

The Oregonian

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler hopes to maintain help for homeless, increase spending on roads

By Jessica Floum

May 2, 2017

The city of Portland is in the enviable position of having \$12 million more to spend in the coming year than it needs to continue all current programs and services. And Mayor Ted Wheeler announced Monday that he wants to spend two-thirds of it, or \$8 million, to address homelessness.

The mayor wants to earmark those millions for shelters, temporary housing, and permanent housing with support services.

That would be on top of the \$17 million of funding the city has already committed to spending each year on Portland and Multnomah County's joint homeless office. The mayor also recommended that the city's housing bureau contribute \$1.7 million of its regular funding stream to help the joint office fund efforts to temporarily and permanently shelter Portland's homeless.

Because the current city budget also provided significant one-time funding to help house the city's homeless, total city contributions to the joint office homelessness would rise just \$600,000 under the mayor's proposal. Current city contributions total \$24.4 million. Wheeler is recommending \$25 million in the next budget.

Overall, Wheeler recommended the city spend \$516 million of general funds next year. That is a 3 percent increase from the city's current budget of \$501 million, according to City Budget Office Director Andrew Scott.

In January, the mayor asked the city bureaus to propose \$15 million worth of cuts in order to balance the budget while allowing him to add spending on new or expanded initiatives, including combating homelessness.

He recommends the City Council make some of those cuts, including eliminating the Portland Police Bureau's Mounted Patrol and cutting funding from the Bureau of Environmental Services' tree program.

Wheeler hopes to place four park rangers on the Springwater Corridor and parks in East Portland to make sure the areas are usable, he said. The mayor also said he plans to coordinate with other jurisdictions to keep the city's corridors and parks clean.

"It's unacceptable when kids go on an Easter egg hunt and they find more needles than eggs in a public park," Wheeler said. "There are some real public safety concerns."

While the mayor plans to invest heavily in homelessness, when it comes to growing the supply of affordable housing, he's looking toward the private sector.

"There is no way the public sector has the resources to close that gap," Wheeler said.

Wheeler's proposed budget calls for spending \$1.4 million less on rental rehabilitation than the city devoted to such upgrades this year.

Rather than invest significant dollars in building housing, the mayor plans to focus on making it easier for the private sector to do so by working through kinks in the building permitting process, especially in design review, he said.

"The private sector must be able to do its thing," Wheeler said. "That means keeping costs low. That means reducing the hassle factor in permitting."

In January, the mayor directed the Housing Bureau to halt spending from a voter-approved \$258 million housing bond so that the council could convene a bond oversight committee and a set a framework for future spending. The City Council has since selected a committee, and the housing bureau is working with a stakeholder advisory group to develop a framework, Housing Director Kurt Creager told The Oregonian/OregonLive last Wednesday.

If Wheeler has his way, the City Council will make [a \\$50 million investment in fixing Portland's roads](#) and other infrastructure by bonding against expected revenues from Portland's urban renewal areas. The mayor proposed dedicating \$2 million in the coming year and in subsequent city budgets to pay the interest on the bond debt.

He plans to further invest in earthquake and other disaster preparation by adding \$350,000 to the Bureau of Emergency Management's budget to expand the neighborhood emergency training program.

However, Wheeler's proposed investments in the Portland Bureau of Transportation's storm planning fall significantly short of what the bureau requested. The mayor proposed spending \$330,000 on storm and ice weather response even though the bureau requested \$2.8 million. The bureau spent \$2.2 million [to remove snow, ice and debris](#) and repair roads after January's snowstorm.

The mayor likely intends to rely on contracts with local companies to help expand the city's storm response as needed, bureau spokesman Dylan Rivera said.

"The mayor's got tough decisions to make, and we're going to make the best use of limited resources we have," Rivera said.

As for the Portland police, the mayor's budget proposes cutting funding for body cameras from \$1.7 million this year to just \$500,000 next year. The city has yet to purchase any body cameras despite public pressure to do so. The City Council decided last year to hold off on purchasing the technology until they worked through policy addressing privacy and other concerns.

The mayor also recommended eliminating the Portland Police Bureau's five-officer mounted patrol, cutting its \$1 million budget, spent mostly on officer pay and benefits.

"The bottom line is it's not a good use of our public and safety resources," Wheeler said.

Instead, the mayor's proposal calls for [spending \\$1.2 million on a pilot program in the police bureau](#) that would enlist 12 "community service officers" to communicate with the public and work on "proactive community police work."

The mayor also proposed cutting almost \$1 million from the Bureau of Environmental Services' tree program.

Following pressure from vocal parents and community members at the city's budget forums, Wheeler proposed continuing funding for [Parks & Recreation's educational preschool program](#) that serves 600 families at a cost of about \$690,000 per year.

"This is an important program," mayoral spokesman Michael Cox said. "It's a popular program." Although Wheeler proposed funding the program for the next year and a half, he believes it's more appropriate that the state fund early childhood education, Cox said.

Each year, the city is required to spend at least 50 percent of any surplus funding on infrastructure. For the coming year's budget, that will mean spending \$9.2 million on roads, buildings, parks and other capital projects. Wheeler proposed spending \$5 million of that on making Portland sidewalks accessible to non-abled bodied people and \$1 million to preserve

several reservoirs on Mount Tabor as non-working historic adornments. He also proposed spending \$950,000 on traffic signal reconstruction and \$778,000 to renovate City Hall's exterior, which Scott says is in danger of falling on people on the sidewalk.

"This is the best opportunity we have as a city to focus our limited resources on things that will make a real difference on the lives of people in Portland," Wheeler said. "My proposed budget represents the culmination of many difficult choices."

The City Council will debate the mayor's budget proposed cuts and funding in public budget hearings over the next month. The City Council won't adopt the budget until June 8, after a tax hearing and utility rate reviews.

"We'll hear from the public and undoubtedly make changes," Wheeler said.

Portland May Day march erupts into fiery riot; 25 arrested

*By Jim Ryan
May 1, 2017*

Protesters shattered business windows, set bonfires in the streets and vandalized a police car Monday afternoon in downtown Portland as a May Day protest devolved into a short-lived but chaotic riot.

The demonstration began as a city-permitted march featuring impassioned but peaceful rhetoric, but it ultimately was defined by black-clad protesters, fires and property damage. Ninety minutes into the march, police declared the gathering a riot. Officers used flash-bang grenades to disperse the crowd after they pronounced the march illegal, eventually arresting 25 people.

May 1 is International Workers' Day, and protesters from the Philippines to Paris celebrated by demanding better working conditions. The holiday traditionally celebrates laborers' rights but in recent years has expanded its focus in the U.S. to support immigrants.

A common theme in the widespread U.S. was disapproval of the President Donald Trump, who in his first 100 days has intensified immigration enforcement by pushing for a U.S.-Mexico border wall and a ban on travelers from six predominantly Muslim countries.

In Portland, the afternoon began with a rally in the South Park Blocks, where speakers addressed about 1,000 people in Shemanski Park while a group of self-described anarchists gathered at a distance from the microphones.

One of the more than half-dozen speakers urged the crowd to support workers' rights and unions. A Somali, Muslim woman encouraged people to continue fighting against racism, Islamophobia and other social injustices and to not lose hope.

Police at the periphery of the rally confiscated several sticks, poles and homemade shields — which were in sharp contrast to the more plentiful balloons, banners, costumes and props that otherwise filled the park. Some of the black-clad demonstrators burned small American flags.

Marchers set off after about 90 minutes, chanting as they marched south along the park blocks and turned toward the waterfront. Marchers remained mostly peaceful as they meandered past City Hall and the west side of the Justice Center.

But things turned violent as some in the crowd began throwing rocks and full soda cans at police while the mass moved north on Southwest 2nd Avenue.

Police later said items protesters threw or launched at officers also included fireworks, road flares and smoke bombs. Anarchists also threw at least one Molotov cocktail at officers but didn't hit them, a police spokesman said in an email.

Police in riot gear rolled in after the first objects were lobbed. Shortly after, police declared the assembly "unlawful" and warned that any marchers in the streets faced arrest.

The first of two main flashpoints came shortly after at Southwest 4th Avenue and Morrison Street, where demonstrators lit a large bonfire in the intersection using traffic cones, newspaper and brochure boxes, wood and a pallet. The blaze produced a plume of black smoke that rolled skyward next to a Starbucks and MAX tracks.

Officers rushed the scene, firing flash-bang grenades to disperse the crowd. The flames were quickly extinguished.

Police shortly after declared the demonstration a riot, saying protesters had vandalized a police car, were "[attacking](#)" [officers](#) and were vandalizing property.

Officers stymied the protest on the west side of City Hall about 10 minutes later, swooping in on protesters from the north and south and taking dozens into custody.

Damage included windows shattered or broken at the Mark O. Hatfield U.S. Courthouse, City Hall, J. Crew, Brooks Brothers, Target, Gus J. Solomon U.S. Courthouse building and Michael Parsons Fine Arts gallery.

A rock was thrown through a window at Goldmark Jewelers, and protesters left a wall and other windows marred by graffiti.

"Why'd they have to do this?" said Kurt Thomas, the building security guard. "The owner's a nice guy, not a corporate store at all."

City Hall was also tagged with graffiti, as was the shuttered Macy's building and other downtown structures. Someone scrawled "Kill Cops" on a Biketown rack, its bicycles' tires slashed.

Police said in a news release Monday night that officers deployed "limited" amounts of less-than-lethal munitions during the riot.

Portland Police Chief Mike Marshman said he's "proud of the professionalism" shown by law enforcement officers and firefighters who "worked to keep the peace in Downtown Portland under very difficult circumstances."

"Unfortunately the actions of the law breakers undermined and covered up the message of the law abiding individuals who worked to peacefully get their message heard on May Day," he said in a statement.

The Portland May Day Coalition, [which organized the rally and march](#), didn't immediately respond to messages seeking comment Monday evening. It did, however, address the day's events on Facebook, saying in part that police "chose to violently escalate a peaceful march."

The coalition, made up of almost 50 organizations, had released its march route and obtained a city permit for the event.

That route was followed only partway, never formally returning to the park where it began.

A separate group, called the [Anarchist Student Union](#), vowed beforehand to join the event and "do our own thing." It was unclear how many of the anarchists were among those arrested. But the vast majority of the hundreds — possibly thousands — of people assembled participated peacefully.

The 25 arrested include two 17-year-olds and a 14-year-old who each face riot charges, police said. They were released to parents, police said, and the other 22 people arrested were jailed.

Each of the adults arrested face second-degree disorderly conduct charges and traffic citations for failing to obey a police officer, according to police. Police said two adults face interfering with a peace officer charges, one faces an assaulting a police officer charge and another faces a resisting arrest charge.

Elsewhere in the U.S., peaceful protesters flocked to the streets in Chicago. At the White House gates, they demanded "Donald Trump has got to go!"

Three people in Seattle were arrested, one for hurling a rock as pro- and anti-Trump demonstrators faced off. In Olympia, police ordered protesters to disperse, calling them "members of a mob" as some threw bottles, used pepper spray and fired rocks from slingshots at officers. Two officers were injured and 10 people were arrested.

In Oakland, California, at least four were arrested after creating a human chain to block a county building where demonstrators demanded that county law enforcement refuse to collaborate with federal immigration agents.

Despite the West Coast clashes, most nationwide protests were peaceful as immigrants, union members and their allies staged a series of strikes, boycotts and marches to highlight the contributions of immigrants in the United States.

Mayor would set aside \$1.2 million for new Portland police community service officer program

*By Maxine Bernstein
May 1, 2017*

The Portland Police Bureau would hire and train 14 unarmed community service officers to handle low-level, non-emergency calls to free sworn full-time officers to do more proactive work with the community, under the mayor's proposed budget.

Mayor Ted Wheeler has proposed setting aside \$1.2 million for the community officer program – one that Chief Mike Marshman says would be modeled after a similar program in San Diego when he was police officer there for two years before joining Portland police in 1991.

The \$1.2 million would cover 12 of the officers and the city would seek an "alternative funding source" for two more, said Michael Cox, the mayor's spokesman.

Community service officers would be trained to respond to non-injury traffic crashes or do welfare or house checks and handle lower-level livability issues, the chief said.

The purpose is to bolster the number of people on the street "at a more effective cost to the public" and allow patrol officers to have time to handle their calls and also become more engaged with the residents and businesses in their patrol districts, Marshman said.

The chief said negotiations about whether the new officers would need to be certified by the state, whether they'd be allowed to drive police cars and what union would represent them are all details that must still be worked out.

"The CSO program is far from fleshed out but all training would likely be done by PPB," said Sgt. Pete Simpson, police spokesman.

The bureau is struggling with a staffing shortage. There are 58 officer vacancies in the bureau, authorized to have 950 officers. Fifty sworn officers also are eligible to retire now, with another 44 by the end of 2017.

The mayor's proposed \$209 million police budget, released Monday, represents a 1.1 percent increase over the current \$207 million budget.

Among other significant steps, the mayor wants to:

- Eliminate the Mounted Patrol Unit and reassign the five sworn officer jobs in the unit to vacant positions elsewhere in the bureau, saving about \$1 million.
- Cut out the \$1.3 million one-time money set aside for hardware and management positions for a body camera program.

The Police Bureau set aside money to buy cameras and held [community forums to solicit ideas](#) from residents to help draft a formal policy for their use. In 2015, the Legislature passed a bill that set statewide standards for their use.

The city set aside \$834,619 several years ago for police to buy cameras, and the bureau has carried over the money from year to year. The city last year gave the bureau another \$1.7 million in ongoing funding to start a body camera program.

Police still want to develop a program, but had suggested for the next fiscal year cutting \$1.2 million out of the \$1.7 million allotted for the camera program. That would eliminate two non-sworn staff dedicated to it.

The bureau is still working to figure out the cost to outfit officers with cameras, support staff needed to cull through the video footage for use as evidence in prosecutions and how the bureau would respond to public records requests for the video.

- Eliminate the sworn police captain position in the bureau records division and return the job to a non-sworn manager.
- Reassign \$162,250 from personnel services to fund a limited-term lawyer focused on helping the city attain U.S. Department of Justice approval for new bureau policy directives.
- Use \$1.8 million from recreational marijuana tax revenue to support the bureau's Service Coordination Team, which provides housing and treatment to repeat drug and property crime offenders, and \$500,000 from the tax revenue to support enforcement of drunken driving offenses in the Traffic Division.
- Add one victim advocate and one crime analyst to the bureau's Sex Crimes Unit as the unit works to deal with an increased caseload, partly from the move to test old sexual assault kits that have sat in its property warehouse.

Robert Ball serves as commander of the Police Bureau's reserve officer program that puts armed, sworn volunteer officers on the street and is president of the nonprofit Friends of the Mounted Patrol. He said he will continue to lobby the mayor to keep the horse patrol.

Ball said he had proposed having some volunteer reserve officers or even new community service officers ride the police horses.

"Community service officers on walking beats would never be as effective as volunteer community service officers on a horse," Ball said.

If the bureau had volunteers instead of paid community service officers, it might be able to recruit more people and use the money set aside for the new program to keep the mounted patrol unit in place, he said.

"I like the idea of a community service officer. I think it's a great idea to have them out there. But I think the city can do more with volunteer community service officers – essentially an adult cadet," Ball said.

The horses are temporarily housed in Lake Oswego. The unit has eight horses; care for each costs about \$5,000 a year. The unit is now down to one sergeant and one officer.

Three other officers were reassigned to fill patrol vacancies due to staff shortages. Friends of the Mounted Patrol has raised \$465,000 toward a future home for the horses. The money is being held in a trust, according to city officials.

Willamette Week

City cancels permitted May Day march due to unsafe conditions caused by anarchists

*By Lyndsey Hewitt
May 1, 2017*

Likely more than 1,000 people gathered downtown Portland for a permitted rally and march organized by a group called the Portland May Day Coalition on Monday afternoon.

The group is made up of more than 30 organizations and, celebrating International Workers' Day, focused the event around workers' rights, anti-colonialism and anti-capitalism.

The group called on workers, renters, artists, immigrants, students, unions and more to rise up for the occasion, and indeed, Shemanski Park was full of groups from varying backgrounds and causes from immigrant justice and rent control to rights of postal workers and the black lives matter movement. The march was to start at 3 p.m. but following a slew of speakers from organizations such as the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice (IMiJ), Voz and others, it didn't get started until a while later.

Organizers released a fact sheet about the march, available [here](#).

Portland was just one city across the nation to protest treatment of workers as well as President Donald Trump's ramped up approach in deporting undocumented immigrants and desire to build a wall.

Two students from Portland Community College held a sign that they said was part of an art project that said "Why are there no people of color on our city council?"

Olivia Singlagl, of Portland but of Samoan background, said she feels as though Portland has a hard time talking about race, and that without a colored person on represented on city council, "They can't think about the issues colored people face."

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly happened to come near the sign and engaged with the students, discussing how city council leaders are elected.

On attending the march, Eudaly said she just wanted to "blend in" and hoped that things remained peaceful.

The event organized by the coalition was permitted, but another march by Portland's anarchist population followed suit to promote anti-capitalism. There were at least 100 or more anarchists at the march all dressed in black wearing masks or bandanas.

One masked individual, who would not give his name, said he was involved with Portland's Resistance group and said he was hoping for "mass chaos."

"That's what's necessary to enact change," he said. He said that anarchy fuels progress, and that "everything (Mayor Ted) Wheeler's done, we've made him."

The march was canceled around 4:30 p.m. and police asked people to leave downtown immediately due to unsafe conditions.

Police canceled following assaults by anarchists throwing Pepsi cans and other projectiles, smoke bombs and at least one broken window at the Green/Wyatt Federal building.

Police have also reported that anarchists started fires downtown and damaged a police car and other property, and arrested 25 people.

Arrests of anarchists ranged in ages as young as 14 years old to 44 years old.

The Portland Mercury

Wheeler's First Budget Pushes Maintenance, Camp Cleanups, and More.

By Dirk VanderHart

May 1, 2017

Sketching a future that includes increased cleanups of homeless camps and hundreds of millions in infrastructure projects, Mayor Ted Wheeler laid out his priorities for the \$515.6 million discretionary swath of the city's general fund today.

Where last year Mayor Charlie Hales' surprise plans for a business tax hike had city commissioners objecting almost instantly, Wheeler's budget mostly contains items he's telegraphed for some time—if not on the stump last year, then at least at his recent State of the City address.

Among Wheeler's proposals

- Spending nearly \$1 million creating a new Office of Landlord-Tenant Affairs at the Portland Housing Bureau. The office, long discussed, would register all rental units in the city, and track evictions cases making their way through court for the first time.
- Pumping roughly \$25 million into Multnomah County's Joint Office of Homeless Services, which works to develop shelter beds and create other options for the city's homeless population. The city's obligated to spend \$15 million per year on the office, per an agreement with the county. That number is often spoken of as a mere baseline though. Wheeler's proposal would match the county's proposed spending this year, meaning the office would have \$50 million to work with if the proposal remains unchanged.
- But Wheeler is also promising a more muscular response to clearing out homeless camps—particularly those strewn with refuse or hazardous materials. The mayor this morning said Portland will work more closely with other agencies—like ODOT, the county, and Metro—to post notices that camps must vacate certain areas. Wheeler is also proposing a \$360,000 contract for three "rapid-response cleanup crews." In the verbiage of the city, which strenuously avoids the term "sweep," "cleanup" can carry various meanings. In some cases the city sends people to merely cleanup trash from encampments. In others, it forces people to move along.

Wheeler, who's frequently said he wants to do away with camping, was asked if he'd heard from homeless advocates about the new enforcement. "I have not been particularly shy or lacking in transparency of my views on this for a year," he replied. "No one's approached me and indicated they have a fundamental disagreement with my strategies."

- \$440,000 more on graffiti abatement, after [reports of heightened hate graffiti](#) in the Portland area.
- The mayor is now proposing a whopping \$600 million in new infrastructure projects, to be spread over the course of the next two decades. That money would come in the form of bonds, which would be paid for by money coming back onto the tax rolls from expiring urban renewal areas. The initiative, called "Build Portland," would begin with a \$50 million bond issuance next year. When pressed, Wheeler acknowledged he had no power to force future elected officials to hew to his plan.

"What I'm hoping to do is show good return on investment," he said, and therefore create public pressure for City Hall to continue the infrastructure spending.

- Wheeler's budget would also pay for four park rangers to patrol the Springwater Corridor, and pay for rangers to conduct security at downtown parks, rather than contract security guards.
- Road safety would get a decent injection. Wheeler is proposing \$1.6 million for projects associated with Vision Zero, including improvements to the city's five most dangerous intersections, and work that would transform roadways to provide for lower speeds. Wheeler's also talking about spending \$650,000 to create a multi-use path on North Greeley. (Disclosure: As someone who rides the hazardous Greeley bike lane daily, I am on board.) But it's not all additions.

The mayor had \$18.6 million more than last year's budget to play with, but in the context of uncertain future revenues and rising city costs, the mayor still suggested cuts and funding adjustments—some of which will likely prove controversial.

- As we'd predicted, the mayor is axing the city's diminished, public relations-oriented Mounted Patrol Unit. Instead, the mayor is preaching a focus on community policing that employs a fleet of "community service officers" who "undertake non law-enforcement duties" and help free up patrol officers for pressing matters. "It's not a good use of our limited public safety resources," Wheeler said of the mounted patrol, predicting the cut would garner more outcry than others.
- Commissioner Chloe Eudaly is likely to take umbrage with Wheeler's decision to divert \$1.2 million that was supposed to amount to the first payment into Portland's new publicly funded elections system. That system is overseen by the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, which Eudaly oversaw until Wheeler assigned himself all the city's bureaus for most of the budget process. Word is she didn't have any warning that Wheeler would divert the expected payment into the elections fund, which the mayor's been skeptical of. (Note: While we've heard of this cut via discussions at City Hall, it is not specifically called out in the sundry budget documents Wheeler's team distributed.)
- **The dive team** that conducts underwater rescues at Portland Fire and Rescue would be abolished under Wheeler's budget. That doesn't seem to have rankled Commissioner Dan Saltzman's office, which oversees the bureau. We're told there's a tacit agreement that the city doesn't have the resources to pay for a proper dive team, and that underwater rescues are relatively rare.

- **Buckman pool**, an annual football at budget time, would be defunded for good. The pool is currently closed anyway, due to safety concerns. It's still early, and the budget is huge. We'll have more as we get a sense of how people are reacting to Wheeler's first crack at a budget.

The Portland Business Journal

Wheeler's budget proposes \$25M for homelessness, a landlord-tenant office and \$600M for 20 years of infrastructure

*By Jon Bell
May 1, 2017*

In his first proposed budget, Portland Mayor [Ted Wheeler](#) wants to tackle everything from homelessness and public camping to roads, community policing and the city's preparedness when it comes to natural and man-made disasters.

The budget, released this morning, would allocate \$25 million from the general fund for the Joint Office of Homeless Services. Multnomah County has committed an equal amount to the office, which serves as an umbrella over shelters, housing options, diversion programs and other related services.

Wheeler also proposed launching an Office of Landlord-Tenant Affairs, which would develop a rental unit registration program, track the 6,000 eviction notices currently on file and provide referrals to tenants who are facing eviction. Such an office would also boost the number of people who receive fair housing legal assistance.

Additionally, the new office would launch an affordable housing portal through NoAppFee to help residents find housing.

When it comes to Portland's livability, Wheeler's proposed budget would kick up the number of park rangers [along the Springwater Corridor](#), in East Portland parks and downtown to "ensure our parks remain livable space that are open to all." Wheeler's budget would also "manage the impact of camping" in Portland's neighborhoods, an issue that business owners and residents alike have taken issue with in recent years.

Wheeler proposed \$600 million over the next 20 years to upgrade roads, parks and other infrastructure in a plan called Build Portland. The first year of the plan would see a \$50 million investment from the city, followed by another \$100 million to \$150 million every five years.

According to a release from Wheeler, the plan would be funded not by new taxes but instead by "leveraging returning revenues from expiring Urban Renewal Districts."

Twelve new community service officers would be added for community policing through the proposed budget, and Wheeler wants to bolster funding to prepare for and respond to man-made and natural disasters. [Portlanders crippled by this past winter's snow storms](#) will be glad to see that the budget gives the Portland Bureau of Transportation the means to call on private contractors for snow plowing services, while also adding three snow plow blades to the city's existing fleet.

The Skanner

Affordable Housing Bond Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting

By Portland Housing Bureau

May 1, 2017

In November 2016, Portland voters approved a historic general obligation bond for \$258.4 million to fund the development and preservation of affordable housing.

A [Stakeholder Advisory Group \(SAG\)](#) will convene for seven meetings over the next five months to provide information, ideas, and recommendations to guide the development of a framework for the use of bond funds.

The second meeting of the SAG is scheduled for Thursday, May 4, 2017 from 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm at New Song Community Church.

These meetings are open to the public and public testimony is invited. The agenda, schedule, and meeting materials are available [online here](#).

[Sign up here](#) for the email list to receive notifications about upcoming meetings and related updates.

OPB

New Portland Mayor Invests In Homeless Services And Infrastructure — But Not Housing

By Amelia Templeton

May 1, 2017

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler released his first proposed budget Monday, and he's got extra money to spend.

The City Budget Office has forecast a \$18.4 million surplus for the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

Wheeler has proposed splitting a majority of that one-time funding between two of his priorities: transportation infrastructure and services for the homeless.

Neither move is surprising. By law, the city is required to set aside part of its one-time surplus for infrastructure investments. The \$25 million in total the budget commits to homeless services matches funding from Multnomah County and is a small increase over last year.

Multnomah County, by contrast, has proposed increasing funding for homeless services by \$7.5 million, up from \$18.5 million it spent on the joint office this year.

Affordable Housing

The budget did not include any new sources of funding for affordable housing construction — a surprise given Wheeler's focus on housing during his campaign and his choice to keep control of the Housing Bureau rather than assign it to a city commissioner.

Asked by reporters why the budget included no new money for affordable housing, Wheeler cited existing sources of funding including a recent \$258 million bond measure passed by voters.

He said he sees the city's primary role in housing construction as speeding up the permitting process for private developers.

"The public sector is certainly not the primary developer of housing in our market," he said. "If we really want to get to the backlog, the private sector must be able to do its thing."

Transportation

On transportation, Wheeler has proposed allocating \$7.2 million in one-time funds to the Portland Bureau of Transportation for street and sidewalk repair and maintenance. The bulk of that funding, \$5 million, would go to replacing 1,000 street corners to include wheelchair-accessible curb ramps.

The new transportation funding also includes \$1.5 million for the bicycle and pedestrian safety program the city calls Vision Zero and \$330,000 for snow and icy weather response.

Homelessness

On homelessness, in addition to \$15 million in baseline annual funding, the mayor has proposed allocating just under \$8 million in surplus dollars this year and \$3.5 million in additional ongoing funding to Portland's Joint Office of Homeless Services, which provides shelter beds and rent assistance payments.

The budget includes smaller investments in programs Wheeler says are designed to mitigate the livability challenges created by homelessness in the city.

"It's the small things that collectively become big: the litter, the needles, the graffiti, the zombie homes, the RVs. These are the kinds of things we're getting dozens and dozens of calls about all the time," Wheeler said.

That includes \$364,000 to turn four temporary positions into permanent positions for park rangers patrolling Portland's Springwater Corridor and East Portland parks, which have attracted large groups of homeless campers. He'd spend roughly \$1 million, funded by city bureaus that own property, to manage the city's complaint-driven system for cleaning up homeless camps.

That funding is directed to the city's Office of Management and Finance, which manages facilities and personnel for the city's bureaus.

The new funding would allow the city to hire a person "to collect data and manage external public customer service relationships" around homeless camping, and to create a \$500,000 reserve fund for "fast turnaround campsite clean-ups," according to budget documents.

The budget also lays out the beginning of Wheeler's long-term vision for the city – and his desire to focus on transportation infrastructure.

Building "Build Portland"

Earlier this year, Wheeler proposed a new fund, which he calls Build Portland, that the city would finance by borrowing \$600 million over the next 20 years.

Wheeler says the city needs new money to reverse a dramatic maintenance backlog.

"We've actually got to go down to the substructure of our roads, and rebuild them, to the extent that we can afford to," he said. "In addition we need crosswalks, we need sidewalks, we need separated bike lanes, and all these things cost money."

The 2017-2018 budget includes \$2 million in ongoing general fund dollars Wheeler has proposed using to raise \$50 million in bonds to kick-start the fund.

In future years, he says, bonds could be raised and paid back using revenue that will come back onto the city's tax rolls as the city's urban renewal areas expire. Wheeler has proposed dedicating roughly 60 percent of returning tax increment financing dollars to the fund.

Questioned by reporters at the budget rollout Monday, Wheeler acknowledged future mayors and councils will have to pay back any bonds issued during his administration, but that he cannot pass legislation that would require them to make future contributions to the infrastructure fund.

Jello, Not Cement

"I believe that this is such a withering priority for the residents in this city that it will be a very difficult vote for a future city council to take to roll back our investments in basic infrastructure," he said. "I think that once we do this, it won't be in cement, it will be in jello."

Wheeler will likely also face questions from council members, who voted under Mayor Charlie Hales to shrink Portland's use of urban renewal and may have competing visions for how to spend those returning tax increment financing dollars.

"Because we showed some discipline over the past four years, we're going to get some money back from urban renewal districts quicker than was originally forecast," said Commissioner Nick Fish.

Fish says he supports the idea of issuing a \$50 million bond to address the growing backlog in street maintenance but says that the mayor's long-term plan for spending the increased tax revenue from retiring urban renewal areas will have to balance other priorities.

"We also have huge other needs around affordable housing and parks, so the council will debate how much money is allocated to each of those important needs," he said.

Identifying Possible Cuts

Finally, Wheeler signaled that future years' budgets could include painful cuts, particularly if Portland's booming economy shows signs of slowing down.

Between pay raises for police officers passed by the council last year and funding for the Joint Office of Homeless Services, the city has roughly \$12.3 million dollars in new ongoing spending that hasn't been offset by new sources of revenue or cuts.

Wheeler said he has asked bureaus to identify \$15 million in possible cuts. And the budget includes cuts to three small but popular programs the mayor says aren't central to the city's mission.

Top on the list of possible cuts is the Police Bureau's mounted horse patrol. Wheeler says it's made up of eight horses stabled in Lake Oswego: They have to be transported to Portland for work. Just two officers are qualified to ride.

"We're going to redeploy the sworn officers associated with the mounted patrol and we're putting them back into the neighborhoods for our community policing program," he said.

Cutting the mounted patrol will save the police bureau about a million dollars a year, but community supporters of the horses have raised money to save the mounted patrol in the past.

Wheeler has also flagged two programs that he plans to fund in the short term but wants to cut in future budgets. A preschool program run by Portland parks. And a program that provides free bus passes for Portland Public high school students.

Wheeler says funding for education needs to come from the state or the school districts.