

## **The Oregonian**

# **Portland Hires Finance Official Who Oversaw Tax Credit Fiasco**

*By Gordon Friedman  
May 4, 2019*

City economic development agency Prosper Portland has hired as its chief financial officer Adam Lane, previously the chief financial officer of Ecotrust, a nonprofit under investigation for more than a year by Oregon Department of Justice prosecutors over its handling of state tax credits.

At the time Lane was in charge of Ecotrust's financial activities, the nonprofit inflated a project budget to obtain \$4 million in state tax credits, according to a 2018 investigation by Business Oregon, the state economic development agency.

Ecotrust representatives have said no wrongdoing occurred. An Oregon Department of Justice spokeswoman said this month that a civil investigation of Ecotrust is ongoing.

City officials are aware of Lane's background and he sat for "extensive" interviews with Kimberly Branam, the Prosper Portland director, before his hiring, said agency spokesman Shawn Uhlman.

"There was no implication that he himself did anything incorrect or wrong," Uhlman said.

Branam issued a statement to The Oregonian/OregonLive on Friday saying Lane's "deep financial expertise" and educational background made him a good hire.

"In his interviews Adam impressed us with his candor, competency, and transactional experience advancing social equity, economic opportunity, and environmental health," Branam's statement said. "We believe that Adam's intellect, his experience, and his demonstrated commitment to Prosper Portland's mission will make him a strong addition to our agency."

Branam said her agency's general counsel has "thoroughly reviewed the information that is publicly available" on Ecotrust.

Uhlman did not respond to emailed questions asking what information was reviewed and what went into the agency's hiring decision.

Prosper Portland is the city's economic development agency, providing loans, grants and other incentives to businesses and entrepreneurs, along with administering urban renewal programs.

The project for which Ecotrust is under scrutiny involves a failed attempt to restart a southern Oregon sawmill with state and federal tax credits. Ecotrust had promised to create at least 70 jobs with the injection of \$8 million in taxpayer funds, but the mill reopened only briefly.

State officials later determined Ecotrust included a \$5 million land purchase in its project budget that was not a legitimate expense. The purchase, where the sawmill owners essentially bought their own facility from themselves, had allowed Ecotrust to collect \$1.3 million in state tax credits it did not qualify for.

Officials moved to claw back the credits if Ecotrust did not make a qualifying investment in a low-income census tract. The nonprofit did that in February, by investing \$3.6 million in a Tualatin office supplies distributor to buy a warehouse and create five jobs.

## The Portland Tribune

### Couch Park Adds Inclusive Playground, Plaza, Portland Loo

*By Zane Sparling*

*May 04, 2019*

#### **2014 Parks Bond pays for replacement play area by Metropolitan Learning Center in northwest Portland**

The 2014 Parks Replacement Bond's poster child has been completed — literally.

Officials gathered at Couch Park, 551 N.W. 19th Ave., said the promised replacement playground was featured heavily in posters and other pitches made to Portland voters. On a balmy Saturday, May 4, kids and adults formally cut the ribbon on a brand-new inclusive play space, which is located across the street from the off-beat Metropolitan Learning Center.

"Last summer, this was all bark chips, a small metal structure and five rocks. Seriously, five rocks," said Nina Peters, a sixth-grader at the alternative school. "Now it's a playground!"

Founded as a park in 1914, MLC students helped design a wooden play structure and plaza on site in 1975. Nearly 40 years later, the structure was worn out and didn't comply with modern disabilities standards, so workers fenced it off and then demolished it.

The \$2.1-million rebuild was paid primarily with funds from the \$68 million parks bond. Parents affiliated with Friends of Couch Playground raised \$350,000, while Metro regional government chipped in another \$150,000.

New features include a battering-ram style group swing, a ramped accessible-to-all fort and a geodesic dome, boulder scramble, slide, as well as a public seating area and Portland Loo.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who was leading the Parks Bureau when the project started in 2014, said recalling the tear-down decision as "difficult" would be a bit of an understatement.

"That's like saying I remember childbirth, but with pressure," she joked. "It was probably the second-most uncomfortable meeting that I've been involved in since I've been on the City Council."

Also in attendance were the current Parks commissioner, Nick Fish, as well as recently hired Parks Director Adena Long and Jon Blasher, director of Metro's Parks & Nature Department. Blasher noted that Metro is planning to renew its current parks and nature bond in a way that "would not increase taxes."

"I'm a product of neighborhood playgrounds and of unstructured play," said Blasher, who lives in the Parkrose neighborhood. "It's really great to be here on a day like this, where the kids are not being quiet and listening to the presentation, they're out using this amazing resource."

# Police Could Still Join FBI Terrorism Investigations

*By Jim Redden  
May 05, 2019*

**The City Council will consider a resolution Wednesday allowing Portland police to continuing working on FBI JTTF investigations.**

The Portland Police Bureau could continue working the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force on a case-by-case basis under the terms of a resolution to be considered by the City Council on Wednesday.

The council voted to withdraw from the JTTF on a 3-to-2 vote on Feb. 13. But that resolution called for another resolution to be introduced within 55 days describing parameters of engagement between the PPB and the JTTF on specific cases.

"This resolution sets general guidelines for the PPB to follow as it develops a directive that will specifically outline for PPB members how PPB will coordinate the sharing of information between PPB and the JTTF regarding the threat of terrorism," read the related impact statement.

The resolution is introduced by Mayor Ted Wheeler, who voted against the previous resolution, and Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, who sponsored it. Under the terms of the new resolution, of the chief of police can assign officers to specific terrorism and hate crime investigations if requested by the special agent in charge of the Portland FBI office.

The chief and deputy chief are also authorized to be liaisons to the JTTF.

The cases must have a Portland "nexus" and a reasonable suspicion of criminal activity. The resolution prohibits the Portland officers from providing information related solely to immigration status, as prohibited by Oregon sanctuary laws.

The officers temporarily assigned to work with the JTTF are also required to attend annual training conducted by the Office of the City Attorney to ensure they comply with compliance with applicable state and federal laws.

Also voting to withdraw from the JTTF were commissioners Amanda Fritz and Jo Ann Hardesty. Voting with Wheeler to stay in was Commissioner Nick Fish.

You can read the resolution [here](#).

## **The Portland Business Journal**

### **Prosper Portland Looks to Ignite New Development in Old Town Chinatown**

*By Jon Bell  
May 3, 2019*

Looking to keep the momentum going in Old Town Chinatown, Prosper Portland has issued a call for developers for two properties it owns in the neighborhood.

One, the former home of the Right 2 Dream Too homeless camp, sits at the prominent corner of Northwest Fourth Avenue and West Burnside at the entrance to Old Town Chinatown. The other

is a vacant property at Northwest Flanders Street and Northwest Fourth Avenue that employees from NW Natural currently use for a parking lot.

For the Burnside proposal, Prosper Portland is looking for a development that would likely include ground floor retail or community space, mixed-income housing or office space. Prosper Portland's goals for the property also include that any development honors and respects the multicultural history of the neighborhood and that the design of any new structures complements the Chinatown Gate.

Prosper Portland acquired the two-lot property in 2017 for \$1.2 million. The homeless camp was later moved across the river by the Moda Center.

The agency's goals for the property at Northwest Fourth and Flanders are similar to those for the Burnside property, with a call for ground floor retail space and mixed-income housing or office space.

In the request for proposals, Prosper Portland noted that it would consider offering some of its financial resources for the projects, including land loans or tax-increment financing. Both properties also sit within an Opportunity Zone, which offers tax deferral opportunities to investors in the area.

Tom Brenneke, president of Guardian Real Estate Services, has dabbled in Old Town Chinatown before, most recently with the renovation of the Tuck Lung Building. He said he's interested in one of the new opportunities, though he wouldn't say which one.

"I think they are interesting properties," he said. "I'm happy to see the city moving forward."