

The Oregonian

Portland City Hall protests - not Facebook controversy - sparked decision to retire, longtime Nick Fish aide says

By Jessica Floum

March 29, 2017

A senior policy director in Commissioner Nick Fish's office says he decided to retire after months of protests at Portland City Hall triggered his post-traumatic stress disorder, not because of recent criticism over his Facebook posts.

Jim Blackwood Jr., 61, will retire on Saturday after working in Fish's office for more than seven years. His retirement comes after an activist publicized controversial posts Blackwood had written on Facebook since October.

Jim Blackwood Jr. worked as a senior policy director for Commissioner Nick Fish for more than seven years. (Photo provided by Jim Blackwood Jr.)

Blackwood told The Oregonian/OregonLive on Tuesday that [the Facebook controversy](#) did not influence his decision to retire.

"Not only did it not affect the decision, I was not aware of it," Blackwood said. He said he was on vacation in Arizona when Gregory McKelvey shared 11 of his Facebook posts. Some of the posts highlighted [black men killing police officers](#), called [the shooting of a protester](#) at an anti-Trump rally "inevitable" and [criticized Commissioner Amanda Fritz](#).

Fish said in an email to The Oregonian/OregonLive that he did not ask or encourage Blackwood to retire as a result of his Facebook posts. Sonia Schmanski, chief of staff to Fish, said no one in their office did.

"Nick became aware of comments made by Jim on Jim's personal Facebook page," Schmanski said. "Nick does not agree with many of the comments, and no, the comments do not reflect his values."

She emphasized that Blackwood announced his retirement plans after returning from vacation in mid-March. Blackwood said he wrote his resignation letter during his vacation.

"This was a decision based on restoring my mental health," Blackwood said.

"It was exceedingly difficult to think that being cyber-trolled like this would affect how I was perceived in leaving this job that I've loved."

A horrifying workplace

Blackwood said he was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder when he was 25. He declined to give any more details about how he developed the panic disorder. Escalating disruptions by protesters and regular lockdowns of the building since September have triggered the illness, he said. In one instance, Blackwood said he had to force his way out of the building and get picked up by his wife after city employees received an email telling them it was unsafe to leave the building.

He said he was experiencing the usual symptoms of a panic attack: a pounding heart, rapid breath and sweating. He concealed the symptoms, however, as he's learned to do during most meetings, he said.

When Blackwood told his therapist about the incident, he said she looked 'legitimately horrified.'

"It was the first time I realized how insanely I'd been living in my workspace," Blackwood said. "I should have taken care of myself."

Blackwood said when he described the [increasing threat posed by protesters](#) at City Hall to his therapist, she told him the environment he described can create post-traumatic stress disorder, in addition to triggering it.

"Because of who I am and what I know about trauma, I'm concerned about my friends down there," Blackwood said.

Facebook controversy

McKelvey shared Blackwood's [Facebook posts](#) on March 3. He said he shared Blackwood's posts because they confirmed many protesters' concerns that Portland policymakers see protesters as a problem rather than a productive part of the political process.

In one, Blackwood called [the shooting of a protester](#) during an anti-Trump demonstration "inevitable." Two others [highlighted cases](#) where black men killed police officers. [One post said](#) "it's only fair" to name the races of "cop killers."

Other posts criticized City Hall protesters, Measure 97 and Portland Commissioner Amanda Fritz.

"Lawlessness and violence always begets more of the same," Blackwood wrote in a [Facebook post](#) about the shooting of an unarmed protester during a late-night march against Donald Trump's election victory. "If you are 'protesting' in the middle of the night, you don't have a cause. You are merely doing it because it is fun."

McKelvey said he's glad to see Blackwood go.

"It's sad because everyone has to make a living, but when your job affects the rest of the city, we can't have somebody with those views determining policy," McKelvey said.

"I don't think the timing of this retirement is coincidental," he added.

Disruptions could lead to arrests at Portland City Council meeting

*By Jessica Floum
March 29, 2017*

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler plans to take a harder line at Wednesday's City Council meeting by asking police to arrest disruptive people if they do not leave when requested, spokesman Michael Cox said.

The mayor's shift in strategy follows months in which protesters shut down and interrupted City Council meetings, preventing commissioners from conducting city business. The mayor has moved or ended council meetings abruptly because of rowdy conduct.

Last week, after a particularly chaotic council meeting, [Commissioner Nick Fish directed employees](#) in his office and bureaus to stop attending until he's satisfied it is safe to do so.

Wheeler's [failed attempts to quell protesters](#) drew complaints from activists, the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon and Portland City Hall staffers for different reasons.

They all questioned why the mayor rarely asked disruptive individuals to leave.

One longtime aide in Fish's office said the protesters' behavior triggered his post-traumatic stress disorder, forcing him to retire. Senior Policy Director Jim Blackwood Jr. will retire Saturday after working in Fish's office for more than seven years.

"Two mayors...have been ineffective in making City Hall a safe place," Blackwood said. "They're ultimately responsible."

Blackwood's retirement comes after an activist publicized controversial Facebook posts Blackwood wrote, some of which highlighted [black men killing police officers](#), called [the shooting of a protester](#) at an anti-Trump rally "inevitable" and [criticized Commissioner Amanda Fritz](#).

Tension hung in the air at Portland City Hall Thursday after protesters took over the City Council meeting Wednesday, wearing gas masks, wielding sticks and projectiles and yelling crude comments about Mayor Ted Wheeler's mother.

The mayor takes concerns about the protesters' behavior seriously, Cox said.

"It's clear that the abusive, hostile, disruptive behavior has not abated," Cox said. "It's gone in the opposite direction. It's been worse."

Cox said the mayor has asked people to leave council meetings at least twice, cleared the council chambers several times and reconvened in City Hall's Rose Room at least once since the mayor took office in January. Wheeler has tried to avoid expelling citizens because he sees that as escalating the situation, Cox said.

"Our preference is to have council meetings that run according to rules of decorum and procedure, but that's not always everybody's goal," Cox said. "In the end, it is our responsibility."

Portland police officers will be available to make arrests Wednesday, Cox said, but he declined to say how many officers will respond or where they will be stationed.

"The police will make staffing decisions based upon the need," Cox said.

Fish received a security briefing from the mayor on Tuesday. He told The Oregonian/OregonLive that he felt "very encouraged" and that he will allow his bureau and office staffers to attend Wednesday.

"Obviously no one can guarantee there won't be disruptions at council," Fish said. "The question is how do you deal with potential disruptions. I believe the mayor has a thoughtful, well-coordinated plan, and he has my support."

City's investments should reflect our values: Letter to the editor

By Hyung Nam
March 29, 2017

On April 5, Portland will consider changing its investment policy under a proposal from Treasurer Jennifer Cooperman that is inadequate, provides no accountability and compromises Portland's position as a sanctuary city.

The proposal would require the screening of approximately 35 companies that have the requisite credit ratings for the city's investment. The ratings range from triple-C to triple-A, and the proposal establishes a minimum investment rating of a company at triple-B.

This is not good enough. The point of socially responsible investing is to publicly pressure companies to change their behavior for the better, earning the highest ratings. The ratings and company reports, meanwhile, are proprietary information, so the public will not know of any company's rating or Portland's rationale for investing in it. In contrast, the city's suspended Socially Responsible Investment Committee, of which I was a member, used a public and transparent process to name companies to its Do Not Buy List, released in its [Sept 2016 report](#).

The rating methodology is itself flawed. Cooperman's proposal calls for a sole reliance upon MSCI ratings, which do not adequately lend weight to a company's ethical performance or, even, incidence of fraud. For details, see: <http://tinyurl.com/le693fb>

We need to reinstate my committee. While other cities have severed ties with the publicly shamed Wells Fargo, for example, Portland holds more than \$70 million in Wells Fargo securities.

Making sure that Portland's investments reflect our values as a sanctuary city are more important than ever. Socially responsible investing requires a diverse group of people doing independent research, taking public input, and deliberating publicly and democratically.

We must be principled and courageous.

Willamette Week

Steve Novick Was Kicked Out of Portland City Hall. Now He Offers His Boldest Ideas to Shake Up a Broken Council.

By Aaron Mesh
March 29, 2017

He's back.

For years, Steve Novick was the darling of Portland progressives. His distinctive physical profile—he stands 4-foot-9 with a metal hook in place of the left hand he was born without—was paired with big policy ideas and a barbed wit. He nearly upset Jeff Merkley in a 2008 Democratic primary bid for the U.S. Senate, then breezed into Portland City Hall in 2012.

But life in that building was a struggle.

During four years as a city commissioner, Novick helped make hundreds of houses safer from earthquakes, reformed a disabled-parking permit system that had long been abused, and ended

an epidemic of suicides on the Vista Bridge with a simple but contentious solution: a fence. Most notably, he persuaded voters to pass a 10-cents-a-gallon gasoline tax to fund street repairs—fighting for dollars on a pothole-strewn battleground where predecessors for years had given up. But that victory came at a cost: Novick warred with colleagues and the public, and those donnybrooks took a toll on his popularity.

In November, bookstore owner and upstart candidate Chloe Eudaly rode a wave of anti-establishment sentiment and anxiety about housing costs to sweep Novick from office with 54 percent of the vote. (WW endorsed Eudaly.)

But nothing keeps Steve Novick down for long—not even Portland City Hall.

He's been monitoring the increasingly toxic atmosphere in the building. And this week, he agreed to share with WW readers five simple steps to making Portland work a little better.

AARON MESH.

BY STEVE NOVICK | ILLUSTRATIONS BY CAMERON LEWIS

Maybe you've noticed: People are unhappy with Portland City Hall.

In November, I became the first sitting commissioner to lose re-election in 24 years. Poor Mayor Ted Wheeler has barely had time to change the drapes, but people are already lining up to yell at him. And polling shows "the City Council" as a whole is less popular than any individual.

I'm not sure to what extent the public's unhappiness is based on objective failings by the City Council.

All politicians are affected by the free-flowing national anger that elected Donald Trump. Our local news media have increasingly adopted the view that only negative news about government is news.

And the specific issues people are most concerned about are rising housing prices and homelessness. These problems also plague other major West Coast cities, suggesting there simply are no silver-bullet solutions. (Many people think rent control might come close, but state law prohibits rent control, so you can't quite blame City Hall for not implementing it.)

And yet I do think something is broken at City Hall—and we need to fix it.

I spent four years on the City Council aware that we weren't facing up to some major problems. But they aren't the issues that people are protesting about. They're slow-developing, long-term issues. Those are the kind of crises that humans as a species aren't very good at dealing with—global climate disruption being the most dramatic, and far deadliest, example.

But I believe we might have a chance to harness the unhappiness with City Hall in a way that will improve its ability to address those long-term problems —by changing the basic shape of Portland's government.

Making that fundamental change could go a long way to solving a series of large problems. Here are five solutions—starting with the one that fuels all the others.

Portland's form of government must change.

Portland has an almost unique form of government, in which the mayor appoints his or her fellow commissioners to oversee various bureaus.

Commissioners—except, occasionally, the mayor—love the commission form of government. You have a lot more power if you directly control bureaus than you would in a city where councilors' jobs are purely legislative and a city manager is hired to run city operations.

But it's not a good form of government.

As soon as you assign bureaus to a commissioner, two things happen: Those bureaus become incredibly important to that commissioner, and everything else the city does becomes relatively unimportant.

Suddenly, each commissioner's primary constituents are the people in the city who care most about that bureau, and its employees—and nobody wants to bring bad news to their primary constituents.

It means the council as a whole is never truly committed to a particular priority, because every commissioner's real priority is his or her bureaus.

I've seen it happen to myself and others.

Before I had bureaus, I brought in outside experts to talk to the council about evidence-based policing; after I got bureaus, I lacked the time and energy to continue that push. In 2013, before Amanda Fritz was assigned the Portland Parks & Recreation, I don't recall her prioritizing parks in the budget; afterward, she always fought fiercely for parks to get its "share."

All of these factors make it harder for the city to take on big, slow-developing problems.

Let's take transportation. City Hall knew, since at least 1987, that we weren't getting enough money from the state and federal gas tax to maintain streets.

Other jurisdictions in Oregon came to the same conclusion, and they did something about it. Medford adopted a street fee in 1991. Washington County adopted a property tax for transportation in 1986. But Portland, which is not known for being anti-tax, did not adopt a local funding source for transportation until voters approved my proposed 10-cents-per-gallon gas tax in May 2016.

Why is that?

I think part of the answer is, there's only one transportation commissioner at a time, meaning that at any given time, there was only one member of the City Council who might make new funding a priority.

In the 1990s, Commissioner Earl Blumenauer pushed Mayor Vera Katz to spend more of the general fund on transportation. Katz said no, perhaps partly because she and Blumenauer still had bad blood from the 1992 mayoral election.

The other three commissioners could have taken Earl's side. But why would they? Not their bureau. In fact, those with general fund bureaus would have seen Blumenauer's request as a threat to their bureaus.

Now, I don't think there was anything stopping Blumenauer or any of my other predecessors from doing what I ultimately did: ask the council to send a measure to voters to raise money for streets. They just didn't happen to have the stomach for it.

Sam Adams, for example, apparently ran a much better process than I did leading up to his 2008 "street fee" proposal. His process was praised, while mine was justly criticized.

But when it became clear he would have to go to the ballot, he simply gave up. I was more stubborn.

But if there were no such thing as a transportation commissioner, if transportation were a shared responsibility, any of the five commissioners, at any given time, might have decided new transportation funding was a sufficient priority to push the council to take the risk of going to voters.

The existence of the commission system reduced the universe of potential transportation champions by 80 percent.

The city would be best served by a truly normal form of government: council elections by district with a city manager. (For one thing, elections by district would mean less expensive campaigns.) But even if we kept all council elections citywide, we'd be better off without putting council members in charge of bureaus.

We need fewer police officers with guns.

Portland, like other cities, has far less serious crime than we had 20 or so years ago. In 2014—the latest year for which the Portland Police Bureau has published data—there were 35,218 "Part 1 crimes" (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, arson and motor vehicle theft).

Twenty years earlier, in 1995, there were 56,251 Part 1 crimes in Portland. Major crimes are down by more than 35 percent.

Intuitively, you would think that if crime is down, we could get by with fewer police and redirect the savings into areas where our problems have gotten worse—like homelessness and transportation.

But that hasn't happened. The number of sworn officers has declined by just 5 percent, from 1,001 in 1995 to 950 in 2014.

In the 2016-17 fiscal year, the city of Portland will spend \$177 million—35.4 percent of the discretionary general fund budget—on the Police Bureau.

And the city recently approved a new police contract that is so expensive that, even with record revenues, the city is facing a deficit.

And yet the police say they need far more officers. Police leadership will say that crime might be down, but the number of calls they get is up. And that is absolutely true—





partly because cellphones let people call 911 more easily than ever before. And somebody has to respond to the calls.

But the vast majority of those calls are not about serious crime, or about crime at all—such as calls to the scene of noncriminal traffic accidents, or "welfare checks" on people who look messed up.

So my question is: Why do we need sworn police officers, carrying guns, to respond to all those calls? Couldn't a lot of them be handled by unarmed staff—"community service officers," such as those Milwaukee, Wis., and Colorado Springs, Colo., are now hiring?

If you replaced, say, one-third of the armed police with CSOs, for one thing, you'd save money: In

San Jose, Calif., community service officers start at \$52,000 a year, while sworn, gun-toting officers start at \$78,000.

You'd also dramatically expand the hiring pool, and probably get applicants whose views on a variety of issues are more consistent with those of most of the community. In a recent national survey by the Pew Research Center, 92 percent of white police officers said "the country has made the changes needed to assure equal rights for blacks"—as opposed to 57 percent of all white American adults. I don't think it's a coincidence that when a job involves carrying a gun, you get applicants with different views than the community as a whole.

And I'm pretty sure that if fewer cops had guns, cops would shoot fewer people. Police in Britain or Norway or New Zealand don't shoot a lot of people. Most of them don't carry guns.

The latest Portland police contract at least opens the door to having staff without guns. It allows the bureau to hire community service officers, who would be unarmed. That's good.

But I would be pleasantly surprised if we saw a major transformation in the composition of the police force. The mayor, like any other commissioner, comes to see the Police Bureau as a primary constituency. They're the people you spend the most time with. You don't want to upset them.

When the bureau is thoughtful and creative, that's fine. But when it isn't, it's a barrier to progress. In 2014, I proposed cutting the budget of the Police Bureau's Drugs and Vice Division. I argued that we all know the war on drugs is a failure, so why are we wasting resources on it? I lost, 3-2. I'm pretty sure then-Mayor Charlie Hales knew the war on drugs was a failure—but I was asking for something the Police Bureau didn't like.

There is, however, a ray of hope on this issue—coming from Portland Fire & Rescue. Fire Chief Mike Myers faces a very similar situation: fewer fire calls, but more overall calls, primarily for medical reasons.

But Myers doesn't want to respond by asking for more firefighters. He thinks he can stop sending a fire engine to every medical call. He thinks some calls, which aren't life-

threatening, can be addressed with "nurse triage": 911 would refer the call to a nurse, who might conclude that a cab to urgent care is the best recommendation.

Myers is a rare gem. (He's like buttah.) Maybe he can inspire the Police Bureau, and the mayor, to be creative.

Let's fix our crumbling parks—and get rich people to pay.

Portland has a fine parks system, and a laudable commitment to expand green spaces to underserved areas. But there isn't enough money to maintain the parks we already have.

The City Budget Office estimates it would take an additional \$14.9 million a year to adequately maintain our current system, plus \$3 to \$5 million a year to maintain planned new parks. So the parks, like the streets, will gradually deteriorate. Right now, the roof of Peninsula Park

Community Center is leaking, and we can't afford to fix it. Ditto for the roof at the Lan Su Chinese Garden. And the terra cotta tiles of the roof apron at the Multnomah Arts Center are breaking—and might at some point start falling on people's heads. The recent parks bond, which raised \$68 million, addressed only a fraction of the problem.

But parks have an advantage streets don't: There is a history in America of rich people contributing money to support public parks—especially high-profile parks in wealthy neighborhoods. That frees up public funds for humbler parks.

In New York, the Central Park Conservancy provides the vast majority of the park's \$46 million annual budget. Brooklyn's Prospect Park Alliance provides two-thirds of that park's \$12 million annual budget. In Chicago, a conservancy raises over \$5 million a year to help maintain Millennium Park.

Now, I know New York and Chicago have more rich people than Portland does. But we have a decent number. And there might be a way to smoke them out.

What if the city simply announced that as of 2022, say, it is no longer going to pay to maintain certain high-profile parks in well-heeled areas: Washington Park, Hoyt Arboretum, Council Crest Park? That would give rich residents five years to decide if they want to keep those parks alive.

That suggestion won't come from the parks commissioner, who won't want to upset his or her primary constituents: people who care a lot about parks. No politician would, but if you're "the parks commissioner," it's much harder.

I don't love the idea of relying on private resources for public services.

But if we don't do something, we're eventually going to have to start closing facilities anyway—when their roofs start falling in.



Bring tax fairness to East Portland.

Everyone at City Hall has spent the past several years expressing their commitment to helping East Portland.

But they haven't spent much time talking about the worst injustice perpetrated on East Portland: the unfair property tax system.

Measure 50, passed in 1997, says that the assessed value of any property may grow by only 3 percent a year. In the past 20 years, the real market value of properties in inner east Portland has gone up by a hell of a lot more than 3 percent a year. Meanwhile, property values east of 82nd Avenue, and especially east of 122nd, haven't gone up so much.

Imagine if income taxes worked this way. Bill and Jill each made \$30,000 in 1995. Bill's income has gone up at a steady 3 percent a year ever since—but Jill has become the new Warren Buffett. In a Measure 50-type income tax system, they would each pay the same amount in income tax today.

As a result, you see people in East Portland paying far higher tax rates than people in recently gentrified areas. The Oregonian has done good work on this issue. In a 2015 article, Elliot Njus gave the example of a house on Southeast 148th Avenue, market value \$224,810, with a \$3,539 tax bill, compared to a house on Northeast 17th, market value \$446,540, with a tax bill of \$2,048.

And every time voters pass a bond measure, homeowners in East Portland are hit much harder than those in Alberta or Richmond, relative to the value of their homes.

City Hall can't fix this problem by itself. The voters of the entire state would have to vote to change Measure 50. But City Hall could make lobbying the Legislature to reform tax inequity a top priority. Commissioners could spend lots of time begging legislators to act, and highlighting the issue in the media.

Although I did raise the issue with legislators and colleagues periodically, I certainly did not give it nearly the attention it deserves—and I'm supposed to be a tax policy wonk.

Part of the reason neither I nor any other commissioner has sufficiently prioritized this issue is simply that overall property tax fairness is not part of anyone's bureau assignments. And it's really hard for commissioners to summon up much time and energy for issues outside their bureaus.

But let's say we held elections by geographic district. Odds are that East Portland's representative would obsess over this injustice.

City Hall needs to hear from citizens—not just the white homeowners.

The city's neighborhood associations are Portland's official squeaky wheels. They also get greased with a substantial amount of city cash.

Portland has an Office of Neighborhood Involvement, which provides \$2.3 million this year to regional neighborhood coalitions representing the city's 95 neighborhood associations.

What kind of citizen involvement does that get us? Well, the kind of people who show up at neighborhood association meetings tend to be middle-class white homeowners over the age of 50. In other words, the kind of people who you might expect to get involved in City Hall issues even if there were no Office of Neighborhood Involvement.

They're fine people. They just aren't very representative, and are becoming less so in an increasingly diverse city.

And they have an agenda. In the context of planning and zoning, they tend to oppose, for example, the idea of increasing and diversifying the housing supply by allowing more duplexes and triplexes ("middle housing") in single-family zones. (And some of them speak darkly of the prospect that such policies would result in—heaven forbid!—more renters.) That will be a hot issue later this year, when zoning votes face the City Council.

ONI tries to offset this bias by funding its Diversity and Civic Leadership Program (\$990,000 this year), which engages underserved communities. But that doesn't change the fact that when City Hall hears from "the neighborhoods," it's really hearing from a self-selecting segment.

The city could use the money it spends on neighborhood coalitions for a different model of citizen engagement.

In Toronto, chief planner Daniel Fusca also noticed that "a disproportionate number of the people we engage in planning processes tend to be white male homeowners, and over the age of 55." So they sent letters to 12,000 people asking them if they were willing to be part of a planning review panel, and selected 28 from 500 respondents, including 13 renters, eight people under 30, and 14 "visible minorities."

As a consultant who helps assemble these panels says, panels are given "a clearly defined task, sufficient time to learn about the issue from different perspectives [and] access to impartial expertise." Oh—and they're reimbursed for child care, too.

That \$2.3 million could fund a lot of citizen panels—if the commissioner in charge of ONI would make the change.

I hope that Chloe Eudaly, elected as a tribune of renters, will break the mold and reform the citizen involvement model. But it would be easier to reform the system if there were no one commissioner on whom the neighborhood associations could concentrate their fire.

Portland can be a city that works better.

Replacing the commission form of government won't automatically solve all of Portland's problems. Other cities, too, have crumbling streets, deteriorating parks, and an overreliance on police with guns. And I'm not joining the naysayers who say Portland doesn't work at all.

But it can be a city that works better.

Portland can be a city that beats guns into plowshares. It can be a city where public funds are concentrated on low-profile parks frequented by people of modest means, and where the property



taxes people pay bear some relationship to what their homes are worth. Where citizen involvement means the involvement of everyone—especially renters and people of color.

I am convinced we can take a major step toward being such a city by eliminating the commission form of government.

The voters have repeatedly rejected such a change. But right now, when City Hall as a whole is pretty unpopular, the timing might be perfect. Anything billed as "shaking up City Hall" could have a real chance.

Who's up for gathering signatures to get that on the ballot?

A Federal Immigration Sweep Arrests Three "Dreamers" in the Portland Area, Turning Up the Heat on a Sanctuary City

*By Corey Pein
March 28, 2017*

The largest reported deportation sweep in the U.S. under President Donald Trump of previously sanctioned immigrants known as "Dreamers" took place last weekend in the Portland area.

In the last week, federal immigration agents arrested three people who had been given limited amnesty under President Barack Obama, according to multiple sources.

The three people had at one time all registered with the U.S. government under an Obama-era program called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, which allows undocumented immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children to legally remain here.

One, Luis Gerado Zazueta, had not renewed his DACA paperwork, says his immigration attorney, Maria Zlateva. Another, Emmanuel Ayala, had gone in for fingerprinting to renew his DACA three days before his arrest, as first reported by local Spanish-language talk show Cita Con Nelly.

The arrests of the Dreamers added to a growing sense that the White House is targeting so-called "sanctuary cities" like Portland for crackdowns on undocumented immigrants. Two of the DACA arrests came Sunday morning, a day before U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions declared his Justice Department would no longer award millions of dollars in grants to sanctuary cities that decline to cooperate with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The first arrest, [reported by WW on March 26](#), inflamed the fear and confusion felt in Portland since ICE started [conducting raids in and around federal courthouses in January](#).

"They're showing up on a Sunday morning. That's an increased level of aggression," says Andrea Williams, executive director of immigrant advocacy group Causa. "It just seems cruel to me, knowing what kind of terror they would create in the immigrant community."

Here's what has changed in the ongoing standoff between Portland and ICE.

Why are Sunday's ICE arrests a big deal?

The three arrests in the Portland area aren't the first of Dreamers under Trump—there were high-profile arrests in Seattle and Jackson, Miss., last month—but they are the most documented so far in one metro area.

Among them: the March 26 arrest by ICE of Francisco J. Rodriguez Dominguez, a longtime resident of Southeast Portland who came to the U.S. at age 5. Rodriguez Dominguez, a church volunteer and Latino Network activist, had entered a court-ordered diversion program last December following a drunk-driving charge. If he completes the program, as he was on track to do, the conviction will be stricken from his record.

The arrest of an immigrant who had officially entered a diversion program for a DUI violation represents a change in the way immigration laws are being enforced. "We're starting to see a scary trend," says Mat dos Santos, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon. "It is a big change. It's shocking to me that [ICE agents] would interfere."

Driving under the influence is dangerous if common. But it's typically punished with probation and community service. People who violated immigration laws as children are suffering more severe consequences for the same or lesser crimes—simply because of where they were born.

Regional ICE spokeswoman Rose Richeson tells WW that Rodriguez Dominguez "was targeted for arrest based upon his guilty plea in December to a charge of driving under the influence of intoxicants, an offense ICE deems a threat to public safety." [ICE released him on bond Monday afternoon](#) as friends, family and supporters rallied outside the agency's offices on Southwest Macadam Avenue. His case will be heard by a federal immigration judge.

Is ICE changing its strategy in Portland and other sanctuary cities?

ICE's Richeson tells WW the agency has not adjusted its policies since March 6, when Trump signed the most recent of three "Executive Orders on Protecting the Homeland" (his modified Muslim ban). But immigrant advocates and lawyers say they've noticed an increase in enforcement and a more aggressive ICE presence in Portland. As in historical mass deportation campaigns, creating fear and uncertainty may be part of that strategy.

Romeo Sosa, director of the Portland Voz Workers' Rights Education Project, which runs the day labor center on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., says the increase in reported ICE activity in public places spreads fear and encourages self-deportation. "It's an intimidation tactic," he says. By making its agents visible on the streets, ICE hopes "people will be afraid, and they'll pack their stuff and leave the country." Some, Sosa adds, have already done so.

Why are Trump and Sessions targeting sanctuary cities?

They promised to. "This has been part of their mean-spirited rhetoric since the campaign," says dos Santos. "They promised to punish cities that dared stand up for their immigrants. I think they're delivering."

After his inauguration in January, Trump threatened to revoke all federal funding of sanctuary cities, but decades of federal court precedent suggests such a move could quickly be ruled unconstitutional. The latest announcement from Sessions is still vague but far more specific in that it limits the federal funding in question to U.S. Department of Justice grants. Oregon's U.S. senators, Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, denounced Sessions' plan to withhold Justice Department grants as detrimental to public safety and, in Wyden's words, "as un-American as it gets."

Will they target Portland?

Probably so. ICE now labels Multnomah and Washington counties as "non-cooperative jurisdictions" and intends to publish a weekly report of how many immigrants wanted by the agency were not handed over by county jailers as a result of sanctuary policies approved by state and local elected officials.

The [first such report, released March 20](#), was a mess of jumbled statistics and drew swift criticism from local officials in counties labeled "non-cooperative." The ICE report named Washington County as one of the "highest volume" sanctuary jurisdictions, as it received seven ICE "detainer" orders demanding the transfer of immigrants in local custody during the week of Jan. 28 through Feb. 3.

This seemed to imply the county protected seven foreign criminals from deportation that week—even though not all of those individuals had been convicted of a crime, nor had their immigration cases been adjudicated. The report also noted that because local law enforcement does not typically inform ICE when denying a detainer, the numbers essentially represented guesswork by ICE personnel.

Two immigrants held in the Multnomah County Jail on charges of assault and amphetamine possession were listed in the report—although their alleged crimes were not necessarily any more serious than those of the approximately 1,200 other inmates in county custody on any given day.

How much money can Trump actually withhold?

The county and the city say they received \$5.5 million from the Department of Justice during fiscal year 2016. Any attempt by Sessions to yank that money will set off a court battle not unlike what happened when the president signed an executive order to bar refugees from entering the country.

"In Multnomah County, we follow federal and state laws," says County Chairwoman Deborah Kafoury. "So we do not expect to lose any of the \$2.5 million in federal money that either comes directly to us or passes through the state or city."

Can Portland officials really do anything to protect immigrants?

As the arrest of Rodriguez Dominguez shows, Portland has limited powers when it comes to protecting immigrants from deportation. "The city had no role in this arrest, and I am against it," said Mayor Ted Wheeler in a statement. "However, ICE has the power to operate within our city, and does not have to inform us of their activities."

City officials have taken actions, from creating a training program for city employees to providing \$50,000 toward the legal defense of immigrants' cases. But advocates argue the city could go further—by making fewer arrests for low-level offenses, for instance.

Will immigration policy be a litmus test for the national search for a police chief?

Yes. "Our Police Bureau leadership is in total agreement with our status as a sanctuary city," says Wheeler spokesman Michael Cox. "We expect any bureau leadership under Mayor Ted Wheeler to hold the same view on this important issue."

The Portland Mercury

Portland's Newest City Council Members Are Considering An Old-School Budget Tactic

By Dirk VanderHart

March 29, 2017

IT TOOK Amalia Alarcón de Morris nine years at the helm of the Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI) to work up to her final annual pay of nearly \$144,000.

David Austin reached that rate after less than three months.

Austin, the deputy chief of staff for Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, was tapped to run the embattled ONI on an interim basis after Alarcón de Morris announced she'd be stepping down as of March 20. In moving him to the new position, Eudaly chose to pay Austin the highest possible salary for the job—money that will come from the ONI budget, not Eudaly's.

The city's [most recent salary scale report](#) shows the ONI director job pays \$102,981 at minimum and tops out at Austin's current salary, \$143,811, which he'll earn until Eudaly hires another full-time ONI director in coming months.

"He has at least as much responsibility as the outgoing director," says Marshall Runkel, Eudaly's chief of staff, noting that the office plans to significantly rejigger ONI under Austin's watch.

"The people are going to get their money's worth out of Dave Austin."

"Commissioner Eudaly has the confidence in me to come in and address things very quickly and make changes to improve the bureau," Austin adds. "I don't plan to sit down and do that slowly."

But Austin's 54 percent pay hike might not disappear completely once he returns to his old role.

Eudaly's office is considering bringing back a budgeting tactic that was cast out under former Mayor Charlie Hales—partly at the urging of the City Budget Office. Runkel says he's thinking of supplementing Austin's salary with thousands more from the two bureaus Eudaly oversees: ONI and the Bureau of Development Services (BDS).

The potential move has a couple of motivations. Both Runkel and Austin say the bureaus need better communications operations, which Austin would be responsible for. Eudaly also wants to pay her deputy chief more than his position's maximum salary under the city's pay scale.

Prior to working for Eudaly, Austin spent more than six years working as the communications director at Multnomah County—a position that paid better than his gig at the city. Since "deputy chief of staff" for a commissioner's office isn't an actual job classification on the city's books, Austin has been earning the \$93,434 maximum salary allowable for a commissioner's staff representative.

Eudaly's considering paying Austin roughly \$20,000 more than that once his stint as ONI director is done—a pay bump that would be evenly split between ONI and BDS, and come with expectations Austin's workload would increase. The office is still assessing how the arrangement would work.

"We're looking for him to not only help set up the communications team for the offices, but help lead them," Runkel says, adding that the arrangement is "not just a transfer payment to help solve our salary issue."

Should Eudaly's office pursue that path, it's a throwback to budgeting tactics that were in fashion last time Runkel worked in City Hall, as a staffer to former Commissioner Erik Sten.

Commissioners and mayors used to routinely pay for their personal aides with money carved from the bureaus they oversaw—a practice which rankled some city number crunchers, who saw it as dishonest budgeting. The practice morphed under former Mayor Sam Adams, when formal “inter-agency agreements” made the practice more transparent.

But when former Mayor Charlie Hales took office in 2013 pledging to whip the city's finances into shape, all that ended. The budgets for most commissioners' offices increased slightly, and there was an expectation they'd stay within those limits.

Eudaly's office isn't the only one pushing throwback budgeting.

Amid his early budget proposals this year, Mayor Ted Wheeler suggested a position in his office could be [paid for with \\$130,000](#) from the City Attorney's Office. The position would “provide strategic policy advice” to the mayor's office and others about the city's ongoing settlement with the US Department of Justice over police abuses.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the City Budget Office [pushed back](#). The office believes the position is a good idea, but suggested that the money to pay for it come from Wheeler's own budget “since the position will be under the guidance of the mayor.”

Wheeler will release a formal budget proposal next month.

Hall Monitor: Paying It Forward

By Dirk VanderHart

March 29, 2017

EVERY YEAR as the City Council begins thinking about its spending priorities for the next year, it gets a stern talking to.

This year, the lecture [came on March 14](#), when City Budget Director Andrew Scott once again laid out the increasingly dire state of Portland's nearly \$36 billion worth of infrastructure.

You've heard it before. The roads are crumbling. The parks need work. Bridges need repair.

“We really are robbing future generations of the level of service that we're currently enjoying,” Scott said. “We see this as the roads continue to deteriorate. We see this as playgrounds shut down because we didn't deal with lead paint.”

Only the numbers seem to change year to year. All told, Scott explained, the city would need to kick more than \$280 million more toward infrastructure each year to maintain the assets we have now. That's about \$12 million more than the number he rattled off last year.

Meanwhile, 43 percent of Portland's transportation infrastructure is in poor or very poor condition, according to the city.

Maybe it's all this repetition that made me perk up last Friday, when Mayor Ted Wheeler started talking about municipal bonds.

Tucked into Wheeler's first State of the City Address—between a pledge to further regulate landlords and fanciful visions of Willamette River swimming holes—the mayor dropped a brand new plan that elicited claps from a stingy crowd. It's a proposal certain to please Scott, and pretty clearly had the budget director's influence.

The plan is to use millions of dollars that will soon be freed up from Portland's urban renewal areas (URAs)—geographic zones that snatch up property tax money to pay for improvements within their boundaries.

With several URAs slated to expire in coming years, the money they've been scooping up will find its way back to Portland's tax rolls. Wheeler wants to use that cash to pay for millions in bonds to fund repairs throughout the city.

"We can no longer put off needed investments in this area," Wheeler said "The time for talk is done. The time for action is now."

"Now" as in this budget. Wheeler's office also says it will propose borrowing \$50 million for infrastructure repairs. As URAs continue to expire, and available cash balloons, the city could see bonds of \$100 million or even \$150 million in coming years, according to Wheeler spokesperson Michael Cox.

There's even a name for the idea: Rebuild Portland.

The beauty of the proposal is that—unlike a "street fee" former Commissioner Steve Novick and former Mayor Charlie Hales ruffled feathers by promoting years ago—it doesn't require citizens to pay anything extra.

That's not the same as saying it doesn't have a cost. The money generated by URAs has long been a central source of funding for affordable housing in the city. Loss of that money could be sharply felt.

Which means that, as with anything involving newly available money, this conversation could become heated fairly quickly. But it's necessary, and it's to Wheeler's wonky credit that it's happening sooner rather than later.

The Mayor's Got a Hush-Hush New Plan for Dealing With Meeting Outbursts

*By Dirk VanderHart
March 28, 2017*

Mayor Ted Wheeler's office has a new game plan for handling disruptive meeting attendees—it's just not saying what it is.

"Those who attempt to disrupt city council meetings will be asked to leave," Wheeler's chief spokesperson, Michael Cox, said earlier today. "Those who refuse to leave will be subject to arrest."

That's boilerplate language at council meetings, though. Wheeler's said those very sentences—or, anyway, something very close—repeatedly as City Council hearings have spiraled out of control over the last few months. But Wheeler's office, not wanting to appear as if it is issuing a challenge to demonstrators, wouldn't offer specifics.

Whatever the plan is, it's got a believer in Commissioner Nick Fish.

Fish, the Mercury [first reported](#), made the decision last week to instruct all his employees and bureaus not to attend city council meetings, after a hearing last Wednesday became particularly testy.

But having sat down with Wheeler and Wheeler's deputy chief of staff earlier today, Fish says he's rescinding the order.

"They went into great detail about the plans they have for maintaining decorum and order at council meetings, starting tomorrow," Fish tells the Mercury. "I'm now satisfied that we will in fact be restoring order in our council meetings. I will be allowing people to come and testify tomorrow."

Fish also wouldn't offer specifics about the planned security policy, other than to say "it's fair to say the mayor intends to use all the tools available to him, and his patience has run out."

So we'll see—maybe. A council meeting scheduled for tomorrow morning was cancelled, due to the planned absence of a majority of council. Commissioners Amanda Fritz, Dan Saltzman, and Chloe Eudaly will be gone.

There will be a meeting held at 2 pm instead.

Despite repeatedly threatening to eject or arrest people who disrupt council meetings, Wheeler has largely allowed outbursts to continue. That was especially apparent last Wednesday, when a meeting over a largely symbolic resolution over whether Portland should be declared a sanctuary city devolved into bedlam. Part of the anger, it appeared, was due to recent news that an officer who killed a 17-year-old last month [would not face criminal charges](#).

Wheeler's also faced outcry for a new law, passed unanimously by Portland City Council, that might allow the mayor to exclude people from council meetings for up to two months. That policy goes into effect next month, but Wheeler has acknowledged the exclusion portion of it might not be constitutional. He'll [wait on a federal judge's permission](#) before any exclusions take place.