

The Oregonian

Portland approves Rooney Rule to tackle diversity at top

By Brad Schmidt

January 6, 2016

Members of the Portland City Council on Wednesday pledged that they may interview a pool of diverse candidates when hiring top executives.

Modeled after the NFL's Rooney Rule, Portland's Charles Jordan Standard calls on city leaders to interview at least one qualified minority, woman and disabled candidate during competitive recruitments for bureau director positions.

But it does not require competitive recruitments, meaning Portland's mayor, four city commissioners and its chief administrator can still appoint bureau directors without interviewing diverse candidates.

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales, who proposed the standard, said he wants to strike a balance in promoting diversity without stripping away elected officials' authority to hire whomever they want however they want.

"What we do want to say is ... think about equity and opportunity as you hire people, because that's one of the ways we really put our values into action," Hales told The Oregonian/OregonLive before the City Council's 5-0 vote.

The new standard would apply to Portland's 26 director positions. The last seven directors hired by Portland were middle-aged white men, three chosen with no competitive process. Of those three, two – chief administrator Fred Miller and Larry O'Dea, the police chief – were hired by Hales.

"I don't think we've made enough progress when it comes to people of color," Hales said.

The City Council on Wednesday also set new reporting requirements to track the hiring process used for bureau directors and other non-unionized posts. Officials will review data to determine how non-competitive appointments impact the diversity of the workforce.

Anna Kanwit, Portland's human resources director, said applicants will be asked to voluntarily disclose their race, ethnicity, gender and disabled status. Additionally, the city will begin asking applicants to voluntarily disclose if they are gay, lesbian or transgender, although that information won't be linked to any specific individual, Kanwit said.

"We will create a mechanism for asking," she said.

Portland's Office of Equity and Human Rights will analyze the diversity numbers and report back to the City Council. But Dante James, who oversees the office, offered a somewhat critical view for director-level hiring that he believes will amount to "reporting after the fact."

Instead, James recommended that members of the City Council announce whether they will conduct a competitive search before making hiring decisions.

"Is it being used in a way that broadly gets to the results that you say you want?" he said of hiring practices.

If an elected official decides to directly appoint a director without a competitive search – including interviewing qualified diverse candidates – "you should be able to have that conversation before you do it," James suggested.

His recommendation fell on deaf ears.

Portland leaders also pledged to study costs of hiring headhunters to help the city reach a more diverse applicant pool.

Sam Sachs, a ranger for Portland Parks & Recreation who single-handedly began lobbying last year for diverse hiring practices, said the City Council's new commitment will help make Portland a "destination."

Portland's standard is named in honor of Charles Jordan, the city's former parks director and one of only two African Americans to serve on the City Council.

Portland demolition tax is dead

*By Brad Schmidt
January 6, 2016*

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales' proposed \$25,000 demolition tax is dead.

The public acknowledgment comes one week before Hales had promised to return to City Council with a revised proposal. Hales' staff privately announced its demise a few days before Christmas.

"He couldn't get council support for a policy he thought would be effective," spokeswoman Sara Hottman said Tuesday.

Hales floated the tax in September hoping to discourage home demolitions while at the same time creating a new pot of money to pay for affordable rental projects.

But the proposal drew fire in October from neighborhood and business leaders alike. At a City Council meeting in December, three city commissioners said they could not support the plan as outlined.

Undeterred, Hales promised to return with a new proposal Jan. 13.

But Hales later met individually with city commissioners and couldn't find a workable solution, announcing through an aide on Dec. 22 that he would withdraw the tax proposal.

"He just couldn't find consensus on a plan," Hottman said.

Portland's booming real estate market has created a premium on close-in land. For several years, builders have been tearing down old homes and replacing them with larger, more expensive houses – or demolishing one and building two in its place.

The city recorded 200-plus teardowns in single-family neighborhoods in each of 2013 and 2014. Early in 2015, Hales pledged to "make demolition a less attractive option" and released details of his controversial plan in September.

Now with just 12 months left in Hales' mayoral term, it seems unlikely a new plan will move forward.

"He is still looking for ideas," Hottman said. "The goal is still in mind but the plan to achieve that goal is not."

Hottman said Hales will advance at least two other efforts to help address demolition concerns: new infill development standards to better ensure compatibility of new homes built in existing neighborhoods, and a proposal to require environmentally friendly deconstruction – rather than demolition – of some homes.

Portland mayor proposes signing bonus, other incentives to attract police recruits

By Maxine Bernstein

January 5, 2016

Portland's mayor wants to raise the starting salary for police officers, offer new hires a \$7,500 to \$10,000 signing bonus and find ways to retain veteran officers as the Police Bureau struggles to fill 40 vacancies while facing a slew of impending retirements.

Mayor Charlie Hales said he plans to present a package to the City Council later this month to use part of the city's \$1.1 million contingency fund for the incentives.

"We've got this fairly entrenched problem. We're behind in recruitment," Hales told The Oregonian/OregonLive. "If we're going to recruit, we're going to have to be more competitive than we are today."

But Hales doesn't yet have an estimate of how much the incentives will cost.

The Police Bureau has had a hard time recruiting new officers after cutting more than 50 positions in 2013 and halting hiring. To reduce mounting overtime, the bureau instead began in November pulling officers from specialty divisions – such as drugs and vice and the gang enforcement team -- to fill patrol shifts on a rotation.

The temporary measure is expected to continue while the bureau works to hire more officers.

Hale's ideas include:

- Raising entry-level officer salaries from \$49,000 to \$60,000. Currently, the salaries increase to \$60,000 after six months on the job. (Seattle police department's starting pay is about \$69,000)
- Offering a signing bonus to recruits of between \$7,500 and \$10,000. (Eugene police offer \$7,500 signing bonus)

-- Rewarding officers who successfully recruit new officers by paying them "a couple of thousand dollars," the mayor suggests.

-- Rehiring retired officers for six months to a year or more. Since most of the soon-to-be retired officers receive disability and pension benefits under Portland's unique public safety fund, they would receive a salary for returning to the job without accruing additional pension benefits, Hales said. But this idea has officers questioning how they'd be covered in case of an injury on the job.

Any of these changes would be subject to mandatory bargaining with the police union.

Officer Daryl Turner, president of the Portland Police Association, said he's been "having conversations" with the mayor and chief, but no formal negotiations have begun.

Turner said the city must work not only to attract new officers, but find ways to retain veteran ones. He declined to cite ways the city could do that.

The city now offers an additional 2 percent longevity pay to officers who have worked at least 15 years on the job, another 2 percent at 20 years and then another 2 percent at 25 years. There's been some talk of adding another 2 percent increase in pay for officers after 30 years with the force.

"We have many more people going out the door than we have coming in the door," Turner said.

About 72 people are eligible to retire from the bureau now, he said. Another 20 to 25 will be eligible to retire by the end of April.

"Our main concern is the retention of people we have now," Turner said. The union last month sent an electronic survey to its members, which showed more than 70 percent rated morale in the bureau poor and few would recommend Portland police jobs to others.

Police agencies across the country are finding fewer people are looking to join them than in years past. City officials and criminal justice experts believe its partly due to a recovering economy making police jobs more competitive, and a backlash from high-profile controversial police shootings across the United States. Other police agencies also are having to come up with creative ways to attract applicants.

Many applicants in Portland are washing out during background checks for being untruthful, said Deanna Wesson-Mitchell, the mayor's public safety liaison and a former Portland officer and recruiter.

Wannabe police officers who seek to avoid taking polygraph tests – part of the application process for recruits in Washington and California – apply to agencies in Oregon, where polygraph tests aren't permitted in the hiring process by state law, Wesson-Mitchell said.

"Unfortunately, the law enforcement career can attract an element or type of person that really shouldn't be police officers, so they get knocked out through the process," Wesson-Mitchell said. The untruthfulness involves applicants' backgrounds and other issues, she said.

Historically, about five to seven of every 100 applicants make it through the full hiring process in Portland, Wesson-Mitchell said.

The city wants to streamline hiring, which the police union and mayor agree takes too long. It now can take six months to a year to complete the process. As applicants await background checks in Portland, they sometimes take offers at other agencies.

Last spring, the bureau changed its written test after more than 20 years. It now uses a private company called the National Testing Network, allowing applicants to sit for the tests in multiple cities. The scores are then sent to Portland police.

By offering the written test and oral interviews more often, the bureau hopes to attract more applicants. The city budgeted \$598,524 last fall to hire 11 more civilian background investigators to help speed up the process, but they aren't working yet. There are nine non-sworn investigators now.

The mayor said the Police Bureau is trying all modes of marketing – its latest, for example, drew on the "Star Wars" mania, with recruitment posters picturing officers standing beside Chewbacca and other characters from the movie, with the words "Join the Force" and in small writing "Now Hiring: We're looking for a few good Wookies."

"We'll try anything," Hales said.

Veteran Portland officers know the bureau has had a history of halting hiring, only to struggle to revive it when given the green light to recruit again. Hales, who became police commissioner three years ago, is learning that now.

"It was probably not fully understood by me how long it would take to gear back up again," he said.

The Portland Tribune

Portland, Nike, ink \$10 million Bike Share sponsorship deal

By Jennifer Anderson

January 6, 2016

Portland city officials on Thursday morning announced a \$10 million, 5-year title sponsorship deal with Nike to help launch BIKETOWN — the new name of the city's Bike Share bikes.

The city's Bike Share system will launch this summer.

The new partnership will allow the city to expand the initial number of bikes available to the public, from 600 bikes to 1,000 bikes.

The deal puts the system on a trajectory of sustainable, long-term growth, PBOT Director Leah Treat explained at a news conference at Nike's Community Store in Northeast Portland.

The store is near the site of a proposed bike share station.

The bright orange bikes will be called BIKETOWN.

Nike will oversee the design and branding of the system's logo, stations and digital presence.

City leaders called the deal a first-of-its-kind commitment.

Nike also announced plans to unveil a select number of additional limited edition bike wrap designs, unique to Nike. The designs, to be made public at a later date, will reflect the city's creative spirit, PBOT officials said Thursday.

"This is how public-private partnerships should be done," Commissioner Steve Novick said in a statement.

"We have developed an innovative, next generation bike share system. And in Nike, we have a sponsor that is a brand powerhouse and a global leader in innovation with a long and distinguished record of supporting sports and physical activity in Portland. It's a perfect fit."

Nike's Casimiro also said the partnership is tailor-made: "We're proud of our long history of partnership with the City of Portland and believe that the BIKETOWN bike share program is one more example of how we can work together to help make Portland an even more active, vibrant and innovative community – goals Nike and the City of Portland share," he said.

"BIKETOWN is the perfect way to help Portland residents and visitors incorporate daily physical activity into their lives. We're thrilled to bring inspiration and innovation as a brand to get more people moving across this beautiful city so many of us call home."

Congressman Earl Blumenauer applauded the new deal as well.

"Commissioner Steve Novick and the Portland Bureau of Transportation's dogged determination in making sure Portland has a bike share program is inspiring," he said.

"Nike, bike share, and Portland make a terrific team. While Portland may not be the first, with Nike's support and partnership, I have no doubt our program will be the best. I look forward to doing anything I can to assist in this exciting effort."

PBOT's Treat said the sponsorship makes good on the Bike Share promise she made two years ago, when joining the agency.

"With Nike as a sponsor, we're going to deliver on that promise in a huge way," she said. "I'm excited because bike share is a proven tool to increase bicycling and because Portlanders and visitors alike will have another option for getting around our great city."

Portland City Council unanimously gave the green light to a Portland Bike Share program on Sept. 23.

At least 60 U.S. cities and 500 worldwide have a bike share program — a public bike rental system for short trips.

Portland users will be able to pay a small fee (\$2.50 for 30 minutes of use) and ride a bike from one point to another, using smart technology to pick up and park at about 3,000 locations.

Initial service will feature the smart bikes stationed downtown, in Old Town/Chinatown, inner Northwest, Goose Hollow, South Waterfront, the West End, Pearl District, Central Eastside, Rose Quarter, Lloyd District and inner North Portland.

PBOT says no city money will be used for Bike Share operations.

The program will be primarily funded by a \$2 million federal grant, approved by the Metro Council in 2011.

The Oregon Department of Transportation will also fund a bike share station at Union Station.

The federal grant requires a 10-percent match requirement that the city plans to meet with reimbursements from transportation demand management programs.

User revenues and sponsor support will also pay for the operations.

Bike Share advocates have been clamoring for the program for years, to provide a low-cost, flexible transportation option as well as to help the city meet many of its livability and climate change goals.

The city has partnered with two Brooklyn-based companies: Motivate, a bike share operator that runs all of the country's major bike share programs; and Social Bicycles, a transportation technology company that will provide the integrated GPS-enabled locking system that users can book via mobile app, website, or RFID access card.

"Starting this summer, Portlanders will have another way to get around our great city — one that is easy to use, affordable and, best of all, a lot of fun," Mayor Charlie Hales said in September, just after the Council passed the Bike Share ordinance.

Added Novick: "We waited a long time for the right bike share proposal, but it was worth the wait. We have a great, experienced partner in Motivate; and we are taking advantage of new 'smart bike' technology. Bicycles are great weapons against two of the biggest threats we face: climate disruption and rising health care costs. Bike share is a great addition to our arsenal — and it's also an important tourist amenity."

Novick to ask City Council to place gas tax on the ballot

By Jim Redden

January 6, 2016

Commissioner Steve Novick says he will ask the City Council to place a measure to impose a temporary local 10-cent-a-gallon gas tax on the ballot to help fund street repair and safety projects.

It will be aimed at the MAy Primary Election ballot and last four years. A hearing on the measure will be scheduled for Jan. 27.

"Portland has been under-investing in its streets for 30 years," Novick said Wednesday morning at the beginning of a presentation of a City Club of Portland report on street funding, which calls for such a ballot measure.

City Club presenters told the council a local gas tax would be easy to collect and directly related to street usage.

Novick is already scheduled to speak in favor of it before the Columbia Corridor Association during its Jan. 27 breakfast meeting.

Mayor Charlie Hales told the Portland Tribune on Dec. 29 that passing such a measure was one of his top priorities during his final year in office.

During the hearings, Hales said that even if such a tax measure passes, the city will still have a "huge unfunded liability" because the city annexed a large portion of mid-Multnomah County in the 1980s that did not have streets built up to city standards.

City Club presenters said their report includes a number of other recommended fees and taxes to support the streets, including a \$2 a month payroll tax on non-city residents.

Several people at the presentation complained about not being allowed to testify on it. Hales said public testimony will be taken on Jan. 27.

You can read the report at www.portlandonline.com/auditor/index.cfm?c=50265&a=558864.

The Portland Mercury

Nike's Throwing \$10 Million At Portland's Bike Share System, And That's A Big Deal

*By Dirk VanderHart
January 7, 2016*

In December 2011, it was big news when Metro approved \$2 million in funding that would be used to build a bike share system in Portland. Until today, that was about the best news Portland's bike share system has had.

Not anymore. After years of stonewalling, Nike is coming out in a huge way for Portland's planned bike share program. A \$10 million, five-year deal the company and city officials announced this morning means Portland finally has a name for the system that will roll out this summer: Biketown.

This deal is objectively huge if you care about bike share. It more than doubles the \$4 million the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) has been angling for from a title sponsor. That money's been sought for years, but the city's repeatedly failed to find an interested partner. It looked, at one point, like a deal might have been reached with health care provider Kaiser Permanente, but that fell through.

As a result, a system initially promised in 2013 has been delayed again and again.

The cash means Portland can roll out a 1,000-bike system this July—66 percent more than the 600-unit system City Council approved last year, and even larger than the 750-bike system Portland has envisioned in the past.

"This is how public-private partnerships should be done," Transportation Commissioner Steve Novick said in a prepared statement. "In Nike, we have a sponsor that is a brand powerhouse and a global leader in innovation."

This is all going to be very, very orange. "Nike orange," according to the company.

There's also talk of roughly 400 bikes in the system having separate "limited edition wrap designs," that "will reflect the city's creative spirit." Who knows what it means?

As we've reported, the system Portland's now planning differs from many bike share set ups you might have seen in Seattle, Chicago, or New York (and many other cities). Rather than bikes that are tethered to "smart" docking stations, Portland's system, supplied by New York-based Social Bicycles, will consist of a fleet of "smart bikes." They'll have computer systems and locks on board, meaning you can park them anywhere around town (though you'll have to pay more if that's outside of prescribed areas). Officials say the system is far cheaper to run than dock-centric offerings.

Have Portland's Bike Share Dreams Finally Found A Benefactor?

By Dirk VanderHart

January 6, 2016

Is Swoosh Bikes coming to Portland?

It looks more likely now than it did 20 minutes ago. The Portland Bureau of Transportation put out a cryptic news release this evening, announcing a "major bike share partnership" with Nike that'll be formally unveiled tomorrow at 9 am. PBOT spokesman John Brady very adamantly refused to say anything about what the agreement is, and it's always possible there's something else in the works, but the tenor of this "significant new partnership" could be a sponsorship agreement the city's hoped for for years.

If so, it comes at an opportune time. Last fall, PBOT announced it's finally rolling out a bike share system this year after years of difficulty finding the money to do so—and selected New York City-based Social Bicycles as a supplier (much more on what the system will look like here). The deal the city's struck creates some fairly large risks for system operator Motivate (formerly Alta Bicycle Share) if the company can't find corporate money to help run the system. Most keenly, the city's hoping for a \$4 million, 5-year title sponsorship.

If it's that PBOT plans to announce tomorrow, then the bikes that roll out on Portland streets in coming months probably won't look much like the prototype officials showed off last year (pictured above). They'll be ...swooshier.

Portland Business Journal

Portland lands \$10M title sponsor for bike share program

By Mason Walker

January 7, 2016

Portland, one of the country's foremost cities for getting around on two wheels, will at long last get its own bike share system.

The news comes thanks to a five year, \$10 million sponsorship deal signed between sportswear giant Nike and the Portland Bureau of Transportation.

City officials have been working on a system for nearly a decade, but funding, particularly from corporate sponsors, has proved elusive. Last September, the city secured \$2 million in grants to continue developing a system. Reports at the time suggested it would cost \$2.50 for a half-hour rental. Full-year subscriptions would cost between \$10 and \$15 a month for 90-minute per day uses.

The system is expected to launch with 1,000 bikes around the central city and inner eastside.

We'll have more on the Nike sponsorship and expected rollout timeline as details are made available.