

# The Portland Tribune

## City Hall Update: Council Approves \$5.1 Billion Budget

*By Jim Redden*

*May 22, 2018*

### **Plus, seven and Portland bureaus now need permanent directors and traffic fatalities still rising in city.**

The city council unanimously approved a \$5.1 billion annual budget Wednesday, May 16, that will take effect July 1.

It includes an increase of the city's business income tax from 2.2 percent to 2.6 percent to raise \$15.3 million. The increase will be used to hire 49 new police officers and six sworn support staff positions, among other things.

The council only controls the \$566 million general fund portion of the budget. Other significant spending items include \$31 million for the city-county Joint Office on Homeless Services and \$500,000 for legal services for Portland immigrants threatened with deportation.

### **Portland bureau heads needed**

Seven Portland bureaus now need permanent directors following last week's announcement that Budget Office Director Andrew Scott will leave to become Metro's deputy chief operating officer.

In the days before the announcement, Portland Bureau of Transportation Director Leah Treat emailed employees to say she was taking a transportation-related job in the private sector and Commissioner Amanda Fritz pushed Mike Abbate out of his job as Portland Parks & Recreation director.

The other four bureaus needing permanent directors are the Bureau of Emergency Management, the Portland Housing Bureau, the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, and the Office of Equity and Human Rights.

Since Mayor Ted Wheeler took office, directors have been replaced at the Bureau of Development Services, the Bureau of Emergency Communications, the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, the Office of Government Relations, the Bureau of Human Resources, the Portland Police Bureau, the Office of Management and Finance and the Bureau of Revenue and Financial Services.

### **Traffic fatalities still rising**

Traffic fatalities are continuing to increase in Portland despite the Vision Zero Action Plan approved by the City Council that is intended to eliminate all fatal and serious injury crashes by 2025.

A bicyclist involved in a May 17 crash in Northwest Portland became the 17th fatality of the year when he subsequently died of his injuries. Twelve people had been killed on Portland streets by this time last year. Traffic fatalities also are increasing across the country.

## Willamette Week

# City Commissioner Amanda Fritz Selects Interim Portland Parks Director Who Had Received Warnings About Elevated Lead Levels at Preschool Building

*By Rachel Monahan*

*May 21, 2018*

**Kia Selley was one of two deputies to the former bureau director told about elevated lead levels in the water at the Multnomah Arts Center in 2012, nearly four years before the public was alerted.**

Interim Portland Parks and Recreation director Kia Selley was one of two high-ranking parks bureau officials alerted to elevated lead levels at the Multnomah Arts Center, years before they were revealed to the public.

The center has been home to a preschool since at least 2012. Elevated lead levels were found in the water in 2011, 2012 and 2013, the parks bureau revealed in 2016. Some requests to fix the lead problem weren't approved by upper management, The Oregonian reported.

Those tests only came to light after the Flint water crisis and the local Portland Public Schools lead-in-the-water scandal encouraged other public agencies to explore their own lead problems.

The Oregonian revealed in July of 2016 that Selley had been one of two top-level parks deputies to receive notice, as far back as 2012, that the facility had elevated lead levels. She resigned later that year.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who has been in charge of parks for five years, chose to bring Selley back as interim director earlier this month after forcing out long-time bureau director Mike Abbate.

Fritz says Selley's resignation in 2016 "had no connection with the lead issue."

"I considered Kia's role in the lead issue before appointing her as Interim Director," emails Fritz.

"With 20/20 hindsight, we all acknowledge that mistakes were made. As reported in The Oregonian, the investigation that was completed determined that there was no malfeasance or intent to deceive. Kia was instrumental in finding solutions....My focus will always be to look for how to address problems so that they don't reoccur."

Fritz also writes that she made the selection of interim direction "in consultation with the Mayor, because of our shared priorities for the Bureau, her in-depth knowledge of Portland Parks & Recreation, and because she is highly respected inside the Parks Bureau, other government agencies, and throughout Portland."

A May 1 memo from Mayor Ted Wheeler to Fritz shows they agreed to launch a national search for a permanent director to be completed within three to six months.

**OPB**

## **Audit: Regional Arts and Culture Council Needs Oversight**

*By April Baer*

*May 22, 2018*

Portland city auditors say the city needs to focus its relationship with the non-profit that handles arts funding and policy.

The Regional Arts and Culture Council or RACC is different than the city bureaus. It gets money from the city budget but functions under its own volunteer governing board. It also performs some advocacy work, in addition to administering arts grants in Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas Counties.

RACC is in-between directors at the moment. Commissioner Nick Fish and Mayor Ted Wheeler asked the Auditor's office to figure out if the agency is meeting its contract obligations to the city.

Jenny Scott, a senior management auditor for the city, says there's one big impediment to answering that question. The city has no clear goals for arts and culture.

"The last plan," Scott notes "was a regional one, Act for Art, in 2009. What we were looking for was a statement about what the city wanted to achieve. Many other cities including Denver, San Jose and Chicago have arts and culture plans which state the vision and strategy for that jurisdiction's arts and culture work."

Beyond that, auditors looked at how well RACC is delivering on its standing city contract. Auditors found RACC is delivering services, Scott said, but leaves much room for improvement.

Regional Arts and Culture Council: Clear City goals aligned with strong Arts Council strategy will improve arts and culture services

What began as an audit of RACC services became an inquiry about Portland's broader goals for the arts in the hands of Portland's auditors.

Some of the vagaries stem from the language of the city contract.

"Many elements of it", Scott said, "are vague and hard to measure." For example, no one's tracking provisions about RACC's equity work and leadership with an eye to performance. There's some disagreement on what metrics RACC should monitor to assess impact of the Arts Education and Access fund (Portland's arts tax) in the city's schools. Even the RACC contract itself has remained unexamined for years, with no city staffers assigned to oversee its implementation — a rarity among non-profits charged with doing the city's business.

In practical terms, Scott said, there's little oversight at the city of how RACC spends its money.

Commissioner Nick Fish notes, in years past, since RACC is a semi-autonomous agency with a fiduciary board, many city leaders thought, "We give them the money, they figure out how to spend it, and then they're audited. They've been getting a clean bill of health every year from their outside auditor."

But now, with RACC in transition, Fish concludes the audit raises a more fundamental question about long-term goals. And, he hints, that question might be answered in part, by Portlanders.

"We're going to go through a process of engaging a whole community."

It's not clear whether that process would happen before or after RACC's search committee hires a new director. A slimmed-down search committee aims to review more job candidates in July. Council will discuss the report today.