

The Oregonian

New push planned to handle homeless complaints, cleanup

By Molly Harbarger

May 5, 2017

High-traffic homeless areas are getting more attention in the latest proposed city budget with money devoted to cleanup and easing tensions between neighbors and the transient populations. Mayor Ted Wheeler released his budget priorities this week, which builds on the county's proposal last week to form a picture of how they plan to tackle the growing homeless crisis.

The new investment responds to steady complaints from residents who have called on leaders to address the visible symptoms of Portland's homeless crisis.

"People are compassionate in this city and they want to help people on the streets get access to services and get off and stay off the streets," Wheeler said this week. "But they're also wanting help with livability and safety services."

Wheeler is adding people to law enforcement and park ranger teams to handle the complaints, look for repeat offenders and deal with trash.

He earmarked \$1.5 million for the programs. The Multnomah County Sheriff's Office asked for a continuation of a pilot program to use deputies to do some of that work as well, but it is not funded in the county's proposed budget.

That's in addition to the city and county's contributions -- \$25 million each -- to fund the 1-year-old Joint Office of Homeless Services, a shared city-county experiment in coordinating efforts to help homeless people and others on the edge of homelessness.

They're still working out how to spend the \$50 million in a dust-up over different budgeting approaches and ideas for allocations.

Wheeler's budget gives a \$25 million lump sum to the Joint Office with no instructions on where the money should go. The amount is less than what the office requested. Kafoury's budget earmarks the county's \$25 million for specific programs and is more than the office requested.

The past week has seen Wheeler explaining himself and Kafoury exasperated that the city's plan is up in the air.

The outcome so far: The Joint Office will retain the 600 shelter beds opened in the past fiscal year and pay for some new programs. Wheeler and Kafoury are still working out what those programs will be.

What's clear

Not in dispute is spending on livability issues apart from the \$50 million joint office budget.

The results of a count earlier this year of people living on the street in Portland and throughout the county are expected later this month. Advocates anticipate a number close or higher than the last count, which found nearly 4,000 people without permanent shelter in 2015.

To deal with the impact of that many people without a home, Wheeler proposes about \$1 million to speed up and expand cleanup at homeless campsites. The money would pay for three crews from Central City Concern -- a nonprofit that provides health and housing services to homeless people -- to respond to trash, needles and other debris left behind. It would be operated through the city Office of Management and Finance, which is the department that takes complaints and coordinates sweeps of homeless camps.

Another \$500,000 would go toward keeping parks clean and safe. Part of that would fund four full-time city park rangers to enforce camping restrictions and refer homeless people to services along the Springwater Corridor and in east Portland parks.

Last year, the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office experimented with a team of deputies who worked with homeless people to connect them to services, remove criminals with warrants and be a mediator in neighborhoods. That program ends July 1, after new Sheriff Mike Reese's request for it to continue was not included in Kafoury's proposal.

What's possible

The county has opened 637 new permanent publicly funded shelter beds since spring 2016, with 14 more coming on line when the Kenton women's tiny house village opens this summer. Some were paid for through state, federal and grant money that's expected to go away in the upcoming fiscal year starting July 1.

So the city and county must find more than \$4 million to backfill those. Kafoury's budget commits to doing this, and Wheeler has said he wants to keep open all existing shelter beds and add more.

Kafoury also supports two new pilot programs to prevent people on the margins from becoming homeless. One would fill the gap between rent in subsidized apartments and Social Security income payments for seniors and people with disabilities. The Joint Office now pays rent for only a few months, but this program would help for years.

The other pilot program would support people who need help navigating relationships with their landlords to prevent eviction.

Marc Jolin, head of the Joint Office, said that the long-term goal of the agency is to move more money toward those less visible programs.

How will it be funded?

This budget cycle has exposed some cracks in the city-county collaboration on homeless services.

The Portland City Council administration that helped found the Joint Office has turned over, with Wheeler and Commissioner Chloe Eudaly replacing former Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Dan Saltzman.

Wheeler has upended what many, including county officials, saw as a routine process.

Portland and Multnomah County historically split which homeless services they would provide. The city's system was more expensive, so it typically contributed more. When the Joint Office was created, the city and county used the same formula to come up with the amounts they contributed: their historical funding levels plus a 50-50 split on any new money.

In its first year, the office received about \$18 million from the county and \$25 million from the city.

To craft a budget proposal for this fiscal year, the two boards that oversee the Joint Office assumed the same model. They asked the county for \$21 million and the city for \$28 million.

Kafoury proposed giving \$25 million -- \$4 million more than the request. Wheeler offered the same \$25 million -- \$3 million less than the request.

"We've split it exactly 50-50 with the county," Wheeler said Wednesday to a group of representatives from dozens of social service agencies, government bureaus and community members that advises the Joint Office.

That means that the county is adding 40 percent more in new money and the city is adding close to 2 percent.

After some more questions at the meeting, Wheeler said: "I feel like I'm being put in this position where this is a joint office, we're matching the county. We're doing our bit. This is a little bit more than what was in the adopted budget last year."

Kafoury said the county has made a priority of trying to help homeless people and came up with its contribution after laying people off and cutting back programs in other departments.

"We made some really tough decisions this year with our budget," she said.

What's next

Wheeler, Kafoury, Jolin and other members of the two Joint Office governing boards plan to meet again soon to go through the budget in depth, at the suggestion of Kafoury. The meeting hasn't been set yet.

Some are worried about what won't be funded. Members of the advisory group voiced reservations about what might be cut and Kafoury said in an interview later that she doesn't plan to scrap the priorities that more than 100 service providers, community members and officials set.

The Joint Office is getting all the money they asked for, Wheeler pointed out.

"We know we're going to be able to sustain much of that current capacity," Jolin said. "Are we going to be able to do that and everything else?"

Kafoury said that the two-party budget process can be confusing, but she's happy with her proposal of what programs to fund.

"Not only did I add an increase this year, but I expect to continue doing that," Kafoury said. "We can't do this all by ourselves. This can't be a county alone effort. We stepped up and we need the city to step up."

The Portland Tribune

Council likely to subpoena Uber for evading regulations

By Jim Redden

May 7, 2017

The City Council is expected to approve a subpoena to obtain documents from the Uber ride-sharing company about its early efforts to evade city regulations on Wednesday.

According to Commissioner Dan Saltzman, the subpoena is needed because Uber has so far refused to turn over requested documents about the reported use of its so-called Greyball software before the council authorized the company to operate in Portland and other cities. The federal government recently opened a criminal investigation into the allegation, which was first reported by The New York Times on March 3, 2017.

"We support the criminal investigation by the United States Department of Justice into Uber's use of the Greyball tool to evade regulators, and will continue to move forward with our own efforts to subpoena the requested records from Uber. My colleagues on the City Council have formally signed on to a resolution to subpoena Uber and force the company to turn over the Greyball playbook and associated software," says Saltzman, who was in charge of the Portland Bureau of Transportation when the city's investigation into the allegation was first launched. Mayor Ted Wheeler has subsequently assigned all bureaus to himself while the council is considering his proposed budget for the coming fiscal year.

According to the newspaper report, Grayball software allowed Uber drivers to identify city employees requesting rides while they were still illegal. The drivers were then able to avoid offering them rides and facing fines.

The council approved a pilot program allowing Uber and other so-called Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) to operate in Portland on April 21, 2015. It was made permanent on Jan. 2, 2016. Saltzman says the city needs to learn whether Uber deliberately evaded previously existing regulations intended to ensure the safety of "for hire" rides before they were authorized — and whether it could still be doing so.

"Public safety is our top priority, and the City of Portland will hold everyone in the private for hire transportation industry accountable for complying with our safety and consumer protections. We fully support expanding transportation options for Portlanders, but we need to ensure everyone in the industry is playing by the rules, providing universal service, and acting ethically," says Saltzman.

According to the resolution to be considered by the council on May 10, Saltman and Wheeler sent Uber a three-page letter on March 15, 2017, detailing the focus of the PBOT-led investigation and requesting any and all information relating to the Greyball software, including company policies and practices, regarding how Uber or Uber drivers can block or restrict access to transportation services.

"The City of Portland takes the alleged use of the Greyball software in our city very seriously. We are conducting an investigation to determine if and when this practice was employed since Uber began operating in Portland and whether it has been employed in any manner against any consumer," the letter read.

Although Uber replied through its attorneys on April 21, the resolution says the company did not provide information about its software, its general managers' playbook, or policies and practices detailing how riders are blocked, how the "violation of terms of service" program is implemented, or the criteria for implementation.

The controversy is another blow against the upstart company which has been repeatedly criticized for not following laws and rules intended to level the playing field for all for hire transportation companies, including taxis.

You can read the resolution at <http://tinyurl.com/khauhan>.

Want to have a say in the city's selection of the next police chief? Take a survey released by Mayor Ted Wheeler

By Lyndsey Hewitt
May 5, 2017

The city is on a nation-wide hunt for its next police chief by July, and it's asking for community input in a new survey released this week by Mayor Ted Wheeler.

The survey asks users' thoughts on what personal characteristics and professional experience is most important for the next police chief. Information will help the city "develop recruitment materials and establish criteria for how we evaluate candidates for this position," according to the online posting.

The survey is only 10 questions long; the first half asks basic questions about the survey-taker, while the last half are open ended questions about the police chief, such as:

- What are the most important personal characteristics of a Portland Police Chief?
- What professional experience or background should the Portland Police Chief have?
- What are the key challenges facing the Portland Police Bureau?
- What should the top priorities be for the Portland Police Bureau?

The city's Office of Management and Finance is in charge of the survey, and so far, they have received 341 responses since its release yesterday, Wednesday, May 3, and it closes June 12.

Take the survey here: www.portlandoregon.gov/omf/73470

What qualities do you think city's next police chief should have? Leave responses in the comments below.

Willamette Week

Portland Official Praises Federal Government's Criminal Investigation of Uber

By Rachel Monahan
May 5, 2017

Portland City Commissioner Dan Saltzman on Friday praised the federal government's criminal investigation into Uber's high-tech evasion of city regulators and other practices.

As expected, Saltzman announced that City Council will vote on Wednesday to subpoena the company for further information on Uber's use of "Greyball," the technology that allows the company to change customer's views on the ride-sharing app. All members of City Council have signed on, so the resolution is expected to pass.

The company has acknowledged the use of Greyball to evade regulators for two weeks in 2014, but Uber denies using it in Portland since.

This morning, [Reuters first reported](#) that the U.S. Department of Justice has launched a criminal investigation of how Uber used Greyball.

Saltzman says Portland has provided the U.S. Department of Justice with all data and other information the city gathered as part of a preliminary investigation released last week, which found no wrongdoing since 2014.

"We support the criminal investigation by the United States Department of Justice into Uber's use of the Greyball tool to evade regulators, and will continue to move forward with our own efforts to subpoena the requested records from Uber," Saltzman says in a statement.

"My colleagues on the City Council have formally signed on to a resolution to subpoena Uber and force the company to turn over the Greyball playbook and associated software is what we would be subpoenaed. give that their five cosponsors."

Uber denies holding back anything of significance during the investigation by the Portland Bureau of Transportation.

"The PBOT report found no evidence that Uber has used Greyball or any technology to avoid city inspectors since the council passed laws allowing ride sharing services to operate in Portland in 2015," says Bryce Bennett, Uber General Manager for Oregon in a statement. "Uber's local operations team has participated in weekly compliance calls and meetings with the PBOT staff for over two years, and will continue to do so to ensure Portlanders and area visitors continue to have safe, affordable and equitable access to the n services they have come to depend on."

The Portland Mercury

Portland's New Gas Tax Is Raking in More Than Expected

By Dirk VanderHart

May 8, 2017

It's too early to make any broad pronouncements, but worth noting that the four-year, 10-cent-per-gallon gas tax Portlanders approved in November is outperforming projections.

Former City Commissioner Steve Novick and his partners in a broad coalition sold the tax on a promise that it would raise \$16 million per year—a little more than half of which would be spent on maintaining Portland's beat up roads, while the rest paid for safety improvements.

Well, the first quarter of the year suggests we could be in for millions more. [State revenue reports](#) show that Portland raked in \$4.78 million from January to March, a pace that, if it holds, puts the city on track for scooping up more than \$19 million.

Of course there's no telling what will happen. Did the oppressive rains of recent months make people drive more rather than riding their bikes? Or should this be seen as hopeful, given that the city was shrouded in ice during a couple weeks in January? The Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT), which gets to spend the money, isn't making any assumptions.

"We have to be careful, it's three months," says PBOT spokesperson John Brady. But he notes: "If we can bring more road repair and more safety projects to Portland, that would fantastic."

Along with the gas tax, Portland also instituted a new four-year Heavy Vehicle Use Tax, in order to capture cash from the semi trucks whose activity takes a dramatic toll on road conditions. That tax is estimated to bring in \$2.5 million a year. Brady tells the Mercury that PBOT doesn't have initial revenue figures yet.

One obligatory observation: An extra \$3 million or so a year would be great for the city's streetscape, but still amounts to a tiny drop in the bucket.

As [we noted](#) in endorsing last year's gas tax, estimates suggest that Portland would need to spend upwards of \$100 million a year for a decade to get its roads in acceptable condition. That won't happen. Even an ambitious plan by Mayor Ted Wheeler to [dump \\$600 million into infrastructure maintenance](#) in the next 20 years won't get us there (and there's no telling if Wheeler's plan will move forward).