

The Oregonian

Commissioners Consult with Prominent Black Lives Matter Activist on Portland Police Contract

*By Gordon Friedman
March 15, 2019*

Staff for Portland Commissioners Jo Ann Hardesty and Chloe Eudaly met Thursday with national Black Lives Matter activist DeRay Mckesson to strategize over the city labor contract with the Portland police officers' union, an official in Hardesty's office said.

Mckesson, 33, met with the officials as part of his work managing Campaign Zero, a group that reviews police union contracts nationwide and points out what it says are policies that shield officers from accountability for misconduct.

Campaign Zero's analysis of the Portland police contract pointed to what the group says is problematic language that restricts questioning of officers, gives officers undue access to information about investigations of which they are targets, and limits officer discipline and recordkeeping of misconduct.

Daryl Turner, the police union president, declined to comment.

The official in Hardesty's office said Mckesson gave "a detailed presentation about policing, contracts, accountability and their relationship to violence."

Also present at the meeting were members of the Albina Ministerial Alliance Coalition for Justice and Police Reform, a faith-based group seeking greater police oversight.

Baltimore-based Mckesson wears many hats: Civil rights activist, author, podcast host and one-time mayoral candidate, among other work. He was in Portland on Wednesday for a taping of his podcast, Pod Save the People, for which Hardesty was a guest. Hardesty's office asked him to extend his trip to give a briefing on the police contract, the official said.

Mckesson tweeted his take on Thursday's meeting to his more than 1 million Twitter followers, saying he led a talk with "activists and advocates" to "discuss avenues for structural change."

"It was incredible to be in a room of such solution-oriented advocates ready to do deep, sustained work. I'm pumped!" Mckesson's tweet said.

The official in Hardesty's office said the commissioner, who has long been an advocate for police reform, will ask Mayor Ted Wheeler to schedule a public briefing led by Mckesson. The official asked not to be named because Hardesty had not authorized the aide to speak on the record.

Wheeler's spokeswoman, Eileen Park, said such a briefing would need to be approved by the mayor and commissioners' chiefs of staff and no such discussion has taken place. A spokeswoman for Eudaly didn't immediately return a message seeking comment.

The city's contract with the Portland Police Association, the union representing rank-and-file officers, doesn't expire until June 2020. Negotiations on a new contract are all but sure to draw a spotlight to City Hall, given tension between the police and public over officials' handling of violent protests and officers' shooting people of color or people experiencing mental illness.

Mayor Wheeler asks State to Investigate Portland Architect

*By Gordon Friedman
March 14, 2019*

In an unusual letter sent last month, Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler asked the state architect licensing board to investigate Raphael Goodblatt, an architect he said has harassed and bullied city employees for years.

“I ask that you conduct an investigation into the misconduct by Mr. Goodblatt,” Wheeler wrote on Feb. 12 to the Oregon State Board of Architect Examiners.

Goodblatt said in an interview Monday that the city has it backwards. He acknowledged he engaged in the conduct the city says he shouldn’t have, but said he was provoked into it. “I hate to say it, I don’t know how better to say it, but this is the city harassing me,” he said.

In his letter, Wheeler includes five pages of excerpts of texts, emails or statements Goodblatt made to city development services employees. The excerpts include alleged incidents of name-calling by Goodblatt, including referring to people using crude terms for male and female genitalia, and other unsavory remarks.

Goodblatt doesn’t deny he said what’s in Wheeler’s letter. But he claims he only did so because city employees spread negative information about him and harassed his clients.

“Everything I did that’s on paper I’m not going to deny,” Goodblatt said. “But the things that I say are because of the way I’m treated.”

He cited three documents as what he said is evidence of city harassment – a 2011 email chain, 2014 letter and 2014 voicemail in which city employees share details of his conduct with others or implore him to stop.

Goodblatt worked in the city development service bureau from 2003 to 2009 but was laid off, according to Wheeler’s letter. He was subject to a human resources investigation in 2012, the mayor’s letter said, that found he “engaged in discourteous, bullying, disrespectful and menacing behavior towards city employees.”

State rules say architects may be disciplined for “any conduct that, through professional experience, is not an acceptable standard for architectural practice in Oregon.”

Lisa Howard, the architecture board director, said the agency has received Wheeler’s letter and the board will consider his allegations at its April meeting.

"I'm a big mouth who tells you what I think," Goodblatt said. "Hopefully the board won't punish me too much."

The Portland Tribune

PBOT: Walking In Portland Depends On Who You Are

By Jim Redden

March 1, 2019

Research finds inadequate transportation infrastructure has greater impact on low-income and minority communities.

Gaps in city's street system have a greater impact on low-income and minority residents, according to research conducted by the Portland Bureau of Transportation.

There are fewer sidewalks, crosswalks and street lights in East Portland than downtown and inner neighborhoods, making walking more dangerous in the part of town with more low-income residents. And during two Walking While Black focus groups held by PBOT, African-American residents complained about small and large racial slights while walking, including drivers who take longer to stop at crosswalks for them.

"In Portland, pedestrian safety and access is an equity issue. Inadequate pedestrian infrastructure and traffic safety concerns disproportionately impact low-income communities and people of color," PBOT said in a March 12 press release

The research was conducted as part of a project called PedPDX to replace the city's current pedestrian plan, which was last updated in 1998. It is scheduled to be presented to the City Council this spring.

Among other things, the research found that most Portlanders say the biggest problem with the transportation system is missing sidewalks on busy streets, followed by people driving too fast on busy streets and not enough safe places to cross streets.

For African-Americans, the biggest problem was poor lighting, followed by missing sidewalks on busy streets and not enough safe places to cross streets.

In the focus groups, African-Americans also complained about being treated differently than Whites while walking. One example was "Crosswalk White girl magic — where cars stop for White women, not for Black people." Another was the belief that Portland police cite African-Americans at a higher rate for minor offenses, like jay walking.

That claim was supported by 2017 series in the Portland Tribune. You can find it [here](#).

PedPDX proposes to address some of these problems by prioritizing transportation spending in historically underserved parts of town. One objective is, "Prioritize investment in areas with the greatest historic underinvestment in pedestrian infrastructure and with historically under-served populations to reduce disparities in access to safe pedestrian facilities."

During a March 12 City Council work session on PBOT's request for the next budget, the bureau estimated that fixing all of East Portland's street lighting issues would cost the city about \$12 million.

You can read a previous Portland Tribune story on PedPDX [here](#).

The Portland Mercury

Hall Monitor: The Care and Keeping of Cops

By Alex Zielinski

March 14, 2019

It's becoming harder and harder for Portland to attract—and retain—new police officers.

In a recent analysis of the police bureau's finances by the City Budget Office (CBO), city economists say that the headline-grabbing problems plaguing the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) can all be traced back to this one issue.

As an example, the CBO points to the city's recent surge in 911 calls. In the past five years, Portland's 911 call volume has increased by more than 25 percent, while PPB's number of sworn officers has remained the same. To meet the demand of responding to the increased calls (the vast majority of which, it should be noted, are made to complain about an "unwanted person" or "disturbance," and not actual crimes in progress), Police Commissioner and Mayor Ted Wheeler passed a 2018-19 budget that included increasing the number of on-patrol PPB officers by 49.

But according to the CBO, growing the police force—while an easy way for the mayor to show that the city is doing something—shouldn't be the city's top priority. At least, CBO says, not until PPB gets better at both hiring new cops and retaining the officers it already has.

Before posting new officer job openings in July 2018, PPB had 17 job openings for officers. Now, the bureau has 75 open officer positions. Despite hiring 22 new officers since last July, the number of officers retiring has far outpaced the number of hires. By this summer, the city estimates PPB will see up to 50 more officers retire.

This means that, at the moment, the number of on-patrol officers who are available to respond to 911 calls has remained exactly the same as it was last year (around 350), as has officers' average response time to "high-priority" 911 calls (8.6 minutes).

At this rate, the CBO estimates that the PPB will have a paltry 360 total officers on patrol by July 2022. Another way to put it: In four years, PPB will hire a net of 10 new officers. That's hardly enough to make any meaningful improvements to 911 response times.

The city can't adequately address the PPB's staffing problems—which cause everything from slow emergency response times, to high overtime costs, to stressed-out cops—without fixing the bureau's glaring recruitment and retention problems. But where to begin?

The CBO says the PPB's glacial application process is, at least anecdotally, a significant reason that prospective officers aren't joining PPB quickly enough. According to the CBO report, PPB applicants wait an average of 11 months to be hired after applying for an officer job. The PPB states that this time period—which has lengthened from an average of nine months in 2016—accounts for an extensive background check, psychological and physical evaluations, and other exams to weed out subpar applicants. (In Memphis, a city close in population size to Portland, this process takes an average of six months).

Even then, those who eventually get a job offer face over two years of training and probation before being able to respond to calls. But few prospective employees are able to wait that long: The CBO found that as many as 25 percent of PPB officers hired in the last three years left before finishing their 18-month probation period. The CBO notes that, in Portland, that number has historically been closer to 15 percent.

PPB is well aware of its hiring and retention problems, but doesn't think its application process is entirely to blame. In the bureau's latest budget ask, PPB points to another issue that's complicating its recruitment: "The deterioration of public perceptions of the challenges of serving as a police officer."

Portland isn't alone in this issue—cities across the country are struggling to hire officers, and blaming the public's growing negative perception of police work, rather than their own officers' conduct. Some cities have already shed requirements to attract more police recruits, such as no longer requiring a college education.

Portland hasn't yet reached that point. But PPB has certainly sweetened the pot: In 2009, the entry-level salary for a PPB officer was \$42,500. By 2014, it had risen to \$47,000. Now, in the same span of five years, that entry-level salary has jumped to \$64,400. Forty seven percent of PPB's requested 2019-20 budget is earmarked for salaries, and in a recent interview with OPB, Wheeler noted that police salaries have become one of the largest burdens on the city's budget.

This budget cycle, the PPB didn't ask for any more new officers—but it did urge the city to increase the force by an additional 150 officers by 2023. The bureau didn't explain how they planned to do that.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

One Step Closer to Significant Zoning Changes

By Chuck Slothower

March 14, 2019

Portland's effort to bring more dense housing types to urban neighborhoods made it past the Planning and Sustainability Commission this week by a razor-thin 5-4 vote.

The commission's recommendation, reached Tuesday, sets up a final debate at the City Council this summer.

The Residential Infill Project has been years in the making. It centers on rezoning much of Portland's single-family neighborhoods to allow duplexes, triplexes and alternative dwelling units (ADUs). At the same time, it limits home sizes to 2,500 square feet on a 5,000-square-foot lot, for example.

The proposal from the city's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability has touched off a roiling debate about the nature of Portland's neighborhoods, with elements of race, class and the divide between the needs of newcomers and renters versus incumbent homeowners.

Commission Chairwoman Katherine Schultz said the proposal has split public testimony "between people who have a home today in our single-family neighborhoods, and those who would love to be able to live in those single-family neighborhoods. And I found that striking."

She voted in favor of recommending the zoning changes.

Allowing denser housing options would provide homes for thousands of new city residents that are expected to move to Portland by 2035, city planners said. Depending on the statistical model, the Residential Infill Project changes are expected to result in anywhere from 3,883 to 24,333 more housing units than under current zoning.

“We want more options – more options for housing on those units and more housing in more places,” BPS Interim Director Joe Zehnder said at Tuesday’s hearing. “What we found was it’ll work. The pace of change for these next 20 years is relatively modest.”

Commissioner Katie Larsell questioned bureau staffers about economic projections after a report in *The Oregonian* revealed more modest projections for unit growth than the commission had seen previously. Zehnder replied that the first projection the bureau received was the more optimistic of the two economic models and was based on unlimited demand for housing units. The second set of estimates, with a much lower forecast for unit production, was based on a more realistic model, he said.

Commissioners who opposed the Residential Infill Project said it may worsen displacement of current low-income residents and residents of color as property owners look to cash in on greater development capacity. The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability’s own projections show increased displacement risk in Brentwood-Darlington, Foster-Powell, Lents, Mt. Scott-Arleta and Montavilla. Overall, the Residential Infill Project is estimated to reduce displacement citywide.

Commissioner Andre Baugh proposed a five-year delay on changing zoning in certain neighborhoods at risk of displacement. The amendment proposal failed by a 5-4 margin.

“Displacement is not a surprise, and should not be a surprise to anybody here,” Baugh said. “The surprise to me is that we’re unwilling to do anything about it.”

After the proposal failed, Baugh made a plea for the City Council to reconsider its push for the Residential Infill Project.

“I think RIP really becomes, as I said before, institutional racism to create the whitest city ...,” Baugh said. “The five years that I proposed was just an opportunity to give us a break to say, ‘How do we really respond as a city and recognize the value of people in this economic class?’”

Baugh was not optimistic the City Council would change the program to stem displacement.

“I ... obviously am very disappointed in what we’re sending to council,” Baugh said. “Council has no urgency to make any changes to RIP in any way, shape or form. I think we’re just making a bad decision, and I’ll leave it at that.”

The City Council has not set a date to take up the Residential Infill Project.

The Residential Infill Project debate has been watched closely by tenant advocates and urbanists who support bringing more density to Portland’s neighborhoods. Many residents have fiercely opposed the proposal, saying it will change the character of single-family neighborhoods.

Some proponents have said that may not be such a bad thing.

“Traditional single-family zoning is not a good thing for low-income folks, and it never has been because it’s unfortunately sort of an exclusive situation,” said Commissioner Eli Spevak, who voted in support. “It works very well if you already own a home in those areas.”