

## **The Oregonian**

### **Portland approves spending \$5.5 million for city projects, social services**

*By Everton Bailey Jr.  
October 16, 2019*

The Portland City Council on Wednesday green-lit spending \$5.5 million to help clean up the contaminated Portland Harbor, fund immigration legal services for domestic violence survivors, pay for concrete barriers used during Aug. 17 downtown demonstrations and other projects.

The biggest single item was about \$2 million towards a \$24 million Portland Harbor Trust agreement with the state. The \$5.5 million tally also included \$1.2 million related to the Columbia River Levee and \$500,000 toward the De Paul Treatment Center, which provides residential and outpatient services for drug and alcohol addiction.

The city council in May approved a \$5.5 billion overall budget for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. When city officials trued up how much of the general fund they've spent to date versus how much has come in, they found some newly available millions they could allocate.

Wednesday marked the end of the first of three budget monitoring periods where the city council can adjust spending plans to meet bureau needs.

The fall budget monitoring process occurs typically in October, a spring period around April and the final one occurs around June.

City financial analysts said they conservatively estimated how much money the city would bring in, and they now believe the city, fueled by the economic expansion, will bring an extra \$11.3 million to the general fund. City policy calls for at least half of the extra balance to be used to maintain or replacing existing assets.

The council also voted to authorize 36.5 new positions, with 27 of them going to help the Portland Bureau of Transportation keep up with its workload.

Some of the new funds approved by the city council included \$30,000 in immigration legal services at the Gateway Center for Domestic Violence, \$250,000 for outside legal counsel for labor negotiations, \$225,000 for new bathrooms at Pioneer Courthouse Square and five new vehicles for the Parks and Recreation Bureau, \$50,000 for the barriers used by police during the downtown Portland demonstrations in August, and \$120,000 to bolster the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability's anti-displacement action plan, which seeks to aid Portland low-income renters and vulnerable property owners living in gentrifying areas at risk of being displaced.

The council also granted the city attorney's office request for \$133,534 to settle two claims related to the burst water main that caused millions of gallons of water to flood streets, homes and businesses in Northeast Portland in March. That money is coming from \$250,000 already set aside in the general fund specifically to settle claims.

The housing bureau requested \$900,000, but the city council approved \$250,000. The money is intended to help create a stand-alone rental registry system to collect and track data related to rental units.

During the public comment period, Adam McBride-Smith was one of several speakers who urged the council to give the housing bureau the full amount of requested funds. He said it would

include basic accessibility features and price ranges that would aid renters in better finding housing that works for them as soon as possible.

“This is a pressing need for renters with disabilities, older renters, low-income renters, people of color and many others,” he said. “Right now in this city, it’s nearly impossible to find accessible, affordable housing, but an inclusive rental registry could change that for the better.”

Mayor Ted Wheeler said the system has his “100 percent commitment,” but said the \$250,000 was what he believed the city could actually deploy between now and the end of the year based on what the housing bureau said was possible. He said next year’s city budget would include more funding for resources and staffing for data collection.

“We’re not being stingy here,” Wheeler said. “If I felt realistically that by the end of the fiscal year we could do it, I’d put the whole amount in today.”

The city budget office said in its supplemental budget review report that the additional time would allow the city to develop specifications about what data is collected, how it will be used and what impacts they will have.

Several bureaus were also approved to carry over unspent dedicated revenue. The Portland Public Bureau, for example, was allowed to transfer \$2 million to the general reserve fund. The biggest chunk of that was \$1.3 million for the development of a body camera program, which the agency doesn’t have. The bureau has had annual funding for the program since the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

## **The Portland Tribune**

### **Portland Water Bureau measures on ballot**

*By Jim Redden  
October 17, 2019*

#### **Measures on the November special election ballot focus on Bull Run and mutual aid deals**

Two measures related to the Portland Water Bureau will appear on the Nov. 5 special election ballot.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who is in charge of the bureau and sponsored them, said they are common-sense changes that should have happened years ago. There is no organized opposition to either measure.

Measure 26-204 would put the current environmental protection for the Bull Run Watershed into the city charter. The watershed is the primary source of water for Portland and much of the region. City code already restricts public access, prohibits tree cutting, limits land-use activities, and more. However, the code can be changed by the council, while changing the charter requires a public vote.

Fritz said she was inspired to ask the council to refer the measure to the ballot after the 2017 Eagle Creek Fire that consumed much of the nearby Columbia River Gorge and the council's approval of a plant to filter Bull Run water to remove contaminants. The fire demonstrated how much harm a single person can cause, while the completion of the plant might encourage some to consider opening the watershed to public uses.

"If the protections are only in the charter, they could be changed by the vote of a single council member," said Fritz.

The measure is supported by a coalition of environmental organizations and the Portland Business Alliance.

Measure 26-205 would allow the bureau to spend ratepayer funds on emergency mutual aid agreements, which would enable governments to provide and receive emergency assistance following disasters. Such agreements typically allow the sharing of personnel and equipment.

The measure is a response to a judge's ruling in a ratepayer lawsuit that the city charter does not currently allow ratepayer funds to be spent on such agreements. The ruling prompted the city council to pay \$350,000 in general fund dollars to repay the bureau for money it spent to help New Orleans recover after Hurricane Katrina.

"General fund dollars are limited, and the bureau's experiences in New Orleans were good training that will help us recover when the big one hits," said Fritz, referring to the Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake expected to strike the region eventually.

Fritz said the bureau is already allowed to spend ratepayer funds to conferences and training exercises that are not as realistic as responding to a real disaster. She said the bureau would be required to report to the council every year on their mutual aid agreement activities, which will guarantee transparency.

## **The Daily Journal of Commerce**

### **Prosper Portland joins effort to boost diversity in construction**

*By Chuck Slothower  
October 16, 2019*

An effort to align government policy on construction sites is gaining steam, with Prosper Portland's board voting last week to endorse a framework plan for the Construction Careers Pathway Project.

The project, spearheaded by Metro, is an effort to increase participation in the construction industry by women and people of color.

Metro is developing what it calls a "tool kit," including template language for diversity goals.

William Myers, a Prosper Portland board member, said the Hyatt Regency Portland at the Oregon Convention Center project showed the need for better coordination. That project involves Metro, Prosper Portland, TriMet and various city bureaus.

"We had conflicting policies that needed alignment," he said at the Oct. 9 board meeting.

Myers noted the Construction Careers Pathway Project comes alongside other efforts to diversify the workforce.

"We're starting to see the industry take over and course-correct a lot of these things," he said.

Myers pointed to the positive jobsite culture training being conducted by the Pacific Northwest Carpenters Institute, as well as an effort being discussed that would provide child care to workers.

Raahi Reddy, Metro’s director of diversity, equity and inclusion, said the project is meant to provide a flexible framework.

“That’s up to each agency what the workforce agreement looks like,” she said.

Contractors will benefit from standardized language on workforce goals, said John Cárdenas, Prosper Portland’s construction, business and workforce equity project manager.

“The best reaction I can ever hear from a contractor or subcontractor is, ‘Oh, I’ve seen that before,’” Cárdenas said. “That familiarity breeds comfort, and that comfort gets us closer to achieving our goals.”

## OPB

# Multnomah County's Tally Of Homeless Deaths Shows 2018 Marked An All-Time High

*By Rebecca Ellis  
October 16, 2019*

On Tuesday, for the fifth time this year, Kaia Sand hosted a memorial in her office.

This week, it was for a man named Brantley Field, who used to be a vendor for Street Roots, the homeless advocacy nonprofit Sand runs. Staff ordered donuts, lit candles and displayed pictures of Field in cardboard frames. Before that, the service was for a woman named Francine who liked to put on her makeup in the back room — an area that’s now been affectionately renamed “Francine’s beauty parlor.”

“If you work with people who are unhoused you end up taking on what it means to memorialize their death.” Sand said. “This is a part of our work.”

Since 2012, Multnomah County, with the assistance of Street Roots, has been using records from the medical examiner’s office to determine just how many homeless individuals die within the jurisdiction each year. This Wednesday, the county released its numbers for 2018.

The final tally is the highest ever: 92 homeless people died last year, nearly double the death toll released in 2012, when the county started keeping track.

Drugs — usually methamphetamines or opioids — and alcohol contributed to more than half of the deaths, according to the report. Ten of the people had been murdered, up from four the year prior. Nine committed suicide, the report found.

To Sand, the fact that so many deaths were connected with substances came as no surprise. At Street Roots, she said she regularly sees people medicating to bear the trauma of living on the street, often using meth to stay alert after dark.

She said she found it shocking that that so many deaths were violent, though.

“I could feel it,” she said. “People end up getting beat up in their sleep with objects. ... They’re treated really badly out there.”

Paul Lewis, who has spearheaded the report for the last eight years as a health officer for the county, said this year’s death toll, like the years preceding it, is almost certainly an underestimate.

For this report, investigators combed through all the deaths in 2018 where the county's medical examiner marked the person as homeless. They then weeded out all of the deaths where they couldn't confirm the person's housing status or the person seemed to be living on the streets outside of Multnomah County. Any deaths that don't come through the medical examiner's office go uncounted in the report.

Lewis said 92 deaths is "the minimum number but a solid number."

Still, he said, that the minimum number is far too high.

"There are too many, too young, and they're preventable," he said. "These are things in your heart, you think, this shouldn't be happening."

The report found people on the streets died, on average, in their 40s. Two-fifths died of what the report classifies as "accidental" causes, mainly related to drugs or alcohol. A little more than a third died of "natural" causes, often uncontrolled diabetes and complications from chronic substance use. Two died from hypothermia.

Lewis said he was struck that a third of all deaths were connected to methamphetamines. Just a few years ago, he said, heroin was the most commonly used drug.

In a statement, Andy Mendenhall, Central City Concern's chief medical officer, warned against the dangers inherent with meth, which he said is "cheaper and more pure than ever."

"When we're talking about methamphetamines, you see death from a variety of causes," he said. "Stroke, heart attack, arrhythmia. And that's in addition to any of the traumas that result from becoming acutely psychotic. Once you're under the influence of methamphetamines, you are no longer of sound mind."

At least 530 people have died on the streets of Multnomah County since 2011, according to the report.