

## The Portland Tribune

### Wheeler trips over politics of racial justice

*By Jim Redden  
January 10, 2017*

Less than a week after becoming mayor, Ted Wheeler admitted Friday that he already has stumbled over one of Portland's thorniest political issues: racial justice.

Answering questions at a Friday news conference, Wheeler said he had botched an unannounced meeting with local community members by not having a clear agenda or inviting enough of them. Wheeler declined to provide specifics about the meeting, except to say it was intended to help him shape his first steps to increase racial justice and did not include some longtime activists who had marched with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

"There are very, very difficult conversations to have as a middle-age white guy, but they are extremely important, and we can't duck them any more," said Wheeler, who promised to do better in the future.

The admission was surprising because Wheeler was praised by two longtime African-American leaders at his public inauguration on Wednesday. Albina Ministerial Alliance President Rev. T. Allen Bethel and AMA Coalition for Justice & Police Reform Chair Rev. LeRoy Haynes both said they had faith in the new mayor before he took a ceremonial oath of office at Jason Lee Elementary School.

The rare misstep for Wheeler is a reminder that Portland politics are frequently more complicated than those of Multnomah County, where he previously served as chair, and the state of Oregon, where he just completed his last term as state treasurer. Many people and organizations are considered to be leaders on a variety of issues in the city. This has frequently led the council to create large and unwieldy stakeholder committees that help create overly complicated new programs and policies.

Former City Commissioner Steve Novick dubbed the process "Portlandization" when he and former Mayor Charlie Hales were trying to develop a proposed street fee that would be supported by a majority of the council. They failed, although Novick subsequently found success with the temporary 10-cent-a-gallon local gas tax approved by voters at the May primary election.

At the media availability, Wheeler also said that he will conduct the national search for a new Portland police chief he promised when running for mayor. Wheeler made that announcement after former Chief Larry O'Dea resigned following the uproar over him not revealing he accidentally shot a friend on a hunting trip. Although Hales subsequently appointed Mike Marshman as permanent — not interim — chief, Wheeler said he has invited Marshman to apply, as the public will have a chance to weigh in on the finalists.

Wheeler also said he continued meeting with the other members of the council and all bureau directors during his first week in office to tell them what he expects from them — including from those bureaus he assigned to other council members last Tuesday. Wheeler has said he will assign all bureaus to himself in April when the council begins considering the new budget that takes effect July 1. He will reassign them in May once the budget is adopted, but may not

give all of them back to the original commissioners if he is not pleased with the progress they made toward his goals.

Specifically, Wheeler said he expects new Commissioner Chloe Eudaly to work with him to reduce the time it takes the Bureau of Development Services to issue permits for affordable housing projects as part of a citywide effort to speed up new home construction.

## **Wheeler suspends affordable housing bond spending until goals and priorities are set**

*By Jim Redden  
January 9, 2017*

In his first significant act since taking control of the Portland Housing Bureau, Mayor Ted Wheeler has suspending spending any more money from the \$258 million affordable housing bond approved by voters in November until more agreement is reached on its goals and priorities.

"I have directed the Portland Housing Bureau to suspend contractual negotiations that use funds associated with the housing bond until we have a community agreement in place. I expect that community agreement to clarify the goals and priorities for use of these funds," Wheeler said in a statement in response to questions from Willamette Week.

Wheeler has not halted the purchase of the 263-unit Ellington apartments approved by the former City Council in December. The council agreed to spend \$51 million to buy and repair the sprawling Northeast Portland complex, with \$37 million coming from the bond.

That averages nearly \$194,000 per unit. The council has previously been criticized for investing affordable housing funds in projects with similar costs. One affordable housing builder, Home First Development, has been building projects whose units average around \$80,000.

Wheeler was elected mayor at the May primary election on a platform that included addressing the affordable housing crisis. The bond measure was overwhelmingly approved by voters after a campaign that said it was necessary to increase the supply of affordable housing. The measure requires the appointment of a committee to oversee its spending.

## **Willamette Week**

### **Mayor Ted Wheeler Is Halting the Spending of Portland's Housing Bond**

*By Rachel Monahan  
January 9, 2017*

Mayor Ted Wheeler has ordered the Portland Housing Bureau to stop making purchases with the \$258 million housing bond approved by voters in November.

In his first major act as the city's housing commissioner, Wheeler says he plans to develop a clear strategy for investments before spending more of the bond money.

"I have directed the Portland Housing Bureau to suspend contractual negotiations that use funds associated with the housing bond until we have a community agreement in place," Wheeler says in a statement. "I expect that community agreement to clarify the goals and priorities for use of these funds."

Wheeler chose to oversee the Housing Bureau after campaigning on a pledge to address homelessness and build affordable housing more cheaply.

WW reported in September that the Housing Bureau has for a decade paid little attention to delivering the most housing for the money spent. Wheeler pledged to do better with the bond.

The Portland Housing Bureau faced criticisms over its first purchase with the housing bond money.

Last month, City Council approved the spending of \$51 million toward the purchase and repair of the Ellington Apartments—\$37 million of it is to be funded with bond money. Former Portland Housing Bureau Director Margaret Van Vliet objected to the purchase, saying that previous owners had failed to maintain the property after receiving public funding to build it.

Spokesman Michael Cox says the decision was not a referendum on the recent purchase agreement. That sale will continue.

Cox says Wheeler is working to appoint a bond oversight committee chair and gather "the stakeholders" to set priorities and goals.