

## **The Oregonian**

# **Portland Council, with Business Tax Hike, OK's \$5.1 Billion Budget**

*By Gordon Friedman  
May 16, 2018*

The Portland City Council unanimously approved a \$5.1 billion annual city budget Wednesday, devoting substantial new sums to funding a city-county agency fighting homelessness and to the Portland Police Bureau, for hiring 49 new officers.

Much of the multibillion-dollar budget, which increased 8.5 percent year-over-year, is spent on construction projects, infrastructure maintenance and debt payments. The council controls only a relatively small portion -- \$566 million, an 8.6 percent increase from last year -- and that fund pays mostly for police officers, firefighters, parks maintenance and bureau operations.

But the budget includes several notable new items: \$31 million for the city-county Joint Office of Homeless Services, a 10 percent increase from last year's allocation; \$5 million for additional police officers; and a \$500,000 special appropriation to pay for legal services for Portland immigrants facing deportation.

To help pay for those increases and others, commissioners increased Portland's local business tax by \$15 million. It is the first increase to the tax rate since the 1970s. Commissioners also upped a deduction to cushion the effect of the tax increase on small businesses.

Mayor Ted Wheeler's proposal to hire more police officers and a plan to close two community centers was a flashpoint for some residents' outrage. Hundreds packed public budget forums in recent weeks to protest those ideas, with some activists saying the Police Bureau had enough officers and parks supporters and senior citizens rallying to keep the community centers open. The budget proposal was the first Wheeler oversaw fully since becoming mayor in 2017.

Ultimately, Wheeler reduced the number of patrol officers he plans to hire from 52 to 49 and conceded to requests to keep the Fulton Park and Hillside community centers fully funded. Portland Parks & Recreation still took a sizable budget cut, at nearly \$1 million. The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability took the biggest cut by percentage, a full 5 percent, resulting in elimination of three vacant city planner jobs.

Wheeler, acknowledging criticism of his plan to put more police on Portland streets, said Wednesday he recognizes that the city budget is a "moral document" and that he and critics have legitimate disagreements on policy.

"You may think I forget sometimes, but I never forget who I work for," Wheeler said from the dais, referencing the electorate. "That doesn't mean I'm always able to forge a consensus on every single issue." He said the budget is an imperfect foundation to build upon, but "as perfect as I think we can get it here today."

The council adopted one major amendment, brought by Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, which stripped language from the budget committing the council to avoid future business tax increases. The amendment passed 3-2, with Eudaly, Commissioner Amanda Fritz and Commissioner Nick Fish voting in favor and Wheeler and Commissioner Dan Saltzman opposed.

Jo Ann Hardesty, an activist and former state representative, and Loretta Smith, a two-term Multnomah County Commissioner, will face each other in a November runoff for a seat on the Portland City Council.

Eudaly lamented the lengthy and politically fraught budget process before voting in favor of the spending, saying bureaus tasked with cutting their own budgets offer programs for the chopping block that alarm the public, sparking public outcry from residents "with little or no knowledge of other budget issues."

"It feels like we live on different planets based on what people's burning issues are," Eudaly said, adding, "We need a more thoughtful and meaningful process."

For his part, Wheeler, a former state treasurer and county chairman, emphasized his concern with the city's fiscal responsibility, saying Portland is "exposed" in the event of an economic downturn.

"People rely on the city of Portland to provide services come hell or high water," the mayor said. "We need to be fiscally responsible in our budget and fiscally sustainable over the long run to continue to deliver those services come hell or high water." Wheeler added: "This budget does that."

The budget now heads to the county Tax Supervising & Conservation Commission, which must give its seal of approval. Once that is done, the council is expected to adopt a final budget in early June, largely a formality.

## **Multnomah County Opens East County Homeless Shelter to Even Out Closures**

*By Molly Harbarger  
May 17, 2018*

Two homeless shelters are slated to close this summer, but the city-county homeless services office says the number of shelter beds will stay relatively stable.

The Columbia Shelter, which was first in a space donated by developers Greystar and the Menashe family and then at the Shleifer Furniture Co. building as it awaited renovations, will close.

The Joint Office of Homeless Services says the men who'd been staying there were moved to other facilities operated by Transition Projects, which operates many of the Joint Office's shelters.

The state's largest homeless shelter, Hansen in Southeast Portland, will also close. It was never meant to be a permanent shelter.

Those 200 beds will be replaced with 125 at the county's East County building, 1415 S.E. 122nd Ave. The Salvation Army Female Emergency Shelter in Old Town and the Do Good veterans shelters will convert 50 beds from winter-only to year-round.

A publicly funded shelter in the county's Mead Building, which was opened as a winter shelter, will also extend its days. It has space for 75 people.

Meanwhile, families moved out of the Southeast Portland family shelter run by Human Solutions are in motels paid for by the Joint Office.

Two new spaces are in planning right now. One is a recently approved shelter at 6144 S.E. Foster Rd. The county signed the lease on the building, and now a committee of neighbors, business owners and homeless service officials gather to help plan its roll-out.

The commissioners heard several hours of testimony from neighbors and homeless advocates. Much of it was opposition from residents who live around Southeast 61st and Foster Road, where a 13,000-square-foot former grocery store will become a shelter that prioritizes women, people with disabilities and elderly people.

Oregon Harbor of Hope, a nonprofit run by developer Homer Williams and former Portland Development Commission chairman Don Mazzioti, is also raising money to operate a 120-bed shelter and navigation center near the Broadway Bridge in the Pearl District. Columbia Sportswear CEO Tim Boyle put up the initial \$1.5 million to build it, but Williams and Mazzioti are still figuring out how to pay the operating costs.

More than 4,000 people are homeless in Multnomah County, according to the 2017 federal one-night count. The Joint Office operates 1,300 publicly funded year-round shelter beds to meet increasing demand.

## **Stark to Become Harvey Milk Street? Plan Heads to City Council for OK**

*By Andrew Theen  
May 16, 2018*

A proposal to rename Southwest Stark Street in downtown Portland for Harvey Milk, the gay rights leader who was assassinated in San Francisco in 1978, moved one step closer to reality.

Portland's Planning & Sustainability Commission unanimously approved the plan Tuesday to rename a 13-block stretch of Stark after Milk. The proposal heads to the City Council for a hearing and vote June 14.

The Stark section from Burnside Street to Naito Parkway was once a hub of gay nightlife and culture in Portland. In recent years, it's transformed into a string of shopping and dining spots.

A coalition of Portland LGBTQ advocates, allies, business owners, and former governors Barbara Roberts and Ted Kulongoski have pushed to rename the area for the gay rights icon.

The group said renaming the street is a way Portland can show its commitment to equity and inclusion, despite the fact many of the businesses that once lined the epicenter of gay culture in Portland are no longer there.

"Only a handful of these remain on SW Stark," they wrote in documents to the city, "but renaming this street after LGBTQ hero Harvey Milk will commemorate the cultural/historical significance of this street to the LGBTQ community for generations to come."

Supporters were required to get 2,500 signatures to support the plan, and the City Council in February agreed to waive rules that prohibited renaming only sections of a street. New street signs would cost an estimated \$6,700. The Milk Street signs would stand alongside the old signs for five years.

Portland's auditor mailed a survey to more than 560 property owners and occupants at businesses on or abutting Southwest Stark. Only 114 responded and 40 percent supported the plan.

Lisa Schroeder, the owner of Mother's Bistro on Stark, told the commissioners Monday the survey results are not reflective of neighborhood sentiment. She said 32 out of 45 business owners surveyed approved the change.

Cameron Whitten told commissioners he came out as gay late in his adulthood, and leaders like Milk were "never talked or taught about."

"I see this as a no-brainer," he said.

San Diego and Salt Lake City have renamed streets for Milk in recent years, and in 2014 he became the first open LGBTQ activist featured on a U.S. postage stamp.

Milk moved to San Francisco in 1972 and was active in civil rights movements there. He was one of the first openly gay Americans to be elected to a public office when he was voted onto the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977. He was assassinated in 1978.

Portland does plan to honor local gay rights leaders or former businesses in some way on the thoroughfare, but those plans have yet to be finalized.

Stacy Brewster, Portland Commissioner Dan Saltzman's communications director, told the commission the city is in the early stages of finalizing how to honor locals.

"It could be murals, it could be rainbow crosswalks," he said, or it could be a broader designation to honor the district's history similar to Chicago's Boystown area.

## **The Portland Mercury**

### **Portlanders Clash Over A Pending Neighborhood Development Project**

*By Kelly Kenoyer  
May 16, 2018*

Last night was so chaotic with primary elections, it was easy to overlook the long-winded zoning hearing taking place before Portland's Planning and Sustainability Commission. The hearing centered on the Residential Infill Project (RIP, a truly tragic acronym), and drew testimony from people eager to increase affordable housing across Portland, and others upset with new buildings ruining the look of their neighborhood.

Residential infill is a pet project of City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly. Her proposed plan, which could affect the zoning of 60 percent of Portland, currently limits the size of new houses to 2,500 to 2,800 square feet for most lots and allows for houses to build two accessory dwelling units (ADUs)—aka "granny flats"—per lot. It also would permit duplexes, duplexes with detached ADUs, and triplexes on corner lots, and clarify rules to make building on narrow lots easier. Those in favor of the plan argue that it will provide "missing middle" housing, while those against it call the project a land grab for developers.

According to people who attended the well-documented hearing, a total of 88 people gave testimony, about half in favor of the project.

"Single-family zoning is one of those things from the 1950s that isn't a good idea anymore, like meat jello," said one supporter, Tanner Baldus.

The discussion around RIP stands at an interesting intersection of concerns: People's hatred of massive, McMansion-style houses and the unyielding need for affordable housing. The caps on house size are controversial even on the pro-infill side, with housing advocacy group Portland for Everyone tweeting "let buildings get a little bigger for each [additional] home they contain... allow small homes everywhere, not just west of I-205." Portland for Everyone also provided a letter explaining its support for RIP.

Other groups, like the Eastmoreland Neighborhood Association, are raising money for a legal fight against the pending RIP project.

The testimony from recent hearings will be incorporated into a recommended draft proposal which should appear before Portland City Council sometime this fall. There it will face more hearings, deliberation, and possibly amendments before going to a vote.

## Hall Monitor: Cop Out

*By Alex Zielinski  
May 16, 2018*

### **What Happened to Last Year's Police Budget Promises?**

This week, Mayor Ted Wheeler will ask city commissioners to pull thousands of dollars from other city programs to fund the salaries of new Portland police officers. Meanwhile, 1,038,251 city dollars that are meant to solve the city's biggest policing problems sit unused.

The Portland Police Bureau (PPB) currently employs 946 sworn officers—or, cops who have a badge, a firearm, and the power to arrest someone. Earlier this year, Wheeler proposed hiring 93 new sworn officers, but community pushback dropped that number first to 58 and then to 55. Still, it's a stark contrast to 2017's budget, which cut five sworn officer positions by eliminating mounted patrol.

As he's campaigned to add new officers to the 2018-2019 city budget, Wheeler's repeatedly mentioned two PPB problems that more police officers could solve: Improving 911 response times and strengthening police-community relations.

These are problems, however, that an already-funded 2017 PPB program was created to solve.

While last year's PPB budget didn't add any new sworn officer positions, it did fund 14 full-time positions for a "Community Service Officers" pilot program. The program, which was granted \$1,159,293 in ongoing funding, was meant to "provide service to community members," a vague task that apparently takes sworn officers away from responding to criminal activity.

According to the city budget office, the number of 911 calls that require police dispatch have increased 22 percent in the past five years. But an increasing majority of these calls are labeled "low and medium priority"—calls that may include welfare checks, an "unwanted person," "suspicious circumstances," or car theft.

These aren't necessarily calls that armed, sworn police officers need to respond to. In fact, these calls epitomize the exact tasks the Community Service Officers are meant to address: "addressing lower-level enforcement issues and... taking reports."

So what happened to that year-old pilot program? Why do we need dozens of new sworn officers to tackle community issues when we've already tasked a PPB team to do the job?

The short answer: It still hasn't been created.

Since Portland City Council approved the 2017-2018 budget a year ago, only one percent of the funds set aside for the Community Service Officer program have been spent. According to PPB, that \$121,042 has paid for one officer who's been given the task of developing the program single-handedly. That leaves \$1,038,251 in taxpayer funds unused.

Michael Cox, a spokesperson for the mayor's office, says the city remains in negotiations with Portland Police Association—the city police union—on what, exactly, that pilot program will look like.

In last year's budget, the pilot program took center stage, touted by Wheeler as a needed solution to help over-burdened sworn officers. This year, the only mention of the program is buried as a footnote to the PPB budget, swimming in bureaucratic promises of “joint quarterly reports” and “progress toward implementation.” According to the budget, it'll be up and running by the end of 2018.

Until then, we'll keep throwing more money at sworn officers to do the same job.