

The Oregonian

While Portland School Board Reconsiders Police Contract, Students Want a Voice

*By Eder Campuzano
January 28, 2019*

As the Portland school board considers withdrawing its support for a contract to pay the city more than \$1 million per year for nine full-time police officers to patrol the district's high schools, students want more say in what happens.

Students from across the district opposed the Dec. 11 school board vote to approve the contract and wanted to pressure the City Council, which also would need to approve it, to spike the agreement.

"Ideally, for me, and for a lot of students I'm working with, is that we're wanting this program to end," Roosevelt High School senior Isabel Mace-McLatchie said. "Our needs are already being met by the administration and security at our school."

She's part of a group called No SROs PDX, which uses the acronym commonly used to refer to school resource officers, as officers in schools are known.

The group argues that uniformed police officers aren't necessary to maintain order in Portland's public high schools. Instead, Mace-McLatchie and Grant High senior Micah Mizushima say, teachers, administrators and school security guards should be the ones disciplining students.

"As a person of color in Portland, I've never really felt safe by the police department," Mizushima said. "Schools are for kids and if kids aren't feeling safe, then we need to think about why that is."

Officials at the Portland Police Bureau did not respond to a request for comment Monday.

For nearly 20 years, Portland Police officers have patrolled three-quarters time at each high school in Portland Public Schools at no cost to the district. But now the city says the school district needs to pay its share or the officers will no longer be deployed in schools.

Mizushima, Mace-McLatchie and their peers in No SROs PDX know they're waging an uphill battle.

Julie Esparza Brown, the only person of color on the school board and its vice chair, was the only one to vote against the agreement between the district and police bureau in December. She told the board she'd been unfairly targeted by police before and worried about the way the agreement would affect students of color.

Two other members, Scott Bailey and Amy Kohnstamm, abstained from the vote, saying they wanted more feedback from students before committing to the agreement.

One of the main reasons school board member Julia Brim-Edwards prompted the school board to reconsider its December vote is the cost: The Portland Police Bureau wants \$1.2 million per year to supply those nine full-time officers to the district's high schools.

Brim-Edwards said the board was given a false deadline of Dec. 31 to decide whether it would pay for those officers or let the program lapse. Once the board voted on the proposal, the city council then had to quickly approve it as well, board members were told.

That hasn't happened. And the school resource officer program is still in place.

The board will vote on whether to rescind its approval of the contract Tuesday night. Students with No SROs PDX plan to attend the school board meeting and speak during the public comment section.

Both Mace McLatchie and Mizushima are hopeful that board members will take the testimony to heart. They say district leadership has seemed open to communication, even if they believe its previous efforts to gather input from students has been limited.

"I think they tried their best, but they've been kind of inconsiderate in the way they tried to get feedback," Mizushima said. "In a sense, I feel like our voices have been fairly limited."

Still, they're optimistic — albeit cautiously optimistic, Mace-McLatchie said — that the process will be more transparent should the board vote to re-consider its vote from December.

"I hope student input will start improving. I'm just really hopeful it's going to get better," Mizushima said.

Judge Dismisses 'Don't Shoot PDX' Leader's \$500k Lawsuit for Alleged False Arrest

*By Aimee Green
January 28, 2019*

A judge on Monday threw out a \$500,000 lawsuit filed against the city by "Don't Shoot Portland" leader Teresa Raiford, who claimed police singled her out and falsely arrested her during a 2015 protest.

Multnomah County Circuit Judge Leslie Bottomly dismissed Raiford's lawsuit, finding police had probable cause to arrest Raiford for allegedly interfering with an officer as she stood in a Southeast Portland street to lead a local demonstration in August 2015.

During a 2016 trial, prosecutors didn't pursue an interference charge, but did pursue a second-degree disorderly conduct charge for allegedly obstructing traffic. Just before the trial, Judge Michael Greenlick found that parts of a police officer's statements weren't credible and that police didn't have probable cause to arrest Raiford for disorderly conduct. A few days later, a jury acquitted her of that charge.

But Bottomly's probable cause finding means Raiford has no grounds to sue the city for alleged false arrest, battery and assault.

"We'll appeal," said Raiford's attorney, Matthew McHenry. "We're not giving up."

Raiford's lawsuit stemmed from her arrest on the afternoon of Aug. 9, 2015. Raiford, who also is a prominent local leader of the "Black Lives Matter" movement and an outspoken critic of police use of force, was leading a crowd of about 100 in marking the one-year anniversary of the shooting death of Michael Brown. Brown, an unarmed African American teenager, was fatally shot by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri.

Raiford said she was lawfully protesting when five police officers caught her by surprise as they suddenly crossed Southeast Division Street near 82nd Avenue, appeared behind her and arrested her while she was calling out chants.

Raiford was one of a small number of protesters who were in one of the traffic lanes of Southeast Division Street. In a video of the protest, she can be seen pacing roughly 3 to 6 feet from the curb as she leads the crowd, standing on the sidewalk, in chants.

After the jury acquitted her of disorderly conduct, Raiford said her arrest and prosecution were evidence of police bias and abuse of power.

Her civil trial had been scheduled to start Monday and last several days this week.

The Portland Tribune

City Hall Update: Cannabis Business Grants Approved

By Jim Redden

January 29, 2019

Plus, civic engagement conversations scheduled and open house set on historic resource changes.

Portland funded two grants totaling \$60,000 to two cannabis businesses owned by African-Americans as part of an equity program intended to mitigate the racial disparity of marijuana-related arrests before the drug was legalized.

Green Box, a marijuana delivery service, and Green Hop, a North Portland dispensary, each received \$30,000. The funds are part of the \$150,000 in cannabis tax revenue distributed by a nonprofit organization called the NuLeaf Project.

The city program is administered by Prosper Portland, the city's economic development agency, because African-American businesses historically have struggled to secure financing.

Civic engagement conversations scheduled

The city is inviting Portlanders to a series of conversations about civic engagement, beginning in February.

The events are being coordinated by Community & Civic Life, formerly known as the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, in collaboration with other community partners. The feedback will inform the process of rewriting the section of the city code that defines the work of the bureau.

The first event is hosted by Hacienda CDC from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 7, at 6700 N.E. Killingsworth St. The second is hosted by the Somali American Council of Oregon from 4 to 6 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 9, at 4415 N.E. 87th Ave. To learn more, go to www.portlandoregon.gov/civic/77951.

Open house set on historic resource changes

The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability has released a discussion draft of changes to the zoning code governing historic resources.

Within the city limits, there are roughly 10,000 buildings, bridges and other landmarks subject to protections in the code. That number will grow as more buildings reach the 50-year mark.

The draft code amendments propose important changes to the rules and procedures for identifying, designating and protecting new landmarks and districts.

Code amendments fall into 10 general themes, ranging from redefining inventory qualifications to revising the duties and powers of the Historic Landmarks Commission.

An open house on the discussion draft will be held from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 19, at the Architectural Heritage Center, 701 S.E. Grand Ave. You can learn more at

www.tinyurl.com/yawl5c89.

Portland Parks Facing \$7 Million Shortfall

By Jim Redden

January 29, 2019

Recently discovered budget gap between spending and revenues will require City Council to make 'hard choices,' says new Parks Commissioner Nick Fish.

Portland Parks & Recreation is facing a potential \$7 million shortfall in next year's budget — 7.5 percent of its approximately \$94 million operating budget.

Commissioner Nick Fish, who was assigned the parks bureau four months ago, says the because costs are outstripping revenues, the City Council will have to make "hard choices" about the budget. Fish says he has already curtailed spending.

"Effective immediately, I have directed PP&R to severely limit hiring, spending, and training. As we develop a sustainable plan to bring costs in line with revenues, we'll continue to consult with the community," said Fish, adding, "My goal is to put PP&R on solid financial footing while continuing to deliver the high-quality services our community expects."

The bureau had previously been overseen by Commissioner Amanda Fritz.

Bureau employees are being told of the problem in a series of personnel meetings that began at noon on Wednesday.

According to a sheet of Frequently Asked Questions distributed to the employees, the potential shortfall was discovered as the bureau began preparing its request for next year's budget under a new process introduced by Mayor Ted Wheeler that requires city agencies to rebuild their budget from the ground up.

"When I was asked to lead Portland Parks & Recreation four months ago, I began by taking a deep dive into our budget and programs," Fish said. "Mayor Wheeler's new budget process has allowed us to take a fresh look — line by line — at our proposed budget."

The shortfall is largely caused by personnel costs increasing faster than revenues generated by the bureau, the FAQ sheet says. More than a quarter of it revenues come from fees for programs, which the City Council has kept low to encourage public participation.

"Personnel costs are growing at a fast pace. In 2016, we added more than 100 new full-time employees following a labor arbitration. But between Council allocated General Fund and program fees, we can't keep pace with growing costs for healthcare, PERS, cost of living adjustments, and other benefits."

The problem has been growing for years.

"The bureau has used one-time strategies to fill the gap. PP&R underspent department budgets to balance the bureau budget, transferred funds internally, and implemented hiring freezes. But these stop-gap measures have not addressed the structural problem.

The gap is now big enough that the bureau can't use these same strategies. We must fix the problem," the FAQ sheet says.

In response to the problem, bureau hiring, training and other spending was limited on Jan. 22. The exact shortfall will be revealed when the bureau submits its request for the budget that starts on July 1 on or around Feb. 4. Options for closing the gap will be discussed at a council work session that will be held in March. The date has not yet been determined.

You can read the bureau [FAQ's here](#).

Willamette Week

Judge Dismisses Lawsuit Filed by Don't Shoot PDX Organizer Teresa Raiford Over Her Arrest at a Portland Protest

*By Elise Herron
January 28, 2019*

Raiford sued the city for \$500,000 for a 2015 arrest at a Portland protest.

On Monday, a judge dismissed a \$500,000 lawsuit filed by Don't Shoot PDX organizer Teresa Raiford against Portland on grounds that police singled her out and falsely arrested her during a 2015 protest.

The Oregonian first reported the dismissal this morning.

Raiford was arrested by five police officers at an August 2015 event she organized to honor the life of Michael Brown, the unarmed black man shot by a police officer in Ferguson, Mo. She was charged with criminally obstructing traffic.

A jury acquitted Raiford in 2016 of the charge.

Raiford filed a lawsuit for damages in August 2017, saying she was singled out for her outspokenness against police violence and claiming officers made disparaging comments as they arrested her.

Multnomah County Circuit Judge Leslie Bottomly threw out Raiford's lawsuit on Monday, finding Portland police did have grounds to arrest Raiford for interfering with a police officer while she addressed a crowd near the intersection of Southeast 82nd and Division. Bottomly pointed to the indictment and a judge's ruling that Raiford could stand trial on the criminal charge, even though she was ultimately acquitted.

Raiford's attorney, Matthew McHenry, tells The Oregonian they plan to appeal the ruling. A civil trial is scheduled to start Monday.

Raiford and McHenry couldn't immediately be reached for comment.

Cecelia Towner, the founder of Black Lives Matter in Vancouver, Wash., who was at the court for the hearing today, tells WW, "the justice system shouldn't be preventing justice from happening.

"All these rules are just technicalities, they don't actually serve justice," she says. "That's why we have the jail rates we do. I don't think it's over, and I'm thankful for that. It's important to appeal [Bottomly's ruling] so that we do get justice. Not just for Teresa Raiford, but for all of us."

The Portland Mercury

Mayor Wheeler Considers Eugene's Model of Mental Health First Response

*By Alex Zielinski
January 28, 2019*

Whether it's the high cost of health insurance, the scarcity of state-funded psychiatric treatment beds, or the fear of an institutional setting, Portlanders with mental illnesses—especially those without homes—aren't getting the kind of care they need. It's a reality not lost on city officials.

"I'm increasingly of the opinion that we are addressing a major public health epidemic," Wheeler said last Tuesday, referring to the city's growing mental health needs. "And I'm not sure we have the right tools in place in able to address it."

The tools in place—an overburdened emergency clinic for psychiatric patients, promises of affordable housing with built-in mental health care, and a network of hard-working, but underfunded, nonprofits—aren't enough to keep the city from relying heavily on a controversial provider: the Portland Police Bureau (PPB).

Portland police remain the de-facto first responders for people experiencing untreated mental health issues. Despite increased officer training and a police team specifically tasked with connecting people to behavioral health care, it's proven to be a Band-Aid solution.

Three out of the four people fatally shot by a Portland police officer in the last year were in the middle of a behavioral health crisis when they were killed.

Community leaders, physicians, and the cops themselves agree that officers shouldn't be tasked with solving the region's growing mental health problem. That's why Wheeler, along with other local officials, have begun looking outside Portland city limits for solutions.

Last week, Wheeler and a number of his top advisors drove two hours south to visit CAHOOTS, a Eugene program that sends trained mental health and substance abuse experts to respond to 911 calls that don't necessarily need police intervention. Now nearly 30 years old, CAHOOTS (short for Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) has at least one of its three mobile units—a combination ambulance and primary care clinic—on call every hour of the day.

"I'm here to listen and learn," Wheeler told CAHOOTS leadership, prior to a presentation and after getting a tour of a mobile clinic.

He isn't the first local official to do so. Representatives from Multnomah County and the PPB (including Chief Danielle Outlaw) have also visited the Eugene nonprofit in the past month, signaling a growing interest in the model.

Like a traditional law enforcement team, CAHOOTS responds to calls that come into the regional 911 call center, where perceptive operators evaluate if incoming calls merit police attention—or could be better handled by an unarmed mental health crisis worker and EMT.

More than 50 percent of all 911 calls that would traditionally go to the Eugene Police Department are handled by CAHOOTS—lightening officers’ workloads and saving the taxpayers an incredible amount of money.

According to CAHOOTS' calculations, the mobile crisis team has saved the EPD an average of \$8.5 million each year since 2014. Thanks to its trusted relationship with the Eugene community, many people call CAHOOTS directly for assistance, avoiding the 911 system entirely.

The program’s team prides itself with treating basic medical needs in the field (via the mobile clinic)—whether it’s wound care, helping people detox from a bad drug trip, assisting clients who show symptoms of psychosis, or counseling people who’ve reported self-harm. Without CAHOOTS, these needs would typically be addressed by a pricey ambulance trip to an emergency room, which often leaves patients (and, more often, taxpayers) with a \$2,000 bill.

CAHOOTS staff are regularly called when someone reports a homeless person sleeping on their property or somehow disrupting their neighborhood. Staff may offer to take that person to a shelter, or to CAHOOTS' brick-and-mortar clinic, White Bird, to address unmet health needs, or give them the hard truth: If they don't move, they might be arrested. But staff never force clients to accept their help.

"At our clinic, we focus on recognizing that people are an expert in their own lives," said Benjamin Brubaker, White Bird administrative coordinator, explaining the program to the mayor and his staff last week. "We can step into situations and try to assist and support, but we could potentially do harm by stepping in and telling people how to lead their life."

Portland doesn’t have a direct equivalent to CAHOOTS. The closest is Project Respond, a program staffed by mental health clinicians with Cascadia Behavioral Health that only responds to mental health-related emergencies when they’re called to assist law enforcement. Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty has suggested training staff at Portland’s 911 call center to triage calls like they do in Eugene—and directing non-criminal emergencies to mental health or social workers.

Aside from a canister of pepper spray, CAHOOTS staff are unarmed when they interact with clients. Despite regularly interacting with folks who are in crisis, no CAHOOTS employees have ever been injured in the field.

CAHOOTS Program Manager Tim Black says staff rely on verbal de-escalation to calm a potentially violent client—and are told to trust their instincts if they feel a situation might get out of their control. Occasionally, Black says, employees will ask police officers to back them up if they’re feeling uncertain about a visit. It’s not a decision they make lightly.

“But, if some kind of intervention like that is going to happen, we’d like to be on scene,” said Brubaker. “We’d like to be able to bear witness to it, help direct it a little bit, make sure the individual still gets the care that they need.”

There’s no way to determine if the fatal encounters between mentally ill Portlanders and police would have ended any differently if Portland had a program like CAHOOTS in place.

“There are several of those [Portland cases] that because of the direction they went... they would not have been situations where we could have effectively intervened,” Brubaker said. “It’s all a guessing game.”

Part of CAHOOTS’ unique success is rooted in its history. White Bird Clinic’s relationship with the Eugene Police Department goes back to the mid 1960s, when officers would mostly swing by

to drop off people who were in the midst of a bad LSD trip. The decades of trust built between the two organizations can't be easily replicated.

“[Law enforcement] believes we're allowing them to do their jobs better, because we're out handling all the other stuff that they aren't necessarily trained to be handling,” said Brubaker.

It's still unclear if the city plans on integrating parts of CAHOOTS' model into Portland's current emergency response system.

The city's visit, however, focused on technicalities rather than abstract ideas, hinting at its level of interest. Wheeler's staff centered their questions for the CAHOOTS team on procedure: How is this funded? (Some city dollars, some fundraising) Can staff access client's health care history? (Yes) Where are clients from? (Vast majority are locals) Where do you direct homeless clients?

Like many other service providers across Oregon, CAHOOTS has yet to find a good answer to that last question.

“The shelter piece is the biggest road to nowhere that we have,” Brubaker said. “There's a huge lack of shelter beds and supportive housing options in the county.”

“It's one of the harder conversations, as we go out to talk to somebody who's sleeping in somebody's doorway,” he says, “because when they say ‘Where can I go?’ the answer is ‘I don't know, man. But right here you're going to get a ticket.’”

OPB

Portland Districts Question Cost, Timing Of School Police Shift

*By Rob Manning
January 29, 2019*

Portland Police Bureau officials have told leaders at city school districts that if they want to maintain campus officers — often called school resource officers — they'll have to use school dollars to help pay for them.

That pressure hasn't gone over well in any of those districts.

The David Douglas School District is holding a work session on the possibility Tuesday, but leaders there are not in a hurry to vote on sharing the cost of a school resource officer.

School leaders in Portland Public and Parkrose are objecting to both the cost and timing of the city's push for districts to take on costs.

Portland school board members approved an intergovernmental agreement with the City of Portland last month over objections from a number of students and parents. In recent weeks, students have gathered hundreds of signatures against the agreement, while city leaders such as new Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, have raised concerns.

In the last few days, PPS board members decided to reconsider that agreement under an agenda item at this week's meeting entitled “Resolution to Suspend Approval of an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the City of Portland, through the Portland Police Bureau, and Portland Public Schools.”

Board documents suggest distrust, or at least a misunderstanding, between the state's largest district and its largest city.

"Representations were made that the City of Portland needed to have the IGA approved no later than December 31, 2018; otherwise School Resource Officer (SRO) services to PPS and its schools would terminate," the resolution reads.

"New information indicates that is not the case."

The school board's proposal rescinds the previous agreement, acknowledges "limited financial resources" at both the district and police bureau, and emphasizes the city's responsibility to provide law enforcement.

"Given it is the responsibility of the City to provide general safety and security for its citizens, PPS expects the City to provide these services to the school district in each of the nine high school clusters, five days a week," the resolution said.

Portland Public is the furthest along in formalizing agreements with the city, but David Douglas and Parkrose are talking through how to respond to similar requests.

"Obviously our school board had lots of questions," said Parkrose Supt. Michael Lopes-Serrao.

At the top of the list — just like with Portland Public — were timing and cost.

"Why, now, are you telling us that there is a budgetary problem because we're both public institutions, we have the same budget cycles?" Lopes-Serrao said.

Lopes-Serrao said the financial strain is already acute in the small east Portland district. He said the district was forced to make significant cuts to its budgets, resulting in a shorter school year. He said that makes the case to fund a school resource officer that much tougher.

"Paying \$136,000 from the state school fund, that is pretty paramount to our budget, particularly in a school year where Parkrose has five furlough days," he said. "That's five days that kids aren't in school, employees aren't being paid."

A number of Portland Public Schools students and community members have questioned the need for armed police officers roaming school buildings on a regular basis. Lopes-Serrao said he has heard similar concerns in his district, particularly when you combine those questions with the strain of limited district funds.

"There's a lot of mixed feelings about using education — state-funded education dollars — to pay for a police officer, someone with a gun in your school," he said.

Lopes-Serrao said his school board chair, Sara Kirby, has contacted her counterparts in Portland and David Douglas to attempt to come up with a shared solution that could work for all three districts and the city.