more inviting. It would include a new scoreboard, seats and concession stands.

Both options would keep the coliseum, which was built in 1960, viable for another 10 or 20 years.

A big-ticket renovation would hit \$89 million and would be expected to prolong the coliseum's life by 20 to 50 years.

Susan Hartnett, who is managing the project for the Office of Management & Finance, said those improvements would allow the coliseum to be "competitive" for a range of event, such as concerts.

City officials will consider the "business case" for each option to determine what the city would get from each investment. A consultant also will provide a market study.

"The market study is showing it's a needed niche," Hartnett said of what the coliseum could look like under the grandest remodel option. Hartnett declined to provide the report.

Officials don't yet have cost estimates for other options being considered: an indoor track, an open-air arena, closing the facility temporarily or demolishing it.

Hartnett said the city hasn't figured out how to pay for improvements. She indicated a "need" for private financial contributions beyond public money supplied by the city.

Hartnett said that until the numbers are refined, she doesn't place a lot of confidence in them. New cost estimates for all options will be ready later this spring and will be shared with the City Council at some point.

Heavy Portland rainfall causes sewage overflow into Willamette River

*By Rebecca Woolington
March 15, 2015*

Heavy weekend rains have caused a sewage overflow into the Willamette River, according to the city.

The rainfall produced a combined sewer overflow warning from the Bureau of Environmental Services.

Residents should avoid contact with the water until the advisory is lifted, city officials said. The affected area is from the Sellwood Bridge until the Willamette and Columbia rivers meet at Kelley Point Park.

People should avoid recreational activities in the river such as jet skiing or swimming because water could be swallowed, said Linc Mann, a bureau spokesman, in a news release. People fishing within 48 hours of a sewage overflow should wash their hands after having contact with the water and should cook fish thoroughly to kill bacteria.

In 2011, the bureau finished the \$1.4 billion Big Pipe project to reduce such events. Before its completion, Portland averaged 50 sewer overflows into the Willamette River each year.

The sewage overflow is the second one this year and 12th since the Big Pipe project was completed, Mann said.

More information is available on the [city's website](#).

The Portland Tribune

City: Rain causes sewer overflow into Willamette

*By Jim Redden
March 15, 2015*

The city is warning of sewage in the Willamette from the Sellwood Bridge downstream to the river's confluence with the Columbia River near Kelley Point Park.

According to the Bureau of Environmental Services, heavy rain during the March 14-15 weekend caused Portland's combined sewer system to overflow into the river. The public should avoid contact with the river — especially recreational activities where water can be swallowed — and any fish caught in it should be thoroughly cooked to avoid contamination.

Portland's combined sewer system carries sewage and stormwater runoff in the same pipes in much of the city. During very heavy rainstorms, the increased stormwater runoff can cause these pipes to overflow into the river.

Portland completed a \$1.4 billion project in December 2011 to reduce the overflows from an average of 50 per year to no more than four per winter and one every third summer.

In addition to operating the sewer system, BES runs the city's stormwater management and watershed restoration programs.

More information is available at www.portlandoregon.gov/bes/overflow.

Willamette Week

Police Body Cameras Could Cost Far More Than Expected, City Budget Officials Warn

*By Aaron Mesh
March 16, 2015*

Amid recent protests of police violence, political momentum is increasing to require Portland Police Bureau officers to wear body cameras.

Rep. Lew Frederick (D-Portland) has made body cameras part of his police-reform package, and Mayor Charlie Hales has said he wants cameras on Portland cops by next fall.

But the city of Portland's budget office has issued a warning to Hales: Body-camera programs carry hidden expenses, and the city shouldn't mandate them until it has a better sense of the ongoing costs. The memo from the City Budget Office says the police bureau's proposal to spend \$227,165 on three employees to supervise the body-camera program—and offset those costs by cutting two property-crimes detectives—should be delayed until the city examines the bids on the body-camera system.

"Law enforcement agencies have reported that the ongoing costs associated with data storage, retention policies, and records management have exceeded most current staff levels and initial cost estimates," the March 9 memo says. "Costs associated with data storage can be significant and over time, there will be increased requests for video records as more persons are aware of the existence of the recordings."

Portland City Council has already approved spending \$834,619 to launch the body-camera program. The budget office suggests the City Council wait on any further funding for body cameras until the fall, when it can hear "a more firm and complete cost estimate for ongoing support."

City of Portland Mulling a \$1,500 Weed Business Permit

*By Aaron Mesh
March 13, 2015*

Portland City Hall still doesn't know whether the Oregon Legislature will allow it to levy a 10-percent sales tax on marijuana.

But city officials are already considering another way to pay for local marijuana regulation: a \$1,500 permit to operate a pot business in Portland.

A city budget document shows officials in the Office of Neighborhood Involvement still aren't sure if such a permit is allowed under Measure 91, which legalizes recreational weed. But they are planning to make the price steep.

"ONI is continuing to work with the City Attorney and the Office of Government Relations on what the city may be able to do locally due to the preemption language," the City Budget Office report says. "The

bureau has noted that if it is able to do a non-regulatory permit, then the fees would have to be relatively high to offset program costs—possibly \$1,500 or more per permit."

That charge would be nearly 15 times what a bar or pub pays the city for a liquor license. That cost is \$100 for the initial application, and another \$35 to renew each year.

WW first reported last July that Portland City Hall was seeking a 10-percent weed sales tax. Last month, Mayor Charlie Hales submitted a budget request for a \$440,000 city "Marijuana Permitting Program," with three regulators hired to oversee recreational dope.

In its new report, the City Budget Office—the office that vets the financial requests of bureaus and elected officials—suggests Hales trim back that plan.

Budget officers suggest that until the Office of Neighborhood Involvement knows what kind of permits and taxes the legislature will allow it to enforce, the bureau can get by with just two regulators. That would cost the city \$303,773.

Other than its estimate of permit costs, the most interesting part of the budget office's recommendation is its detailed list of what the Marijuana Permitting Program would do. Here's that list of what the \$1,500 permits might fund:

ONI has provided CBO with a list of the duties that the Program Specialist and the Assistant Program Specialist would perform, which include:

- **Reviewing applications for permits to operate a marijuana facility;**
- **Problem-solving neighborhood public safety and livability concerns through coordination with the Bureau of Development Services, Police, and other agencies;**
- **Acting as the City's liaison with the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) Marijuana Program;**
- **Evaluating police reports, complaint logs, and complaints received by community members;**
- **Preparing violation notices and warning letters for Time-Place-Manner violation cases;**
- **Monitoring compliance with abatement / permit criteria, including site visits;**
- **Conducting outreach to neighborhoods regarding problem-solving meetings and public forums.**

The Skanner

City Council Considers Resolution to “Ban the Box”

*By Arashi Young
March 16, 2015*

Even though social worker Emmanuel Price is open about his past criminal history and is well connected within the community, his record still interferes with getting a job. His most recent employment application was with Portland Public Schools.

During the process he was hired, fired, rehired, fired again and finally rehired for the position – in which he counsels teenagers in new approaches to conflict resolution in the schools.

Last year The Skanner News covered Price's story and how an Oregon statute prevents people who have committed “forever crimes” from working with children.

Price testified Wednesday at the Portland City Council public hearing in support of a proposal to “ban the box.” He was joined by community advocates, labor leaders and business owners who packed the City Hall chamber.

The citywide initiative would prevent employers within Portland city limits from asking about criminal histories on job applications, effectively eliminating the past convictions checkbox.

Proponents say banning the box would eliminate barriers to employment for people who have arrests on their record. Instead of throwing out job applications from ex-convicts at the beginning of the selection process, candidates can compete on merit and reveal their records in interviews or through background checks.

The grassroots civil rights organization All of Us or None started a national Ban the Box campaign in 2003. The group was made up of formerly-incarcerated people and their families.

Since that time, the Ban the Box movement has been gaining significant momentum. In 2013, the City of Seattle restricted using criminal records in hiring decisions. San Francisco enacted a similar ban in 2014. More than 50 districts in the country have similar ordinances.

The Portland Business Alliance, Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs (OAME) and the Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber have announced their support of removing employment barriers.

On Thursday, Metro, the regional government, unanimously passed a resolution to remove the box from their applications. Metro councilor Sam Chase introduced the bill to ensure that every candidate has a fair chance at being considered.

"With the box removed from our applications, Metro will now allow people to make the case for their qualifications on a fair playing field," Chase wrote in a press release.

Metro joins the City of Portland and Multnomah County who have removed "the box" from their government job applications. The Portland City Council proposal would extend this to all employers within city limits.

In addition to a citywide proposal, the Oregon Legislature is considering House Bill 3025, which would ban the box statewide.

Many submitted testimony at Wednesday's council hearing in support of the resolution such as: Michael Alexander, president and CEO of Portland Urban League; Emmanuel Price, founder and executive director of Second Chances are for Every One (SCAFE) and Tom Chamberlain, president of Oregon AFL-CIO.

The Fair Chance for All coalition submitted over 7,000 petition signatures from Oregonians who support banning the box.

Price has first hand experiences of the hardships ex-cons go through when trying to find employment. He started SCAFE to provide programs and resources to former criminals to break the cycle of recidivism.

Price told the council that he has been out of jail twice as long as the time he had served and it is still hard to get a job.

"I served close to five years in Oregon Correctional facilities," said Price. "It's been ten years now since I returned to society and still struggle with finding employment. Not because I'm ill equipped or not qualified, but because my background inhibits my forward progress."

Small business owner Bill Dickey of More! Ink spoke with The Skanner News about his decision to take the box off his own business' application. He believes it creates a bias that artificially limits the pool of applicants.

"It's really removing a stereotype that exists for no reason," Dickey said. "Attitudes change over time and this is one of those attitudes that is ripe for fixing."

Dickey believes that employers should perform background checks, but he believes those conversations should happen after he has screened candidates for their skills and aptitude.

"If we find in the interview that they have had a criminal record, we'll discuss it and I decide whether or not it creates a conflict for me," Dickey said.

For Price, banning the box is about more than employment, it is about having access to jobs with more responsibility and clout. When faced with dire job prospects, Price felt he had more to give back to his community.

"I just felt like I could do more, there was more that I had in store for myself rather than laborious or low entry or very, very minimum wage."

The Portland City Council votes on the "Ban the Box" proposal next Wednesday.