

The Oregonian

Portland approves \$30,000 to help homeless people bus out of town

By Denis C. Theriault

March 17, 2016

Portland will spend at least \$30,000 helping a few dozen homeless people leave town this year — offering bus fare, plus services, to volunteers who've lined up another place to live.

City Council approved the pilot program Wednesday morning, part of a 4-0 vote on a \$2.75 million investment in Mayor Charlie Hales' nearly six-month-old housing emergency. Housing Commissioner Dan Saltzman was absent.

The largest share, \$1 million, will help the Portland Housing Bureau grow an assistance program that helps keep people who've suddenly struggled to pay rent from losing their apartments and falling into homelessness.

The council also approved hundreds of thousands of dollars to help the Office of Management and Finance manage city-sanctioned campsites for homeless Portlanders, a daytime storage program and new emergency shelters that have already served hundreds of people months after opening.

That spending, playing out while Hales crafts his last city budget this spring, will draw from two newly arrived sources of cash: a legal settlement with online travel companies on hotel taxes and a payment related to the development of downtown's Pioneer Place mall.

Though among the smallest allocations approved Wednesday, the bus fare program has attracted significant notice.

Called Homeward Bound, it's similar to programs offered in other cities and also locally among domestic violence providers. Portland's effort is directly inspired by a program with the same name in San Francisco, said Kurt Creager, the housing bureau's director.

Likely participants will include people who might like to leave Portland — to live with family or friends, or land a job — but currently have no means of moving. Participants will have to prove they've locked down a secure place to live. They'll also need to be medically fit for bus travel, although air fare might be possible in limited cases.

Officials have cautioned that it's more than a means of sending people to some other city, with one-way tickets, their ultimate destination unknown. Creager said participants will be assigned case managers who will verify any job or housing offers.

"We don't want to export the problem to another community," he said. "We're trying to end homelessness. We're not trying to move homelessness."

Portland and Multnomah County officials working together on homelessness issues, part of a regional program called A Home for Everyone, had expected to seek funding for a similar pilot program later this year.

The pilot program, working alongside local nonprofits, is expected to help about 75 people through June. Officials hope to have it running by April.

"That's our goal," Creager said.

Portland police shouldn't buy body cameras until more money found, budget analysts suggest

By Maxine Bernstein

March 18, 2016

In fall 2014, a federal judge urged Portland to place body cameras on its police officers even though they aren't required under the city's use-of-force settlement with the U.S. Department of Justice.

Days later, Portland Mayor Charlie Hales said he agreed with the judge's push and wanted police to wear the small cameras within a year.

The Police Bureau set aside money to buy cameras and has held community forums to solicit ideas from residents to help draft a formal policy for their use. And last year, the Legislature passed a bill that sets statewide standards for their use.

But now the city's budget office is recommending against buying the cameras unless leaders can find a way to pay for the annual costs of operating the cameras and storing the data.

The Police Bureau already has \$834,619 to buy about 600 body cameras. The bureau requested \$1 million in ongoing funding to help cover the costs of storing the data and program management.

On Thursday, the budget office urged council members to reject the request.

"We think the cameras are a good thing," said city budget director Andrew Scott. "But we don't want the Police Bureau to move forward if they don't have ongoing funding."

His office hasn't been able to identify a source for what's anticipated to cost between \$800,000 and \$1 million a year.

Christy Owen, the city budget analyst assigned to Police Bureau spending, said it wouldn't be responsible for the city to seek a request for bids to buy the cameras if the city can't support the technology, including data storage plans, potential hardware or software requirements and a dedicated program manager.

The mayor said he'll push ahead somehow, dismissing the city budget recommendation as just that.

"There's no going back as far as I'm concerned," Hales said.

Yet the mayor conceded that the Police Bureau may have to scale back its initial purchase and possibly phase in the cameras to officers, starting with one precinct at a time.

"We've got more work to do to figure out staffing and ongoing costs," he said.

As of Thursday, he hadn't yet identified where that money would come from.

Beaverton and Eugene police last fall were among 73 agencies nationwide to receive a chunk of \$19.3 million in federal grants for the cameras. Across the country, 285 agencies from 42 states, Washington, D.C., and tribal governments applied for money.

Portland police didn't because the bureau already had money set aside to buy cameras, city officials said. The grant money, they said, was restricted to start-up costs.

Some police departments have already spent hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars managing their data, but proponents say the high costs may be offset by savings in future litigation, according to an April 2015 Harvard Law Review article.

During a work session on the Police Bureau's budget Thursday, a community budget advisory member Rob Fullmer and Dante James, director of the city's Office of Equity and Human Rights, urged city officials to make police body cameras a priority.

James said other cities that have used them have reported reductions in use of force and complaints against officers, as well as increased accountability and public trust in police.

Fullmer urged city officials to find the money to support the cameras and their ongoing costs.

"It makes me wonder if we're not wiser to spend ongoing resources for body cameras," Fullmer said. "We should prioritize this as soon as possible."

Secretive Portland planners have run roughshod over Eastmoreland (OPINION)

By Guest Columnist Robert McCullough

March 17, 2016

Portland's land use planning process — once held out as a national model — is now just a tattered shell. Many decisions have been made in back rooms far from the public eye. Even worse, attempts at public involvement have been belittled by the city's planning staff. As one Bureau of Planning and Sustainability email put it, "Why should we downzone Eastmoreland? Ask the peckerwood."

Actually, we have been asking the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability this same question for almost a year. The email quoted above is the most pertinent answer they have been willing to provide. This fall, the city's neighborhood coalitions sent the City Council a letter stating that the exclusionary nature of the comprehensive plan was felt citywide — not just in Eastmoreland.

Eastmoreland's story is very simple. In 2013, the Reed neighborhood asked the planners to bring their zoning into conformity with their land use. We innocently followed suit, little realizing the Kafkaesque process we were entering into.

A few months later, in the spring of 2014, we received a letter recommending approval in the comprehensive plan. A year later, just as we were submitting our formal materials, the staff preempted us with a blistering rebuttal. Since then, the planning staff has lobbied relentlessly against Eastmoreland's proposal while simultaneously approving very similar proposals in Reed, Portsmouth, Kenton, Brentwood-Darlington and numerous pockets in East Portland.

What few materials we have been able to access indicates that the staff held an undocumented meeting in March. No records were kept since they say it was a "group session."

Who attended the secret meeting? Well, you are free to ask, but you may well join the list of peckerwoods who expect transparency at the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability. In the most recent response to our Oregon open document request, they provided 100 emails randomly selected from their files — many of which were completely irrelevant and all — other

than the peckerwood email — unrelated to the issue at hand. And they charged us \$871 to discourage us from asking again.

So, what is the argument actually about? At its heart it is about McMansions and trees. Even the BPS admits this is not a density issue. Eastmoreland has quiet tree-lined streets. Developers have been buying older more affordable homes, razing them, clearcutting the trees and building huge McMansions. In spite of Housing Land Advocates president Jennifer Bragar's beliefs, each McMansion adds \$100,000 to the cost of housing. Not to mention that McMansions are often unattractive — without yards, places for children to play, and without trees.

The claim that the arrival of the Orange Line will require the elimination of traditional neighborhoods through Southeast Portland is particularly difficult to understand. The planning standard is a quarter-mile around the light-rail station. In the case of the Bybee Station, this would include knocking down several homes on Southeast 27th Avenue, the fire station, two city parks, a retirement home, part of the golf course and hundreds of additional trees.

In Portland's current environment, it is not unusual for city bureaus to ride roughshod over the residents. This is the real world where the interests of developers often seem more important to them than those of taxpayers and residents.

However, a good first step might be for BPS to open their black box and let the rest of us see what they have been hiding.

Why did they change their minds? Who were they meeting with? Why was it so important to punish one neighborhood while accepting identical requests from others?

Some of us peckerwoods would like to know.

Willamette Week

Committee Recommends Portland Pull Investments From Caterpillar, Saying Its Bulldozers Support the Israeli Occupation of Palestine

By Karina Buggy

March 17, 2016

Portland's Socially Responsible Investments Committee voted 4-2 Thursday to put Caterpillar on the city's "do not buy" list, because activists say Caterpillar and its D-9 bulldozer support the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

"Caterpillar is the model of corporate bad behavior," said committee member Hyung Nam, who is also a teacher at Wilson High School. "As for the issue with their bulldozers: this is a military weapon that was designed for military purposes —not for tractors. It's been used to destroy Palestinian homes and infrastructures. They're clearly not responding to criticism for developing a military weapon."

The issue of whether Portland should divest from Caterpillar and other companies said to support the Palestinian occupation sparked controversy and division in October among members of another volunteer-led city committee, the Human Rights Commission.

The Human Rights Commission endorsed pulling Portland money from Caterpillar but the decision prompted two members of the HRC, who later said they didn't understand what they were supporting, to renounce their votes. Mayor Charlie Hales said he didn't support the move. The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland railed against it. So did Oregon Treasurer Ted Wheeler, who's running for Portland mayor, and U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-Portland).

"This decision is deeply disappointing and only aggravates divisions among people who share a common goal — a peaceful two-state solution that affirms the rights of Israelis and Palestinians," Bonamici wrote in an Oct. 29 letter to the Portland City Council.

Sayer Jones, a second member of Portland's responsible investing committee, said today the group has an obligation to communicate with Caterpillar and make clear exactly what needs to change. "We are missing an opportunity to exert our power if we do not try to engage with companies," Jones said.

Nam, the Wilson teacher, said the opposite approach would prove more effective. "There have been campaigns with these companies to change their behavior for years, but they have not," he said. "Putting them on this list will motivate them to change their behavior."

Robert Landauer opposed the move. "We're on the precipice of absurdity for putting this on the 'do not buy list' if that is what happens," Landauer said. "I find it difficult to say that the company itself, not the Israeli government, is egregiously among the worst."

The committee won't make a final recommendation until October. If the Portland City Council agrees with its decision, Caterpillar will join Walmart and fossil fuel companies on the list of those excluded from Portland's portfolio of investments.

Portland's treasurer, Jennifer Cooperman, says not investing in Caterpillar could spell a loss of \$750,000 to \$1 million in interest earnings foregone over a three-year period.

The Portland Mercury

The Daily Journal of Commerce

New BDS division has community focus

By Chuck Slothower

March 17, 2016

Portland's Bureau of Development Services has created a new Public Information and Enforcement Services Division.

"This change is largely focused on our communications and outreach and engagement efforts, as well as highlighting the work our Enforcement Services does in the community," said Ross Caron, the bureau's public information officer. He will temporarily serve as the appointed division manager.

The biggest change is that Enforcement Services, which has approximately 28 employees, will no longer be part of the Inspections Services Division. Enforcement Services inspects building permits.

The bureau has five divisions with more than 300 employees.

Public Information and Enforcement Services will respond to and correct complaints related to violations of the state building code and the city's zoning, housing and nuisance codes. The division also coordinates the building code appeals process and the maintenance and development of the codes, the bureau said in a news release.