

The Oregonian

Portland 911 Keeps Improving Call-Wait Times

By Gordon Friedman

February 19, 2019

Portland's 911 agency continues to improve its call-answering times and is on track to meet national standards for prompt dispatching as early as this year, its director, Bob Cozzie, said Tuesday.

National standards say emergency dispatchers should answer 90 percent of calls within 10 seconds during the busiest hour of each day. Portland dipped to a low of just 8 percent of calls answered in that timeframe last June. It has steadily improved since, reaching 65 percent answered within 10 seconds during January.

Cozzie attributes the headway to increased staffing and technology changes. Agency trainees have become certified call-takers since last summer, he said, and more are in the pipeline.

Also key was a decision by Cozzie to turn off a digital "filter" technology that routes calls from cell phones to a pre-recorded message instead of a live dispatcher. His predecessors decided the bureau should use that filter because they believed an outsized proportion of cell phone 911 calls from cell phones were accidental "pocket" dials.

Long term, Cozzie said his Bureau of Emergency Communications hopes to receive enough funding from the City Council to hire up to two dozen additional dispatchers.

Portland mayor makes case for investigation of police texts with right-wing leader

By Gordon Friedman

February 19, 2019

Mayor Ted Wheeler zeroed in on a particular exchange of text messages Tuesday in defending his call for investigations of affable messages between a Portland police lieutenant and Joey Gibson, leader of the right-wing group Patriot Prayer.

The exchange the mayor said deeply troubled him was one in which the commander of the Portland Police Bureau's protest monitoring squad, Lt. Jeffrey Niiya, warned Gibson that a warrant had been issued for one of his supporter's arrest.

Saying at once that he intends to "reserve judgment" until an investigation is complete and that the exchanges "raised significant questions," Wheeler said his chief concern is what appears to be a police lieutenant coaching someone "about how to avoid arrest."

"Is that standard police strategy?" the mayor asked rhetorically during a press conference Tuesday.

Former deputy city attorney Jason Loos, who worked closely with Niiya, told The Oregonian/OregonLive that warning Gibson about his supporter's warrant before a protest made tactical sense. Loos, now city attorney in Rochester, Minnesota, said the advice was "to avoid a flashpoint" and not have him arrested in the middle of a protest.

Hundreds of texts and emails between Niiya and Gibson were released last week to Willamette Week and the Portland Mercury under public records requests. Both news outlets were the first of many to publish stories on the exchanges.

The news reports prompted a flood of public criticism of the Police Bureau, renewing charges that police officers favor right-wing demonstrators and actively work to aid them.

Among those putting forth acid criticism of the police were Portland City Commissioners Jo Ann Hardesty and Chloe Eudaly. Wheeler said the messages were “disturbing” and called for an investigation.

Their statements drew rebukes from the police commanders’ union and others who defended the contacts with protest leaders on both sides as a law enforcement best practice to improve public safety. On Tuesday, the police commanding officers’ union filed a formal grievance against Wheeler for his public rebuke of Niiya.

Wheeler told reporters on Tuesday that the Police Bureau, of which he is commissioner-in-charge, must conduct its own investigation and also hire an outside firm to look into the facts. He offered no timeline for such an inquiry, but stressed its importance in maintaining public trust in Portland’s police force.

“Let’s let the investigation go where it goes,” Wheeler said.

Police union blasts Mayor Ted Wheeler’s criticism of cop for friendly exchanges with right-wing group leader

*By Maxine Bernstein
February 19, 2019*

The Portland police commanding officers union that represents Lt. Jeffrey Niiya filed a grievance Tuesday against the city, citing a contract provision that says any reprimand of a police supervisor should be done in a way “least likely to embarrass” the officer in public.

The grievance stems from statements Wheeler, as police commissioner, and City Commissioners Jo Ann Hardesty and Chloe Eudaly issued last week after the release of hundreds of text messages between Niiya and Patriot Prayer leader Joey Gibson in 2017 and 2018. Niiya and Gibson exchanged the messages as Gibson’s right-wing group ventured into Portland to stage rallies that drew counter-protesters and often resulted in bloody assaults.

The Portland Police Commanding Officers Association also filed a workplace harassment complaint against the mayor, Hardesty and Eudaly, writing that their comments last week were “derogatory and hostile and damaged Lieutenant Niiya’s professional work environment.”

Niiya’s texts and emails with Gibson show him sometimes telling Gibson about the movements of counter-protesters, telling Gibson if officers would be on foot or bike at protests and alerting Gibson to have one of his followers Tusitala John “Tiny” Toese, also a member of the far-right Proud Boys, take care of his outstanding arrest warrant before he showed up downtown. Niiya told Gibson that officers could arrest Toese if he acted out but it wasn’t likely to occur, though Toese ended up being arrested on a warrant and additional charges.

Niiya, a 22-year bureau veteran, served as the Police Bureau’s liaison to protest organizers as the supervisor of the bureau’s Rapid Response Team, which handles crowd control. Niiya’s job was

to establish a line of communication with protest leaders to help the bureau prepare and plan on how to staff demonstrations.

In a Feb. 14 news release, Wheeler called the text messages “disturbing” and said they “appeared to cross several boundaries.” He raised questions about whether warrants “are being enforced consistently and what information is being shared with individuals who may be subject to arrest.” Wheeler suggested the text messages appeared to “unnecessarily encourage” Gibson.

The next day, Police Chief Danielle Outlaw said Niiya had been ordered to halt further activities with the Rapid Response Team and any communications with protest organizers while an internal investigation proceeded.

The union said Wheeler’s statement “about our communications with Patriot Prayer organizers is either disingenuous or shows willful ignorance of the situation. Either way it shows that during his two years as Portland police commissioner he has failed to develop an understanding of even basic police work.”

Wheeler, in a news conference later Tuesday, defended his statements. He said his chief concern was that it appeared a police lieutenant was coaching someone “about how to avoid arrest.”

Hardesty and Eudaly and some community activists last week pointed to the text messages as confirmation of their beliefs that Portland police have shielded ultra-conservative demonstrators while targeting leftist opponents. Some have demanded Wheeler step down as police commissioner.

Hardesty, in a statement last week, said the texting “simply confirms what many in the community have already known - there are members of the Portland police force who work in collusion with right-wing extremists.”

Eudaly’s statement said, “This revelation has only served to confirm suspicions and deepen the divide between the PPB and the community. All members of our police bureau must follow our rules and uphold our progressive values, not aid and abet groups and individuals bent on doing harm to our communities and responsible for terrorizing our city.”

Niiya also has tried to reach out to counter-protesters and self-described anti-fascist demonstrators and their allies but has had less success since the 2017 publication of his months of text exchanges with June Davies, also known as “Gia,” according to Lt. Craig Morgan, president of the Portland Police Commanding Officers Association.

After those messages became public, critics accused Davies of being an informant for the police. In his exchanges with Davies, Niiya often discussed police presence at protests, how activists might respond and answered some of Davies’ inquired whether certain people were arrested during marches.

"Our job is to keep the people of Portland safe," Morgan said in a statement Tuesday. "That means building bridges and developing cordial relationships with diverse groups and individuals. We have regular open communication with the mayor’s office about our work and the tactics we employ. This situation is no different."

The Police Bureau’s policy on crowd control directs officers to “make reasonable efforts to contact and engage in dialogue with known event or demonstration organizers.” That’s done to plan and to “develop a shared understanding of the organizers’ needs and objectives,” according to the policy.

Officer Daryl Turner, president of the rank-and-file Portland Police Association, also issued a statement to the union's members. Turner said he believes the mayor's office knew about Niiya's communications with Patriot Prayer and other protest groups.

"Transparency, accountability and good leadership hinges on putting facts ahead of political agendas," Turner wrote. "Pushing out sensationalized soundbites and one-sided stories ahead of an investigation does a disservice to our citizens and our rank and file officers, who rightfully have grave concerns regarding the leadership of our city."

Here's a copy of the complaint by the Portland Police Commanding Officers Association, made to the city's Human Resources Director Serilda Summers-McGee:

Ms. Summers-McGee,

Please accept this email as an official complaint against Mayor Ted Wheeler, Commissioner JoAnn Hardesty, and Commissioner Chloe Eudaly. PPCOA believes all three violated HR Rule 2.02 with their various public comments about Lieutenant Jeff Niiya and his text messages with protest organizers. Their comments were derogatory and hostile and damaged Lieutenant Niiya's professional work environment.

A grievance based on Article 30 of the PPCOA collective bargaining agreement will also be arriving via separate cover.

We look forward to a thorough investigation of these allegations.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require any additional information.

Craig Morgan

Mayor Ted Wheeler names longtime aide as chief of staff

*By Gordon Friedman
February 20, 2019*

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler announced Tuesday the appointment of a longtime aide, Kristin Dennis, as his third chief of staff.

"Kristin is a trusted adviser," Wheeler said in a statement. "She brings leadership, integrity, and sharp political acumen to the job."

Dennis, 35, was named the interim chief of staff after Michael Cox resigned from the job in early January. Cox, another longtime aide to Wheeler, submitted his resignation shortly after The Oregonian/OregonLive reported he had begun a romantic relationship with a subordinate and disclosed it after the city attorney advised him to do so to ensure compliance with city ethics laws.

Wheeler on Tuesday declined to discuss Cox's resignation, citing privacy over personnel matters and said there were no other romantic relationships within his office that require disclosure. Cox had become chief of staff after his predecessor, Maurice Henderson, left the mayor's office to work as an executive at TriMet.

Dennis was a policy adviser and chief of staff to Wheeler when he was state treasurer, according to a biography provided by the mayor's office. She was also the youngest person ever elected to the Lake Oswego city council, at 22.

“I am proud to work alongside a team that leads from conviction, values, and integrity,” Dennis said in a statement. “We have so much to be proud of. We also have a lot of work ahead of us.”

Portland cop’s chatty texts to Patriot Prayer spur outrage but are standard police strategy, experts say

*By Maxine Bernstein
February 16, 2019*

As violent protests became almost routine the last two years in Portland, the officer overseeing the police crowd control team worked almost full-time reaching out to protest leaders to decide how police should plan and staff the demonstrations.

Lt. Jeffrey Niiya exchanged hundreds of texts and emails with Joey Gibson, the outspoken leader of Patriot Prayer, as the right-wing group ventured into Portland to stage rallies that drew counter-protesters and often devolved into bloody brawls.

Disclosure of the messages and rapport between Niiya and Gibson ignited a firestorm in the past several days.

City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, followed by Mayor Ted Wheeler, and community activists reacted with outrage. They jumped on the cozy communications as evidence of their long-standing fears that police have colluded with ultra-conservative demonstrators and targeted leftist opponents.

The heated flap shines a light on the challenge police face, law enforcement specialists say: While police gather information to keep the peace on city streets, as their policies direct, they’re also expected to maintain a fair playing field for dueling demonstrators.

“If there’s one thing we learned from Charlottesville, you have to connect with demonstrators from both sides,” said Chuck Wexler, executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum, a nonprofit police policy organization. “Not to do that is a recipe for disaster.”

In 2017, police in Charlottesville, Va., were ill-prepared for the white nationalist Unite the Right rally that left dozens injured and one counter-protester dead.

“You can’t just pick and choose which demonstrators you like,” Wexler said.

The confiding tone of Niiya’s emails and texts could be taken as preferential treatment to people not familiar with police technique, said Erroll G. Southers, a national security professor at the University of Southern California.

“I can understand how it looks to the oppositional groups. Don’t get me wrong, the optics are not real good,” said Southers, a former FBI agent. “As soon as you appear to show some sort of favoritism or allegiance with an extremist group that can become a problem.”

But it’s common to be conversational and work to establish a relationship, he said.

CROWD CONTROL POLICY

It’s not the first time communications by Niiya, a 22-year police veteran who has been the bureau’s liaison with demonstrators since Occupy Portland in 2011, have sparked controversy.

Two years ago, his emails and text messages with a member active in left-leaning protests, June Davies, became public. Then, critics accused Davies, known as “Gia,” of being an informant for the police.

Their text exchanges spanned months, often discussing police presence at protests, how activists might respond and Davies inquiring if certain people were arrested during marches and Niiya providing what information he could.

Since then, Niiya has continued to make overtures with self-described anti-fascist demonstrators and their allies but has had less success as a result, said Lt. Craig Morgan, president of the Portland Police Commanding Officers Association, the union that represents lieutenants.

Morgan said counter-demonstrators often have been less organized or without a clear leader and some don't recognize police authority. They have been less inclined to talk to officers before or during a protest, he said.

“Obviously Joey Gibson was willing to engage in a dialogue and quite frankly, willing to provide information to us,” Morgan said. “We were getting valuable information to help us shape our responses and keep Portland safe.

“You can second-guess the friendly tone but the reality is it's done to build rapport with people to get information out of them for public safety. That's a time-tested technique. Niiya has tried to do it with people from all sides.”

The Police Bureau's policy on crowd control directs officers to “make reasonable efforts to contact and engage in dialogue with known event or demonstration organizers.” That's done to plan and to “develop a shared understanding of the organizers' needs and objectives,” according to the policy.

The bureau also should communicate its expectations and tell participants what's allowed or restricted during a protest, it says.

Officers who are liaisons are encouraged to maintain contact with organizers before and during the events and to interact with crowds in non-confrontational ways, the policy advises.

But police, while doing that, must avoid providing any suggestion or perception that they're backing one group over another, said Brian Levin, a former New York City police officer and now director of California State University's Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism.

“Police are in a difficult position trying to maintain some type of communication to forestall violence,” Levin said. “Police work requires that there be communication with folks that ain't choir boys.”

Gibson, who lives in Washington, has become a particularly polarizing figure on the Portland protest scene, drawing people espousing hateful views to his gatherings – including right-wing supporters from out of town known for clashing with antifa activists. Despite the mayor's attempts to derail it, he held a rally in Portland in June 2017, shortly after a man was accused of fatally stabbing two good Samaritans and wounding a third on a MAX train who had tried to stop his racist rant. The alleged killer had attended one of Gibson's past rallies, though Gibson subsequently denounced him.

Niiya's texts and emails with Gibson show him sometimes telling Gibson about the movements of counter-protesters, telling Gibson if officers will be on foot or bike at protests, even warning Gibson about an arrest warrant for one of his devoted followers.

“The problem is, even if the intentions here weren’t malicious, the perception can damage the police-community relationship significantly,” Levin said.

Wexler added that if demonstrators on one side don’t want to talk to police, “you keep trying. You do the best you can. You try to talk to as many demonstrators on as many sides as you can” or friends of friends.

CAN’T AID AND ABET

It’s important for Niiya to have shared his communications and information he got from Gibson with command staff, said the USC’s Southers, also the author of the book "Homegrown Violent Extremism."

According to the material released, Niiya often alerted the police chief, an assistant police chief and others, including the mayor’s office, about details gleaned from Gibson. At one point, the communications referenced a meeting that police, Gibson and Wheeler had before the June 2017 protest.

It’s appropriate to find out a protest group’s plans, the number of people expected at a march, and who’s expected to show, Southers said.

Niiya’s suggestion to Gibson during one protest that Gibson may want to move his group because counter-protesters were headed his way also was appropriate to reduce the potential for violence, Southers said.

Even Niiya’s hearty congratulations to Gibson upon learning he was running for U.S. Senate -- “personally I don’t have a problem with that,” he said.

What would be unacceptable, he said, is police “willing to aid and abet” or fraternizing with an extremist organization.

Gibson’s remark in one message to Niiya, when Gibson apologized, noting "I accidentally said portland police has our back. It slipped," is the kind of remark that can be explosive, the experts said.

‘HE WAS THE SAME WITH ALL GROUPS’

The texts and emails give a one-sided view of how crowd control preparations work, said former Portland Deputy City Attorney Jason Loos, who was legal adviser to the Police Bureau from 2016 through 2018 and worked nearly every protest during that time.

Loos said he found Niiya to be professional and courteous to all sides.

“There seems to be a lot of criticism because Sergeant Niiya was ‘friendly,’” Loos said. “I can guarantee you he was the same with all groups.”

Niiya’s alert to Gibson on the night of Dec. 8, 2017, and again the next day, on Dec. 9, 2017, about his supporter’s arrest warrant just before one protest made tactical sense, Loos said. Niiya advised Gibson that Tusitala John “Tiny” Toese, also a member of the far-right Proud Boys, had a disorderly conduct warrant in Portland and suggested that it be taken care of before Toese came to the city. Niiya also said officers could arrest Toese if he acted out but it wasn’t likely to occur.

“It is trying to avoid a flashpoint,” Loos said. “It is in no way allowing them to evade arrest. It is trying to avoid having them arrested in the middle of a demonstration.”

Police did end up arresting Toese during a protest on Dec. 9, 2017, accusing him of additional allegations of attempted fourth-degree assault, harassment and second-degree disorderly conduct, in addition to the prior disorderly conduct warrant he faced, court records show.

Morgan, the union president, said there's a "sense of frustration" that the mayor condemned Niiya's actions before an internal investigation began.

"It feels like he's already got his mind made up," Morgan said.

Now, it's important for the Police Bureau to repair the break in the community's trust, the experts all agreed.

"It can be a catalyst for division or a catalyst for positive change," Levin said.

The bureau must do a full investigation and make it public when it's done, they said.

Going forward, police need to ensure their text messages, emails and social media posts don't "look overly chummy" with either group of protesters, Levin said. Police also must continue to broadcast parameters set for future protests before an event and enforce them evenly "without respect to ideology," he said.

Gibson on Friday said his contacts with Niiya were no different from Davis, the left-leaning protester.

"Anytime I wasn't coming into Portland, Niiya was happy," Gibson said. "It's funny to watch everyone's reaction because he was doing his job."

Niiya himself wrote to Gibson last October: "It's a tough job and trying to weigh everything to come out with everyone safe and happy. Probably will never happen but we try. And I try to do the best I can to communicate to you and the others on the other side who will listen to me."

The Portland Tribune

Council postpones major hearings at last minute

By Jim Redden

February 19, 2019

Still scheduled are measures to delay the earthquake warning sign posting requirements and extend the existing State of Housing Emergency for two more years.

The City Council postponed much of this week's agenda at the last minute late Tuesday.

In an announcement release around 5 p.m. Tuesday, the City Auditor's Office said the following previously-scheduled measures would not be considered Wednesday or Thursday:

- Moving the foreclosure functions from the City Auditor's Office to the Revenue Division.
- Considering the appeal of the Citizen Review Committee against the Portland Police Bureau's finding regarding an independent police review investigation.
- Adopting City Code changes to implement the Clean Energy Fund program approved by Portland voters at the 2018 general election.

Still scheduled are measures to to delay the earthquake warning sign posting requirements and extend the existing State of Housing Emergency for two more years.

The announcement did not give a reason for the delays, but noted that commissioners Amanda Fritz and Chloe Eudaly will be absent on Wednesday and Thursday, the normal days for council meetings.

Union files complaint against majority of City Council over text controversy

*By Jim Redden
February 19, 2019*

The Portland Police Commanding Officers Association accuses Wheeler, Hardesty and Eudaly of violating the rights of protest liaison.

The union representing a Portland police lieutenant who exchanged text message with a right-wing protest leader has filed a complaint against Mayor Ted Wheeler and commissioners Jo Ann Hardesty and Chloe Eudaly for their comments about him.

Police Lt. Jeff Niiya was a designated liaison to Patriot Prayer leader Joey Gibson. After texts between Niiya and Gibson were released last week, Wheeler, Hardesty and Eudaly questioned whether they revealed Niiya had favored Gibson over the counter-protesters who frequently attended his rallies.

Niiya was subsequently relieved of his liaison duties. On Tuesday, the Portland Police Commanding Officers Association filed a complaint with Chief Human Resources Officer Serilda Summers-McGee against Wheeler, Hardesty and Eudaly. It alleges they violated a city personnel rule that prohibits workplace harassment, discrimination and retaliation.

"Our job is to keep the people of Portland safe. That means building bridges and developing cordial relationships with diverse groups and individuals. We have regular open communication with the mayor's office about our work and the tactics we employ. This situation is no different. Mayor Ted Wheeler's statement about our communications with Patriot Prayer organizers is either disingenuous or shows willful ignorance of the situation. Either way it shows that during his two years as Portland Police Commissioner he has failed to develop an understanding of even basic police work," the union said in its Feb. 19 press release announcing the complaint.

During his previously-scheduled Tuesday press conference, Wheeler affirmed that he has ordered an internal police investigation of the texts and will also approve an independent investigation. He said Niiya was entitled to due process.

Willamette Week

Portland Mayor Agrees to Provide Police Training on Identifying White Supremacy, Announces Independent Investigation of Police Bureau Communications

*By Katie Shepherd
February 15, 2019*

"I have heard from the people of Portland," Mayor Ted Wheeler says. "I agree we must do more to ensure that we adhere to the values affirmed by the resolution recently passed by City Council to condemn white supremacist and alt-right hate groups."

Mayor Ted Wheeler took another step to solidify the city's opposition to right-wing extremism Friday afternoon by accepting his colleague's suggestion to implement training for the Portland Police Bureau on identifying white supremacy. Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty joined civil rights

advocates in calling for such training after WW and the Portland Mercury broke stories revealing text messages between a Portland police officer and a right-wing organizer.

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly echoed Hardesty's suggestion Friday.

The texts WW first reported Feb. 14 showed that Lt. Jeff Niiya had offered Patriot Prayer leader Joey Gibson advice on how to avoid having his followers arrested on warrants and also sometimes shared information about where leftist protesters were demonstrating.

Wheeler called the texts "disturbing" on Thursday afternoon. He immediately asked Outlaw to open an internal investigation into the bureau's communications with right-wing groups. That investigation is ongoing, and PPB has not commented on whether any bureau or city policies were violated in the messages.

City-wide training on identifying and rejecting white supremacy and far-right extremism had already been approved in a resolution denouncing white supremacy that City Council passed last week. The Western States Center has been tasked with designing the training, which would be provided to every city employee.

"First and foremost: Chief [Danielle] Outlaw and I are going to implement training for the Portland Police Bureau around how to identify white supremacy based on the recommendation of the Oregon Justice Resource Center, Council on American-Islamic Relations Oregon and the Western States Center," Wheeler said in a Feb. 15 statement.

Wheeler also announced an independent investigation of the Police Bureau's communications with right-wing groups, a move he says the chief supports.

"Chief Outlaw agrees this is a necessary next step and is more than ready to work with me on this," Wheeler said in a statement. "I have heard from the people of Portland. I agree we must do more to ensure that we adhere to the values affirmed by the resolution recently passed by City Council to condemn white supremacist and alt-right hate groups."

The Police Bureau has also removed Niiya from the rapid response team, which polices protests, and instructed him to stop communicating with event organizers until the internal review concludes.

Police Union For Commanding Officers Slams Portland Officials For Condemning Controversial Texts With Right-Wing Activist

*By Katie Shepherd
February 19, 2019*

"As Portland Police Commissioner [Wheeler] has failed to develop an understanding of even basic police work," the union said in a statement.

The union that represents commanding officers in the Portland Police Bureau slammed three city officials for condemning texts sent by a lieutenant to a far-right activist.

The press release, announcing that the Portland Police Commanding Officers Association filed workplace complaints against Mayor Ted Wheeler, Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty and Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, shows an extraordinary hostility between the police and the city's elected officials.

"Mayor Ted Wheeler's statement about our communications with Patriot Prayer organizers is either disingenuous or shows willful ignorance of the situation," the union president Lt. Craig Morgan said in a statement. "Either way it shows that during his two years as Portland Police Commissioner he has failed to develop an understanding of even basic police work."

The union filed complaints with the city's Bureau of Human Resources alleging that statements by the elected officials violate a rule that prohibits "workplace harassment, discrimination and retaliation."

The allegations come after Wheeler, Hardesty and Eudaly called for an independent investigation of police communications with far-right groups after WW and the Portland Mercury revealed hundreds of texts between Lt. Jeff Niiya and Patriot Prayer leader Joey Gibson.

The texts raise questions about whether Portland police treat groups on the left and right differently. The messages also show a cozy relationship between Niiya and Gibson, in which the police officer offers advice to keep one of Gibson's core followers out of jail.

"Our job is to keep the people of Portland safe," Morgan said in today's statement. "That means building bridges and developing cordial relationships with diverse groups and individuals. We have regular open communication with the mayor's office about our work and the tactics we employ. This situation is no different."

Mayor Ted Wheeler Appoints Kristin Dennis Chief of Staff

*By Rachel Monahan
February 19, 2019*

Dennis has served as his deputy chief of staff since he became mayor.

Mayor Ted Wheeler has appointed former deputy chief of staff Kristin Dennis as his new chief of staff.

She's his third chief of staff just over two years into his first term as mayor.

Dennis has served as deputy chief of staff and director of operations since the mayor took office in January 2017 and as interim chief of staff since Michael Cox, the previous chief of staff, resigned abruptly on January 4.

Cox had served as chief of staff for six months. It's not clear why Cox resigned, but it followed disclosure in December by Cox that he had a personal relationship with a subordinate.

At the time, Wheeler made accommodations for that personal relationship by rearranging the management structure in his office.

Related: Mayor Ted Wheeler's Chief of Staff Disclosed a Relationship to a Woman Who Worked for Him in the Mayor's Office

"Kristin is a trusted advisor," says Wheeler in a statement. "She brings leadership, integrity, and sharp political acumen to the job. I am thrilled to have her as my Chief of Staff. It's a challenging job, and she has already stepped up. I look forward to her continued leadership."

Dennis also worked for Wheeler when he was state treasurer as his chief of staff and his policy director.

"I am proud to work alongside a team that leads from conviction, values, and integrity," says Dennis. "We have so much to be proud of. We also have a lot of work ahead of us. It will be an honor to serve the city as the Mayor's Chief of Staff."

Wheeler's first chief of staff, Maurice Henderson, went on to become COO of TriMet. He has since announced his resignation from TriMet to work for the e-scooter company Bird.

The Portland Mercury

Mayor Wheeler Stands By Criticism of Cop's Texts, Despite Police Union Grievance

*By Alex Zielinski
February 19, 2019*

The union representing the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) is—unsurprisingly—unhappy with how city commissioners have responded to news about Portland Lt. Jeff Niiya's friendly relationship with alt-right leader Joey Gibson.

"Our elected city officials tout 'fairness', 'transparency', and 'accountability' as cornerstones of city government," writes Portland Police Association (PPA) President Darryl Turner in a statement posted on the PPA's Facebook page. "Yet, with only a small piece of the facts in hand, City Hall has already rushed to judgment and condemned Lt. Niiya."

The Portland Police Commanding Officers Association (PPCOA), the union representing Niiya, has filed two grievances with Portland's human resources department against city commissioners—including Mayor Ted Wheeler—for making public comments criticizing Niiya last week. Wheeler appeared unfazed by the grievance at a Tuesday press conference, predicting the facts would "not bear out" to support the PPCOA's case.

On Thursday, reporting by the Mercury and Willamette Week detailed more than a year's worth of text messages sent between Niiya, one of PPB's public liaisons, and Gibson, the founder of Patriot Prayer, a right-wing extremist group based in Vancouver, Washington.

Among messages updating Niiya on the time and size of Patriot Prayer rallies coming to Portland (information that police officers regularly contact protest organizers about), Niiya shares information that appear to contradict PPB's own directives.

In some messages, Niiya warns Gibson—in the middle of a violent rally—about counter-protesters headed toward him, and offers the PPB's protection. In others, Niiya reminds Gibson that a fellow member of Patriot Prayer may be arrested if he comes to Portland, because of an active PPB warrant against him.

Shortly after the Mercury and Willamette Week made these texts public, Wheeler released a statement deeming the text messages "disturbing," and called for an internal and external investigation into the existence of bias in the actions of the PPB regarding alt-right and anti-fascist (or, antifa) protesters. Wheeler also reiterated that PPB officers will soon be trained on how to identify white supremacy, a decision the city council voted on in early February.

Commissioners Chloe Eudaly and Jo Ann Hardesty also issued statements chastising the PPB for allowing Niiya to engage in such a supportive, protective relationship with a member of the alt-right.

In the union's workplace harassment complaint, first reported on by the Oregonian, the PPA argues that these comments "were derogatory and hostile and damaged Lieutenant Niiya's professional work environment." The PPCOA also signaled its intent to file a separate grievance based on its contract with the city, which stipulates that police supervisors are reprimanded in a way "least likely" to publicly embarrass the officer.

"The union has every right to file those grievances," Wheeler said at the Tuesday afternoon press conference. "I think ultimately the facts will not bear out on the case they're trying to make."

Wheeler said that Niiya is certainly entitled to due process through investigative process. But, he stood by his initial statements about the Gibson text messages.

"We're talking about an individual who comes from Vancouver, Washington to Portland who has a history of holding events that incite violence," said Wheeler, referring to Gibson. "A leader of a movement whose rallies attract both white supremacists and neo-Nazis."

"While I completely understand that the goal of the police liaison is to try to develop rapport with anyone who identifies as a leader or organizer, regardless of content of event, the text messages are still concerning for a number of reasons," Wheeler continued. "For example, what is the value to policing offering advice on how to avoid arrests regarding someone who has an active warrant outstanding? Is that standard police strategy?"

Wheeler said that an outside, independent investigation into PPB should answer these questions. He is not certain who the city will select to conduct that investigation or when that investigation will begin.

PPA's Turner has also called for an investigation—but one that focuses on whether Wheeler knew about Niiya's text messages with Gibson prior to last week's reporting.

"My gut feeling is that we will find out that the Mayor's office, as part of the strategic planning team, knew about the strategy behind and context of Lt. Niiya's communications with Patriot Prayer and other organizations," Turner wrote on Facebook. "Pushing out sensationalized soundbites and one-sided stories ahead of an investigation does a disservice to our citizens and our rank and file officers."

PPB has scheduled a listening session on Thursday, February 21 at 6 pm to allow the public to share their concerns related to PPB's relationship with alt-right groups.

Editor's Note: This story originally identified the union representing Lt. Niiya as the Portland Police Association, when it is the Portland Police Commanding Officers Association. We regret the error.

Activists Issue Demands Following Release of Portland Police Texts with Joey Gibson

*By Blair Stenvick
February 15, 2019*

Portland activists are calling on Mayor Ted Wheeler to step down as police commissioner, and for Police Chief Danielle Outlaw to resign or be fired, after Willamette Week and the Mercury reported on newly released text messages between the Portland Police Bureau and far-right Patriot Prayer founder Joey Gibson on Thursday.

A coalition of activists held a press conference outside Portland City Hall Friday afternoon. They included a representative from local group Direct Action Alliance (DAA), and anti-fascist organizer Luis Marquez, who was mentioned several times in texts between PPB Lt. Jeff Niiya and Gibson.

Direct Action Alliance presented a list of several demands that they want the city to meet by Friday, Feb 22. In addition to calls for Wheeler to step down and for Outlaw's dismissal, they are also asking that Niiya be suspended without pay, and that PPB undergo an independent investigation—rather than the internal investigation mentioned in Wheeler's Thursday statement.

"If these demands are not met by Friday next week, we will launch a city-wide campaign of marches, rallies, and shut-downs to pressure Ted's administration into taking accountability for his failures that directly affect and endanger the lives of people in this city that he claims to protect," a DAA member said at the press conference.

DAA's demands echoed those released by local nonprofits CAIR, the Oregon Justice Resource Center, and the Western States Center yesterday evening.

Portland activist Sarah Iannarone read a statement on behalf of Portland United Against Hate and Unite Oregon at the press conference.

"The face of law enforcement has been lying to us," Iannarone read. "The history and roots of racism in this city are preserved in this lip service to us, and the protection of them. These hate groups have a history of violent attacks that have perpetuated the same the same culture of fear that Portland police have had over the same communities, and the police union has worked feverishly to maintain this long and sick culture. We ask for nothing short of an independent investigation of the Portland Police Bureau."

PPB announced today that it will hold a listening session to address the text messages on the evening of Thursday, Feb 21, from 6 to 8 pm at the Maranatha Church on NE 12th.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Revised Residential Infill Project elicits hopes and fears

*By Chuck Slothower
February 15, 2019*

After a first draft of rezoning rules meant to expand Portland's housing stock was criticized by the Planning and Sustainability Commission for not going far enough, an updated proposal goes further.

The revised draft of the Residential Infill Project has emerged. It doubles down on city officials' drive to allow more so-called "middle housing" – duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) – throughout the city.

If approved by the commission and City Council, it would put Portland at the forefront of efforts by urban planners to make room for growing populations in U.S. cities. Minneapolis led the way in December when it decided to allow duplexes and triplexes throughout the city, effectively ending single-family zoning.

Portland's proposed rules would allow fourplexes, and not just on corner lots but on any properties within areas zoned for them. The changes came at the urging of the Planning and Sustainability Commission.

The Residential Infill Project zoning would allow a 2,500-square-foot house, a 3,000-square-foot duplex, or a 3,500-square-foot-triplex or fourplex on a 5,000-square-foot lot. In many neighborhoods, a lot could have a house and two ADUs.

Portland is working to accommodate an expected 123,000 new households in the city by 2035. At the same time, the Oregon Legislature is considering House Bill 2001, which would fundamentally change single-family zoning in cities throughout the state, requiring municipalities to allow middle housing.

In gauging the likely effects of the Residential Infill Project on rents, demolitions and displacement of existing low-income residents, officials are also weighing the cost of doing nothing – what planners call a baseline scenario.

Tyler Bump, senior economic planner with the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, laid out the risks of doing nothing and potential displacement of low-income renters during a Planning and Sustainability Commission meeting earlier this week.

“There seems to be a relatively high cost of doing nothing in terms of impact to displacement across the city right now,” Bump said.

Bump showed the Planning and Sustainability Commission maps of mathematical displacement models across the city. The models show about a 20 percent reduction in displacement.

“The proposal broadly decreases displacement risk across most areas of Portland,” Bump told the commission.

That’s not good enough for the populations in East Portland, where the Residential Infill Project is projected to accelerate displacement, Commissioner Andre Baugh said.

“I really worry that we’re being asked to displace certain populations faster than others for the benefit of this greater good, and the greater good of more units is not benefitting everybody equally,” he said.

Baugh said he would not support further displacement of Portland’s African-American neighborhoods.

“You’re asking me, as an African-American, to approve displacing African-Americans that can’t come ack,” he said. “I just can’t approve that.”

City officials estimate the Residential Infill Project would lead to the creation of 1,700 additional housing units in 20 years’ time. That works out to about 85 units per year. The city’s analysis suggests this would result in a slight reduction in rental rates citywide and slightly fewer demolitions of existing properties.

“There’s a limit to how much just changes in zoning can stimulate development,” said Morgan Tracy, project manager for the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.

Tracy mentioned Gateway as an area with generous zoning but little construction.

“You have to be cognizant of what the market will be, and the gap between demand and units,” he said. “Zoning by itself won’t dictate development.”

Middle housing in Portland has been the domain of small-scale developers, while major developers focus on large single-family homes in the suburbs or multistory multifamily projects.

A study of up-zoning in Chicago drew some attention when it found that denser zoning led to no additional construction, but boosted land prices.

BPS Interim Director Joe Zehnder cautioned against reading too much into the Chicago study, saying political resistance has played a role in blocking construction there.

“In Chicago, each of the 50 different wards have separate aldermen and they call all of the zoning,” Zehnder said. “So the way the zoning happens is very political and related to power.”

Yonah Freemark, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology researcher who conducted the study published in *Urban Affairs Review*, cautioned against drawing direct conclusions.

“It’s quite possible that other cities that make similar changes see dramatically different effects,” he wrote in an email message. “It is also worth pointing out that every zoning change is different.”

Yet he suggested cities watch for increased land prices and displacement after up-zoning.

“If up-zoning increases value when it occurs, but construction takes a while to get going, what happens in the meantime?” Freemark stated. “My study suggests that one effect might be increased costs and reduced affordability. Cities should be thinking through how they approach this issue, because it might mean displacement for some.”

The Residential Infill Project has drawn some criticism from residents who want to preserve the character of their single-family neighborhoods. But Kimberlee Stafford, a Tonkon Torp partner, said fears of dramatic changes are overblown.

“I don’t think ... rampant demolitions or drastic changes in neighborhoods are at all what we’re going to see,” she said.

The Portland Business Journal

Portland Could Extend Housing Emergency for Two More Years

*By Jon Bell
February 19, 2019*

Back in 2015, then-Portland Mayor Charlie Hales declared a state of emergency to help address the city's growing homeless and affordable housing crisis.

Now, after two extensions of that declaration, the city of Portland is looking to add another two years onto it.

The Portland City Council will take up the issue at its meeting on Thursday afternoon.

The earlier declarations allowed for the expedited development of affordable housing projects, made it easier to use certain buildings for temporary shelters and allowed two-day storage units to be set up to help people who are experiencing homelessness.

A document on the proposed extension notes that two different affordable housing projects, the Riverplace Parcel 3 in South Waterfront and Gateway Park in the Gateway District, are among those that have utilized the expedited development process made possible through the state of emergency declaration. Those projects will deliver 201 and 40 units of affordable housing, respectively.

According to the city, some 800 "newly affordable units" came online in 2018, the largest number ever produced in a single year.

Those and other efforts have not been enough to counter the rising rents, growing population and increasing numbers of those who struggle with housing costs and other issues.

The Skanner

Portland Police Texts With Far-Right Group Spark Probe

By Gillian Flaccus

February 18, 2019

The city of Portland, often in the spotlight for its liberal leanings, has been roiled by the revelation that a police lieutenant in charge of containing protests texted repeatedly with the leader of a far-right group involved in those demonstrations.

The mayor asked the police chief Friday to investigate "disturbing" texts between Lt. Jeff Niiya, who is the head of the Police Bureau's rapid response team, and the leader of a Washington-based group called Patriot Prayer that has repeatedly crossed into Oregon to stage right-wing rallies and marches.

The events in Portland and other West Coast cities routinely draw crowds of self-described anti-fascists, who show up in force to try to shut down leader Joey Gibson and his followers.

Police have struggled to contain the violent clashes and residents have grown used to events that shut down streets for hours, leave downtown windows shattered and end in open brawls, fires, injuries and dozens of arrests.

The text messages, first obtained by the Willamette Week newspaper through a public records request, show Niiya communicating with Gibson before, during and after those clashes.

In texts spread over months, Niiya at times details the movement of a rival anti-fascist protest group, warns Gibson by text that a friend of Gibson who is a member of a documented hate group could risk arrest by showing up in Oregon and congratulates Gibson on his decision to run for an open U.S. Senate seat in Washington state.

"The hate against me will multiply because I am running for office, so when I come into Portland and Seattle the energy will be high. I know it's a pain in the ass for you guys, but I will do the best I can to work with you," Gibson texted Niiya on Jan. 22, 2018.

After learning Gibson was a candidate, Niiya responded: "I won't say anything. Thank you for trusting me and letting me know. I appreciate it."

It's not unusual for police to talk with those organizing protests in advance to work on planning, which makes it harder to say if these texts were out of line without hearing Niiya's account, said Heidi Beirich, director of the intelligence project at the Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization that tracks hate groups and extremist activity.

But the texts did seem "odd for their chattiness," she said, and warrant an investigation.

While Patriot Prayer is not considered a hate group, its members often align themselves with known hate groups and white supremacists, she added.

The Portland Police Commanding Officers Association said in a statement Friday that Niiya was following orders by establishing communication with Gibson. The Willamette Week reported that Niiya texted with an anti-fascist protester as well in 2017 — communications that led to that person being disowned by her fellow activists.

"Everything was about de-escalating and avoiding conflict. It was his job and he does that with several activists," Gibson said in a phone interview on Friday.

"There were several times when he was literally begging for me to leave Portland — and on numerous occasions, I would do it."

Niiya did not immediately return phone messages seeking comment.

In a statement, Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler said police must remain objective and that the texts appear to "cross several boundaries."

"They also raise questions about whether warrants are being enforced consistently and what information is being shared with individuals who may be subject to arrest," he said.

In one text, Niiya tells Gibson he does not see a need to arrest Gibson's assistant, Tusitala "Tiny" Toese, who often brawls with anti-fascist protesters, even if he was the target of a warrant, unless Toese committed a new crime. Toese is a member of the Proud Boys, a documented hate group.

"Just make sure he doesn't do anything which may draw our attention," Niiya texted Gibson on Dec. 9, 2017. "If he still has the warrant in the system (I don't run you guys so I don't personally know) the officers could arrest him. I don't see a need to arrest on the warrant unless there is a reason."

Portland Police Chief Danielle Outlaw said in a statement that an internal review would be conducted to determine if policies were violated.

"If anything is identified that is deemed outside of our values and directives, it will be addressed," Outlaw said.

Niiya will no longer work with police department's rapid response team during the investigation, police said in a statement, and a community "listening session" was scheduled by the police for next week.

City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty said the "broken policing system in Portland" must be addressed.

Community Listening Session Thursday

A community listening session has been scheduled for Thursday, February 21, 2019, from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. This event will be hosted at the Maranatha Church located at 4222 NE 12th Avenue. The goals of the listening session are to hear concerns and solutions from the public. There is nearby parking and the use of public transportation is encouraged. "It is imperative that we come together to hear people's concerns and ideas," said Chief Danielle Outlaw. "2019 is a year for solutions. We would like for the public to have the opportunity to share with the Portland Police Bureau their ideas for how to move forward." Chief Outlaw and Mayor Wheeler will be in attendance.

OPB

Portland Will Work To Block More Oil Trains, Though How Isn't Clear Yet

*By Amelia Templeton
February 19, 2019*

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler says he's exploring his options to try to block the growth of a terminal that unloads oil train cars in North Portland.

Zenith Energy, tucked between the river and Forest Park in the city's northwest industrial district, began receiving train shipments of crude from Canada's oil sands last year, records show. Now there are obvious signs of construction underway; the company is building three new rail platforms used to offload oil.

The expansion could more than double the number of oil trains that pass through Portland. The company received permits and approval for the project in 2014, but since then public awareness and opposition to oil train shipments has grown.

"I'm having legal counsel take a look at what options are available to me as mayor," Wheeler said at his monthly press conference Tuesday. "I also have external partners who are interested in this question from an environmental perspective."

Wheeler refused to be more specific, but suggested he is working with the same coalition of environmental groups that successfully lobbied for Portland's moratorium on new fossil fuel infrastructure in 2016.

Wheeler Stands By Call For Independent Investigation Into Police Texts

*By Amelia Templeton
February 19, 2019*

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler says he is fully committed to a police bureau that is transparent and accountable.

But in his monthly press conference Tuesday, Wheeler shared little detail about how he intends to handle an unprecedented independent investigation he has promised into communications between a lieutenant at the bureau and Joey Gibson, the leader of Patriot Prayer.

The text messages have reignited concerns among Portland activists and Commissioners Chloe Eudaly and Jo Ann Hardesty that Portland police are sympathetic to far-right groups and biased against left-wing groups such as Antifa.

Wheeler was asked Tuesday why acts of violence caught on video between right-wing activists and left-wing counterprotesters haven't led to more arrests. Berk Nelson, his public safety adviser, said he met with city detectives and lawyers from the Multnomah County district attorney's office last month to discuss that question.

The group went frame by frame through one of the most notorious brawls caught on camera, a fight between Patriot Prayer and masked Antifa counterprotesters outside Kelly's Olympian in October.

“It’s a complicated legal issue with self-defense and people who are acquiescing to violence and coming in a form of mutual combat,” Nelson said.

Nelson said that in that particular case, people involved in the fight had been unwilling to identify themselves as victims of a crime.

“You have to have someone who is willing to file a complaint. You need to get cooperation from the public,” Nelson said.

Nelson said prosecutors have told him they’ve had difficulty identifying victims and prosecuting other cases.

Under criticism from the police lieutenant’s union, Wheeler doubled down Tuesday on his decision to call for an independent investigation into text messages the police bureau’s liaison to demonstrators sent to a controversial activist.

“I do not believe it was an over reaction,” he said.

The mayor said the investigation will focus on the narrow question of how the bureau communicates with people planning demonstrations in Portland.

“What is our policy? Is it an appropriate policy?” Wheeler said. “Is the policy uniformly implemented or is there any bias? And what does the bureau actually get out of this policy in terms of information?”

Wheeler didn’t say who will lead the investigation or how long it will take. He suggested the inquiry could be done by any group approved by his office and Police Chief Danielle Outlaw, but also noted that any “employment questions” would have to be resolved through the bureau’s internal investigation.

Wheeler also said he has met with Patriot Prayer organizer Joey Gibson: “I did attend that meeting. I remember it. I would describe it as completely useless from my perspective,” he said.

Asked a follow-up question, Wheeler acknowledged that he hadn’t just attended a meeting with Gibson; he requested it.

“I was hearing loudly and clearly from the public that they did not want people to come into our community sometimes with the express intent of committing acts of violence,” he said. “My recollection was, I asked Mr. Gibson what we could do to mitigate those impacts. And he basically didn’t have a lot to say. That was the only time I’ve ever spoken to Mr. Gibson in person.”

Portland Commanding Officers Union Files Complaint Against Mayor, Commissioners

*By Ericka Cruz Guevarra
February 19, 2019*

The union representing commanding officers at the Portland Police Bureau has filed a complaint with the city’s human resources officer against city commissioners following public comments they’d made about Portland Police Bureau Lt. Jeff Niiya.

The Portland Police Commanding Officers Association (PPCOA) alleges Mayor Ted Wheeler, Commissioners Jo Ann Hardesty and Chloe Eudaly made public statements that violate a city administrative rule prohibiting workplace harassment, discrimination and retaliation.

In an email to Serilda Summers-McGee, Lt. Craig Morgan with PPCOA said the union believes all three commissioners' comments "were derogatory and hostile and damaged Lieutenant Niiya's professional work environment."

Last week, Willamette Week and the Portland Mercury broke news of text messages between Niiya and Joey Gibson, the leader of the group Patriot Prayer. The text messages added to an existing sense among some Portland activists that Portland police are more sympathetic to far-right groups such as Patriot Prayer than left-wing groups like Antifa.

Gibson is the organizer of rallies that have brought white supremacists to Portland. Those rallies often end in violence between opposing groups.

Wheeler, Eudaly and Hardesty have all called for an independent investigation into the messages. Wheeler has said he is disturbed by the text messages which appear to "unnecessarily encourage" Gibson. The three have also said the bureau should implement training on identifying white supremacy.

"Mayor Ted Wheeler's statement about our communications with Patriot Prayer organizers is either disingenuous or shows willful ignorance of the situation," Lt. Craig Morgan said in a release about the filed complaint. "Either way it shows that during his two years as Portland Police Commissioner he has failed to develop an understanding of even basic police work."

In a press conference, Wheeler defended his statements about Niiya as appropriate, given the content of the text messages published last week.

"On the whole, I've had — I believe — a very positive and a professional relationship with not only the leadership in the police bureau but the rank and file," Wheeler said. "Are we going to disagree from time to time? Sure we are. This is obviously one of those times."

PPCOA is also preparing to file a grievance against the city for allegedly violating the city's labor agreement with the union, which says that if the city has reason to reprimand or discipline a commanding officer, "it shall be done in a manner that is least likely to embarrass the commanding officer before other employees or the public."

The union previously said it was disappointed in what it called Wheeler and Hardesty's rush to judgment against Niiya. PPCOA has said Niiya was acting under direction from his managers, who told him to establish relationships with people who regularly plan demonstrations in Portland.

The union said Niiya's communications with Gibson were within the bureau's policy.

Portland Police Bureau Moves Toward Using Body Cameras

*By Meerah Powell
February 16, 2019*

Police agencies across the United States use body camera technology. The Portland Police Bureau isn't one of them, but it's hoping to change that and is asking for the community's help in creating a policy.

PPB hosted its first of three town halls Saturday at the East Portland Community Center. The town halls are open to community members to share their comments on body camera technology.

Only about a handful of people showed up at the community center to talk with PPB officers and employees, but conversations spanned a multitude of topics such as when cameras should be activated, who should view the footage and how long that footage should be stored.

PPB says it will be taking these community comments into consideration when creating its body camera policy.

The community forums are the first step in a phased implementation, said PPB program manager Tammy Mayer.

Once PPB receives public comments and builds its policy, it'll be sent out for public comment again for revisions. After that, it will go to Portland City Council in a report to get confirmation, then PPB could move forward with a pilot program — actually testing out different cameras.

It's a bit of an aggressive timeline, Mayer said, but she hopes for body cameras to be deployed by October 2020.

Mayer said other regional agencies such as Beaverton Police, Portland State University Police and the Oregon State Police have already been using the technology, but, she said, she thinks it's a benefit that Portland has waited a little longer.

“We wanted to see how they were working in other agencies,” Mayer said. “By waiting a couple extra years we didn't have to go through the same trials and tribulations that some of those first adopters did.”

She also said it was important to PPB to consider the community's viewpoints.

“I don't think a lot of police agencies did the community engagement piece first,” Mayer said. “They thought it was the right thing and they did it and they just kind of told people they were doing it. That's not the way Portland does things.”

Mayer said, along with with community body cam town halls, PPB has already talked with other specific communities such as the Muslim Advisory Council, the Slavic Advisory Council and the Community Peace Collaborative.

The two additional public town halls are Friday, Feb. 22, from 2:30-4:30 p.m. at the Matt Dishman Community Center and Thursday, Feb. 28, from 5:30-7:30 p.m., location to be determined.

Those who can't make it out to public meetings can leave online feedback [here](#).

Wheeler To Order Independent Investigation Into Portland Police Texts

February 15, 2019

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler has acquiesced to calls from two city commissioners to hold an independent investigation into text messages between a police lieutenant and Patriot Prayer leader Joey Gibson.

Wheeler said he'll make sure Portland police receive training on how to identify and respond to white supremacy.

On Thursday, Willamette Week and the Portland Mercury broke news of text messages between Lt. Jeff Niiya and Joey Gibson, the leader of the group Patriot Prayer.

Gibson is the organizer of rallies that have brought white supremacists to Portland and ended in violence between right-wing groups and antifascists.

But close observers of the police bureau say some of the messages may have crossed a line. And they added to an existing sense among some activists that Portland officers are more sympathetic and lenient with protestors from groups such as Patriot Prayer than ones such as Antifa and Don't Shoot PDX.

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty said she's particularly troubled by a message in which Niiya warned Gibson about an arrest warrant for a member of his group.

"I've never seen that kind of communication with other protesters certainly not with Black Lives protesters, or when people are protesting against police violence," she said.

Some activists called on Wheeler to turn over day-to-day management of the police bureau to Hardesty, who campaigned on a promise of police reform and this week fulfilled one of her campaign's core promises when the City Council voted 3-2 to remove Portland officers from the FBI-led Joint Terrorism Task Force.

Hardesty and Commissioner Chloe Eudaly didn't go that far. But they did call on Wheeler to order an independent, outside investigation into the messages and, more broadly, how the bureau responds to white supremacy and political protests.

Initially, Wheeler, who called the messages disturbing, asked Police Chief Danielle Outlaw to investigate the messages. But on Friday evening, he went further, promising an outside investigation and to ensure that Portland officers get more training on white supremacy.

Niiya has been removed from his role on the bureau team that handles protests. Lt. Craig Morgan, the president of the union that represents commanding officers within the bureau, said Niiya had direction from the mayor and police chief to develop relationships with protesters.

"One of the ways we get ahead of these events is to build rapport with folks so we can gather information, so we can then figure out how we're going to handle these protests," he said.

Morgan said Niiya did try to develop relationships with protesters on the left but they generally didn't text him back.