

The Oregonian

Costs for Portland water treatment plant rise 70% -- because planners now including pipes

*By Betsy Hammond
September 21, 2019*

The Portland City Council approved plans for a \$500 million water filtration plant in 2017. But now, more than two years later, Water Bureau leaders say the plant likely will cost 70% more, or \$850 million.

That's because the original cost estimate did not include any pipes to carry water to or from the treatment plant. Planners did not disclose that omission to the council in 2017 or during the intervening two years.

Mayor Ted Wheeler appeared politely infuriated over it Thursday, noting the plant could never have operated without pipes leading in and out. Those are projected to cost \$100 million to \$200 million, and Water Bureau officials made it clear they think the higher-end system would be better for water quality and system reliability.

Overall, they recommended commissioners pick an \$850 million version of a treatment plant, not a pared-back \$730 million one or a "minimally compliant" \$670 million one. All three of those options include pipes.

Wheeler upbraided Water Bureau Director Mike Stuhr for his agency's lack of transparency when presenting the \$500 million plan to the council before its August 2017 vote.

"It would have been very helpful for me to know that what we were talking about at that time was not the total project cost but merely one component of an overall system," Wheeler said. "We needed to know we were talking about a piece of the system that could not operate, work or function in any meaningful manner without the other component of the system."

Stuhr said planners at the time didn't know what type or size of pipes they would need and hadn't studied those issues or the costs. "Nobody's pipe systems are the same," he said.

Portland, which prides itself on its pure "Bull Run" water from a huge virgin watershed of the same name, does not treat its water other than to add chlorine and a chemical to reduce its corrosiveness. But in 2017, the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the Oregon Health Authority said that had to change because cryptosporidium was showing up too often in the city's water samples.

Hence the 2017 vote to authorize construction of the \$500 million filtration plant.

Officials said at the time that \$500 million was a rough, early-stage estimate. They said the same is true of the new figures and showed that the \$850 million version of the plant could end up costing as little as \$600 million or as much as \$1.25 billion.

Stuhr and other top bureau officials briefed Wheeler and commissioners Amanda Fritz and Jo Ann Hardesty about the new plans and costs projections Thursday. Commissioner Nick Fish, who oversaw the Water Bureau when the original cost projections were made, and Commissioner Chloe Eudaly were both absent from that work session.

In addition to revealing that the recommended treatment plant will require \$200 million of pipelines, Stuhr and his team also said the projected cost to build the plant they envision sans pipes has risen by about \$150 million to about \$650 million.

Hardesty zeroed in most forcefully on the impact the ballooning costs will have on ratepayers. The typical residential customer would see their water and sewer bills rise an average of 9.2% a year to a peak increase of \$10.91 a month in about 2028, Water Bureau finance director Cecelia Huynh told the commissioners.

Hardesty and the mayor both questioned whether that was an annual figure, only to be told it is monthly, translating to an extra \$131 a year. "I need to understand why we are doing a Mercedes plant when requirement is minimum compliance. Why?" Hardesty asked.

Principal engineer David Peters' rationale included that the new plant would meet full projected water needs, while a smaller plant would require expensive use of groundwater in some years; that having two pipes leading into and out of the treatment plant would allow the system to continue to operate in case of needed repairs or maintenance to the lines; and that a longer pipe with more filtering better removes sediment and takes more advantage of gravity to move water.

The council will be asked to vote on the issue in October.

The Portland Tribune

Climate strike in Portland draws praise from leaders

*By Courtney Vaughn and Jim Redden
September 21, 2019*

Thousands of students protested Friday, Sept. 20, to draw attention to climate change.

Many protests take on an air of "us vs. them."

The Climate Strike on Friday, Sept. 20, in downtown Portland, was more of "us and us vs. a common threat," as community leaders largely sided with the students over concerns about climate change.

"It's incredible to see our world uniting and acting on climate change," said Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler, following the mass protest that saw thousands of students and their allies shut down city streets.

"Portland stands in solidarity with all climate champions," Wheeler said. "When it comes to addressing the climate crisis, those with the most at stake are young people. 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 their leadership. We ask that everyone continue fighting the good fight with us!"

The students and the school district appeared to be in lockstep even before Friday's rally. In late August, a group of teens addressed the school board, announcing plans for the strike and delivering a list of demands from PPS that included extra buses to transport students from schools to downtown, and excused absences for those participating in Friday's events.

PPS responded, advising students to "make pre-arrangements with their teachers or principals for addressing any missed school assignments," and inform school administrators on the day of the strike as they exited school.

Additionally, in keeping with requests from the student activists for climate-oriented education for students remaining in class on Friday, the district said it was encouraging pre-kindergarten to fifth grade educators to offer "developmentally appropriate climate change awareness" learning activities.

PPS officials noted at least 5,000 students from the district participated in Friday's strike.

All of that was in response to the speeches, chants and cheers from thousands of young people could be heard throughout downtown Portland Friday, but the urgent call for action was a message echoed around the world.

Thousands of teens left school and gathered in Terry Shrunken Plaza for a climate strike Friday, Sept. 20 to demand aggressive action from lawmakers and city leaders to combat climate change. Protesters flooded city streets surrounding Portland City Hall Friday morning, before marching across the Hawthorne Bridge to OMSI, where food trucks lined up and festival-style events continued through the early afternoon.

"This global movement is focused on demanding immediate change from government officials and lawmakers to end the age of fossil fuels in order to pave a road to a sustainable climate and stable future," Jaden Winn, founder of Youth Igniting Change and one of the key organizers of Friday's climate strike, said a few days prior to the mass turnout.

Friday's strike was the latest in a series of youth-led demonstrations related to climate change. In March, teens gathered in Portland in the same spot for a climate crisis protest.

"Our government needs to realize that we are the people who will experience the effects of climate change in the future, so our voices are most important on this issue," 16-year-old Lana Perice said Monday, quoting a fellow youth organizer. "We need to be heard and we cannot wait any longer."

Students poured into Terry Schrunken Plaza, spilling out beyond the plaza in droves with handmade signs. Three students took buses from Reynolds High School in Gresham.

"I have a lot of people that care about the climate," 16-year-old Zee Crain from Troutdale said, trying to keep footing on wet soil in plant beds a few hundred feet outside the plaza, with only inches to move in every direction. "If the planet's going bad, we're dying first."

Most teens who participated in the strike cited a lack of urgency from teachers and leaders.

"We want to voice our concerns for the future," Aaron Berlau, a Reed College student, said Friday. "(Climate change) was never something people of power voiced their concern for."

What they want

Before last Friday's Climate Strike, organizers posted five demands they want Portland area officials to accept.

Two are probably politically acceptable, declaring a climate emergency and requiring a climate health evaluation for future decisions.

One, providing TriMet passes to all students in Portland schools, requires taxpayer funding that has not yet been identified.

Another, denying all permits for the Zenith oil terminal expansion, is legally risky if the company qualifies for them.

And the final one, requiring Mayor Ted Wheeler to not attend an upcoming international climate summit, could be counterproductive. The mayor and the city employees who plan to accompany

him to the C40 summit in Copenhagen in October say they expect to learn new ideas for fighting climate change from representatives of the other large cities around the world who will be there.

Only those most involved with the rally were likely aware of the demands before it started. An informal survey by the Portland Tribune found no one who had visited the local protest's website. Most protesters probably first learned of them during the speeches. Many were already opposed to Zenith expanding its oil export operations, but they simply wanted city officials to "stop it" by any means necessary.

Although they may not have been fully aware of the organizer's specific demands, everyone at the rally seemed to have demands of their own, judging by their signs, banners, T-shirts and comments, which ranged from "Do Something" and "Use Less of Everything" all the way to "Eat the Rich."

Sophia England, a 17-year-old Madison High School student, expressed her generation's frustration. "This has been going on for a long time and nothing is happening," England said. "We're mad."

By Friday afternoon, the peaceful downtown protest had shifted to the OMSI campus on the eastside, and an hours-long Climate Strike Festival. Food carts and informational booths awaited those who attended.

Alejandra Gallegos-Chacon, a community organizer with OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon, was happy to explain how TriMet passes for school students who help fight climate change. "Not all school districts in Portland have yellow buses for all students, and we can't keep driving cars. Lower-income families can't afford bus passes. If students start using TriMet, they'll become loyal customers," Gallegos-Chacon said.

Willamette Week

Forceful Arrest of Student Climate Protesters Draws Condemnation From Portland Civic Leaders

*By Aaron Mesh
September 22, 2019*

“It was shocking to see police officers push into a group of children, and toss two boys to the ground to be handcuffed,” Nkenge Harmon Johnson tells WW.

The president of the Urban League of Portland is among the observers condemning the forceful arrest of two students during Friday's climate strike.

Nkenge Harmon Johnson, the Urban League's president and CEO, says she's troubled by videos showing Portland police officers shoving their way through a crowd of white teenagers to pull a black teenager from their midst.

"It was shocking to see police officers push into a group of children, and toss two boys to the ground to be handcuffed," Harmon Johnson tells WW. "There was no emergency requiring that use of force. No matter which sidewalk rule police claim to have been enforcing, it was not acceptable behavior from public safety officers toward our young people."

Harmon Johnson's comments come in the wake of several videos that have been viewed more than half a million times on social media and have drawn widespread ire.

The first video shows officers trying to yank two teenagers down from a metal railing on the Hawthorne Bridge. The second shows the officers later pushing through a group of student protesters to arrest one teen—apparently one of the two who was earlier standing on the railing.

The officers' actions have drawn denunciations across social media, including from Sarah Iannarone, a candidate for mayor. "I've said it before and will say it again: the Portland Police are out of control and need to be reined in," she wrote Saturday.

The Oregonian examined both these videos on Saturday, and provided a third showing police handcuffing two teens—one black, one white—on the pavement of the bridge as cars passed.

The Portland Police Bureau issued a statement Friday evening explaining its officers' actions. The statement said police saw several teenagers standing in a divider between car traffic and the sidewalk, but that only one refused to leave.

"After numerous requests, orders, and warnings that he would be arrested, the marcher still refused to get down," the statement says. "He was observed leaning out into the traffic lane causing vehicle drivers to abruptly apply their brakes. Officers were concerned about the extremely unsafe circumstance and saw arrest as the only option."

The statement says police waited to make an arrest until the teenager was in a safer location. That's when they pushed through the crowd—and arrested the teenager along with a second teenager who tried to stop the arrest. Police say neither teenager was injured, and both were "returned to the custody of responsible adults."

Mayor Ted Wheeler's office says the mayor will wait to comment until he sees the results of an internal review.

"The Mayor's office is aware of the incident and has been in touch with the Police Bureau regarding it," says Wheeler's spokesman Timothy Becker. "We look forward to learning the results of their thorough review."

The arrests came midway through a march by students demanding action from City Hall and others on climate change. The protest was part of a worldwide strike calling for policy change in the face of a rapidly warming planet.

The students are the second group to march across the Hawthorne Bridge in a month. On Aug. 17, a group of Proud Boys and other right-wing protesters walked across the bridge, with the permission of police who wanted to keep them separated from antifascists.

Harmon Johnson noted that juxtaposition.

"The use of force and arrests against the youth are especially troubling because we've seen the same police department act with deference and calm when facing rallies packed with adult white supremacists," she says. "In fact, officers work together to shut down roads and bridges to keep those haters safe from even approaching other individuals and vehicles. The police are adept at helping them move safely across the city. Why didn't PPB ensure the same for our children during their peaceful civic action?"

Mingus Mapps Used to Work in Commissioner Chloe Eudaly's Bureau. Now He Aims to Unseat Her.

*By Rachel Monahan
September 21, 2019*

"Clearly, one of the things that we don't have right now is an evidence-based commissioner and a commissioner who will listen."

This summer, Mingus Mapps was fired from the Portland Office of Community and Civic Life. Now he's looking for a bigger job—by challenging the elected official who runs the bureau.

Mapps, 51, launched his campaign to unseat City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly last week, in the midst of her controversial push to change the way the city solicits involvement from neighborhood associations.

A former political science professor at Brandeis University, Mapps is a critic of that effort. He says he was fired from his city job after refusing to discipline a subordinate whom he thought was blameless. This week, he discussed his insurgent campaign, where he differs from Eudaly, and why it's time for a leadership change.

WW: If you get elected, what are your priorities?

Mingus Mapps: Part of what you're going to get when we switch from Chloe to me is a profoundly different style of government. Clearly, one of the things that we don't have right now is an evidence-based commissioner and a commissioner who will listen. A commissioner who will examine his or her assumptions when challenged. A commissioner who respects the public and a commissioner who respects staff.

Is there a policy point on which you disagree with the commissioner?

Chloe said her No. 1 victory in her first term was that she helped get rent control on the agenda. It's a bad policy. I don't know anyone in Portland who wants to turn our city into San Francisco or New York.

You support infill development. Would you vote for the proposal as it's currently before the City Council?

I'd have to take a closer look at the proposal. In general, density is a good policy. A thing that makes communities vibrant is that they're walkable. It's much easier from an infrastructure point of view. [But] you can have too much density. Think about Burnside on the eastside up to at least 20th. I've lived in that neighborhood for a long time. Two or three years ago, you could just park in that neighborhood. I could park in front of my house. Some of our Portland neighborhoods are becoming a little dysfunctional because we've packed too much into too small of a space.

How would you address the housing crisis?

Chloe talks a lot about inequity. And I think one of the most painful inequities in this city is the difference between the services that are provided in East Portland and the services that are provided in other parts of the city.

The city hasn't built basic infrastructure east of 82nd. I think if we built sidewalks, if we paved roads, if we created more parks and provided adequate police protection, we could shift the center of the city away from downtown out to the borders. We're building downtown up so that it's a jewel box. Meanwhile we're neglecting most of the people who live on the periphery.

On the issue of homelessness, what specific program would you support?

My goal is to end sleeping on our streets and sleeping in our cars. How do we do that? We're going to need more shelters. We're going to need more supportive housing. We're going to need to be more aggressive about keeping people from falling into homelessness.

The city also has done a terrible job of working with neighborhoods around the placement and management of those shelters. That's a piece that I hear and I've seen and I think that we can fix and we should fix.

OPB

Students March On Downtown Portland To Urge Action On Climate

*By Elizabeth Miller
September 20, 2019*

Thousands of students marched through Portland Friday as part of the international strike against climate change.

Students demonstrated outside Portland City Hall, coming from schools all over the city. From there, students walked across the Willamette River to OMSI for what organizers called a “festival.”

“I want to do anything I can as a 16-year-old to help make the change now before it’s too late,” Madison High School junior Miles Anderson said.

Previous student marches have intentionally excluded adults from the effort, but for Friday’s “strike,” student organizers reached out to parents and other community members to offer support.

Students are speaking out against fossil fuels, such as the Zenith Energy project in Portland. Some called for stronger regulations on industry and more consideration for marginalized communities.

“The biggest thing I would like to see changed is from big corporations, but especially from Zenith Energy and the oil tanks they are constantly bringing into Portland through the cities,” Lincoln High School senior Aliya Peek said.

Students also pushed for climate change to be more of a priority in their classrooms, through a focus of science curriculum, for instance.

Phoebe Kemp is a senior at Lincoln High School in Portland. As part of an environmental justice class in school, she wants all students to have the same opportunity.

“We’re learning math, we’re learning science, we’re learning history, but we’re not learning what’s truly important which is about our environment,” Kemp said. “I think it needs to be a curriculum implemented in every school.”

A group of students presented a list of demands to Mayor Ted Wheeler’s staff. Students couldn’t get inside City Hall, because it was closed in response to the throngs who showed up to the downtown building as part of the march.

According to Sunrise Movement PDX, Wheeler's office responded to a meeting request with an invitation to meet Thursday night, the night before the Climate Strike.

Youth organizer and Grant High School senior Ella Shriner helped create the list of demands. She spoke at Friday's rally in front of City Hall, and called the last-minute meeting invitation "completely unacceptable."

"We're all out here organizing and building for this movement," she said.

The Portland Police Bureau said there were three arrests made related to the climate events, one adult and two juveniles.

For past protests, officials at Portland Public Schools have given mixed messages about student participation, or explicitly told students that they should be in class, rather than marching in the streets. For Friday's action, PPS was more tolerant, saying that students could get an "excused absence" for participating in the protest, so long as families communicated with schools about what their students were doing.

West Linn High School junior Matilda Milner held a sign with an illustration of the Lorax, from Dr. Seuss.

"Our generation feels ignored. This is our future, this is our health, this is our safety," Milner said. "We're running out of time and we're running out of resources, and we're running out of options. So I think we need to force radical change through whether it's the easiest option or not."