

## **The Oregonian**

# **Portland Firefighters Need New Breathing Equipment Due to Malfunctions, Chief Says**

*By Maxine Bernstein  
March 20, 2018*

Portland's police and fire chiefs Tuesday urged City Council to provide funding for what they called their critical public safety needs: \$ 3 million to replace all firefighters' breathing equipment due to malfunctions, and more than \$10 million to add 93 officers to the police bureau's authorized strength.

Fire Chief Mike Myers and Deputy Fire Chief Sara Boone described the breathing apparatus as vital for firefighters' respiratory protection, allowing them to inhale air from a cylindrical bottle worn on their back when fighting a blaze.

In the last three years, firefighters in Portland have experienced "breakdowns and malfunctions" with the equipment, and several firefighters have experienced what's called a "no air situation" inside a working fire, Boone said.

The equipment, purchased in 2002, no longer can be upgraded to meet 2018 standards set by the National Fire Protection Association and National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, they said.

The money would replace the high-pressure air cylinder, pressure regulator and face piece that are connected to a backpack harness, according to a budget request for fiscal year 2018-2019. There are 369 breathing apparatuses and 1,200 air cylinders for the fire bureau, as well as 774 face masks for each firefighter.

Mayor Ted Wheeler questioned why the need to replace the equipment wasn't foreseen earlier.

"This is a life-and-death apparatus. They've been failing for three years," Wheeler noted. "Why didn't you plan for this?"

Myers acknowledged that the fire bureau's one-time request for \$3 million to replace all the equipment is unusual and should come from a capital replacement fund. "I am well aware this is an inappropriate way to ask. Your concern weighs heavy on me," Myers responded.

Yet firefighters will be unable to fight interior structural fires and rescue victims without fully functioning equipment, he and Boone told council members.

The \$3 million one-time request is part of the fire bureau's \$123 million budget request for the next fiscal year, a jump from its current \$119 million budget. City budget analysts have highlighted the bureau's need to create a reserve fund for its equipment and maintenance needs.

Fire officials also have applied for a federal grant to assist with the cost of replacing the breathing equipment.

The city budget office called the \$3 million a "critical request " that needs to be funded for firefighter safety, but suggested the money not come from the general fund. The city budget office recommended money be secured from a 1998 general obligatory bond fund balance, or money not spent from this fiscal year.

If the bureau receives the federal grant, it would require \$1 million in one-time funds to cover a 10 percent grant match.

## **POLICE BUREAU STAFFING**

In a separate budget presentation Tuesday, Portland's new Police Chief Danielle Outlaw said her top priority in the next budget year is to increase the number of sworn officers to help the bureau meet minimum staffing in each of its three patrol precincts.

She's asked for 93 more sworn officers, of which 81 would be assigned to patrol, four to training, six to emergency management and 2 to the Behavioral Health Unit. There are now 946 sworn police. The request is part of a \$229 million spending plan the bureau has sought for next fiscal year, up from the current \$211 million budget.

"We don't have all of the resources that we need in order to enable and empower officers to do what we're asking them to do. That is to get out and be community policing officers. That means get out of their cars, say hello to merchants, residents, get to know people and smile," Outlaw said. "They're chasing the radio, going from call to call to call, meaning they don't have enough discretionary time built into their work schedule in order to do that."

Increased retirements, a large number of recruits who remain on probation, as well as increased calls for police service have forced the bureau to pull officers from specialty units to fill patrol shifts.

According to the city budget office, calls for police service have increased by more than 22 percent in the last five years, driven largely by low- to medium-priority calls, not high priority, emergency calls, while police staffing has not followed suit. The increase in calls has been largely driven by so-called "disorder" calls, such as welfare checks, calls about an "unwanted person" or suspicious car or person. Calls reporting stolen vehicles and traffic collisions also have contributed to this increase.

The chief had attempted to play for council members a 911 call from a man named Kevin, who reported at 6:39 a.m. on Nov. 7 that a man in his late 20s or early 30s sprayed mace in his face and ordered him out of a 2013 Honda parked outside a 7-Eleven store on Southwest First Avenue and Arthur Street and drove off with the vehicle. Yet, at Commissioner Amanda Fritz's request, the chief did not play the call, as Fritz was concerned it might have been the worst time of that caller's life.

The dispatcher, according to a recording obtained by The Oregonian/OregonLive, told the caller, "We'll get the police right out there sir."

Yet it took one hour and three minutes before an officer was able to respond the scene, at 7:42 a.m., according to the bureau.

Eight of 13 officers assigned to Central Precinct were at a shooting scene that turned into a homicide that morning until 7:40 a.m., bureau spokesman Sgt. Chris Burley said. Other calls involving a welfare check and suicide attempt also were made prior to the carjacking call.

Police response times have increased due to staff vacancies.

Currently, officers now use about 22 percent of their 10-hour shifts on proactive police work, getting out of their car to meet residents or merchants in their district, but the bureau's goal is to increase that to 45 percent of officers' shifts.

During the holiday season, the bureau pulled officers from other units to fill new walking beats downtown to respond to merchants' push for greater police visibility.

The bureau can't maintain that without hurting other investigative units, or paying officers overtime, the chief said. Yet if officers rack up a lot of overtime, as historically has been

allowed, Outlaw urged the council to "think about what their decision making process looks like," and their fatigue and burnout levels will be.

Through January, Portland police have spent \$2.8 million this fiscal year in overtime due to staffing shortages – a \$700,000 increase from the overtime spending at the same time last year, according to the city budget office.

"I would love to operate without overtime whatsoever. Overtime is an unfortunate need but it's not a right. It's a privilege. It's not an entitlement. It should not be built into your budget," Outlaw said.

Portland's crime rate today is low, compared to the past three decades, while the bureau's staffing has remained relatively flat with an average of 969 sworn officers since 1990. Between 2016 and 2017, there was a dramatic spike in car thefts, and increases in burglaries and assaults in Portland.

Four years after a federal judge urged the bureau to adopt body-worn cameras, the bureau is still studying the feasibility, council members were told Tuesday.

Wheeler said he'd support testing the cameras on a "pilot basis" rather than equipping all officers with them because of their expense. City budget advisors have urged the Police Bureau to partner with a university to consider the potential outcomes and costs of using body-worn cameras. Outlaw said she's an advocate for the cameras, but recognizes they're costly and wants the bureau to continue to assess their feasibility.

## **The Portland Tribune**

### **Sources Say: Administrative Cap on Arts Tax Repealed**

*By Jim Redden  
March 20, 2018*

**Plus, gang violence is increasing in 2018 and an audit shows city transportation safety projects work but might have unintended consequences.**

The Portland City Council voted to repeal the 5 percent administrative limit for the Portland Arts Tax on Wednesday to fund more collection efforts.

The city revenue office has exceeded the limitation every year since voters approved the \$35-a-year payment in 2012. But it has not been able to fully pursue those who do not pay the tax, the council was told.

The council also agreed to consider raising the exemption for paying the tax from the poverty level to double the poverty level. That would increase those eligible for the exemption from one in seven, to one in three Portlanders.

#### **Gang violence up in 2018**

Gang violence increased during the first two months of 2018 compared to the same period last year, according to the most recent figures released by the Portland Police Bureau.

The Gang Enforcement Team investigated 15 incidents in January and February of this year. Although that is higher than the 10 investigated in 2017, it is less than the 25 in 2017 and the 24 in 2015.

Gang violence officially peaked in 2015 with 193 reported incidents. It declined to 159 in 2016 and 86 last year. Police veterans says the numbers were higher in the 1980s and 1990s, before gang incidents were tracked separately, however.

### **Safety projects mostly work**

Portland Bureau of Transportation safety improvement projects work but may have unintended consequences, according to an audit released Thursday.

The City Auditor's Office found that speeding and crashes were reduced after a project was completed on East Burnside Street between 15th Avenue and Laurelhurst Place. Some traffic may have diverted to Northeast Couch Street, however, where peak volumes increased 117 percent.

Speeding and crashes also were reduced after a project was completed on Southeast Division Street between 60th and 80th avenues. There was no evidence that traffic had diverted to other streets there.

The audit recommends PBOT adopt a process to evaluate potential unintended consequences in areas around such projects. In her written response, PBOT Director Leah Treat said such work already is underway. You can read the audit at: [tinyurl.com/y8dx642m](http://tinyurl.com/y8dx642m).

## **Willamette Week**

### **Portland City Council Seeks to Offer Tax Incentives for Affordable Housing**

*By Rachel Monahan  
March 20, 2018*

#### **County Chair Deborah Kafoury raises questions.**

When Portland City Hall passed its inclusionary housing program in 2016, developers rushed to beat the permitting deadlines and avoid the new requirement to include affordable housing.

None of the 19,000 units that developers filed to build before the Feb. 1, 2017, deadline will include affordable housing.

Mayor Ted Wheeler is pushing to fix that gap by extending tax breaks to those developers if they're willing to rent 20 percent of their units for less than market value.

"My administration has struggled with the question: how do we get more affordable units into the projects that are already in the pipeline?" Wheeler wrote in a March 16 letter to his colleagues and obtained by WW. "That's not an academic question. We are in a housing crisis. The need is now."

Specifically, he's working to resuscitate a program called the Multiple-Unit Limited Tax Exemption—a program that existed before inclusionary housing was passed.

The city and Multnomah County did not continue the program for units that are not subject to inclusionary housing when that new program passed. The revived program would use money already set aside for the tax exemption.

At a Council hearing last week, the mayor appeared to have the three votes to pass the program.

But the county has to approve the tax exemption too.

Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury has yet to sign on—and her response raises questions about how the program was previously administered.

"I'm looking into the cost-effectiveness of the program, and I'll be talking with my colleagues next week," Kafoury says in a statement.

Under the previous program, the city forgave large amounts of taxes and got very few units in return.

In one example, the city agreed to forgo \$17,692.31 per unit per year in taxes for Sky3 Apartments, which has 39 units of affordable housing. Over the course of 10 years the forgone tax revenue adds up to more than \$175,000 per unit, assuming no massive downturn in the value of property in Portland.

That's a large sum of money for a unit that will return to the open market in 10 years.

The mayor has already offered an amendment last week to address the past spending by providing a cap of \$500,000 on the per-project spending. That might bring down the amount the city is forgoing per unit on average.

"The \$500,000 per-project cap hits the sweet spot—big enough to ensure we get affordable units in the Central City, where the larger projects tend to be built, but small enough to avoid the unintended consequence of subsidizing luxury units," the mayor wrote.

City Council could do more: limiting the amount of tax revenues per unit the city agrees to forgo.

Some of Kafoury's colleagues on the county commission may also be ready to accept that compromise that Wheeler presented last week.

"I'm concerned about the lack of affordable units in the pipeline, particularly in the central city area," says Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson.

"I think the proposal the mayor has put forth is a good one that incentivizes but doesn't overly subsidize affordable units. I'm open to other suggestions, but I do think we need to make use of all tools at our disposal."

## **Murmurs: Saltzman May Ask Voters to Fix Publicly Funded Elections**

*By WW Staff  
March 21, 2018*

**In other news: Chip Shields returns!**

**Saltzman May Ask Voters to Fix Publicly Funded Elections:** At a budget hearing last week, City Commissioner Dan Saltzman raised the possibility of asking voters to move the city's program for publicly funded election campaigns to the Auditor's Office. He's pushing the idea over the objections of Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who championed the program and wants to get it running, as well as Auditor Mary Hull Caballero. The Auditor's Office was responsible for a previous incarnation of publicly financed campaigns. Abuse of the system helped end the program and has contributed to Hull Caballero's reluctance to take it on. A charter amendment approved by voters may be the only means Saltzman has to compel the auditor to take on the new program.

**Former State Senator Keeps Campaigning:** Former Sen. Chip Shields (D-Portland) retired from the Legislature in 2017 after a dozen years, but he's remaining active in two of his longtime interests. Earlier this month, Shields, who has been a foster parent, issued a request for proposals from lobbyists for a new group called the Foster Homes of Healing Fund. Shields is prepared to spend \$130,000 on lobbyists to improve the state's troubled foster care system. Shields' second cause? Criminal justice reform. Shields founded and ran a nonprofit called Better People, which helped prison inmates re-enter society. Elections filings show that he recently wrote a \$2,500 check to Max Wall, a defense lawyer who is running for Washington County district attorney as part of a national criminal justice reform movement. Shields did not return a call seeking comment.

**Wheeler Dangles a Tax Break for Developers:** Mayor Ted Wheeler is hoping to make up for a shortage of affordable housing by offering developers a tax break. When Portland City Hall passed its inclusionary housing program in 2016, developers rushed to beat the permitting deadlines and avoid the new requirement to include affordable housing. Now Wheeler hopes to entice those developers by offering them tax breaks if they're willing to rent 20 percent of their units for less than market value. "We are in a housing crisis," he says. "The need is now." One possible obstacle: Multnomah County Chairwoman Deborah Kafoury, who remains skeptical.

**Campus Protests Draw National Scrutiny:** Portland's reputation as a hotbed for explosive campus politics is under the national magnifying glass once again, following a series of controversial speakers and reactive protests at Portland State University and Lewis & Clark College. New York Times columnists Bari Weiss and David Brooks highlighted the student outrage over these local events as chilling examples of PC culture run amok on college campuses. But in the past week, commentators at other major media outlets have pushed back on that narrative, tying the organizers of these events to a right-wing outrage machine. The Guardian writes that the provocateurs inviting controversial figures to Portland campuses deny political affiliations with the far right, yet "take such trouble over antagonizing the left, and drawing right-wing attention."

## **The Portland Business Journal**

### **Portland Developers Could Collect Tax Breaks Through Expanded Affordable Housing Program**

*By Jon Bell  
March 20, 2018*

Tim O'Brien's Urban Asset Advisors had hoped to tap into an affordable housing tax abatement program for its Multnomah Village Apartments project, a 70-unit development that recently wrapped up construction.

The program, run by the Portland Housing Bureau and known as the Multiple-Unit Limited Tax Exemption program, offers developers a 10-year property tax exemption if they make at least 20 percent of the units affordable to households earning either 60 percent or 80 percent less than the median family income.

One of the most notable projects to tap into the MULTE option was Yard, the 21-story apartment building at the east end of the Burnside Bridge, which has 57 units of affordable housing as a result of the program.

But UAA's project, which sits at 7707 S.W. Capitol Highway, was outside the geographical bounds of the program, so the apartments moved forward as 100 percent market rate.

"Absolutely we looked at it before," O'Brien said, "and we would have liked to use it for our Multnomah project, but unfortunately we were outside the boundary so we weren't able to."

It's too late for UAA's project now, but revisions to the MULTE program, on which the Portland City Council will vote tomorrow, could open up the program to projects anywhere within the city limits, not just in the largely close-in patchwork that had been specified by the program before.

In addition, the revisions would make the MULTE program available to hundreds of housing projects that were grandfathered in prior to the implementation of the city's Inclusionary Housing program. That program requires new multifamily developments with 20 or more units to reserve 20 percent of those units for households making 80 percent of Area Median Income.

The Area Median Income for the Portland metro area was \$74,400 as of last April.

In a rush to beat the February 2017 IH deadline, developers flooded the permitting pipeline. According to the city, some 19,000 units "became vested through land use actions or by the submission of building permits" and aren't subject to the IH program. They are, however, also not eligible for the MULTE program, but the Council is widely expected to change that tomorrow.

The ordinance that Council will take up on Wednesday states: "PHB wants to make the MULTE Program available to housing developments not subject to the IH Program requirements in order to promote affordable units in what would otherwise become market-rate housing developments."

Under a cap, the city would forgo no more than \$3 million in tax revenue over a two-year period under the MULTE program.

O'Brien's UAA has two new apartment projects in the works, one in Multnomah Village and one on Southeast Division Street and Southeast 33rd Avenue. Both of them came after IH, so they will be required to have affordable units and wouldn't qualify for the MULTE program.

Even so, O'Brien said he's overall in favor of offering the MULTE program to more projects. He would like to see the application process streamlined and perhaps projects already in the pipeline given eligibility. At present, developers need to apply for the MULTE program and be approved before a building permit can be issued.

"It's a good approach and I'm very supportive of it," O'Brien said. "I mean, they need to look at it and make it beneficial to developers. They really need to consider flexibility with timing. Having to get approved before permits is a limitation. I've heard other developers comment on that. If you already are waiting on permits and construction loans, you don't want to have to wait around even longer for a city program."

Other local developers question whether an expanded MULTE program will help make projects pencil in an era of rising construction costs and rents that aren't rising as they have been in recent years. Developers may enjoy the tax breaks that come with the MULTE program, but the affordable units generate less revenue, thus making a completed project less valuable than a comparable market rate building — an unappealing opportunity for banks and investors to back.

The council is set to vote on the ordinance during its morning session tomorrow.