

The Oregonian

Portland Grants More Paid Vacation to City Employees

By Carol Voorhees

July 18, 2018

The Portland City Council unanimously approved a significant boost in paid vacation time for city employees Wednesday. The change will take effect in January.

New employees previously topped out at two weeks of vacation per year for their first five years working for the city. Starting in January, new hires will receive two weeks and four days and they'll qualify for an additional half-day each year.

Paid vacation will top out at five weeks and two days for employees who have worked for the city at least 25 years. That's two days more than the most senior employees get now.

The biggest change will come for workers in their fifth year with the city, who will see their vacation time increase by 60 percent, from two weeks up to three weeks and one day. Workers in their 10th year will see a 25 percent increase, to nearly four weeks of paid vacation.

City officials said the increases are necessary because other public employers in the Portland area offer their employees more paid vacation than Portland does.

The increases are expected to result in a relatively small loss in productivity for the city.

The council vote also changes how they accrue vacation time. Currently, workers get a fixed amount of vacation per year, with increases coming every five years. Starting in January, vacation time will be accrued per pay period with gradual increases each year.

The city set up a workgroup consisting of top managers, employees and representatives from local labor unions in 2017 to research vacation accrual rates among other public employers in Oregon and Washington. The group analyzed about 19 at the city, county and state level, said Elliot Levin, research director for Professional and Technical Employees Local 17, who participated in the work group.

The group found that the city's vacation accrual rate was below the average and was not competitive enough. It put forth three recommendations, depending on if the city wanted to be above, meet or be slightly below the average. The city's human resources director, Serilda Summers-McGee, recommended the "middle of the road" option, and city council members all voted yes.

"That was clearly impacting our ability to recruit quality talent," said Mayor Ted Wheeler.

Levin said job applicants have shied away from working for the city because of the vacation policy. He has heard of applicants turning down job offers for the city or not even applying because of they would take a "significant loss" in vacation time to work for the city, he said.

There are "loads" of openings, Levin said, for roles such as engineers and IT professionals. Increasing vacation time removes a significant barrier in attracting the "experts and skilled professionals" that Portland will need to grow, he said.

This change in vacation accrual does not apply to employees not in full-time permanent positions, which includes seasonal and temporary workers such as parks maintenance workers and summer recreation employees.

Where are Portland's 10 most dangerous intersections?

*By Andrew Theen
July 19, 2018*

Portland's most dangerous intersections have a lot in common.

The majority are in east Portland (7 out of 10 east of I-205).

Four of them are on 122nd Avenue, east Portland's main thoroughfare.

They are predominately four- or five-lane roads that serve as major traffic arteries for the city's eastside. When two of those streets intersect, it's a dangerous recipe for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians alike.

A recent driving tour of the 10 most dangerous intersections showcased a sea of commonalities: convenience stores, gas stations, businesses and curb cuts give drivers dozens of reasons to turn off the highway and infinite sources of potential risk.

All of these factors converge in what is the city's most diverse neighborhoods, where transit service still lags (despite recent gains), bike infrastructure pales in comparison to the central city and pedestrian crossings are often harrowing.

With Portland amid its Vision Zero campaign, the multi-pronged effort to change how streets are designed and educate residents about the dangers of speeding, we felt now was a good time to share the city's list. Portland hopes to eliminate all traffic fatalities by 2025. At least 18 people have died on Portland roads so far this year.

The list is based on five years of crashes (2011-2015). The city gave more serious injuries additional weight in its calculation, so some intersections may have more crashes or injuries but rank lower than other areas that have seen more serious crashes or fatalities.

Portland calculated an intersection's danger level by looking at the number of fatal and injury wrecks there, the number of collisions per million vehicles at the intersection and the severity of the crashes.

The top 10:

No. 10: Southeast 148th Ave. and Stark St.

Total Crashes: 71

Fatalities: 0

Serious Injuries: 2

Moderate Injuries: 15

Minor Injuries: 87

Projects: No specific projects are planned.

What it's like: We spotted a Vision Zero advertisement urging drivers to slow down at this busy intersection, which has lots of pedestrian crossings and where 148th Ave. seems to crest, creating a job-ride type situation. It creates visibility issues.

No. 9: Southeast 92nd Ave. and Holgate Blvd.

Total Crashes: 65

Fatalities: 0

Serious Injuries: 3

Moderate Injuries: 20

Minor Injuries: 86

Projects: There is money in 2019 to upgrade traffic signals at this intersection.

What it's like: This intersection is not like the others. It is bordered by Lents Park on one side. But westbound Holgate narrows to one lane just west of the intersection, creating an incentive for cars to speed if trying to merge left.

No. 8: Southeast 136th Ave. and Powell Blvd.

Total Crashes: 72

Fatalities: 0

Serious Injuries: 2

Moderate Injuries: 23

Minor Injuries: 88

Projects: New sidewalks, bike lanes and upgrades to traffic signals are projected in 2019-2020 project list.

What we saw: This section of Powell is extremely narrow, and one side of the street has no sidewalks in the approach to 136th. A cluster of strip clubs, a pawn shop and a Plaid Pantry dominate this intersection.

No. 7: Southeast 122nd Ave. and Powell Blvd.

Total Crashes: 79

Fatalities: 0

Serious Injuries: 1

Moderate Injuries: 14

Minor Injuries: 112

Projects: New sidewalks, bike lanes and upgrades to traffic signals are projected in 2019-2020 project list.

What it's like: Powell starts to widen at this intersection, and drivers seem to accelerate as they head west. A Walgreens and Pay Day loans business are big draws at this intersection.

No. 6: Northeast 122nd Ave. and Glisan St.

Total Crashes: 90

Fatalities: 0

Serious Injuries: 2

Moderate Injuries: 24

Minor Injuries: 119

Projects: In 2020 there are plans for new street lights at the intersection.

What it's like: This intersection's sidewalks are extremely narrow, and it feels perilous waiting to cross the street here. We watched numerous pedestrians cross 122nd.

No. 5: Southeast 82nd Ave. and Division St.

Total Crashes: 92

Fatalities: 0

Serious Injuries: 3

Moderate Injuries: 11

Minor Injuries: 123

Projects: Protected bike lanes and other improvements are expected to start in 2018 and lasting until 2021.

What it's like: This is a rapidly changing part of town, where Portland Community College's Southeast Campus sits, and an apartment project rises out of the ground on the southwest corner of the intersection. There's a lot of foot traffic here.

No. 4: Southeast 174th Ave. and Powell Blvd.

Total Crashes: 86

Fatalities: 0

Serious Injuries: 1

Moderate Injuries: 20

Minor Injuries: 120

Projects: This intersection is also within the state's \$110 million in outer Powell improvements.

What it's like: This area is just within the city limits. The Chevron gas station attendant we spoke with described a dangerous intersection where drivers cut through the business at a high rate of speed to try and avoid the traffic light.

No. 3: Southeast 122nd Ave. and Division St.

Total Crashes: 117

Fatalities: 0

Serious Injuries: 5

Moderate Injuries: 23

Minor Injuries: 156

Projects: Significant projects are expected to begin in 2018 and continue until 2021 on outer Division.

What it's like: This intersection offers stunning views of Mt. Hood. The Division Center shopping area brings many businesses and curb cuts to the intersection. We saw a group of young kids on bicycles cross the road amid a busy day.

No. 2: Southeast 82nd Ave. and Powell Blvd.

Total Crashes: 138

Fatalities: 0

Serious Injuries: 2

Moderate Injuries: 12

Minor Injuries: 207

Projects: ODOT is expected to complete \$110 million in safety improvements to outer Powell before transferring responsibility to the city.

What it's like: This intersection is a major transit corridor, with two bus lines serving the area. It's also, as with many intersections, home to a 7-Eleven. On a recent visit, we saw dozens of people trying to cross the street in midafternoon.

No. 1: Southeast 122nd Ave. and Stark St.

Total Crashes: 122

Fatalities: 1

Serious Injuries: 3

Moderate Injuries: 18

Minor Injuries: 159

Projects: This year, city plans to add bike lane extensions and address "conflict areas" on 122nd.

What it's like: An ocean of asphalt greets pedestrians waiting to cross this eastside thoroughfare. A gas station, Burgerville and other amenities surround the intersection.

Here are the next 10 most dangerous intersections (in order from No. 11 on)

NE 122nd and Halsey: 79 crashes

SE 148th and Division: 57 crashes

SE 112th and Powell: 51 crashes

SE 92nd and Powell: 78 crashes

NE 82nd and Glisan: 62 crashes

NE 82nd and Fremont: 49 crashes

NE Glisan and I-205 northbound onramp: 56 crashes

SE Division and I-205 southbound offramp: 67 crashes

SE Foster Rd and SE 96th Ave/I-205 northbound onramp: 56 crashes

SE Cesar E Chavez and Powell: 67 crashes

[Read more about Vision Zero and the city's High Crash Corridors and most dangerous intersections here.](#)

The Portland Tribune

Sources: Wheeler Sits Out City Council Race

By Jim Redden

July 19, 2018

Plus, the mayor says he will not actively oppose the clean energy fund measure if it qualified for the ballot and the Planning and Sustainability Commission leans towards even more density.

Mayor Ted Wheeler is not going to endorse either activist Jo Ann Hardesty or Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith in the November 2018 runoff election for City Council.

Wheeler told the Portland Tribune editorial board last Friday that he will have to work with whoever wins the race to fill the council seat being vacated by Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who did not run for reelection. That's different than when mayor-elect Wheeler endorsed Commissioner Steve Novick for reelection in the November 2016 election, only to see him defeated by small business owner Chloe Eudaly.

"Chloe and I get along just fine," Wheeler noted, while still reaffirming he intends to sit out the Position 3 race.

Mayor won't actively oppose clean energy measure

The same is sort of true for the Portland Clean Energy Fund initiative that could make the November 2018 ballot. It seeks to tax large businesses in town to finance green energy projects and workforce training.

While the petitions were being circulated, Wheeler came out against such a tax. Wheeler says that although he supports the goals of the potential measure, he still opposes taxing businesses in Portland to achieve them. Wheeler says that for him, it's a matter of priorities, and right now he is more concerned about homelessness and the affordable housing crisis.

But Wheeler also told the Portland Tribune editorial board last Friday that he will not actively oppose the measure.

Wheeler also declined to take a stand on the campaign finance reform initiative measure that also appears headed for the November ballot, saying he doesn't have enough time to study it. A Multnomah County Circuit Court judge has ruled a similar measure approved by county voters violates the free speech provisions of the Oregon Constitution.

Planning commission supports more density

The Planning and Sustainability Commission has tentatively agreed to increase the density of Portland's single-family neighborhoods more than the Residential Infill Project recommends.

The project, launched within the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, currently recommends rezoning 60 percent of the single-family neighborhoods to encourage more relatively small multi-family housing projects, including duplexes, triplexes and accessory dwelling units. The commission, which advises the bureau, will send its version to the City Council for approval later this year.

At a July 10 work session, a majority of the commission signaled its support for rezoning more single-family neighborhoods and allowing four-plexes on every residential lot within them. Most

commissioners opposed requiring property owners to provide at least one affordable unit to build a four-plex.

The council had been scheduled to receive and vote on the commission's version of the recommendations by the end of the year. Mayor Ted Wheeler recently told the Portland Tribune the vote has been postponed to March 2019, noting that the rezoning issue is very controversial.

The Portland Mercury

Hall Monitor: Paradigm Shift

By Alex Zielinski

July 18, 2018

Mayor Wheeler's Response to Homelessness Isn't Working

It's not often that Portland's police union and advocates for Portland's homeless community agree.

But there's an unavoidable similarity between the demands of the Portland Police Association (PPA)—underscored in a lengthy Facebook post penned Monday by PPA's combustible president Daryl Turner—and the call to action of a Change.org petition being circulated by local proponents for affordable housing. Both groups agree that police officers shouldn't be the first responders to calls regarding homeless individuals, and both agree that Mayor Ted Wheeler's response to new data on homelessness-related arrests is misguided.

Both the PPA's Facebook post and the online petition follow a jaw-dropping investigation published in the Oregonian on June 27. Reporters found that 52 percent of all Portland arrests in 2017 were of people who were experiencing homelessness. Only 3 percent of the city's population fits that description.

This jarringly disproportionate finding sparked outrage in Portland's homeless advocacy circles and civil rights organizations, prompting Wheeler to announce an investigation into the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) to determine if officers are unfairly profiling Portland's houseless population.

“The real question here is, ‘Is there some sort of profiling or implicit bias?’” Wheeler told the Oregonian last week. “From my perspective, that's the crux of the situation.”

Is it, though? Are officers responsible for arresting a high number of homeless people, or is it the responsibility of Wheeler—who serves as Portland's police commissioner—to reevaluate the number of crimes that a houseless person can be charged with?

“The mass arrests of people on the streets aren't a reflection of the integrity of police officers,” says Israel Bayer, a longtime advocate for Portland's houseless and the former executive director of Street Roots. “It's about creating smart public policy that isn't driven by neighborhood complaints.”

PPA's Turner seems to agree. In his Facebook post, Turner writes he's “incensed” that Wheeler is blaming systemic city issues on inferred officer bias. “It's a recipe for failure to put the burden of the homelessness solution on the Police Bureau's shoulders,” Turner writes.

Turner believes the problem can be solved with more PPB officers. That's where the similarities between PPA's demands and homeless advocates' activism begin to disappear.

“When people call for more police, they’re really calling for more people to solve the problem, because the current people aren’t cutting it,” says Elliott Young, a Lewis & Clark history professor who helped organize the popular online petition that calls on the city to decriminalize homelessness.

The petition, which has gathered more than 2,000 signatures, asks Wheeler to slash police officer positions and use the funds to increase access to affordable housing, mental health care, and addiction services.

Wheeler isn’t necessarily opposed to that idea. In a May meeting with police accountability advocates, the mayor said that in cases of mental health crises, “having police officers be the safety net shouldn’t make anybody comfortable.” Wheeler didn’t specifically address Portland’s homeless population, but in his remarks, he showed genuine concern over fundamental flaws in PPB’s current mandate.

Wheeler added, “We have to completely change the paradigm around policing here in this community to be more reflective of the kinds of needs that are increasingly important.”

If he’s looking for a signal to start changing that paradigm, the combined outcry from the PPA and homeless advocates is it.

A Band-Aid Solution for Portland’s Cycle of Evictions

*By Alex Zielinski
July 18, 2018*

A Pilot Program Works to Keep Low-Income Tenants in Their Homes. It's Working—for Now.

Sandra Brown is late for eviction court. It’s 9:15 am on Friday, July 13, and after missing two buses, Brown says she lost her balance and hit her knee—hard—on the bus ride downtown. The driver offered to call an ambulance for Brown, who looks to be in her early 60s. She refused.

“I didn’t want to get evicted,” says Brown with a laugh. “I’ll go to the hospital later.”

Dressed in a flowery jumpsuit and clutching a manila folder, she hurriedly limps down the halls of the Multnomah County Courthouse and slips into Room 120, joining the usual congregation of bored-looking landlord lawyers and anxious tenants sitting before Judge Benjamin Johnston.

Like the majority of Portland renters who end up in eviction court, Brown is here because her landlord claims she didn’t pay her rent. The organization serving as Brown’s landlord—Portland’s public housing authority, Home Forward—says she skipped a September 2017 rent payment for her North Portland apartment. Brown refutes the claim. According to her, Home Forward has since refused to accept her last two rent checks. Now Home Forward is asking her to cover the September rent, the past two months’ rent, and a number of late fees, for a bill totaling \$475. If she pays, Brown won’t be forced to immediately vacate her studio apartment, which she’s called home for four years. She’ll also avoid getting stuck with an eviction on her rental history record—a damning mark that would likely hurt her chances of renting a home in the future.

But Brown doesn’t have the funds. Usually, this would mean an eviction is certain. Today, however, is an exception to that rule.

“We can help. We have the money,” says Margot Black, the founder of Portland Tenants United. Black regularly volunteers her time to help tenants navigate the city’s labyrinthine eviction court process. Today she’s helping Legal Aid Services of Oregon (LASO) attorneys connect with tenants who could benefit from their free services.

Black crouches next to Brown, who has left the courtroom to negotiate with Aaron Matusick, a lawyer representing Home Forward. The nondescript hallway outside Room 120 is where the majority of eviction cases are actually settled, in agreements between a tenant and a landlord’s lawyer before they ever go to court. Black waves over a lawyer who’s with LASO.

“Oh yeah, get them to help you,” says Matusick, with a sardonic smile. “The taxpayers are paying for it anyway.”

LASO attorneys are part of a new team of tenant advisors who, over the past two budget cycles, have been granted a total of \$205,000 in city funds to help Portlanders avoid eviction and homelessness by simply paying their overdue rents and late fees. Ideally, the program’s financial aid acts as a temporary cushion, giving tenants enough time to restructure their finances and get back to regularly paying rent.

The program acts as a short-term financial solution to a chronic problem—tenants’ inability to pay rent in a city with a deficit of affordable housing—and advocates say it’s helping tenants. And in a court system that can seem systemically built to work against tenants, it’s a small victory.

The “Eviction Prevention Pilot Program” kicked off last month and is made up of LASO lawyers and staff with the Community Alliance of Tenants (CAT) and JOIN, a homeless outreach nonprofit. July 13 was the fourth day that group members met outside of Room 120, intercepting tenants who couldn’t pay their way out of an eviction. The group also tries to visit and send postcards to every person on the court’s eviction docket, in an effort to educate tenants about the program’s purpose and benefits before they enter the courthouse.

To qualify for aid, a tenant simply needs to meet low-income criteria and show up to court. “It’s pretty simple,” says Dung Ho, CAT’s tenant education director. “And there clearly is a demonstrated need. We’ve already helped a lot of people.” She doesn’t have hard numbers to back this claim but says she’s confident the group’s eventual presentation before city council to request that the pilot project becomes permanent—scheduled for no earlier than next year—will be persuasive.

In this case, the pilot program is able to fully cover Brown’s mounting bill and keep her from going to trial, where she would have most likely lost. LASO lawyers also help explain the importance of continuing to pay rent on time.

“I understand,” Brown says. “I am so lucky that I found you.”

If Brown slips up a second time, the pilot program’s funds will no longer be able to keep Home Forward from evicting her.

Patterns like Brown’s are familiar to those who know the eviction court system.

“By the time people get to this point, they’re already late on rent for this month and probably can’t afford the next,” says Black. But even as she supports the program, Black fears the process may only postpone the inevitable.

“Sure, we can cover one month, or two... but what about the next?” says Black. “It’s a vicious cycle. The system is set up to fail.”

The ideal fix, Black says, would be a more comprehensive, long-term solution, like a program that offers low-income tenants financial guidance and assistance before their overdue bills start piling up. But in Portland, where the lack of affordable housing has been deemed an “emergency,” short-term solutions have become the priority.

Back inside Room 120, Judge Johnston is hearing the pleas of a woman who has returned to the court after allegedly failing to uphold her landlord’s settlement agreement. She says she never received a notice in the mail and that there must have been a clerical error. Her voice wavers as she asks for an extension.

“I’m sorry, ma’am,” Johnston says, “but this is the agreement you made.”

“She’s probably going to be homeless,” Black says. “If only we caught her last week, we could have helped her.”