

The Oregonian

Portland's mayor seeks a half-million dollars for background investigators to speed up police hiring

By Maxine Bernstein

10/26/2015

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales said he wants the City Council to set aside just over a half-million dollars to help the Police Bureau hire 11 more background investigators to speed up bureau hiring.

"We need to make the hiring machine bigger and faster," Hales said.

There are currently 35 vacancies in the Police Bureau, and a large group of retirements is anticipated over the next five years. The money would come from the city's annual budget revisions -- the subject of a council work session Tuesday.

According to the city's Bureau of Fire and Police Disability and Retirement, as many as 218 officers will be eligible to retire over the next five years. The Police Bureau separately estimates the number is closer to 292.

Last fiscal year, 27 Portland police retired. Another 30 officers will be eligible to retire this fiscal year, 30 more in fiscal year 2016-17, and between 30 and 40 officers annually for the three following years.

Police Chief Larry O'Dea said the bureau has been struggling with lean staffing since the city eliminated 50 sworn and five non-sworn positions two years ago.

"Increasing the recruitment capacity and the speed of the background investigation and hiring processes are critical to the bureau's success in maintaining pace with the rate of attrition and in ensuring successful hiring from a pool of applicants that are being recruited by many agencies across the country," O'Dea wrote to the city's budget office director.

Currently, there are nine background investigators. It takes five to seven months for an investigator to complete one background check on a recruit, according to the city.

To fill current vacancies and meet minimum patrol shift staffing, the Police Bureau must pay officers overtime to work extra shifts.

The number of overtime hours worked to meet the bureau's minimum shift requirements has grown 52 percent this fiscal year, from 119,000 hours in 2013-14 to a projected 181,000 hours this fiscal year, according to the city budget office.

"This level of overtime is not sustainable from either a budget or operational perspective," city budget analyst Christy Owen said.

According to Police Bureau figures, the bureau exceeded by \$800,000 its overtime budget in the 2014-15 fiscal year, paying out a total of \$7.6 million. Four months into the current fiscal

year started July 1, the bureau has spent nearly half of its budgeted \$6.9 million in overtime pay.

"We're spending a lot on overtime, and we're working our officers really hard," Hales said.

The bureau estimates that it would need to hire at least 130 new recruits this year -- which all agree is an impossible task -- and about 30 each year for the next five years to keep pace with retirements and maintain current staffing levels.

The Police Bureau requested \$598,524 in one-time general fund money to hire 11 background investigators. The bureau also has asked for about \$108,000 to hire two additional recruiters to help "increase the volume and diversity" of police applicants.

The city's budget office recommends the council provide financing for the extra background investigators, but not for new recruiters.

It also recommended that the Police Bureau provide the council "a clear plan" for how patrol and specialty units will function at the current staffing levels during the next five years and outline future recruitment and hiring.

Portland plans \$67 million more for affordable housing over decade

By Brad Schmidt

10/23/2015

The city of Portland plans to pledge an additional \$67 million to subsidize affordable housing over the next decade, marking a massive political shift as housing becomes a top priority for the City Council.

Most of the money would be dedicated for the Pearl District and gentrifying parts of North and Northeast Portland.

Officials would meet the obligation by increasing the percentage of money spent on affordable housing within city-designated urban renewal districts, boosting the share from 30 percent to 45 percent.

The spending plan heads to the City Council on Wednesday, with approval expected the following week.

Portland's financial commitment comes less than three months after affordable-housing advocates blasted the city's long-term spending priorities and demanded more money to subsidize apartments for low-income Portlanders. And it follows this month's "housing emergency" declaration and a \$20 million pledge to combat homelessness.

Meeting the obligation would come at a cost, however, leaving less money for redevelopment projects and public improvements, such as to streets and parks.

Housing advocates hoped the City Council would dedicate 50 percent of urban renewal funds to affordable housing, a pledge that would have increased funding by about \$90 million.

But Mayor Charlie Hales believes the new spending commitment "strikes the right balance," aide Jillian Detweiler said Friday.

"If we weren't in a housing crisis, we might be more comfortable with having the luxury to see things unfold and see if economic development projects materialize," she said. "But right now it just seems irresponsible to let that money sit idle and unplanned when we know there's a need for it."

The plan follows negotiations involving Commissioners Dan Saltzman and Nick Fish, who support the increase.

Commissioners Amanda Fritz and Steve Novick have expressed reservations, worried about leaving less for parks and street projects.

Before the proposed change, officials planned to dedicate about \$202 million in urban renewal funds to affordable housing over the next 10 years.

Here's a list of urban renewal districts where the additional \$67 million would be spent:

- \$32 million: Interstate Corridor, which includes parts of North and Northeast Portland
- \$20 million: River District, which includes the Pearl District and Old Town Chinatown
- \$7.5 million: Lents, which stretches along Southeast Foster Road to 122nd Avenue in east Portland
- \$5 million: North Macadam, which features the South Waterfront District just south of downtown
- \$2 million: Gateway, envisioned as Portland's second downtown in east Portland.

The Portland Tribune

Council to consider more affordable housing measures

By Jim Redden
10/23/2015

The City Council on Wednesday will consider two measures related to the housing emergency it recently declared.

One measure would increase the amount of urban renewal dollar set aside for affordable housing from 30 to a minimum of 45 percent. The other would authorize the Portland Housing Bureau to study whether increased market rate housing supports new jobs that call for more affordable housing, and whether a so-called linkage fee should be created to support it.

Both measures were introduced after the council declared that increasing rents and no-cause evictions are creating a hardship on even Portlanders earning moderate incomes.

"The City of Portland is experiencing a housing affordability crisis, renters are facing some of the highest month over month rent increases in the nation, and homeownership opportunities are limited for many moderate income families," reads the urban renewal-related ordinance

submitted my Mayor Charlie Hales and commissioners Nick Fish and Dan Saltzman. They comprise a majority of the council.

An early Portland Tribune story on the issue can be read at pamplinmedia.com/pt/9-news/278231-154435-mayor-brokers-deal-to-boost-urban-renewal-money-for-housing .

You can read the proposed ordinance [here](#).

The resolution calling for the linkage fee study was submitted by Saltzman, who is in charge of the housing bureau. It directs the bureau to return to the council with an analysis and recommendation by April 27, 2106.

You can read the proposed resolution [here](#).

Hales seeks \$546,000 to speed up police hiring

*By Jim Redden
10/23/2015*

Mayor Charlie Hales wants the City Council to speed up hiring more police officers during a record-breaking spike in gang violence.

Hales will ask the council to spend \$598,000 next week to hire 11 more background investigators to screen applicant to fill 35 officer vacancies in the Portland Police Bureau and an additional 40 vacancies expected to created by upcoming retirements.

The funds will be requested during the annual fall budget adjustment work session set for Tuesday. The bureau currently has nine background investigators.

"I know that sounds like a lot of investigators, but it's a lot of work that needs to be done. Most applicants aren't hired," says Hales.

Hales made the announcement during Friday's biweekly meeting of the Community Peace Collaborative at North Precinct. During the meeting, the Gang Enforcement Team released statistics showing it was investigating 158 incidents of gang violence as of Oct. 22, almost all of them shootings. That's 40 more than the previous record of 118 set it 2012 and a 45 percent increase over last year's total of 109.

"We have a lot of work to do," Hales said when the new figures were released. "We need to arrest and prosecute the people who are breaking the law, but we need to build relationships and offer hope to prevent future gang violence," Hales told those at the meeting, most of whom work with public agencies or nonprofit organizations that offer services to young people.

The announcement also came as the union representing most rank and file bureau employees is pushing the council to hire 700 more officers to help combat the crime increase.

The Portland Police Association has launched a public relations campaign called "Having Enough Police Matters" that includes an online petition and billboards in various parts of the city intended to convey the message the bureau is understaffed.

The title is a play on the Black Live Matter movement that angered some local activists.

"Inadequate staffing in the Police Bureau is hurting our communities and putting all of us at risk. Nothing is more basic to the livability of a city than public safety. We need City Council to take immediate action to fix this critical staffing shortage. Our city and our officers deserve better," says PPA President Daryl Turner, a Portland police sergeant.

According to Turner, the bureau does not currently have enough officers to respond to calls for service, investigating and solving crimes, address the deadly upswing in gun and gang violence, serve those who are impacted by livability issues surrounding homelessness, assist citizens with mental illness and those suffering mental health crises; engage in community policing; and ensure the safety of Portland citizens and officers.

"Yet, police bureau staffing levels are dwindling even as our city continues to grow. Officers are forced to do more with less, and the community pays the price. In fact, the police bureau is around 700 hundred officers short of national staffing benchmarks," says Turner, referring to an FBI recommendation.

State Treasurer Ted Wheeler, who in running for Portland mayor, told the Portland Tribune editorial board that he supports hiring "significantly more" officers. Wheeler said he had met with the PPA and agreed with its assessment of the situation, but did not propose a specific figure.

Hales spokeswoman Sara Hottman insists the mayor is well aware of the situation.

"Mayor Hales says clearly there is an urgent need. These positions have been budgeted for more than a year; retirements have been more frequent, and with police agencies nationwide hiring, recruiting has been more competitive," Hottman said in an email to the Portland Tribune. "The background investigators are going through the hiring process now, and should be active at the beginning of the year. Mayor Hales encourages people to visit JoinPortlandPolice.com for information on applying," Hottman continued.

The police bureau has lost 190 positions since 2001, according to city personnel figures recently obtained by the Portland Tribune through a public records request. An earlier Portland Tribune story on the issue can be read at www.pamplinmedia.com/pt/9-news/265871-138823-citys-thin-blue-line-is-getting-thinner.

The PPA campaign includes a website with a petition at OurCityOurPolice.org.

Portland Business Journal

Hales wants to boost affordable housing funding by \$67M

By Jon Bell

10/23/2015

Continuing the push to address escalating affordable housing issues in Portland, Mayor Charlie Hales has outlined a plan to boost funding for projects in Portland's Urban Renewal Areas by nearly \$67 million.

According to an announcement, the \$66.7 million would come in the form of tax increment financing in five URAs: Gateway, Interstate, Lents, North Macadam and the River District. At present, 30 percent of the TIF in those areas is set aside for affordable housing; under the plan devised by Hales and Commissioner Dan Saltzman, that percentage would be boosted to 45 percent.

The \$66.7 million would come in addition to \$202.3 million already in place in those URAs.

“We have great projects in various stages of planning, in each district,” Hales said in the release. “But we are in a housing crisis. Given that, we have scrubbed each URA in detail, looking at both opportunities and costs, in an effort to direct money toward affordable housing while maintaining projects to enhance jobs, livability and equity.”

Two other plans already approved by the city council, the Old Town Chinatown Five-Year Action Plan in the River District and the Lents Action Plan, would not be impacted by the changes.

This latest plans come a few weeks after the council declared a housing state of emergency. The city and Multnomah County also unveiled more than \$61 million in potential funding to entice developers to build affordable housing projects.

The council will take up Hales's proposed changes at its Oct. 28 meeting and is expected to vote on the plan the next week.

GoLocal PDX

Portland City Officials Earmark \$66.7 Million for Affordable Housing

10/23/2015

Mayor Charlie Hales announced today that \$66.7 million in funds will be directed to affordable housing projects in five Urban Renewal Districts over the next 5 years.

“We have great projects in various stages of planning, in each district,” Hales said. “But we are in a housing crisis. Given that, we have scrubbed each URA in detail, looking at both opportunities and costs, in an effort to direct money toward affordable housing while maintaining projects to enhance jobs, livability and equity.”

The new money was added to a pot of \$202.3 million already in place in those districts. The new money comes from an increase in tax funding being directed towards affordable housing.

The Urban Renewal Districts affected are: Gateway, Interstate, Lents, North Macadam and the River District.

Two action plans already in place, The Old Town/China Town Five Year Action Plan within the River District, and the Lents Action Plan, will remain intact.

“To seriously address the affordability crisis, we have to look at all potential sources of funding,” Commissioner Dan Saltzman said. “Increasing the amount of money we spend in urban renewal areas for housing is a community-led solution which I am pleased to join the Mayor and Commissioner Fish to support.”

The Council will have a hearing on the proposed changes at the Oct. 28 City Council meeting, with a vote expected the following week