

## The Portland Tribune

# Need a Scorecard to Keep Up With City's 2020 Election?

By Nick Budnick

April 25, 2019

**Analysis: Upcoming mayoral race may be one for history books, say political experts.**

The recent news that county Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson may run for the Portland mayor's job in 2020 amounted to an only-in-Multnomah political trial balloon.

So far, the race features a potential candidate who can't declare that she's running and a seemingly declared incumbent who may not run — along with an activist who's definitely running, but may not win.

Next year's Portland primary has all the makings of "one of the most interesting and historic elections" in the city's history, lobbyist and political analyst Len Bergstein said.

On April 10, the news broke in The Oregonian/Oregonlive that Vega Pederson is "strongly" considering a run for mayor, according a source familiar with her thinking. She recently confirmed to the Portland Tribune that "I'm thinking about how I can best serve my community in the future and where my skills and strengths can be best used."

If the former lawmaker indeed jumps in, she will constitute the first establishment candidate to potentially face Wheeler. She would enter a race already featuring Teresa Raiford, a community organizer and leader of Don't Shoot Portland who has set up a campaign committee with the Secretary of State's office.

Raiford, who previously ran for Portland City Council, has been polarizing. In 2016 she was blasted by Jo Ann Hardesty, now a Portland city commissioner, for what Hardesty called unproductive tactics when it comes to police oversight.

And the news of Vega Pederson's interest comes at a time when Wheeler is widely perceived as weak, sparking widespread speculation about possible challengers. "If the election were this week, even voters who are paying attention will be hard-pressed to identify a strong reason to reelect," Bergstein said.

### County charter looms

One of the interesting wrinkles of Vega Pederson's possible candidacy comes from the fact that she draws a \$112,699-per-year salary from Multnomah County. The county's charter, or guiding document, says "no elected official of Multnomah County may run for another elective office in midterm without resigning first," until they enter their final year of office.

That could mean Vega Pederson can't declare — or potentially make significant moves toward running — before January 2020 without losing her current job.

When Commissioner Loretta Smith declared her candidacy for Portland City Council in September 2017, for instance, she was hit by a lawsuit from local campaign activists demanding her immediate resignation and that she reimburse the county for her salary. The case is still active.

Three Oregon election law experts last year told the Tribune that it's not just a declaration of candidacy that could trigger the Multnomah charter requirement. A judge, one said, likely would use a "walks-like-a-ducks" standard to determine whether a county commissioner had begun

running for another office. If that's true, then retaining a political consultant, raising large amounts of money and registering a website could all lose Vega Pederson her current job. So if she wants to keep drawing her Multnomah salary for the next eight months, any efforts toward a mayoral run may need to be covert.

Vega Pederson said she hasn't ruled out running for reelection to the county. "We have big issues that we need to be working together on, that we need to be moving forward on," she said. "And figuring out the best place that I can do that is part of the process."

Wheeler will or won't?

Adding to the strangeness of a potential candidate who can't declare that she's running is a seemingly declared incumbent who may not run.

In November 2018, Wheeler famously muttered in a moment of unguarded frustration that he "can't wait" for his term as mayor to end in two years — seemingly alluding to the heckling and criticism he'd been facing as mayor.

Over the next few weeks, he feverishly walked those comments back, telling the Tribune that, while he hadn't made a final decision, people should assume that he's running again.

"I'll make a decision sometime in the next year with my wife about whether or not I'm running for re-election, he said. "But people should assume that I'm going to run a very aggressive reelection campaign, with an equally aggressive forward-looking agenda."

In December he added an exclamation mark by raising \$58,500 in one three-day span, and lately he's begun posting campaign-style videos on his Twitter account, one of him having coffee with Police Chief Danielle Outlaw.

"The mayor hasn't made an official announcement yet, and this decision will ultimately be made with his family, but he is leaning on running for reelection," his spokeswoman, Eileen Park, said last week.

Tony DeFalco, executive director of Verde, said that frustration with Wheeler's office is creating an opportunity to make the Portland City Council more diverse. People are saying "maybe it's time to bring in some new voices," he said. "I always think that's good for the democratic process."

Bergstein agrees the city's political trendline is toward more diversity. But despite Wheeler's current vulnerability, the mayor still has time to mount a strong reelection bid.

"Lucky for Ted, the election is not now," Bergstein said. "By May he may have found his footing and be able to drown out a challenge with a heavily financed narrative."

## **Portland: Who Pays After An E-Scooter Accident?**

*By Zane Sparling*

*April 25, 2019*

**Electric scooters return to city streets Friday, but riders assume risk and liability, experts say.**

With electric scooters expected to return to city streets as soon as Friday, there's a new question Portlanders may be asking: Where does the buck stop when riders start to roll?

Experts say e-scooter users expose themselves to liability whenever they hop into the saddle.

"Individuals have a significant amount of risk of financial loss based upon damaging somebody's property or injuring somebody while they're riding a scooter," explained Thom Rickert. "They're also assuming financial risk for injury to themselves."

Rickert, a specialist with Trident Public Risk Solutions, notes that scooters aren't covered by traditional auto insurance policies, because scooters aren't cars, or homeowners insurance.

Some personal "umbrella" insurance policies could be stretched to cover e-scooter accidents, while trendy new pay-per-mile insurance companies may begin offering plans aimed at ride-share users soon. A rider who injures only themselves would likely be covered by personal health insurance, and workers comp if injured on the job.

"The individual operating the vehicle has responsibility and assumes risk by using the scooter," said Rickert, who was recently quoted in a New York Times article on the topic. "The problem is there is little insurance available."

But while riders of the two-wheelers may be left out in the cold, e-scooter companies and Portland City Hall are taking steps to protect themselves.

The Bureau of Transportation has mandated e-scooter companies take out at least \$2 million in insurance in order to operate with city limits.

New rules require the companies to indemnify the city, protecting the government when lawsuits inevitably are filed. The mobility tech firms must also agree that it's not the city's responsibility to educate users about helmet requirements or how to ride safely.

"The city is transferring some of their liability for the operation of the scooters from the city to the provider," said Rickert.

Twelve companies have applied for Portland's year-long second test drive of the upright contraptions — but residents won't know the specifics until Friday, April 26, at the earliest.

"We're not sure how many companies will be approved for permits," PBOT spokesman Dylan Rivera said in an email.

## **Willamette Week**

### **Federal and Oregon Law Enforcement Officials Investigated a Threat Against Portland-Area Mosques**

*By Katie Shepherd  
April 24, 2019*

**"Not only in the wake of what happened in New Zealand, but with all of the Islamophobia that we're seeing online, we've just become increasingly concerned about the safety of our community."**

The FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force and local Oregon law enforcement agencies investigated a threat against Washington County mosques early Wednesday morning, law enforcement sources say.

An FBI spokeswoman says there is currently no credible threat against any Muslim communities in Oregon.

"Earlier today, the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force identified a possible threat to Islamic organizations in Oregon," spokeswoman Beth Anne Steele said in a statement. "The FBI immediately notified our local law enforcement partners who increased patrols as appropriate."

The Washington County Sheriff's Office sent deputies to patrol the area around a targeted mosque from about 6 am to 2 pm, an agency spokesman told WW. He referred further questions to the FBI.

The JTTF investigates hundreds of possible threats each year, and the move to release a statement on a threat that resolved without an arrest or incident is unusual. Steele says the FBI wrote the press release in response to media inquiries.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations of Oregon tweeted that law enforcement had informed Washington County mosques about a threat and confirmed later in the day that the threat had been resolved. Advocates say law enforcement's response shows that they are taking possible threats against Muslims in Oregon seriously.

"We appreciate law enforcement's response to this issue and we're appreciative of their work safeguarding the Muslim community today," says Zakir Khan, chair at CAIR-Oregon. "Not only in the wake of what happened in New Zealand, but with all of the Islamophobia that we're seeing online, we've just become increasingly concerned about the safety of our community. And that's why the law enforcement response today is really important."

Portland City Council voted to sever ties between the Portland Police Bureau and the JTTF in February. It's unclear whether PPB was informed of the threats or involved in the investigation.

## **The Portland Mercury**

### **Following Pedestrian Death, Activists Call For Safety Improvements to NE Broadway**

*By Blair Stenvick  
April 24, 2019*

Seventeen people have died in Portland from traffic-related accidents so far in 2019. That number is up considerably from this time in 2018 and 2017—and Portland's strong community of bicyclists and transportation advocates finds that concerning.

The most recent fatality occurred the afternoon of Thursday, April 18, when Portland resident Lori Woodard was struck by a commercial delivery truck while using a crosswalk to walk across the intersection of NE Broadway and NE Grand.

It is the 17th traffic fatality this year, and the ninth resulting in the death of a pedestrian. For comparison, at this time in 2018 there had been 12 traffic-related deaths, and in 2017 there had been just 8. This year's number is, however, about on par with 2016's count, according to information provided by the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT).

It's worth noting that 2016 was the year PBOT adopted Vision Zero, an ambitious plan to eliminate traffic-related fatalities by 2025. A key element of Vision Zero includes targeting a "high crash network"—a network of high-traffic roads where accidents are more likely to occur—and making them safer for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers.

NE Broadway is a part of that network. BikeLoud PDX, a bicyclist activism group, believes PBOT is taking too long to improve the busy street. RJ Sheperd, an organizer with BikeLoud, calls traffic fatalities in Portland an “epidemic.”

“More people died due to traffic violence in Portland last year than due to homicide,” he says. “This particular death is something that triggered something very broad in the community, because we all know how deadly Broadway is.”

BikeLoud will host a memorial for Woodard at the intersection where she was hit at 5:30 pm tonight. The event will also function as a rallying cry to bring pedestrian- and bike-friendly improvements to NE Broadway—quickly.

BikeLoud has submitted three demands to PBOT: installing temporary curb extensions and a protected bike lane until a more permanent solution is in place; changing the traffic signal to allow for a protected left turn at NE Broadway and NE Grand; and changing the walk signal to give pedestrians a head start and more visibility while cross the street. Sheperd says he believes PBOT can enact these changes “in the next couple of weeks.”

PBOT did install a temporary curb extension using traffic cones and signage at the intersection on Tuesday. Sheperd says he appreciated how quickly PBOT implemented the changes, and that BikeLoud members would like to see that expediency continue.

“[PBOT should] do pilot projects, do immediate curb extensions, do protected bike lanes,” he says. “What is so frustrating is we go into a lot of meetings with PBOT, and their excellent staff are very knowledgeable about the conditions and what needs to be done. But to be frank, it’s not happening fast enough.”

At Wednesday evening’s memorial, BikeLoud members plan to encourage people to voice their own concerns about dangerous conditions on NE Broadway. From a BikeLoud statement sent to the Mercury:

“BikeLoud asks that you share your stories of biking, walking, or taking transit on NE Broadway with the [transportation] Commissioner [Chloe Eudaly] and Interim PBOT Director Chris Warner, and call on them to prioritize immediate safety improvements, including curb bump-outs, protected bike lanes, and 3-second walk signal head-starts (Leading Pedestrian Intervals).”

## **Audit Finds No Improvement to Scholarship Program for City Classes and Camps**

*By Alex Zielinski  
April 24, 2019*

In March 2018, the city auditor's office instructed Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) to tweak its budget to grant low-income Portlanders access to community center classes and camps.

A year later, the city's seen zero improvement.

All four of the auditors' recommendations to improve the PP&R scholarship program—which gives financial assistance to people who can't afford the cost of city-run programs—have not been implemented, according to an audit update released Wednesday morning.

But it's not for lack of interest.

"The parks bureau is fully on board with our recommendations," says Kristine Adams-Wannberg, the city's lead auditor on this report. "I think what happened is that the enormity of the budget shortfall really hit them, and they had to hit pause."

PP&R is currently facing a \$7 million budget gap in its upcoming fiscal year budget. The gap is based on a decrease in revenue coming into PP&R from various fees (including the cost of classes and camps), a long-simmering problem that the city finally chose to address this budget cycle.

Funding a scholarship program without solving PP&R's bigger financial issues would only push the bureau further into debt. In the meantime, however, the city is systemically keeping low-income kids and adults from participating in community programs.

"Hopefully council addresses the budget concerns," Adams-Wannberg says. "It's going to be a hard call, but it's incredibly worthwhile, especially considering the city's equity goals."

Adams-Wannberg says Portland is one of the few cities that doesn't budget for scholarships within its recreation department. At this point, the onus lies on Portland City Council to repair PP&R's budget issues through upcoming budget negotiations. Mayor Ted Wheeler is expected to release his proposed budget for 2019-2020 on May 1.