

The Oregonian

Portland City Council Adopts \$5.5 Billion Annual Budget, But Cuts Parks Services

*By Gordon Friedman
May 23, 2019*

Portland's mayor and commissioners approved the city's annual budget on Thursday. It included controversial cuts to the parks bureau that will cause layoffs of parks workers and closures of community centers.

The \$5.5 billion budget, a nearly 6 percent increase over last year, funds the city government through June 2020. It includes annual rate increases of \$44 for water and \$26 for sewer services for typical households. Water rates rose 7.4 percent and sewer rates 2.95 percent.

The vast majority of the budget pays for infrastructure and maintenance projects within the city bureaus overseeing transportation, drinking water and sewer systems.

Most disagreement among the mayor and commissioners came over how to fund Portland Parks & Recreation, a bureau funded mainly by the discretionary general fund, an account that along with parks pays for police and firefighters and other services.

A long-simmering budget deficit within the parks bureau came to a head this year as a \$6.3 million gap grew between available funds and the amount needed to avoid program cuts. Officials in the city budget office said the deficit stems from flat revenues from parks services coupled with growing personnel costs.

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, the City Council newcomer, proposed two stop-gap plans to avoid cuts, but she had no support for those measures.

One would have been a one-year pay freeze for the non-union employees who make \$80,000 or more. That freeze would have saved \$1.8 million – enough to pay for about 35 parks jobs. The other would have plugged the parks deficit by diverting money budgeted for the Police Bureau's officer-worn body cameras program.

Hardesty said her proposals were “about protecting our people” – employees and parks users alike. But as Mayor Ted Wheeler and the other commissioners began voting against her ideas, Hardesty said, “I can see the writing on the wall” and predicted her amendments would go down “flaming.”

Nick Fish, the parks commissioner, acknowledged his bureau would have to “reinvent itself” to become financially stable and said there were “no easy decisions” Thursday. The council agreed the cuts would be painful for parks employees and residents, and adopted the budget 4-1 with Hardesty voting no.

Hardesty also proposed defunding the Police Bureau's Gun Violence Reduction Team, which had come under scrutiny for what she said was disparate treatment of African American residents. She had no support for that proposal except from Chloe Eudaly, who said her vote in favor of defunding the team was “a protest vote.”

The approved budget will mean the Sellwood Community Center and Hillside Community Center close by autumn. Dozens of residents testified to the council that closing those centers would leave them without daycare for children or activities for seniors.

The city will also no longer offer programming at the Laurelhurst Dance Studio and instead open it to be leased by private groups. It's unclear how many parks employees will lose their jobs but it could be as many as 50, a bureau spokesman said.

Debate over parks funding overshadowed new programs funded by the budget. They include an \$878,000 allocation for three mobile bathrooms and showers for the homeless, \$662,000 to create a 311 information phone line and a \$500,000 allocation for a "Street Response Team" to help the homeless, among others. The council kept funding for the Joint Office of Homeless Services flat at \$32 million.

'I'm Embarrassed': Mayor Ted Wheeler Apologizes for Testy Exchange Over Police Funding

*By Gordon Friedman
May 23, 2019*

Mayor Ted Wheeler repeatedly apologized at Wednesday's Portland City Council meeting after losing his temper at two colleagues during a budget debate.

The mayor had been arguing with Commissioners Jo Ann Hardesty and Chloe Eudaly over funding for the Police Bureau's Gun Violence Reduction Team.

Hardesty and Eudaly criticized the unit, formerly known as the Gang Enforcement Team, for stopping African Americans more frequently than people of other races. They noted city audits also found many stops were unjustified. Police practices cause people of color to be fearful of law enforcement, Hardesty said.

Wheeler, who serves as police commissioner, defended the team. It has morphed into a unit that responds to shootings citywide, not just gang violence, the mayor said. And it has stopped labeling people as gang members, he said, even though some police officials view that as a stumbling block to fighting crime.

The exchanges that Wheeler later apologized for began after Hardesty and Eudaly misstated the unit's name several times, prompting him to accuse the women of not knowing much about the team they were critiquing. Here is a condensed version of the dialogue:

Wheeler: "I fault myself that my colleagues don't know more about this program. That's on me. It's my job to inform them about the program. I find it hard to understand how my colleagues could understand the substance of a program when they don't even know the name of the program."

Eudaly: "Oh, wow."

Wheeler: "I think it's entirely fair. I think it's entirely fair."

Eudaly: "It's called the Gang Enforcement Team."

Wheeler: "Well, here's the deal. It's not. It's the Gun Violence Reduction Team. And in September of 2017, Portland Police Bureau – and this has been reported to the council – formally rescinded the gang designation policy. And that was done out of a request out of the community. It was due to identification of that as being a problem by the auditor and it was done. During the last year, significant changes were implemented in response to the audit. ... The auditor raised, I think, some very valid concerns, but not necessarily concerns I agree with."

Hardesty: “I just want to sanction you on being disrespectful to Commissioner Eudaly and myself. ... When black and brown people are confronted by people with weapons they do not think they are free to turn around and walk away. We know what the repercussions of that behavior is, and it is not pretty. I do want to have a real conversation about having accountability measures from our police. The fact that the police changes the name of units – they change how they collect data because they do not want to be held accountable to the same standards we set for every other bureau in the city of Portland. So, I am really disappointed, mayor, that you would take the opportunity to take a pot shot at your colleagues.”

Wheeler: “I want to keep this to the budget discussion. But, Commissioner Eudaly, I do apologize. I do apologize.”

Hardesty: “To her but not to me?”

Wheeler: “I’m turning to you, and if you’d stop interrupting me commissioner, I could get to it. I apologize to you too. But here’s the deal. I have listened while we cast aspersions on the employees of the city and not give them the opportunity to defend themselves. Let’s hear them out.”

Eudaly: “I am sorry. Once again, questioning staffing levels, allocation of resources, policies and procedures of the Police Bureau is not disparaging individual officers. I’ve stated time and time again that I respect the hard work of many of our officers. I recognize the work is stressful, it is dangerous, and I just refuse to allow this narrative to continue from the union, the bureau or the mayor that I can’t have differing opinions without dismissing and disparaging the entire bureau. That’s not what this is about. This is about the smart allocation of our limited resources based on data not on fear.”

Wheeler: “Fair enough. Thank you. Commissioner, I apologize. Let’s get to the budget.”

The mayor later apologized for how he spoke to Hardesty and Eudaly.

Wheeler: “I’m not proud of my behavior earlier, Commissioner Eudaly or Commissioner Hardesty. I don’t even recognize myself sometimes. This is a very emotional issue. It’s an important issue. At the end of the day it’s a budget conversation. And I let me emotion on this issue get the better of me.”

He turned to Hardesty and then to Eudaly: “You deserve better. Commissioner Eudaly, you deserve better and I apologize. That is not the way I choose to comport myself and I’m disappointed and I’m embarrassed and I’m sorry.”

City of Portland will Pay \$1.6 Million for School Resource Officers as Negotiations Continue with Districts

By Eder Campuzano

May 23, 2019

The Portland City Council on Thursday approved Mayor Ted Wheeler’s proposed budget, which provides \$1.6 million to fund school resource officers in three of the city’s largest school districts.

That means armed city police officers will likely be stationed inside all 12 high schools that lie inside the city limits in Portland Public Schools and two other districts for the coming school

year. Police Chief Danielle Outlaw told city commissioners this week that superintendents for all three districts said they would like the program to continue.

City Commissioner JoAnn Hardesty voiced her displeasure with the allocation Thursday and said the council was rushed to vote on a budget “despite students and community members saying they want no part of school resource officers.”

A day prior, Commissioner Chloe Eudaly said she was surprised to see the city was funding school resource officers because “there had been a conversation about the district taking on the cost” of the program.

That, in turn, led to a debate over whether police be assigned to patrol the city’s schools, Eudaly said.

Hardesty was the only commissioner to vote against the mayor’s proposed budget.

Police bureau leaders approached Portland Public Schools late last year, pushing district officials to absorb the \$1.2 million cost for PPS’s share of the program. School board members said they gave in to the request for funding under pressure for meeting a Dec. 31 city deadline.

But on Wednesday, Outlaw said the district and bureaus were working on a looser timeline.

“We recognized that we had some time there,” she told commissioners at the tail end of budget deliberations. “There wasn’t a need to make a hasty decision given that the schools were still in session.”

The school board reversed course and cancelled the funding agreement one month later, following student outcry.

The city will now pick up the tab as the police bureau and school districts hammer out how to fund the program beyond next school year, according to city budget documents.

Top brass at the three districts — David Douglas, Parkrose and Portland Public Schools — have all agreed they want police officers to patrol their schools, but told the mayor and police chief they have little appetite to fund the program, according to the minutes from a March David Douglas school board meeting.

Student activists, on the other hand, oppose the presence of armed officers on their campuses at all.

Roosevelt High senior Breely Buttita and Jefferson High senior Sophia Lucas told The Oregonian/OregonLive they thought that district officials would have that conversation with students after the school board voted to nix its funding agreement with the city during a January meeting.

Both testified to the school board in opposition of the resource officer program back then.

Portland Police Commander Resigns After Accusations of Driving Drunk, Crashing Police SUV Off-Duty

*By Maxine Bernstein
May 23, 2019*

A veteran Portland police commander who was accused of driving drunk off duty and crashing a police SUV into a light pole has resigned.

Steven James Jones, who was head of the bureau's Professional Standards Division at the time of the crash last year, chose to resign in the face of potential discipline, which could have included termination, according to his lawyer.

Jones' resignation went into effect May 3, according to state records. He served just under 25 years with the Police Bureau.

"It was fairly apparent he would be facing discipline," said Steven Myers, Jones' lawyer. "He is an honorable man that, given his position within the Bureau and the bar he set as the commander of the Professional Standards Unit, chose to resign."

The state Department of Public Safety Standards & Training also is reviewing Jones' police certification, according to Rebecca Hannon of the state police licensing agency.

Jones, 47, pleaded no contest to reckless driving and driving under the influence of intoxicants last year in Multnomah County Circuit Court. He was placed on paid administrative leave after the June 2018 crash.

The city's Independent Police Review Division conducted an internal inquiry into Jones' actions, and the bureau's Police Review Board examined the investigation and recommended discipline.

A spokeswoman for Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler, who serves as police commissioner, and Police Bureau spokesman Sgt. Brad Yakots declined comment on any proposed discipline, calling it a "personnel matter." The Oregonian/OregonLive has submitted a public records request to the city to obtain the information.

In December, Jones received a three-month suspended driver's license and also agreed to pay the city \$38,239.95 in restitution within 60 days to cover damage to the police SUV and the pole, according to court records. Jones was alone in the SUV and not injured.

Oregon State Police cited Jones for alleged drunken driving and reckless driving at 3:26 a.m. June 28 near Southwest Third Avenue and Arthur Street, according to court records. A witness told police he saw the police SUV speeding when it traveled onto a median and crashed into the pole and a tree, according to the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office.

The witness stopped to check on the driver "but the driver initially held his door shut from the inside and said that he was a police officer and that police were already responding," according to the investigation.

Officers described Jones, who smelled of alcohol, as swaying. A state trooper found Jones' blood-alcohol content was at a level of .10 percent, over the state's .08 percent legal limit.

Jones has completed a court diversion program and remains on probation for a year. If he abides by the conditions of his probation for one year, his pleas will be withdrawn and the charges dismissed. If not, he could face up to a year in jail.

The police policy committee of the state Department of Public Safety Standards & Training was set to review Jones' certification on May 16 based on his pleas in criminal court, but the matter was pulled from its agenda after the agency learned of Jones' resignation from the police bureau. The agency will continue to review his police certification in light of the city's Independent Police Review inquiry into his crash, Hannon said.

Jones will be eligible to start collecting his pension when he turns 55, but it will be calculated slightly below the full payout as he hadn't reached 25 years of service when he resigned. He would have marked 25 years of service in September.

The Portland Tribune

Council Passes Controversial City Budget

By Jim Redden

May 23, 2019

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty fails to cut spending on the Portland Police Bureau and transfer the savings to Portland Parks & Recreation.

The City Council approved its next budget late Thursday afternoon after one of the most contentious hearings in recent memory the day before.

The May 23 vote was 4 to 1, with only Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty voting against it. Commissioner Chloe Eudaly said she has repeatedly been frustrated by how hard it is to have serious policy decisions during the budget process, however.

Mayor Ted Wheeler called the budget responsible. He thanked the council, city budget staff and his office employees for their work on the budget.

The budget included cuts to Portland Parks & Recreation programs to help close a \$6.3 million funding shortage but preserved the Portland Police Bureau's Gun Violence Reduction Team, which Hardesty tried unsuccessfully to disband.

"I am disappointed we were not willing to vote our values today, Hardesty said.

Parks Commissioner Nick Fish said he was satisfied with the budget because it will transfer the bureau to more stable financing. Although more than 50 parks position will be eliminated, Fish said the city is working to find jobs for those employees who will lose their jobs in other bureaus.

Wheeler clashed with both Hardesty and Commissioner Chloe Eudaly over the Gun Violence Reduction Team on Wednesday, May 22, and ended up apologizing for criticizing them for not remembering its name. It had been known as the Gang Enforcement Team until last October.

The council voted down Hardesty's attempt to disband the team, and also her efforts to defund the body camera program being developed by the police bureau.

Hardesty's justified her efforts as necessary to preserve the approximately 56 parks job threatened by the \$6.3 million shortfall in the bureau. Most of the public testimony on Wednesday opposed the parks cuts. The council rejected Hardesty's motions, with only Eudaly joining her on the vote to disband Gun Violence Reduction Team, saying she thought more money should be spent on traffic enforcement.

But Hardesty also revealed her disdain for the police bureau itself, repeatedly accusing it of racial profiling and saying that it refuses to be accountable to the public.

"The police bureau has shown they have no interest in being held accountable by the people they are sworn to protect and serve," Hardesty said.

Hardesty's first attempt to formally raise her budget concerns also fizzled early Wednesday. She moved that the council delay the first hearing of an ordinance to grant a 3.9 percent cost-of-living-adjustment to city employees who are not represented by unions. The percent is the average of what represented employees are scheduled to receive.

Hardesty wanted to delay the hearing on the ordinance until the council considers the overall budget for the next fiscal year. Hardesty said she could not in good faith vote to give herself a

raise at the same time the council is considering cutting some of the lowest-paying jobs in the parks bureau. Wheeler noted the council will not actually vote on the COLA ordinance until next week. Hardesty's motion died when it was not seconded by another other council member, and it was scheduled for a second hearing and vote next week.

Hardesty brought the issue back up Thursday, and it was defeated with every other member voting against it.

The budget takes effect on July 1. Before that, the public can testify on it again at the Tax Supervising and Conversation Committee hearing on June 11, and then again when council formally adopts it on July 12.

Auditor, PP&R Director Disagree Over Future of Portland Golf Courses

*By Jim Redden
May 23, 2019*

A report released Thursday says the city-owned golf courses face a dismal future, but the head of the parks bureau is upbeat about them.

The City Auditor's Office and the director of Portland Parks and Recreation disagree over the future of the city's publicly-owned golf courses.

In a report released Thursday, May 23, the auditor's office said the courses are financially struggling and face a declining future because interest in golf is decreasing.

"Portland Parks and Recreation's golf program is at a crossroads. Intended to be self-supporting, the program required an infusion of \$800,000 of taxpayer funds in 2017 to remain solvent. While Parks has taken steps to cut costs and increase the number of golfers, it is fighting a national trend of a sport in decline and past ineffective program management," reads report, titled "Portland Parks Golf: Changes needed to ensure long-term sustainability."

But in a May 17 response letter, parks Director Adena Long said the courses generate surpluses and are in the process of being better managed.

"The Golf Program is unique in the City as it successfully promotes environmental stewardship and recreation opportunities, while being a self-supporting business model that responds to market forces," said Long, who was hired as parks director in April.

According to the report, the city has offered golf for more than 100 years. The parks bureau owns five courses. Four are in Portland: Colwood, Eastmoreland, Heron Lakes, and Rose City. One in Beaverton, RedTail Golf Center.

The 2018 budget for the golf program was \$9.6 million, which was about 5 percent of the overall Parks budget of \$213 million. The past five years left the golf program with almost no funds in reserve, the report say, and little ability to absorb future downturns or additional employee costs.

But according to Long, her bureau is working its way through Golf Program Strategic Plan adopted in 2015 to increase participation, improve financial stability and sustainability, and demonstrate environmental stewardship. Although Long says the city needs to invest more in its golf courses, plans are underway to reduce operating cost. Among other things, Long wrote the bureau is aligning the expiration of the four eastside golf course management contracts to 2021

"in order to do a comprehensive request for proposals that allows for the option of single or multiple operators, with appropriate alignment and incentives."

"While maintenance of aging facilities remains a challenge, the Golf Program continues to be a good investment for Portlanders. PP&R's courses consistently generate operating surpluses and provide valuable ecosystem services over 800 acres of open space and natural area," Long wrote.

Both the report and Long agree the city needs to do more to increase interest in golf and attract more young people and minorities to the courses. Long is confident the bureau has started to do that.

"PP&R has prioritized historically underrepresented communities' participation by increasing the diversity of the Golf Advisory Committee, leading racial equity trainings for PP&R staff and operators on culturally-responsive customer service, and increasing social media, events and partnerships with culturally-specific organizations and communities as well as creating targeted women's programs," Long wrote.

The report lists a number of recommendations, including:

- Developing alternative financial forecast scenarios and present them to City Council for direction on how to proceed;
- Negotiating contracts to reflect current conditions;
- Improving contract monitoring;
- Presenting contracts to City Council for approval and renewal.

Long said her bureau will implement the recommendations,

PP&R is committed to implementing the audit's recommendations and looks forward to sharing updates with you and the community as this work progresses," long wrote.

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

The Portland Mercury

Apply for Cannabis Tax Grant Money, but Hurry!

By Josh Jardine

May 23, 2019

You have until tomorrow to [apply for a Cannabis Social Equity Grant](#) from the City of Portland. Now, this doesn't mean you can get free money to have an ice cream social with your friends, except swapping out the ice cream with cannabis. (But that's a really good idea, right, City of Portland?)

These grants are taken from the \$700,000 of cannabis taxes the City of Portland has earmarked for Cannabis Social Equity Grants, and come from some of the 3 percent city tax you pay every time you visit a local dispensary and make a purchase as a non-OMMP cardholder. Ballot Measure 29-180 established that a portion of these taxes needs to be allocated for the following:

"Support for neighborhood small businesses, especially women-owned and minority-owned businesses, including but not limited to business incubator programs, management training, and job training opportunities; and providing economic opportunity and education to communities disproportionately-impacted by cannabis prohibition."

These are all good things, even if they don't involve the aforementioned cannabis social for me and 20 of my jazz-tobacco-toking friends.

Portland Prosper will administer \$210,000 of the money to provide industry support and technical assistance to minority-owned cannabis businesses. The remaining \$490,000 is set aside for applicants who may request funding for projects and programs ranging from \$25,000 to \$150,000 in the following priority areas:

- Record clearing and expungement
- Workforce development
- Re-entry housing services

If you have experience or expertise in one of the priority areas, foster interconnected communities, and provide multicultural and community-specific engagement, you should apply. Non-profit and for-profit entities of any size are encouraged to apply.

[Follow this link](#) to download the 2019 Cannabis Social Equity Grants announcement and application.

Portland Parks Director Calls Financially Unstable Golf Program a "Good Investment"

*By Alex Zielinski
May 23, 2019*

The city's public golf courses are hemorrhaging money.

According to a [new city audit](#), decreasing revenues, unaddressed maintenance issues, and waning public interest in the sport has left the "long-term viability of the golf program is in question." That's despite the city pumping an extra \$800,000 in taxpayer dollars into the program three years ago.

The revenue problems detailed in the golf audit, dropped the same day City Council will vote on its annual budget, mirrors issues plaguing the entire Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) program, which oversees the city's five golf courses.

The proposed 2019-2020 budget sets the golf program's budget at \$9.7 million—4.3 percent of the total PP&R budget. In comparison, the amount of funding Mayor Ted Wheeler has introduced to "bridge" the massive gap in PP&R's budget and temporarily keep several community and recreation centers open is \$3.9 million—1.7 percent of the total parks budget.

The audit concludes that the current golf program lacks long-term financial stability.

"[The city] has taken steps to decrease costs and increase use of the city's courses, but despite these improvements, financial risks remain," the report reads.

But Adena Long, PP&R director, doesn't see it that way.

In her response to the audit report, Long curiously called the golf program a "self-supporting business model"—a statement soundly debunked in the audit.

"While maintenance of aging facilities remains a challenge, the Golf Program continues to be a good investment for Portlanders," writes Long in a response to the audit report. "PP&R's courses consistently generate operating surpluses."

However, the audit tells a different story, claiming that the 2016 transfusion of \$800,000 into the golf budget "stanching three consecutive years of net operating losses."

The audit recommended PP&R present a longterm financial forecast to City Council that addresses its budgetary gaps. Despite appearing unfazed by the golf program's grave financial problems, Long said her department is committed to following these recommendations.

The Uncertain Future of Portland's Parks

By Alex Zielinski

May 23, 2019

"Save our parks! Save our parks! Save our parks!"

This chant serenaded Portlanders as they left the city's last public hearing on the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

After years of patching the ballooning Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) budget with temporary funds, the City of Portland's award-winning parks system is facing a whopping \$6.3 million budget gap. It's the incremental result of the bureau's relatively static revenue stream not catching up with its quickly growing parks and community-center programs.

This gargantuan budget gap has only worsened Portlanders' collective exhaustion over the annual fight to keep its 146 award-winning parks and 29 community and recreation centers open.

"Every year, these meetings pit people in our community against each other," said Emily Golden-Fields, co-chair of Portland's Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) chapter, speaking during an April budget hearing. "Here we are again, dancing to the same tune. We are tired of having to beg."

Often, Portland parks and community centers are put on the city's annual chopping block, then saved at the last minute by leftover budget dollars. This year, however, promises more permanent cuts.

To rebalance this year's off-kilter budget, PP&R leadership initially suggested shuttering up to six community centers and recreation facilities and slashing 56 full-time employees. Mayor Ted Wheeler softened the blow in his newly revised budget proposal, offering one-time funds to cover summer classes at three community centers on the chopping block (Hillside, Sellwood, and Montavilla), allowing the Columbia Pool and the Community Music Center to stay open for at least one more year, and granting Multnomah Arts Center enough funding to remain open for two more years. Wheeler's budget, however, only saves one of those 56 jobs from annihilation.

Wheeler has asked PP&R Director Adena Long and Parks Commissioner Nick Fish to cobble together a long-term plan within the next year to fundamentally change the way the floundering bureau is funded. A few ideas that have been tossed around: Creating a formal "parks district" that has the power to raise and collect its own parks-specific taxes (Seattle voters approved this tactic in 2014), introduce a "parks bond" similar to the successful housing bonds Portland and Metro have advanced in the past few years, or leaning on private organizations to fill budget gaps.

That final option was coolly received by many members of the public during the latest—and final—budget hearing. "Hearing of soft privatization is frightening," said a woman at the hearing who identified herself as Holly.

Kelsey Owens, a Sellwood mother of two, said she was disturbed that, instead of funding after-school programs that keep kids from joining gangs or other “unhealthy” groups, the city is keeping its dollars in policing programs that disproportionately targets people of color. Owens was alluding to the city’s Gang Enforcement Team (now called the Gun Violence Reduction Team) that was discovered to be pulling over more people of color than white people, on the simple assumption they were in a gang.

Owens’ critique is sourced directly from a proposal pitched by another member of city council, Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty. For the first time in recent history, a city commissioner has introduced an amendment to the mayor’s budget that suggests alternative ways of shuffling city dollars. By defunding the Gun Violence Reduction Team and relying on the salaries of unfilled Portland Police Bureau (PPB) positions, Hardesty has managed to save all PP&R jobs from extinction—and keep all parks and community centers open for a year.

“That funding will give us time to have a much more thorough conversation about how to fund our parks for the long term,” Hardesty told the Mercury.

In 2011, PP&R was recognized as the best-managed park system in the nation from the Academy for Park and Recreation Administration and the National Recreation and Parks Association. A recent study by a private research firm found that out of all major US cities, Portland ranks first among millennials for its parks and green spaces.

But without a dramatic overhaul to how the city funds park maintenance—as well as hiking classes, daycare programs, judo classes, and other beloved PP&R offerings—will Portland’s park standards slip?

“This decision upstream is going to affect all of us downstream,” said Owens at the May hearing. “I never thought in my wildest dreams you would take the heart out of our community. That is what our community center is.”

Hall Monitor: Protest Season Is Coming

By Alex Zielinski

May 23, 2019

It’s that time of year when the sunny days have cautiously begun to outnumber the gloomy ones and the lines for Salt & Straw begin to make a little more sense. In Portland, that can only mean one thing: Protest season is coming.

Recent Portland summers have been marked by protests that appear to serve only as an excuse for two opposing organizations to publicly throw insults and punches.

Here’s how they usually play out: Members of the Vancouver, Washington, alt-right group Patriot Prayer schedule a demonstration in Portland, showing up with rifles, MAGA hats, and sanctimonious smirks. They’re met with disdain from black-clad members of Portland’s anti-fascist (Antifa) groups. Eventually, armored Portland Police Bureau (PPB) officers escalate the confrontation with smoke bombs and bean-bag bullets. After hours of cat-and-mouse chases around downtown, serenaded by police loudspeakers’ threats of arrest, the crowds disperse—only to return the following weekend and repeat the charade.

It’s exhausting.

Last summer, numerous rallies—all instigated by Patriot Prayer—ended in mass arrests, serious injuries, and outrage from Portlanders fed up with their city being used as an alt-right playing field.

Mayor Ted Wheeler attempted to solve the problem by introducing a policy that restricted where and when people could hold demonstrations—but the policy’s unconstitutional techniques kept it from passing a City Council vote.

At the same time, the public raised concerns that PPB officers appeared to favor members of Patriot Prayer over local counter-protesters. Officer comments about ignoring alt-righters who showed up to an August rally with a weapons cache—not to mention friendly text messages between Portland Lt. Jeff Niiya and Patriot Prayer leader Joey Gibson—only solidified those worries.

In February, City Council voted to denounce white supremacy and alt-right movements, a purely symbolic statement against Patriot Prayer. At the council meeting, Wheeler added: “Today’s resolution is the beginning, not the end, of a process.”

So where does that leave us?

Wheeler’s communication director, Eileen Park, says the mayor’s office doesn’t have any new tactics to address Patriot Prayer protests. The city has requested two investigations into how the PPB handled protests in 2017 and 2018, but it’s unlikely we’ll learn anything from them soon.

City Attorney Tracy Reeve says an outside investigation started in mid-May will take an estimated six months to complete. The results of an internal inquiry by the city’s Independent Police Review (IPR) won’t be made public for several months.

On May 1, Patriot Prayer gave Portland leaders an opportunity to show an improved response. That afternoon, the group swarmed Cider Riot, an Eastside pub hosting a May Day event attended by Portlanders affiliated with Antifa. Armed members of the alt-right group shouted at and pepper sprayed patrons, and sent one woman to the hospital with a vertebrae fracture.

PPB officers showed up an hour after they received the 911 call, long after the ensuing street brawl had dispersed.

“We were hung out to dry by the police,” said Cider Riot owner Abe Goldman-Armstrong, who is suing Patriot Prayer for damages. “There was no appropriate response.”

Portland’s Police Oversight System Seems to Be Working. Why Does the Mayor Disagree?

*By Alex Zielinski
May 23, 2019*

On May 16, a small audience witnessed an act rarely seen on the public stage: A police officer was held accountable for doing something wrong.

For the first time in Portland history, city commissioners overturned a police chief’s decision and voted to uphold a citizen’s allegation that an officer violated Portland Police Bureau (PPB) policy. The majority council vote means that the PPB must discipline the accused officer, even if Chief Danielle Outlaw doesn’t think it’s warranted.

“It’s a historic day,” said Dan Handelman, the founder of Portland Copwatch, after the vote. To Handelman and other longtime police oversight advocates, the vote is a rare sign that the convoluted, glacial system that Portland uses to determine whether an officer violated PPB policy is working.

The only problem? Mayor Ted Wheeler disagrees.

Wheeler, who campaigned on a promise to strengthen the PPB’s accountability system, was the sole commissioner to vote in favor of the police bureau on May 16. Before the vote, Wheeler also questioned why City Council should be able to overturn a disciplinary decision made by the PPB.

“I wonder,” Wheeler said, “if this is really a fair or reasonable process.”

Portland has long struggled to create a police review system that includes some semblance of civilian oversight. While few familiar with the process of the city’s Independent Police Review (IPR) believe it’s without flaws, Wheeler’s critique suggests he’d prefer even less transparent review procedures for Portland cops accused of misconduct. This idea—which clashes with the very reason the IPR was created 18 years ago—leaves advocates questioning where Wheeler’s allegiances lie: with the officers he employs or the community he was elected to represent.

It’s incredibly rare for City Council to hear an IPR case. To understand why, one first has to grasp the painful intricacies of the city’s officer complaint process, which is overseen by the IPR.

The IPR was created in 2001 to field complaints from members of the public who believe an officer violated PPB policies—allegations that can include everything from officer profanity to an unjustified use of deadly force. Citizens’ complaints are sent to either an IPR investigator or an investigator within PPB’s internal affairs office. IPR investigators exist to offer a more neutral examination of specific complaints, like those involving high-ranking officers, discrimination or retaliation against a member of the public, or free speech restrictions. PPB’s internal affairs investigates everything else.

If investigators find that the police officer in question violated PPB policy, they kick their findings to the police chief, who then chooses whether or not to discipline the officer. If investigators find that an officer didn’t break the rules, the case is closed—unless the person who filed the complaint wants to appeal the decision.

That appeal is heard by the all-volunteer Citizen Review Committee (CRC). If the CRC sides with the citizen, the police chief gets involved and usually reaches some kind of settlement, like agreeing to discipline the officer or improve cop training on a certain policy. In the rare cases when the police chief refuses to agree their officer made a mistake, then—and only then—does the allegation warrant a City Council vote.

The final befuddling piece of this labyrinthine process is how the commissioners are expected to vote. Instead of voicing their own opinion on the case, commissioners decide whether, based on the facts, a “reasonable person” would come to the police chief’s conclusion.

This month marked only the third time in 18 years that one of these appeals landed before City Council—and the first time commissioners voted in support of the appellant.

The particular complaint, filed by Kristin Bowling, accuses PPB Officer Neil Parker of retaliating against Bowling for taking photos of an armored police vehicle as it pulled into a PPB parking garage. According to Parker, the officer behind the wheel, Bowling was making a face that “express[ed] disapproval” while she snapped photos. Parker wrote Bowling a citation for

jaywalking, despite her being only one of several people crossing the low-traffic street at the time.

For some unclear reason, this retaliation case was investigated by PPB internal affairs, not the IPR. Those PPB investigators initially concluded that Parker did not act in retaliation, but Bowling appealed, and the CRC supported her claim. Outlaw, however, firmly believed there wasn't enough evidence to prove that Parker acted in retaliation, which left city commissioners with the responsibility of deciding if a "reasonable person" would agree with Outlaw's analysis.

"I have come to know... Chief Outlaw over the time she's been in office and, in general, find her a very reasonable person," said Commissioner Amanda Fritz at the May 16 meeting. "However, in this particular decision, I don't find her or the Police Bureau's decision reasonable."

Fritz pointed to Parker's interview with PPB investigators—interviews that are never made public—where he said, "I don't care about people recording me, but there was something about this whole event that spurred me on to... write a citation."

Parker went on, according to Fritz: "I mean, to me... it's the filming and... [I thought], because of this photograph, I'm going to write this ticket."

Commissioners Chloe Eudaly and Jo Ann Hardesty agreed with Fritz, leaving Wheeler the sole vote in support of Outlaw. (Commissioner Nick Fish was absent that afternoon.)

Wheeler—who serves as both Portland's mayor and police commissioner—argued that because Parker told investigators that he "did not care" about being photographed, it was clear he wasn't acting in retaliation. But, being the final commissioner to vote, Wheeler also knew his dissent would not change the outcome.

"I've already lost this one, and that's democracy at work," Wheeler said before casting his vote.

The council's majority vote means that, unless it's delayed by an objection from the police union, Parker will likely be disciplined for retaliation. Based on the PPB's discipline guide, he faces anywhere from two days of unpaid leave to termination. It's a significant punishment for Portland's rarely reprimanded police force.

That gravity wasn't lost on Wheeler.

"There's something else I want to say," he said before ending the council hearing. "I have serious concerns about this process. I have concerns about having a simple majority of an elected city council being able to overturn the police commissioner [and] the chief... on what is effectively an HR disciplinary measure."

It's this comment that troubled police watchdogs like Handelman who remembers IPR's predecessor, the Police Internal Investigations Auditing Committee (PIIAC). Under PIIAC, the police chief was allowed to overrule City Council votes on a citizen's police misconduct appeal. Time after time, police chiefs used that veto power to protect officers from discipline.

IPR was largely created to correct that self-policing policy, allowing city commissioners to have the final say on these appeals.

Handelman, who sat on the 2000 committee that created the IPR, said he met with Wheeler early in the mayor's first term to explain the significance of this history. That's why Wheeler's comment was so disheartening to hear.

"Clearly our conversation didn't stick," said Handelman. "This is not just a HR decision, it's a civilian check on the paramilitary body the city employs. That comment made it seem like he was working on behalf of the police."

Amanda Lamb, interim director of the IPR, declined to comment on Wheeler's critique, saying the IPR doesn't comment on council decisions.

On the 2016 campaign trail, Wheeler repeatedly criticized the city for not having enough power to hold police responsible for their errors. By the end of his first year in office, Wheeler successfully addressed one aspect of the issue—eliminating a rule allowing cops who shoot people to wait 48 hours after the shooting before being interviewed by an internal affairs investigator.

But ever since, Wheeler has been accused of increasingly obsequious behavior toward the PPB. It's been particularly evident in his treatment of the IPR. Wheeler's concern with City Council's "civilian check" on the city's police comes two weeks after he made a similar observation about the CRC, the only other layer of civilian oversight included in the IPR process.

On May 2, after CRC explained to City Council why their 11 members voted unanimously to support Bowling's appeal, Wheeler said he was "struggling" to understand how they came to this conclusion if the six other people who reviewed the case before the CRC didn't agree. (Five of those six people were members of the police bureau, and one was an investigator with IPR.)

This stumped the members of the civilian oversight committee. "If the mayor just expects us to agree with the police, what's the point?" CRC Vice Chair Candace Avalos told the Mercury after the meeting.

Both Avalos and Kristin Malone, an attorney who's chaired the CRC since 2015, attended the May 16 City Council meeting. While Malone says she was happy the final vote favored Bowling's appeal, she was unsettled by Wheeler's remarks.

"The mayor is not the first person to observe that Portland has a very unusual police accountability system. It's not wrong to say the winding path the community must take to hold police accountable is problematic," Malone says. "But you can't call this an HR decision. It's not like someone in the Water Bureau went against city policy. These decisions have real importance in the community."

Malone has consistently advocated for a more transparent and equitable IPR system. To no avail, she and other CRC members have routinely pressed City Council to do away with the wonky "reasonable person" standard of review. If Wheeler truly wanted to reimagine police oversight in Portland, Malone says, she wouldn't complain—unless it meant keeping even more of the process from the public.

"It would be a massive mistake to completely hide the process within the Police Bureau," she says. "The best thing our police accountability system can be doing is to make sure the public has faith in the system."

The current system has already lost Bowling's trust. She believes the sliver of civilian oversight—represented only at the very end of the drawn-out process by the CRC and City Council—isn't enough to truly reform the city's police bureau.

Bowling has spent the past two years steering her case through IPR's slow-moving complaint process. In her brief testimony prior to the City Council vote, Bowling made sure commissioners understood what she's gained from a process that "allows the police to investigate themselves."

"I've learned that the IPR process fails and is biased toward police in so many ways... I don't have time to list them all," Bowling said. "I am also not under much illusion that even if you do vote in my favor, that the officers involved will change their ways."

"In the end," she said, "the result will make very little difference."

City Council Approves \$5.6 Billion Budget in 4-1 Vote

By Alex Zielinski

May 23, 2019

Today's vote to approve the City of Portland's \$5.6 billion annual budget ended in tears.

"I'm really disappointed," said Farrell Richartz, business manager for Laborers' Local 483. "This is effectively an anti-worker budget."

Richartz' union represents the 56 parks bureau employees whose jobs have been eliminated in the 2019-2020 city budget. Faced with a \$6.3 million budget gap in the Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R) budget, city commissioners opted to cut jobs and shutter community centers to keep other crucial programs afloat. The budget suggests some of the community centers seek out private partnerships to backfill their budgets.

The majority of people facing layoffs are instructors. Many of them tearfully commiserated with each other outside city council chambers after the meeting wrapped.

"I would say the community centers, the programs, and in fact, the jobs themselves are a community trust," says Richartz. "It's not just one person... those jobs belong to the community. And the city has taken that away."

While all city commissioners lamented the fact they had to cut jobs to balance the parks budget, none of them could agree on a solution to halt the imminent lay offs.

"Usually at this vote I feel a sense of hope and satisfaction... with a touch of frustration," said Commissioner Amanda Fritz, before casting her vote in favor of the budget. "But today I'm sad. This has been a really hard process for staff and community members effected by these cuts. I wish there had been another way, but I was not able to find it."

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, the one commissioner who voted against the proposed budget, introduced three amendments that could have reshuffled city dollars to fund the doomed PP&R jobs. None of them passed.

One suggested defunding the Portland Police Bureau's controversial Gun Violence Reduction Team, another proposed cutting the budget for PPB's officer body camera program, and a third suggested freezing pay raises for non-represented city employees making over \$80,000 a year.

"This is my very first budget process, and I'm pretty sure it didn't do it the way it's been done in the past," said Hardesty, before the council voted on her amendments. "But that's the fun part about being the new kid on the block—You get to do things differently. You get the opportunity to have conversations that we may not have had before. I'm asking you, my colleagues, take a chance."

Commissioner Nick Fish, who oversees the PP&R, praised Hardesty for her commitment to the parks bureau.

"Commissioner Hardesty and I agree on more than what we disagree on," said Fish. "We agree there are no easy choices. We agree that parks is going to have to reinvent itself in order to be strong in the future. We agree that our employees are our greatest resource."

"Here's my commitment to you," he went on. "I will work tirelessly to put parks on that stronger foundation. I will look at different models that would perhaps allow us to get out of this vicious

cycle of every year making these kinds of choices. We can't continue to have this discussions. They're too discouraging to our community, they're not fair, and they're not okay."

Fish has been working with the city's human resources department to find a way to move laid off PP&R employees into other vacant positions—both within the bureau and in other city departments. It's still unclear how many people will be eligible for or accept those jobs.

"I will work tirelessly to make that happen," Fish told Hardesty, before voting against her amendments.

While commissioners noted their agreement with some of Hardesty's other ideas—like not funding body cams or increasing the level of transparency within the PPB—they noted that a budget vote is not the time for in-depth policy decisions.

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly said throughout her tenure City Council she's lamented the lack of thoughtful policy conversations commissioners can engage in outside of rushed budget hearings.

Mayor Ted Wheeler said he'd like to start holding public work session on policing issues year-round.

"I think it would be helpful for us to be able to hear the same information at the same time, hear from some people with lived experience who've been impacted by the programs," Wheeler said. "So that next year, people don't feel pressured into using the budget process as the only opportunity for meaningful dialog around policy."

All commissioners supported the idea.

The approved budget includes funding for a number of brand-new programs, like a homeless response program drafted by Street Roots, a new program that connects nurses to people who call 911 for low-level emergencies, three mobile bathrooms and three mobile showers to serve homeless communities, mediation services for disputing tenants and landlord, a water taxi called the Frog Ferry, and a 311 public information hotline.

The budget will not officially go into effect until July 1.

The Portland Observer

Winning School Board Candidates

By Danny Peterson

May 22, 2019

DePass elected for Portland Public and Penson for PCC

Two longtime African American community members won election in local school board races Tuesday with the preliminary results showing Michelle DePass being the successful candidate for Portland Public School Board, Zone 2 and Tiffani Penson winning a seat on the Portland Community College Board of Directors, representing north and northeast Portland and Columbia County.

DePass—who works for Portland's Housing Bureau--pulled in 66 percent of the vote while her opponent, Shanice Clarke, another African American woman and an educator, netted 29 percent. Carlos Jermaine Richard, also vying for the position, garnered four percent of the more than 62,000 votes cast.

DePass' win marks the first time in over 10 years at least one black member of the community will be represented on the seven-member Portland School Board when the district begins its new fiscal year in July. Andrew Scott, Eilidh Lowery, and Amy Kohnstamm—the only person to return for another term—also secured seats on Portland Public School Board, the unofficial results said.

Tiffani Penson--also a city worker--garnered 86 percent of the 20,600 total votes for the Portland Community College Board of Directors for Zone 2 while her opponent, Leonardo Kendall, a Portland State University student, garnered almost 13 percent. Michael Sonnleitner also secured a seat on the board for Zone 3.

Numerous other school district positions were also on the ballot, which saw a statewide turnout of nearly 15 percent—or 500,000 of Oregon's nearly 2.8 million eligible voters--according to the Secretary of State's website as of Tuesday.

OPB

Portland City Council Approves Budget With Painful Cuts To Parks

*By Amelia Templeton
May 23, 2019*

In a 4-1 vote, the Portland City Council approved the mayor's proposed 2019-20 budget Thursday.

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty cast the sole vote against the budget, after two amendments she proposed to temporarily limit layoffs at the parks bureau failed.

The most significant changes affect Portland Parks and Recreation, which uncovered a \$6.3 million annual shortfall in its \$94 million operating budget. The city's independent budget office has been warning of a potential shortfall at parks for the past several years.

Under the budget adopted by the council majority, the parks bureau will eliminate 50 positions and prepare to scale back its community center program over the next year.

As it became clear that Hardesty's amendments would fail, expressions of pain and tears swept down the faces of a half-dozen parks employees who had come to watch the vote and said they were on the list for layoffs.

The budget includes \$2.5 million in one-time funds to blunt the impact of the cuts this year and buy the parks bureau time to look for other operators for some of the community centers.

Commissioner Nick Fish took over management of Portland Parks and Recreation last August, just a few months before the bureau's fiscal problems came to light.

Fish said the cuts were necessary to address the root cause of the \$6.3 million funding gap.

"There were no easy fixes," Fish said. "The more we looked at it, the more we realized that one-time funding was not the solution. It would only extend the problem for another year, allowing it to grow and to worsen."

In addition to the operating budget shortfall, the parks bureau has a \$28 million annual maintenance funding gap and many aging facilities, which contributed to the rationale for closing some community centers.

The popular Sellwood Community Center, which provides preschool programs, is scheduled to close in September. The Columbia Pool will remain open this summer, but will close July 2020. The city will reduce taxpayer funding for the Community Music Center and the Multnomah Arts Center.

The parks bureau is looking for private partners to lease and operate three of its other small community centers.

The mayor had relatively little new discretionary funding to work with: \$2.4 million in ongoing revenue and \$18.4 million in new one-time funding.

The city's investment in homeless services, which has grown rapidly in recent years in response to the housing shortage, will remain steady at about \$34 million, including about \$2 million in federal grants.

Hardesty proposed three amendments to the budget that didn't pass.

One amendment would have frozen a planned cost-of-living increase for some non-union city workers. She also proposed eliminating funding for the police bureau's body camera pilot program, and eliminating the bureau's 28-person gun violence reduction team and moving those officers to patrol jobs.

Hardesty, who is the only person of color on the council, has used the budget process as a platform to discuss the gun team's history of stopping African Americans at much higher rates than any other community in the city.

"There are not two sides to this," Hardesty said, wondering aloud how outraged the council would be if police were stopping white people at disproportionately high rates. "There is justice; there is fairness."

None of the amendments passed, though Commissioner Chloe Eudaly cast what she termed "a protest vote" in favor of the proposal to eliminate the gun violence reduction team.

Hardesty's full-throated campaign against the parks cuts violated one of the unspoken rules of Portland's unusual commission form of government: Commissioners generally defer to their colleague in charge of a bureau on questions of that bureau's management.

Eudaly, Fritz and Wheeler all said they have faith in Fish and the new director of parks, Adina Long.

Fritz, who was the previous parks commissioner, noted that she had proposed closing some of the same community centers last year.

"I can't support another one-time allocation to keep all the aging facilities open," she said.

Eudaly called Hardesty's proposals "a false choice" and "a short-term fix," and noted that the general fund is under strain as the council's priorities shift toward homelessness and transportation.

"It's frustrating to see cuts at a time of relative economic prosperity," she said. "That is in no small part due to the federal government divesting in things like affordable housing and transportation and our need to fill in that gap."

But after a tense hearing Wednesday that was marred by what was perceived as a patronizing comment from Wheeler to Eudaly and Hardesty (followed by three apologies), the mood before Thursday's budget vote was markedly collegial.

Hardesty acknowledged that her approach to the budget process was unorthodox, and said she intended no disrespect to her colleagues.

“I would not be true to myself and my value system if I didn’t do everything in my power to make sure we had a public conversation about whether or not we are investing based on my values,” she said.

Fish thanked the mayor for his leadership on the budget and praised Hardesty for her passion for the parks system.

“We agree on more than we disagree on,” he said. “My goal is to help every impacted employee find a home at the city. I will work tirelessly to make that happen.”

The parks workers facing layoffs will be offered vacant positions within the bureau and will be given the first opportunity to interview for other city positions they qualify for. Sixteen workers will be laid off July 1, and the city expects at least half will move into other positions. A second round of 36 workers will be laid off in September.

The city’s total 2019-20 budget is \$5.6 billion, with roughly 6,000 full-time workers on the payroll. Of the total budget, \$609 million, or 11%, is in the general fund, which pays for public safety, parks, homeless services and transportation. The rest is restricted for specific purposes or goes to servicing the city’s debt.

While Hardesty’s proposals to eliminate programs at the police bureau did not gain traction, her advocacy on the issues led to a promise from the mayor.

Wheeler said he wants to create opportunities for his colleagues to review police bureau policy outside the budget process. He committed to holding council work sessions, open to the public, on controversial police issues like school resource officers and body-worn cameras.

Editor’s Note: This story was updated to add context, and to clarify the content of Commissioner Hardesty’s proposed amendments and the program effect of the Sellwood center closure.

E-Scooters Return To Portland Despite Concern Over Accessibility, Inclusivity

*By Meerah Powell
May 24, 2019*

Portland is using new strategies in its second electric scooter pilot program to increase safety, inclusivity and accessibility, but some people are still worried about oversight.

Even on a gray, damp day, Cory Huff is still happy to rent an electric scooter.

Huff and his wife gave up on owning a car 12 years ago when they got tired of the upkeep and maintenance. Instead, he’s been focused on alternative forms of getting around such as Car2Go, public transportation and biking.

“I probably think about transportation more than most people because I don’t have a car,” Huff said. “I’m always thinking what is the most optimal way to get where I’m going because it’s not just about cost, it’s also about how fast will I get there, how safe will it be and how fun will it be.”

Huff is a digital marketing consultant and business owner. He works from home, but rides e-scooters about five or six times a week to run errands and go to meetings.

He was one of the people who accounted for some of the more than 700,000 rides that Portlanders took on electric scooters last year during the city's four-month e-scooter pilot program.

Now, e-scooters have returned for a full year, but not everyone in Portland is as excited as Huff. Last year, the city's pilot aimed to bridge gaps in transportation and get more people out of their vehicles, and for the most part, it did do that.

A report from the Portland Bureau of Transportation, or PBOT, the agency in charge of the e-scooter program, found that for many people last year, e-scooters were an introduction to active transportation.

The program also encouraged a good chunk of people to use e-scooters instead of cars. About 34% of Portlanders and 48% of visitors took an e-scooter instead of driving or using a ride-share program, the report states.

But still, there are a multitude of concerns around accessibility, safety and inclusivity when it comes to scooters in Portland.

"We've received quite a lot of complaints from people with disabilities within Portland mainly revolving around sidewalk access with e-scooters either by blocking part of the sidewalk, by being parked sideways or by being parked right on curb ramps," said Matthew Denney, an attorney with the nonprofit legal group Disability Rights Oregon.

Although people can technically park e-scooters on the sidewalk, they must be near a bike rack or close to the curb, so as to not block access.

E-scooter users illegally riding on sidewalks was also an issue last year.

Dylan Rivera is with PBOT. He said they've been keeping those issues in mind when talking with Disability Rights Oregon about this new pilot program.

Specifically, while the old program focused solely on education, the new one allows for penalties to be issued against riders.

"We'll have PBOT regulatory specialists monitoring sidewalks especially for illegal scooter riding and parking and providing that information to the companies," Rivera said.

From there, the companies — not PBOT — will issue warnings, fines and suspensions.

Disability Rights Oregon is concerned about that.

Rivera said PBOT will analyze the data, including the number of rides taken, injuries and complaints. Just like a report they put out last year, that data will be public, he said.

Still, with three different, private scooter companies being held accountable for the data, Denney said he worries that negative information, like complaints, could easily be withheld, and fines and warnings may not be issued.

"We're concerned that this is a way for the companies to kind of self-police and that it's going to result in actually less information coming out of this pilot than last pilot," Denney said.

Jeremy Nelson is Oregon's general manager for Lime, one of the companies in both the current and former e-scooter pilot programs. Nelson said the company has incentive to take action against problematic riders.

“We don’t want these folks who repeatedly are causing problems to be on our scooters,” he said. “We actually welcome the opportunity to understand when someone is doing something wrong and we actually want to educate those riders.”

The new complaint process is another concern for Disability Rights Oregon.

Last year, people could send general complaints directly to PBOT. This led to the agency receiving more than 6,000 complaints about scooters and riders from Portlanders, most of them related to riders not wearing helmets or riding on sidewalks.

This year, the complaint process must go through each individual scooter company — and the complaint must identify a specific rider.

A major issue in this for Denney is that people must record a “permit number” from the front of the scooter in order to make a complaint.

“If you don’t know the number of the scooter because it went by you on the sidewalk or you didn’t get it when you walked by it, there’s not actually a way to send a complaint into the company,” he said. “I think that’s going to discourage a lot of people from even sending in complaints.”

Nelson with Lime said that number on the front of the scooters is the only way to hold individual riders accountable.

“Without that, there are hundreds of thousands of trips taken, and it would be like saying, ‘A red car was going too fast,’” he said. “But if you can say, ‘A red car with a certain license plate number,’ which essentially is what the permit number on the front of the scooter acts as, then we’re able to identify an individual.”

Nelson said that Lime has “suspended several riders whose behavior was extremely negative” so far, after receiving all of the information needed to identify the people, including the permit number.

Along with ongoing uncertainty from Portlanders with disabilities, there have also been concerns surrounding accessibility and inclusivity with the e-scooters.

The first pilot worked successfully on extending ridership outward from Portland’s core — to North Portland and East Portland — in a push to include people of color and low-income Portlanders.

Nelson with Lime said the company is trying to make scooters accessible by offering discounts for underserved communities with Lime Access — a program that gives a 50% discount to riders on local or federal assistance programs.

According to Portland State University researcher Jennifer Dill, data from last year’s program shows that ridership with respect to race and income was relatively balanced. She found the biggest gap in ridership is with gender.

Dill found that only about a third of Portland e-scooter riders last year were women. The issue was safety, she said.

“Women want safer, more separated infrastructure,” Dill said. “A white-striped bike lane is not enough to make a lot of women feel safe biking on the street and the same thing goes for e-scooters.”

Rivera with PBOT said, even though there’s a need for more data collection, he agrees.

“Our strong suspicion is that as we grow our network of protected bike lanes, we’ll see more women riding bicycles and potentially more women riding e-scooters,” he said.

Rivera said that a portion of the money from all e-scooter rides will go toward improving bike infrastructure.

Although there are only about 1,000 e-scooters on Portland streets currently, by early 2020, Rivera says there will probably be 8,000 or 9,000.

Audit: Portland's Golf Program Is Struggling To Stay Afloat

By Meerah Powell

May 23, 2019

In a new audit out Thursday, Portland’s city auditor says the Portland Parks and Recreation’s golf program is struggling to keep itself afloat.

The Parks and Recreation division owns four golf courses in Portland and one in Beaverton. The city has offered golf for more than 100 years.

According to the audit, the golf program has cut costs and worked to increase the number of people using its courses but is still fighting a national trend of declining golfers.

In 2017, Portland City Council transferred \$800,000 in tax-payer money to the program from its general fund in a “bailout” to keep it going.

These financial conditions are only projected to worsen due to costly employee retirement and health benefits, the audit said. Staff salaries and benefits are the largest cost for the program at more than \$3 million a year.

Not all of Portland’s golf courses are equally in the hole.

The Heron Lakes, Eastmoreland and RedTail courses have had positive cash flow every year since 2014. Rose City Golf Course had negative cashflow from 2014 to 2017 but turned it around in 2018.

Colwood, a nine-hole course in Northeast Portland, is doing the worst financially and has had negative cash flow since 2015. The Parks division borrowed money in 2014 to purchase the course jointly with the Bureau of Environmental Services, in an interest to restore wetlands in an area of the property.

The initial plan was to repay the debt in five years, but according to the audit, construction delayed the opening and Colwood did not generate enough money to pay back the debt in that time. Now, the debt repayment will impact the golf fund for four more years.

In 2015, the Parks division developed a strategic plan to help the golf program. It focused on outreach to the community, improving financial stability and demonstrating environmental stewardship.

Portland Parks and Recreation has cut maintenance expenses, eliminated a number of positions, reduced the number of mowers and shared larger equipment among the courses. It also partnered with organizations in attempts to attract young people, women and people of color.

Still, the rounds of golf played at Portland-owned courses are down 6% over the last five years and 46% over the last 25 years.

In order to keep it self-sustaining, the audit recommends the golf program work with city council on how to better its financial situation and review and potentially renegotiate contracts after what it calls “a history of lax contract management.”