

The Oregonian

Retired Las Vegas fire chief selected to be Portland's next fire chief

By Maxine Bernstein

May 16, 2016

Mike Myers, 49, who retired as Las Vegas fire chief in 2013 after a 26-year career with the department and went on to work as chief of a fire department in St. Charles, Missouri, has been selected to be Portland's next fire chief.

Commissioner Dan Saltzman said Monday that Myers was selected from 31 applicants in a national search. The Bureau of Human Resources narrowed the 31 to 10 qualified applicants. A panel, which included the fire union president, human resource representatives and a citizen on the fire budget advisory committee, whittled the pool to five candidates, and Saltzman selected Myers out of the five.

Saltzman said Myers was a "leader in the emergency medical side" of the Las Vegas fire service, which is important considering that 70 to 80 percent of the Portland fire department's calls are medical.

"Chief Myers has the right skill-set to approach the complex challenges our Fire & Rescue Bureau is facing with rapid growth and changing demands and, specifically would be able to bring a cutting-edge approach to the Emergency Medical Services side of the Bureau," the commissioner said.

Myers began in Las Vegas as a firefighter in 1986 and later was a paramedic, fire training officer, assistant chief and deputy chief before becoming chief in 2011. He has a bachelor's degree in health care administration and was a volunteer for years with the Las Vegas police department's search and rescue team.

According to the Las Vegas Sun, while Myers was chief, the fire department opened two new fire stations, implemented a program to increase the survival rate of heart attack patients and updated sick leave and overtime policies.

Myers replaces chief Erin Janssens, who announced her retirement earlier this year and left last month. Chief Ken Burns has been serving as interim fire chief.

Myers isn't the first outsider to lead the Portland fire bureau. In the early 90s, then-fire commissioner Charlie Hales appointed Robert Wall, who came to Portland from Palo Alto, Calif.

A member of the Portland fire bureau was among the five finalists for the chief's job this year.

Saltzman is meeting with the fire bureau's command staff at 1 p.m. Monday to discuss the new appointment.

"I think the command staff is going to work well with Chief Myers. They're professional," Saltzman said.

Myers and his wife are eager to live in Portland. In Las Vegas, they had lived in the city across from City Hall. They plan to move to a high-rise apartment in Portland, Saltzman said.

"He's passionate about Portland," Saltzman said. "He and his wife are very outdoor-oriented."

In a prepared statement, Myers said he considers Portland's fire service among the most respected in the country. "It is an absolute honor to have the opportunity to lead the fine men and women of this organization," he said. "My wife Tara and I find Portland to be completely aligned with our lifestyle. We look forward to interacting with and serving our new community."

Myers is scheduled to start June 30, with an annual salary of \$180,000, according to Saltzman.

Steve Novick's sophistry: Editorial Valley

By The Oregonian Editorial Board

May 13, 2016

Rhetorical gimmicks: To no one's surprise, the Portland City Council this week approved a doubly inequitable tax on heavy trucks. This would qualify as a valley all by itself, but an argument in its favor employed a kind of sophistry that will be familiar to any regular City Council observer. This week's sophist in chief was Commissioner Steve Novick.

The tax's inequities, about which we wrote earlier this week, are as follows. First, the tax has little relation to heavy trucks' actual use of city streets. It's simply a fixed percentage of the weight-mile taxes companies pay for the use of all state roads. The tax thus treats affected users differently. Second, though the Council rushed to pass the tax as a way to encourage Portlanders to vote for a 10-cent gas tax on smaller vehicles, the two taxes are not linked. The truck tax will go into effect even if the gas tax fails this month.

Novick and his colleagues are aware of the tax's flaws. Amanda Fritz, for instance, acknowledged that it's imperfect and probably does need some changes ... right before she voted for it. Knowingly adopting bad policy is not what good officials do.

Here's how Novick tried to argue around this problem: Truckers say this is the wrong way to raise \$2.5 million, he said, but haven't come up with an alternative. Therefore, we should soldier on.

Novick isn't the only commissioner to use this line of argumentation, but it usually follows the same pattern: Propose flawed policy; challenge affected group to do better; use failure of affected group to do better as evidence of flawed policy's goodness. This sort of argument is an attempt to obscure the fact that bad policy remains bad policy notwithstanding failed efforts to improve it. It also attempts to shift responsibility: Crafting good policy is City Council's job, not that of its constituents.

Eastmoreland 'downzoning' dumped: Editorial Peak

By The Oregonian Editorial Board

May 13, 2016

No special treatment: Portland City Council provided a second "peak" this week, and it, too, was at the expense of an ill-considered proposal by lame-duck Mayor Charlie Hales. On Wednesday, not a single commissioner volunteered to second the mayor's proposal to reduce allowable density in the city's tony Eastmoreland neighborhood, where the mayor coincidentally happens to live. As a result, The Oregonian/OregonLive's Brad Schmidt reported, the idea died with barely a whimper.

Increasing neighborhood density is generally considered an appropriate response to population and price pressure, both of which Portland faces. Allow two (or more) residential units in lots formerly occupied by one, the thinking goes, and a city can house more people less expensively without requiring a lot more land. Hence all the talk these days about "missing middle" housing.

However, Eastmoreland residents have been less than thrilled by a practice allowable under existing zoning that involves the elimination of a single expensive home and the construction in its place of two expensive homes. The practice does change the appearance of the neighborhood. But, then, so does the same phenomenon anywhere in the city. Imagine if City Council considered proposals to reduce allowable density in every neighborhood whose residents asked.

Downzoning Eastmoreland would be particularly strange given the proximity of TriMet's new Orange Line, which stops near the Eastmoreland golf course. Why would you spend a zillion dollars on high-capacity public transit, then alter zoning in a way that would ensure that it operates less efficiently? Fortunately, City Council didn't.

Credit Commissioner Steve Novick, meanwhile, for coming up for the perfect name for the zoning Hales sought. Riffing on the city's standard zoning abbreviations – R5, R7, for instance – Novick proclaimed himself "glad that the council didn't elect to create ... an R1 Percent zone." Wish we had thought of that.

A few budget cuts for Charlie Hales: Editorial Agenda 2016

By The Oregonian Editorial Board

May 12, 2016

It's surprising that a politician like Charlie Hales, who is rounding the corner into his last stretch as mayor, would make such a rookie mistake. But Hales managed to blow both mathematical and political calculations in developing a proposed \$510 million budget that not only outspends the city's record revenue, but lacks support from colleagues for the tax hike that his budget needs.

So Hales is lobbying the public directly, The Oregonian/OregonLive's Brad Schmidt writes, issuing a missive that warns of a homeless crisis/gang violence/housing Armageddon if

the city fails to raise additional tax dollars, whether through his proposed 13.6 percent increase in the business license tax or some other way. It's a pretty stark – and dishonest – assessment that belies the city's unprecedented revenue growth and nearly \$37 million in surplus funds for the coming year – \$11 million of which has already been dedicated to housing-related initiatives.

This isn't a revenue problem, it's a priority problem. And Hales is leaving it to other commissioners to propose changes to his budget to reduce it by the \$8.7 million that would come from a business-license tax increase.

Since that seems to be beyond our mayor, here are a few money-saving ideas, including cuts from existing spending and reductions in proposed new spending. The items below total \$5.9 million, which, while still a few million short of the \$8.7 million, should help get the conversation started.

Mounted patrol: This Portland Police horseback unit is perennially on the chopping block but its modest budget and Portlanders' love for horses always seem to save it. Still, in these tough times, even small expenditures add up, and patrolling by horseback is an expensive way to police. The mounted patrol is even less efficient now that the horses are living in Lake Oswego and have to be chauffeured over and back each day. If the city is in such dire straits that it can't live within its record-revenue means, then it's time to put the horses out to pasture. Savings: \$439,000 with the officers and sergeant transferred to other units in the police bureau.

Body camera implementation: There are many reasons to support outfitting police officers with body cameras that capture encounters with the public. But the city should not move forward until it publicly reveals its plans for how the cameras will be used. Portland Police began soliciting feedback on body camera policies more than a year ago, but still has not told the public the circumstances in which officers will use body cameras, the agency's privacy policy regarding footage, how officers will handle sensitive situations and whether police officers will be allowed to review footage of officer-involved shootings before giving a statement to investigators. The public's willingness to invest in this expensive and invasive technology rests on how police intend to use it. Until there's a draft policy for the public to comment on, the city should hold off committing funds. Savings: \$1.7 million

Regional Arts and Culture Council: The much-reviled arts tax was supposed to help provide millions in funding on an annual basis to the Regional Arts and Culture Council, which funds arts organizations in the area. But collections have fallen far short of rosy projections that failed to adequately consider the legality of who can be taxed, the administrative costs and the lack of compliance. So Portland City Council has continued to fund the group, a tradition that Hales aims to do so again this year to the tune of \$4.1 million. While city commissioners have shown little appetite for paring back funding, they should consider that the mayor's budget includes more than \$5 million in cuts from general fund bureaus. The selected cuts, Hales said in a recent work session, were those "that we thought were bearable and reasonable and didn't thin the soup of basic public services that people in the city depend on." Under that criteria, RACC at the very least should also take a 5 percent hair cut.

Savings: \$205,000.

Portland Development Commission's B-Corp program: The mayor's budget provides money toward staffing and setting up a "Best for Portland" campaign that encourages companies to become certified as a "benefit corporation" for modeling social, environmental, accountability and transparency values. Such certification is, as the city's budget office noted, a marketing tool for "mature companies," while PDC's business development programs are geared to smaller businesses trying to grow and become profitable. The office also noted that many Portland businesses are seeking such certification without needing the city's prodding. In other words, why is this a core function of the city? Answer: It's not.

Savings: \$275,000

YouthPass: Helping pay for bus passes to high school students in Portland Public Schools is not a core function of Portland city government. It's also unfair to families in Portland's other school districts – including David Douglas, Reynolds and Centennial – which have higher poverty rates than PPS but whose tax dollars are being devoted to PPS students. Hand off the responsibility back to PPS where it belongs.

Savings: \$967,000

Housing's law enforcement diversion program: This program has not been largely defined but would be a pilot effort to provide "alternative law enforcement" tools for homeless individuals committing low level crimes. This pilot program needs a lot more detail before the city should make a \$2.3 million commitment that the mayor calls for.

Savings: \$2.3 million

The Portland Tribune

Saltzman picks out-of-town fire chief

By Jim Redden

May 16, 2016

A veteran out-of-state fire chief has been appointed to head Portland Fire & Rescue.

Mike Myers, 49, formerly headed the fire bureaus in both Las Vegas and St. Charles, Missouri. He was appointed by Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who is in charge of PF&R, in part because of his experience with emergency medical services (EMS) responses.

"EMS responses make up 80 percent of the bureau's responses, and Myers has a reputation for innovation in that field," says Saltzman.

Saltzman selected Myers after a national search that included applicants from within PF&R.

According to Saltzman, Myers is nationally recognized for his EMS leadership. He has been featured on the Discovery Channel for innovation, and holds a B.S. in healthcare administration.

Myers has more than 27 years experience with fire and rescue bureaus. He retired as chief for Las Vegas Fire & Rescue in early 2013 after 26 years of service. Myers began there in 1986 as a

firefighter, and quickly rose through the ranks as a paramedic, fire training officer, assistant chief and deputy chief before earning the top job in 2011. Under his leadership, the department earned a rare accreditation with the Center for Public Safety Excellence.

In 2014, Myers returned to service as chief and emergency manager for St. Charles, Missouri. With a population of 70,000 and a unique mix of defense industry and commercial holdings, St. Charles is a regional partner with St. Louis. While there, he modernized the outlook and operation of the department.

Myers has also served as a principal member for the National Fire Protection Association on three committees and was an adjunct faculty member for the College of Southern Nevada for many years, having designed and taught the Fire Strategies and Tactics curriculum.

The position pays \$180,752 annually.

Former Portland Fire Chief Erin Janssens retired in April after 28 years of city service. She became the first woman to serve as chief in June 2012 when former city councilor Randy Leonard appointed her to the job. She was the fire marshal at the time.

Density fight gets personal at City Hall

By Jim Redden

May 15, 2016

A Southeast Portland neighborhood leader is accusing Commissioner Steve Novick of hypocrisy in the ongoing fight over how much of Portland to zone for increased density.

Last week, the City Council failed to approve an amendment to the proposed Comprehensive Plan update that would have rezoned the Eastmoreland Neighborhood R7, meaning no more than one house on a 4,200 square foot lot. The neighborhood is currently zoned R5, requiring minimum lot sizes of 3,000 square feet.

"I'm glad that the council didn't elect to create what I think would have to be described as an R1 Percent zone," Novick said at the hearing, referring to the term coined by the Occupy moment to describe the wealthiest Americans who are allegedly not paying their fair share of taxes.

"I say that with deep love," Novick added. "Some of my best friends are rich people in Eastmoreland."

The amendment was introduced by Mayor Charlie Hales, who lives in the Eastmoreland neighborhood. It died after failing to receive a second. Novick says density must be increased in some Portland neighborhoods to accommodate the additional people expected to move to the city over the next 20 years.

But on Sunday, Eastmoreland and Southeast Uplift leader Robert McCullough sent an email to neighborhood residents saying Novick currently lives in a R7 zone in Southwest Portland. And, according to the email, Novick and his wife, a county employee, earn more than many families living in Eastmoreland.

"There was enough outrage at his remark that I looked up Steve Novick's home," said McCullough. "His family income is also significantly larger than Eastmoreland's average."

Contacted by the Portland Tribune, Novick said he did not know his home's lot was zoned R7. But he continued to insist Portland needs to increase density to accommodate the additional people expected to move here by 2035.

"I do think it's important to note that an R7 zone means "you can't move here unless you can afford a 7,000 square foot lot," Novick said in an email to the Portland Tribune. "The way things are going in our real estate market, it looks like 'R7' will be the equivalent of 'R1%' in large parts of the city," "The Eastmoreland example came up because they were asking for a change to their zoning to R7, but again, I question why that category should exist at all."

The clash is ironic because McCullough supports the temporary gas tax increase Novick has placed on the May 17 primary election ballot and the charge he convinced the council to place on heavy truck companies to help fund road repairs.

The City Council is expected to vote on the proposed Comprehensive Plan update on June 15. The amended version is expected to be posted on the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability's website in coming days.

For an earlier Portland Tribune story on the issue, see portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/302840-180514-portlanders-split-on-missing-middle-housing.

Willamette Week

Portland City Commissioner Dan Saltzman Names New Portland Fire & Rescue Chief

*By Nigel Jaquiss
May 16, 2016*

City Commissioner Dan Saltzman today named Mike Myers, formerly the fire chief in Las Vegas and briefly, St. Charles, Mo., to replace Chief Erin Janssens, who announced her retirement earlier this year.

"Chief Myers has the right skill-set to approach the complex challenges our Fire & Rescue Bureau is facing with rapid growth and changing demands and, specifically, would be able to bring a cutting-edge approach to the Emergency Medical Services side of the Bureau," Saltzman said in a statement.

Myers' hiring marks a departure for the Fire Bureau, which usually hires its top leader from within: Janssens, a lifer in the bureau, succeeded John Klum, who like his predecessor, Dave Sprando, was part of an extended family who served in the bureau.

The clannish nature of bureau leadership has made change difficult, even as the nature of firefighters' work has continued the shift away from putting out fires toward emergency medical response.

In Las Vegas, Myers commanded a bureau slightly smaller than Portland's. In his bio, he highlights a significant increase in the survival rates for people suffering from heart attacks, which he says rose from 3 to 5 percent to 30 percent under his leadership.

"Mike is an innovative, community-minded leader with a strong vision for the Bureau, and brings the right combination of leadership and experience for Portland Fire and Rescue," Saltzman said.

Myers begins work June 30.

The Portland Mercury

There's Another Rate Hike on Businesses in Charlie Hales' Budget

By Dirk VanderHart

May 11, 2016

PORTLAND BUSINESSES have been railing against Mayor Charlie Hales' ill-fated proposal to raise Portland business taxes but there's a far steeper potential hike tucked away in the mayor's budget.

In a little-noticed item, Hales has proposed raising the city's fee on commercial trash collectors by up to 31 percent in coming years—from \$8.30 per ton of trash to as high as \$10.90 per ton by 2020.

The hikes, which would be split evenly between two \$1.30 jumps under the proposal, could bleed into the rates businesses and apartment buildings pay for trash collection. They wouldn't affect collection rates for single-family homes.

That's a bit odd, because the issue Hales wants to address with the rate hike affects all Portlanders.

The city plans to use revenue from the higher fees to more than double the number of public trash cans in the city—from fewer than 600 today to around 1,400 by 2020. That'll take around \$500,000 just to purchase new cans, the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) estimates, and perhaps \$1.1 million a year for trash collection and maintenance. Hales also wants to create a new position to oversee the whole program.

"It's a tiny impact on individual bill payers, with a big, positive impact for the city's commercial districts," says Hales' spokesperson, Sara Hottman.

Indeed, the plan would vastly expand the number of neighborhoods that get public trash cans. Currently, just seven business districts host the city's roughly 570 cans, and the vast majority—

around 400—are downtown. Under the expanded program, the city would add around five neighborhoods a year until public trash pickup extended to 31 urban "centers" identified in the city's Comprehensive Plan. The farthest from downtown: the intersection of SE 162nd and Division.

"I would assume that part of [the fee raise] will be passed through to the customers," says Kevin Veaudry Casaus, a solid waste and recycling coordinator at BPS, "but the disposal cost is a small portion of the overall cost of service."

The fee the City of Portland charges haulers for doing away with trash pales in comparison to Metro's charge of \$94.98 per ton. But the raises Hales has proposed—chosen from a number of options BPS considered—are steep enough to give the city's budget office pause. The office recommended Hales hold off on a rate hike while the city investigated what the true costs of the program might be.

Hales chose to ignore that advice. And on this fee hike, at least, it doesn't appear he'll get pushback.

"We're not planning to oppose this," says Dave White, who represents the Portland area for the Oregon Refuse and Recycling Association.