

The Oregonian

If not jail, hospital, then what? Portland aims to dispatch better first responders for some homelessness calls

*By Molly Harbarger
September 16, 2019*

As the sun began to set, Chelsea Swift and Amanda Smith pulled their white van up near a man tucked between some bushes on the side of a busy street. He was grumbling and yelling at passing cars. He grasped a handful of toys and a flashlight as he held a conversation that only he could understand.

Swift and Smith work for Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets – most commonly called CAHOOTS – a 48-person program that provides medical and behavioral health services as an official third arm of Eugene’s public safety system. It’s become the national model that many cities are trying to emulate. But few have.

Portland joined that list this year when the City Council dedicated \$500,000 to figure out how to adapt CAHOOTS to a larger urban area. The city’s working group is expected to put a proposal before the council in November.

The idea was spurred by an editorial from Street Roots, the Portland nonprofit newspaper focused on problems faced by people living in poverty. Executive Director Kaia Sand called for an alternative method for helping homeless people who are in mental health or drug-related distress. The editorial drew from an investigation by The Oregonian/OregonLive that found 52% of all arrests in the city were of homeless people -- the vast majority of those for low-level crimes.

Those are exactly the kinds of arrests CAHOOTS is trying to deter.

Swift and Smith left the man alone after unsuccessfully trying to cajole him into a ride to a place to chill out, away from the concerned -- and sometimes fearful -- public eye.

Even interactions like that one -- that seem to go nowhere -- are important, they say. Now they are aware of him and a little bit about his mental state. If they get three more calls that night, each time they will build more of a relationship. Maybe on the fourth, they say, they’ll be able to help him access services he might need -- a place to sleep, food or a ride to the pharmacy to pick up medicine.

And maybe the next time, he’ll call them for help as many people do when their phone is out of minutes and can only dial 911. That’s why Swift is willing to work within a system that is so closely tied to law enforcement.

“If they have one number, we want to be part of what that number calls,” Swift said. “If we want to keep the scope of our work, we want to be part of that system.”

She thinks that by addressing those issues with CAHOOTS, she can help the man avoid becoming more aggressive in the future and interacting with police, who have more limited options: jail or the hospital.

Eugene garners attention

On one of the first chilly September nights this year, Swift drove the darkening streets of Eugene like a veteran cab driver. She’s worked the night shift for three years and is used to navigating

the city and its highways, running after vague descriptions of people in distress -- sometimes from hours-old calls.

But it was a wrong turn that brought her to Linc, a middle-aged man lying on a grassy median that separated a residential neighborhood's sidewalk from the street. Three women sat on the sidewalk nearby.

One of the women said she'd called for a CAHOOTS response, but the dispatcher told her it would take too long and opted for a paramedic. That frustrates Swift. CAHOOTS is sent when 911 dispatchers recognize the person in crisis may respond better to a civilian than police.

Some people ask for CAHOOTS specifically, a growing habit the program wants to encourage.

Early on, the relationship between CAHOOTS and the city's other first responders was more adversarial. The program sprouted from a group of radical hippies who began helping people in drug crisis who needed a place to sleep for the night. Eventually they shifted, aiming to be "in cahoots" with police when they turned their grassroots approach into a program that city officials chose to fund over hiring more police.

But over the last 10 years, CAHOOTS staff have invested more time building relationships with police and dispatch workers by being open to receiving feedback as much as giving it. While some officers embrace the program more than others, the first responder and broader Eugene-Springfield community has come to see CAHOOTS as an equal resource.

That night, the fire crews were happy to have Smith already taking Linc's vitals by the time their two engines pulled up.

Linc was an alcoholic, he said, and wanted to walk to the hospital to enter a detox program. He had been denied over the phone, but in the past, he had found that he could get in this way. Problem was, he'd overshot the hospital and was in too bad of shape to keep walking.

Swift said Linc's was a typical call. It's also the kind of call that she is glad to respond to instead of police or even the fire department, which likely would have taken Linc to the nearest hospital. There, he would rack up a medical bill before being released to go home after he sobered up -- or maybe he actually would get into a detoxification center.

Instead, Swift and Smith helped him to the van, which is set up with a few seats bolted to the wall and a wide space on the floor, where Linc lay down.

As the sun set, they drove him to the Buckley Detoxification Center. The nurses there recognized the van and its occupants and helped Linc check in for the night.

While Portland has more beds for people in Linc's situation, Eugene is more limited. A homeless couple with a toddler who called Swift and Smith to ask where they could sleep safely for the night ended up with no options other than to walk the streets to stay awake.

Eugene has one shelter and it only had room for the mother and child, but the father said his post-traumatic stress syndrome acts up when he is separated from them and could become violent and end up in jail.

CAHOOTS answers a variety of calls in addition to drugs and mental health. They even notify families when a loved one dies on the street and provide grief support.

Program Manager Tim Black said it's an approach that has shown measurable impact over the past 30 years. He estimates CAHOOTS saves \$7 million annually in medical costs because the people they help would otherwise end up in emergency rooms.

Today, the lean operation deploys two vans with two workers each who log about 110 hours daily in staggered shifts. Combined, they field about 20% of calls that come in to 911 and the non-emergency line.

Only about 10% of CAHOOTS responses require help from other public safety agencies. Black said the key is that his team works with public safety, but isn't beholden to them. That allows them to respond with different tools -- and a different mindset.

"The type of response that an officer is going to have is completely different than the response we would have," Black said.

CAHOOTS has become the frontline defense for the area's homeless, even though it was never meant to provide homelessness outreach. But the calls they respond to coincide with the area's population of people who struggle to be able to pay rent.

Now, about 60% of all the people CAHOOTS work with are homeless.

Expanding its reach

Likewise, officials say the majority of calls to Portland's 911 system are about homelessness. And when police receive a call, they say they are obligated to check it out.

Data shows many of those interactions end in arrest, creating a disproportionate number of homeless people in jail or cited for low-level crimes. Advocates say that doesn't need to be the case.

Sand, the Street Roots executive director, said she proposed the street response idea after a series of articles in local media made it clear the current system isn't working. She also heard from homeless Portlanders who said interactions with law enforcement made it harder to find housing and other employment.

City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty is leading the charge to create a CAHOOTS-style program, and is in the early stages of deciding who would be involved and in what capacity. Part of that work has been to collect data from people living on the street.

"Getting the right first responder to the right incident means we need to talk to the people who will interact with these first responders," she said.

Representatives from nonprofits, advocacy groups, public safety agencies and various bureaus meet regularly to iron out other issues.

Robert King, who is Mayor Ted Wheeler's public safety policy adviser, also helps lead the planning and is focused on defining what a pilot project might tackle with the first infusion of cash.

He sketched out a two-person walking beat with a distinct boundary, such as the downtown core or a section of Southeast or North Portland. The street responders would work like CAHOOTS, but only for calls about unwanted people or welfare checks -- calls that might be low priority for police on a busy night.

The street responders would also plug into the police radio channels, so they could head for scenes where they'd be helpful. Or be called directly by police and fire officials. They would likely be stationed within the fire department or be contracted to do the work, King said.

"It's going to be a bit of a learning curve for the street response folks and for council and for the community," King said.

Followers adapt their models

Portland isn't alone. Olympia, Wash., hired Eugene's former police chief and this year, became one of the first cities to adopt the CAHOOTS model.

The new chief insisted Olympia would benefit from the program, so city officials worked with residents, community leaders and business owners to create the Crisis Response Unit. It is housed within the police department and responds when asked by police, fire or social service agencies.

About two-thirds of their calls are self-initiated: They see someone charging into traffic and intervene. City data also showed that the unit showed up at the same place as police in at least half of the first six months' worth of calls.

Washington's labor laws block emergency medical technicians from working in the unit, so instead two mental health workers patrol the streets. The first team was deployed in April.

Dispatchers faced learning curve

Portland's Bureau of Emergency Communications, which houses the 911 call center, is already used to weighing various options when considering how to respond to Oregonians in need.

In 2011, the U.S. Department of Justice stipulated that Portland needed to fix how officers handled interactions between mentally ill people and police. As part of the settlement, the Multnomah County health department agreed to take on some calls from suicidal people with its federally mandated crisis line.

The line is staffed by mental health counselors with advanced degrees. Neal Rotman, who heads the county's mental health programs, said it only made sense to divert similar calls from 911.

Of the more than 80,000 calls the crisis line handles a year, about 500 are diverted from 911.

County officials have also tried to reduce the number of calls that must be diverted. They posted advertisements on buses and elsewhere hoping to provide an alternative to calling 911 for mental health issues. Rotman also met with business groups and others to urge them against calling police on the person who appears to be homeless and yelling outside their door.

His staff has access to a vast database of health records. They can see whether a caller was put on a psychiatric hold recently after being picked up by police or if they were seen at a hospital for similar behavior over the past two years. If a caller is on Medicaid, their case manager will be notified, allowing the crisis center to alert a familiar face to check in on the caller within hours.

In some cases, the contracted mobile mental health intervention team Project Respond is sent out immediately. Otherwise, a county clinician or other mental health worker is supposed to follow up within 24 hours.

Rotman said that many callers prefer to deal with someone who is not in uniform.

"In many cases, people will engage because it's not the police," he said, "because they don't have that fear."

The diversion was a change for dispatchers. They had to learn to evaluate who would be best served by a crisis counselor and who needed a police officer.

Lisa St. Helen, who runs Portland's 911 center, said that the policy has been tweaked as dispatchers ran into gray areas. No other city had tried this strategy, she said, so it was challenging to figure out how to keep a caller on the line as they were transferred. City officials also had to consider liability when telling a suicidal caller to hold on the line.

Now, the guideline is whether someone is in immediate danger -- standing on the bridge -- or whether they are still in the phase of talking about stepping on to the bridge. Dispatchers might ask if there is a gun in the house, and if so, where. Is it loaded? Is it unloaded but ammunition is on the table?

Police, who sometimes face life-or-death situations without the training to talk someone off the ledge, saw the benefit of shifting that burden elsewhere.

Providing more options to the people handling calls makes sense to St. Helen.

“911 is ever evolving and change is a part of the process,” she said. “When you find there is a better way to respond or handle calls, we have to make those changes.”

City moves to pay \$15,000 to settle suit filed by man mistakenly arrested by Portland police

*By Maxine Bernstein
September 13, 2019*

The city of Portland plans to pay \$15,000 to settle a suit brought by a Forest Grove man who said he was tackled and wrongfully detained when cops mistook him for a car vandalism suspect at an anti-Donald Trump demonstration in 2016.

Daniel Martinez, of Forest Grove, said he was walking east on the sidewalk of Southwest Yamhill Street at the tail end of an anti-Trump march on Nov. 13, 2016, when police in riot gear suddenly rushed him from behind and tackled him to the ground.

He said officers held him down, pressed their knees into his back and used zip ties to handcuff his wrists behind his back.

Martinez said police mistook him for a suspect in a car vandalism that had occurred some days earlier.

“The true perpetrator of the vandalism, who was arrested subsequent to the facts and circumstances giving rise to this complaint, was an African-American and bore no resemblance to Mr. Martinez,” his lawyer Richard E. Davis Jr. wrote in the suit.

The settlement is on the City Council’s consent agenda for a vote Wednesday.

City attorneys acknowledged that police had briefly taken Martinez into custody but then realized they had the wrong man.

A police officer identified Martinez as a suspect wanted for property crime damage from a prior night’s protest, and officers developed a plan to take him into custody, according to deputy city attorney Daniel Simon.

Officers quickly moved behind Martinez and “using a controlled takedown,” secured Martinez’s hands behind his back with zip ties, stood him up and walked him to other officers about a half block away, Simon wrote in court papers.

“Shortly afterwards, (Portland police) officers realized that plaintiff was not the suspect,” Simon wrote.

Police released Martinez, “apologized for the inconvenience and offered plaintiff a police business card,” Simon wrote in his response to the suit.

The ordinance before City Council suggests the settlement is appropriate “to avoid the risk of an adverse jury award.”

Martinez initially had asked for \$75,000 in non-economic damages and \$1,482.00 in economic damages in the suit. The Forest Grove man, according to his suit, missed three days of work and suffered nerve pain in each wrist. He cited medical bills that totaled \$944.

Portland releases dramatic photos of Swan Island bridge damage, plans to reopen third lane soon

*By Andrew Theen
September 14, 2019*

Portland released dramatic photos Friday showing the scale of damage that occurred last weekend when a Union Pacific train derailed and smashed into multiple Swan Island bridge support columns.

Nearly a week after the two locomotives and three tank cars carrying liquified petroleum gas derailed and crashed into the bridge, Portland engineers are still uncertain how long repairs will take.

“We weren’t kidding when we said this would take some time,” said Dylan Rivera, a transportation bureau spokesman.

The city still says it could still be “several months” before crews are able to reopen all lanes on the bridge on North Going Street, the major connection between the rest of the city and the Swan Island Industrial Area.

Monday morning’s commute was a snarl, but employers said they would adjust people’s schedule if possible to deal with the limited travel lanes to the industrial area.

Rivera said the city has heard from businesses that delays were “significant enough to really cause significant pain.”

Union Pacific will halt trains on its line adjacent to the most severely damaged bridge column this weekend, Rivera said. That will give city engineers and contractors the opportunity to dig into the earth to examine the concrete support footings and pilings to see whether those structures were also damaged.

But the city does plan to reopen a third lane on Going Street “sometime the week of Sept. 16,” though the precise date is not yet clear.

Swan Island traffic jam on first Monday commute following train derailment

This week, traffic was limited to two lanes across the bridge, one in each direction. Next week, the second westbound lane will be restored.

City crews repaired a section of the bridge’s deck this week, removing damaged concrete from the 89-year-old bridge span.

Rivera noted this week that the bridge is actually three separate structures. The middle bridge, which suffered the most damage in the derailment, was built in 1930. The other bridges on either side were built in 1976.

In 2010, the city seismically upgraded the bridges and connected them for “lateral support,” Rivera said.

“We think the reinforcement we did intending to make it more resilient in the event of an earthquake may have also made it more resilient during last weekend’s train crash,” he said.

More than 35,000 vehicles use the bridge every day.

The city and Union Pacific officials are asking employees traveling to the job hub on the island to stay off North River Street, a private road through the railroad’s Albina Yard. That route was briefly posted as a detour in the wake of the derailment, but it is not equipped to handle large scale traffic, and some drivers “got lost” on the property this week, Rivera said.

It’s still unclear what the city will do with the damaged support columns. Rivera said options could include building around them, replacing them altogether, or otherwise shoring up the damaged columns.

Update: A previous version of this story referred to the damaged structures as beams. It’s been clarified to reflect they were support columns.

The Portland Tribune

2019 Portland Insight Survey to be presented to the City Council

*By Jim Redden
September 15, 2019*

Survey finds residents are evenly split between those who feel positive about the city's future and those who do not, with 45% agreeing and disagreeing. Long-term and African American residents are more likely to be dissatisfied.

The City Council will be briefed on the 2019 Portland Insights Survey on Wednesday, Sept. 18.

The survey, which was conducted by the City Budget Office, found that a majority of respondents are satisfied with Portland today as a place to live, raise children, work or go to school, or to be part of a community. But many are worried about the future, as expressed by these results:

- Residents are evenly split between those who feel positive about the city's future and those who do not, with 45% agreeing and disagreeing. Long-term and African American residents are more likely to be dissatisfied.
- Residents are evenly split between those who agreed they can find jobs sufficient to support themselves and their families, and those who disagreed. Those with disabilities report having more difficulty finding jobs that pay enough to support them and their families.
- Homelessness is perceived as the top challenge facing Portland. This perspective was shared across every race and age group. In all, 88% of respondents are dissatisfied with the city's response to homelessness, the highest level of dissatisfaction with any of the questions included in the survey.

- More than 40% of respondents in every race and residency length group identified the high cost of living as a top challenge facing Portland. They chose increasing housing affordability and addressing homelessness as a top budget priority.
- Residents are evenly split over whether Portland is making progress on becoming a city in which a person's outcomes are not based on their race; with 40% agreeing and disagreeing. African Americans were most likely to disagree, followed by those who identified as two or more races. Hispanic and white respondents gave similar responses, and Asians were more likely than others to agree.

The survey also found that a majority of Portlanders — 61% — feel they do not have the power to influence city decisions about issues important to them. Responses were consistent regardless of gender, educational attainment, household income and geography.

Responses were more negative among African American, Hispanic and white respondents compared to Asians. Those aged 45 to 74 and those who have lived longer in Portland were more likely to respond negatively as well.

The Office of Community & Civic Life is proposing a rewrite of the public engagement section of the City Code that is generating controversy. It would eliminate all references to neighborhood association in section 3.96 to not show favor to them. Many neighborhood activists oppose the change, while many community groups support it. The council is scheduled to consider the proposal on Nov. 14.

The survey also includes responses to questions about specific bureaus with the results broken down by areas of the city. Those in East Portland tend to be the least satisfied with city services.

The 2019 Portland Insights Survey was the first conducted by the City Budget Office. It replaced the annual Community Survey conducted by the City Auditor's Office for 26 years. The new survey was designed to better help city leaders understand Portlanders' priorities and recommendations for improvements to services. It also was the first to hire multilingual community members to solicit feedback by canvassing members of historically underrepresented communities.

You can find the survey at www.portlandoregon.gov/cbo/article/740406.

Your City Hall: Facial recognition ban to be reviewed by council

*By Jim Redden
September 16, 2019*

A work session on a proposal to ban facial recognition technology by private businesses in Portland is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 17

WHAT IS HAPPENING? The Portland City Council will be briefed on a proposal to ban the private use of facial recognition technology in Portland during a work session scheduled to begin at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 17.

The ban is being drafted by the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability at the request of Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty. As reported on Thursday, Sept. 5, by the GeekWire news site, it could be the most far-reaching such ban in the country. Cities already banning the technology include San Francisco, Oakland, California, and Somerville, Massachusetts.

WHAT IS FACIAL RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY? As described by GeekWire, facial recognition technology "employs artificial intelligence to match the faces of real-life people to images in databases. These biometric identification technologies are used by some cities for law enforcement and surveillance purposes, in public schools for security purposes and, increasingly, in workplaces, stores or other commercial spaces."

Although being developed by law enforcement agencies and private companies to identify both criminal suspects and to streamline retail and other commercial services, the technology also has attracted a lot of criticism from privacy and civil rights advocates, in part because it is being used by the Chinese government to track Muslims, and also because of race- and gender-related misidentification problems.

More than 30 activist groups recently asked Congress to ban law enforcement from using the technologies.

WHY DOES HARDESTY WANT TO BAN IT? Hardesty told GeekWire, "No one should be unjustly harassed by this technology, nor should anyone have to worry about their face being scanned, stored and sold by companies. I look forward to working with my colleagues on what really is a privacy and civil rights matter."

In preparation for the work session, the city's Smart City PDX program and the Office of Equity and Human Rights recently hosted an invitation-only Surveillance Technologies Community Forum with representatives from government, nonprofit, academic and private business arenas. Ideas generated during the event will be shared with the council at the work session.

"This work session will focus on facial recognition. However, the intention of the privacy work group coordinated by Smart City PDX and Office of Equity and Human Rights (OEHR) is to develop more comprehensive policies that include other surveillance technologies.

"Such policies would need to include procedures for responsible use, procurement, due diligence and due care of technological solutions to minimize negative impacts in our communities," said a bureau memo submitted to the council before the work session.

Although the Portland Police Bureau is not using the technologies, the Washington County Sheriff's Office is experimenting with them.

WHAT CAN I DO? You can learn more by watching the work session in person, on community TV, or on the City Auditor's website, where it will be streamed live and then archived for replaying. The video page can be found at <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/28258>.

The council has not yet scheduled a hearing on the proposed ban.

Willamette Week

15 Portland-Area Elected Officials Back City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly's Change to Neighborhood Associations

*By Rachel Monahan
September 16, 2019*

The letter of support comes at a time when the commissioner is facing an uphill battle to make changes at City Hall

Six Portland-area legislators and nine school board members signed a letter today backing City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly's push for changes in the city code on the official recognition of neighborhood associations.

"Communities of color in Portland have been marginalized, excluded, red-taped, discriminated and displaced, it is critical to acknowledge the harms committed in the past for us to undo our complex history and disparities," the elected officials write in a Sept. 16 letter. "The code changes acknowledge this past and commit to right these wrongs."

That letter is the latest volley in a war of words over how the city handles civic engagement. Eudaly has argued that Portland's neighborhood associations too often consist of disproportionately white, older homeowners while critics have said she's trying to dismantle groups that have provided a means for engaging with city government.

The legislators backing of her proposal as more equitable comes at a critical time for the proposal: Eudaly is facing the most controversial policy fight over her two and half years in City Hall.

The list of signatories include five Democratic lawmakers whose district touch at least parts of Portland: Rep. Diego Hernandez, Sen. Shemia Fagan, Rep. Sheri Schouten, Rep. Andrea Salinas and Rep. Tawna Sanchez.

The letter acknowledges what neighborhood associations have contributed to Portland. But it says that more groups should share access to the city's Office of Community and Civic Life.

"The change simply acknowledges that people organize themselves in many ways and the intent is not to elevate one specific type of group over another, but about bringing more people to a larger table," the signatories write.

Individual school board members, though not their boards as whole, also signed on. They include Andrea Valderrama, board chair of the David Douglass School Board; Yesenia Delgado, board chair of the Reynolds School Board; Jessica Arzate, board member of the Multnomah Education Service District; Sonja McKenzie, vice-chair of Parkrose School District; Sara Kirby, board chair of Parkrose School District; Sahar Muranovic, board member of David Douglass School District; Michelle DePass, board member of Portland Public School Board; Katrina Doughty, board member of Multnomah Education Service District; Erick Flores, board member of Parkrose School District.

Lt. Jeff Niiya Expressed Frustration With Police Bureau's Failure to Be Transparent About His Text Messages

*By Nigel Jaquiss
September 13, 2019*

"This police bureau and the executive management of this organization can't seem to get out in front of this," Niiya told an investigator.

As it turns out, the seven-month long investigation of Portland Police Bureau Lt. Jeff Niiya told the command staff of the bureau little it didn't already know.

That's because Niiya says PPB command staff, including Chief Danielle Outlaw, knew the scope of his communication with various protesters was somewhat broader than initially portrayed in the media—yet PPB declined to provide the more expansive communications or an explanation for how Niiya was interacting with the protest groups he was assigned to monitor.

"I was not working in a vacuum," Niiya told Independent Police Review investigator Andrea Damewood in an April interview. "I was providing information all the way up to the highest levels of this city about what was occurring."

"The chief of police knows—our current chief of police is someone else that knew about my text messages," Niiya added. "When the highest level of people in this organization are aware of things, they need—they need to understand there is a chain that everyone's held accountable and we need to do better around this."

Mayor Ted Wheeler and Outlaw yesterday released the results of a probe of Niiya's communications with Joey Gibson, the leader of the Vancouver, Wash.-based right-wing group Patriot Prayer.

In February, WW and the Portland Mercury reported that text messages the two papers obtained through public records requests showed that Niiya and Gibson communicated regularly on friendly terms. The resulting public outrage prompted Wheeler to call for an investigation of Niiya. The context for that investigation was the question of whether PPB was giving preferential treatment to Gibson and other right-wingers at the expense of their ideological opposites in the antifascist movement.

Investigators inside and outside PPB reviewed more than 11,000 text messages and interviewed Niiya and several of his colleagues and the mayor's police liaison. Their findings: Niiya did nothing wrong.

Interview transcripts show that Niiya expressed frustration that PPB command staff failed to provide full context for the text messages it released in February.

That failure to provide full context appeared to extend to what the bureau told the mayor's office, leaving Wheeler red-faced yesterday as he expressed contrition for not giving Niiya benefit of the doubt when he sought an investigation. Wheeler nonetheless said he was glad the bureau carried out the probe.

Niiya was less than thrilled.

"The context of the media about this is hurtful both personally and professionally," Niiya told IPR investigator Eric Berry in the April interview. "The fact that this police bureau and the executive management of this organization can't seem to get out in front of this, and we knew about these requests since November of 2018."

Niiya told Berry he felt he'd been hung out to dry.

"Why individuals in this department can't satisfactory (sic) perform their duties to provide context around this stuff...the media has a job to do. I completely understand that. But when the narrative is driven that is not complete, it's not a full story, right. You're only giving partial information and it's damaging to this organization. It's damaging to this city. It's damaging to me."

A PPB spokesman, Sgt. Stephen Yakots, declined to answer questions about why the bureau didn't provide more context earlier.

"I have nothing more to add regarding this investigation," Yakots said in an email.

The Portland Mercury

Documents Suggest Portland Police Chief Outlaw Texted with Patriot Prayer's Joey Gibson

*By Blair Stenvick
September 13, 2019*

A newly released city interview with a Portland Police Bureau (PPB) officer raises the question of whether PPB Chief Danielle Outlaw has ever communicated with Joey Gibson, leader of the far-right Vancouver, Washington based group Patriot Prayer. Though PPB denies any exchanges between Gibson and Outlaw, the interview transcript suggests otherwise.

On Thursday, Outlaw and Mayor Ted Wheeler announced that an investigation led by the Independent Police Review, a branch of the city auditor's office, had cleared Lieutenant Jeff Niiya of any wrongdoing. Niiya was under investigation after text messages between him and Gibson—which were obtained by the Mercury and Willamette Week through public records requests and published in February—raised the question of if Niiya had been overly friendly with or protective toward Gibson and his fellow Patriot Prayer members.

After announcing IPR's findings, the city released a trove of documents used in the investigation, including a transcript of an interview between Niiya and IPR investigator Andrea Damewood. (Full disclosure: Damewood writes food and drink reviews for the Mercury, but does not have any involvement with our news reporting.)

Their conversation is wide-ranging, and at one point they discuss the nature of police liaison work. Niiya makes the point that it's common for police liaisons to communicate with people who could potentially pose a danger to officer or public safety, and also asks that IPR look "for improvements in the process" of both how PPB's liaisons are trained and how they do their jobs. Niiya then says this:

"What has happened with me and how can we do better because when the chief of police knows—our current chief of police is someone else that knew about my text messages. There's text messages that you have between me and the chief and Joey, so when the highest level of people in this organization are aware of things, they need—they need to understand that there is a chain that everyone's held accountable and that we need to do better around this."

Niiya appears to be saying two things here: both that Chief Outlaw was aware of the texts shared between Niiya and Gibson, and that she participated in some of those text conversations.

When reached for comment via email, PPB spokesperson Brad Yakots told the Mercury, “I can confirm that Chief Outlaw never had communication with Joey Gibson.”

Yakots declined to comment on why Niiya would make the remark about “text messages that you have between me and the chief and Joey” if Outlaw has never communicated with Gibson.

At a Thursday press conference announcing the results of the investigation, both Outlaw and Wheeler referred to “11,000 text messages” that would be released as part of the investigation documents. After the press conference, PPB sent out a clarifying press release stating that only texts “which were relevant to their investigation” would be included in the documents, rather than all 11,000 messages.

The Mercury has submitted a public records requests for any communications between Gibson and Outlaw.

OPB

Student Activists Prepare To Hold A Global Climate Strike Friday In Portland

*By Monica Samayoa
September 16, 2019*

Portland youth activists are planning to participate in a global climate strike Friday to call on city leaders to stop the burning of fossil fuels and to take other action against climate change.

Student activists say they will walk out of class and arrive at 10:30 a.m. at Portland City Hall, where they plan to hold a rally and read out a list of demands.

After the City Hall rally, students plan to walk across the Hawthorne Bridge and head over to the Eastbank Esplanade, where a Climate Strike Festival will be held. There, they will be able to have more opportunities to meet with other organizers in taking action for climate justice.

“The hope is we’re kind of uniting as a global movement but also recognizing that there is a lot of work to be done locally and in small communities and that everyone really does have a small role to play,” student activist Holly Rolfs said.

Rolfs is a senior at Lincoln High School. Over the summer, Rolfs says, she was inspired to become a climate change activist after taking a three day environmental activism camp.

“Portland is a really an instrumental place for like setting trends for like the rest of the country because we are so like progressive and so many people are so connected to the nature out here, it would really be setting an example for the rest of the country,” Rolfs said.

About three dozen student activists met last week with Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler at City Hall, where they were given a tour and discussed the upcoming strike in a Q&A session.

After the visit, Wheeler said in a statement, “those with the most at stake are young people who now must contend with the mistakes of older generations. They are aware of and responding to the urgency of this crisis, knowing that the policies and decisions made now will influence climate and sustainability for generations to come. We would all do well to listen to and follow the lead of young people and respond to the climate crisis in kind.”

Last spring, a similar climate actions was held in Portland and other cities around the world.

This time student organizers are encouraging adults to participate to help pressure leaders to make changes.

“It’s a call for them to have the same commitment that the youth have for their futures and to take that bold step,” said Elijah Cetas, organizer for the Center for Sustainable Economy. “If we’re serious about the emergency that we face and we’re serious about the transformation that our economy and our society will need to undergo, then we need to start building at solidarity right now and we need to start showing ourselves that we can do it.”

Portland Public School Chief Engagement Officer Jonathan Garcia and Director of Community Engagement Shanice Clarke said in a shared statement that school administrators will be made aware of the planned strike. Elementary school educators will be encouraged to participate in a developmentally appropriate ‘climate change awareness’ learning-based activities program.

Meanwhile, middle school and high school students must make arrangements in advance with their teachers or principals for addressing any missed school assignments and inform school administrators on the day of, that they will exit the school.

Garcia and Clarke also announced they will be the first school district in the country to launch a new support role for students as a climate justice program manager will be made available to discuss the student-proposed climate summit in the spring.

The Portland Police Bureau said it is aware of the rally and will have the resources available to ensure a safe and successful event.

Additional Reading

The Rise of the ADU

**Homeless Residents Got One-Way Tickets Out of Town.
Many Returned to the Streets.**