

The Oregonian

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler says he won't use taxpayer financing for reelection campaign

*By Everton Bailey Jr.
November 08, 2019*

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler says he won't use taxpayer funds to help finance his reelection campaign.

Wheeler's campaign announced Friday that he won't enroll in the city's new public campaign finance program. He announced his reelection campaign last month.

"What I do not want to do is divert limited taxpayer dollars to a newly-formed program at a time when we are asking more from our public employees, non-profit partners and law enforcement in the face of so many pressing challenges," Wheeler said in a statement.

His decision sets him apart from at least one of his challengers. Thus far, candidate Sarah Iannarone has qualified for the program. So has Carmen Rubio, executive director of the nonprofit Latino Network, who is running for the seat Commissioner Amanda Fritz plans to vacate due to retirement.

Wheeler is seeking to become Portland's first two-term mayor since Vera Katz, whose tenure ended in 2004 after three terms. So far, Iannarone and six others filed to run against him.

Wheeler's decision to opt out of the program will allow him to collect individual donations as large as \$500, the limit set by new city campaign financing rules. Candidates who opt to receive taxpayer matching funds can only accept donations up to \$250 per donor.

Wheeler cited homelessness, affordability, traffic congestion and climate change among the priorities that he plans to address. In his statement, he said he plans to run "a transparent, accountable re-election campaign gaining support from across Portland."

"In my last campaign, thousands of Portland residents from all walks of life stepped up to support our effort," he said. "I am committed to a grassroots fundraising approach this time around as well."

Wheeler was part of the Portland City Council when it created the Open and Accountable Elections program in 2016 and said he supports the system, although he won't enroll.

City officials have described the system's goal as trying to reduce the perception of corruption created by the influence of money in politics.

It allows enrolled candidates for mayor, auditor or city commissioner to qualify for \$6 in taxpayer funds for every \$1 raised from eligible donors. Mayoral candidates hoping to opt into the program must first raise at least \$5,000 from at least 500 verified Portland residents.

For commissioner races, candidates face a lower threshold to qualify: They must collect at least \$2,500 total in contributions from at least 250 verified Portland residents.

Candidates hoping to benefit from the program can accept donations of no more than \$250, except for initial seed money to help the candidate getting started.

A \$5 donation, for example, would be matched with \$30 from the taxpayer fund to yield a \$35 contribution to the candidate. City officials said the program has \$2.8 million available in matching funds for qualified candidates with another \$1.2 million expected in July 2020.

Portland voters amended the city charter last year to limit individual or political committee donations to \$500 per election cycle. The amendment also limits campaign spending and requires campaigns to disclose advertising funders, among other restrictions in mayoral, commissioner and auditor races.

Past contributions to Wheeler's campaigns have been the subject of controversy recently due to him accepting donations from controversial Portland hotelier and European Union Ambassador Gordon Sondland.

On Tuesday, Wheeler announced he donated \$16,000 he received from Sondland to eight local nonprofits and groups and to a national coalition supporting the House impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump.

A cheap shot from the city of Portland: Steve Duin column

*By Steve Duin
November 8, 2019*

Brenda Scott loved her two jobs with the city of Portland. She spent five years as a records clerk for the Police Bureau in the '70s, then was rehired as a contract compliance specialist in 2003.

She enjoyed great pay and benefits. She especially appreciated that the city was forever promoting equity, and it was her responsibility to ensure just that in city contracts.

So much for the ironic foreshadowing.

Two years ago, Scott discovered the city made a mistake in calculating her benefits when she returned in 2003. It failed to take into account her five years at the Police Bureau when Human Resources set her vacation accrual rate.

In each pay period, as a result, Scott was credited with 90 minutes of vacation time less than she deserved. "Which isn't a lot," she says. "But over 14 years?"

Scott informed her supervisor: "Then I let it go, because nothing moves fast at the city. I forgot about it until I was getting ready to retire."

As she said her farewells in October, Scott asked Human Resources to pay her the 483 hours of vacation time she was owed. At her hourly salary, that totaled \$21,375.

The bean-counters balked. Human Resources didn't deny the error. Instead, Scott was told the bureau had an unwritten policy that set a 6-year statute of limitations on such underpayments. The city would only reimburse Scott for 149 hours of vacation, not 483.

"I figure they owe me \$15,000," she says.

At this point, most people would call a spirited employment lawyer. Dana Sullivan, perhaps. As Sullivan notes, "Oregon law requires that an employer pay an employee all wages accrued and unpaid within a certain period after their separation.

"The penalty is 30 days of wages if they aren't timely paid. It seems to me Brenda might have a claim for wages due, plus the penalty, plus whatever attorney fees she might incur."

But Scott didn't want to sue a city that treated her quite well until the very end. She appealed instead to Margie Sollinger, the city ombudsman, and told her story to Sollinger's deputy, Tony Green.

Green poked around. He discovered that absolutely nothing in city code, administrative rule or state law prevents Human Resources from paying Scott what she is owed.

He also recalled the lovely parting gifts the city routinely hands out to bureau heads when they get the ax.

Anna Kanwit received \$195,000 when she left Human Resources in 2017. Paul Scarlett snagged \$182,000 when he was cut loose at Development Services.

And Bryant Enge sailed off with \$166,000 in severance pay when the Bureau of Internal Business Services dissolved in March 2018, even though the city didn't owe him a dime.

"When the city removes its highest earning bureau directors, it gives them tens of thousand in extra pay," Green says. "Here's a regular employee asking for what she's owed, and they turned her down.

"It's inequitable and unethical."

It's also not the way Multnomah County handles such cases. When Jeff Heinrich, the labor-relations manager, was asked how far back the county would go to correct vacation accrual errors, he said, "As far as we needed to. We could go back to the beginning of time."

To which Green adds, "Council often extols the city as the employer of choice – people want to work for the city because it's a good place to work. On this issue, the employer of choice is on the other side of the river."

On this issue, Cathy Bless, the interim director at Human Resources, didn't respond to two requests for comment.

Back in September, Commissioner Nick Fish asked the Council to authorize a \$4,322 refund in sewer charges to a North Portland property owner who, it turns out, was connected to a cesspool, not the sewer.

The charges dated to 1993. As Fish apologized on behalf of the city, Mayor Ted Wheeler wondered why that kind of sensible billing remedy even needed to come before Council: "I see no reason why this can't be resolved administratively by the bureau."

Probably because administrators at other city bureaus aren't concerned about equity and fairness for citizens, much less long-time employees like Brenda Scott.

"It's not like I was a slacker employee. I had incredible evaluations," Scott says. "And it's not my supervisors who are denying me. It's the city, for whom I'm just a name on a piece of paper.

"I'm not going to sue. I'm not. I don't want to get emotional. If nothing happens, that's just the way it is. But it's wrong."

Portland raising SmartPark all-day rates by \$2, just in time for holiday season

*By Andrew Theen
November 8, 2019*

Portland is raising the all-day parking rate at its city owned SmartPark garages by \$2 per day.

The transportation bureau announced the price increase on Friday, and said the new rates would be in effect Nov. 18, just in time for the holiday shopping season.

That's by design.

The roughly 4,000 spaces at SmartPark garages around the downtown core are increasingly filled. The department said it shoots for an 85% occupancy rate, so drivers can come and go in the short-term spaces.

A sixth garage, the bunker-like facility under O'Bryant Square, is indefinitely closed due to structural concerns. Willamette Week reported last month that the city is accepting bids to demolish the park and the 100 spaces underneath it.

Available spaces in the other five SmartPark lots, though, are increasingly hard to come by. John Brady, a transportation spokesman, said the rates had "all been over the 85% threshold" and the Southwest First Avenue and Jefferson Street lot is "approaching 100%."

Brady said the parking crunch is partly due to some employers downtown "providing employees all-day SmartPark validations."

He said that the city's rates were "among the lowest in the Central City" and the rate hike was designed to increase the available space for short-term parkers. Rates won't change for drivers who park in the garages for less than four hours. The garages intended, the city said, to accommodate tourists shoppers, business folks and others who park for a short period then move on.

"PBOT encourages anyone who needs long term parking, particularly employees who work downtown, to look to private garages for their parking needs," he said.

Drivers who enter the lot between 5 a.m. and 4:59 p.m. and stay for more than four hours would pay the new rates. It does not apply to weekend rates.

Here's the breakdown of the new rates:

First and Jefferson: \$20/day

Third and Alder: \$18/day

Fourth and Yamhill: \$18/day

10th and Yamhill: \$16/day

Naito and Davis: \$18/day

The Portland Tribune

Wheeler and Hardesty to host police union contract meetings

*By Jim Redden
November 08, 2019*

Two meetings are scheduled to seek public input for the upcoming negotiations with the Portland Police Association.

Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty will host two public meetings on the upcoming negotiations over the next police union contract.

The first meeting will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 18, at the PCC Cascade Student Union, Rooms 203 and 204, 5575 N. Albina Ave.

A second is scheduled from 6 to 8 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 16, at a location to be announced shortly.

According to the announcement, the goal of the events are to educate the public about the collective bargaining process, to listen to their thoughts and concerns and to gather their input to help ensure the contract best serves the interests and welfare of the public.

City attorneys will also be present to share guidelines and offer background on the current contract with the Portland Police Association that represents rank-and-file bureau employees, which is set to expire in June 2020.

SmartPark garage rates going up

*By Pamplin Media Group
November 08, 2019*

City said the new rates were designed to increase the number of spaces available for people visiting downtown.

Parking downtown in one of the city's five SmartPark garages will get a little more expensive.

The city said Friday, Nov. 8, that rates will go up Nov. 18. The Bureau of Transportation announced that rates will go up by \$2 a day, ranging from \$16 a day in the 10th and Yamhill garage to \$20 a day at the First and Jefferson garage. The change applies to customers who enter a garage between 5 a.m. and 4:59 p.m. and stay for more than four hours. Rates for people parking up to four hours will stay the same. So will evening rates, which begin at 5 p.m.

The city said the new rates were designed to increase the number of spaces available for people visiting downtown.

New rates for the five SmartPark garages will be:

- First and Jefferson garage: old rate, \$18 a day; new rate, \$20 a day.
- Third and Alder garage: old rate, \$16 a day; new rate, \$18 a day.
- Fourth and Yamhill garage: old rate, \$16 a day; new rate, \$18 a day.
- 10th and Yamhill garage: old rate, \$14 a day; new rate, \$16 a day.

- Naito and Davis garage: old rate, \$16 a day; new rate, \$18 a day.

Seismic retrofitting: Are homeowners getting ripped off?

*By KOIN 6 News
November 11, 2019*

Residential seismic retrofitting is unregulated and only requires a rudimentary sketch for a county or city building inspector to sign off on the work that can cost thousands

Some homeowners are not getting what they think they are paying for when having their homes seismically retrofitted to protect against a giant earthquake. ?

"It's the Wild West. You can do anything you want and call it a 'seismic retrofit,'" said Michael Wieber of NW Seismic. For the past 25 years, Wieber is a contractor specializing in seismic retrofitting of homes.

Wieber's description of the rules and regulations — or the lack thereof — highlights a murky gray zone for homeowners.

Residential seismic retrofitting is unregulated and only requires a rudimentary sketch for a county or city building inspector to sign off on the work that can cost thousands. "An inspector looks at this (sketch) and looks at the work and says, 'Yes, that's what you did.' Not that it would be effective in any way in an earthquake," said Wieber. "It's considered a voluntary upgrade."

Terry Whitehill, the head building code official in Portland, confirmed what Wieber said is true.

"There isn't a code standard," Whitehill said. "All we can do is look at what they're proposing to do and make sure they're not making the building any less safe than it already is."

Whitehill said the state mostly leaves voluntary upgrades — like retrofitting — up to cities and counties. The City of Portland's website includes guidelines on how a retrofit could be done to a house.

The State of Oregon's Construction Contractor's Board also states the following:

"The City of Portland is the only jurisdiction in Oregon that has adopted specific, prescriptive standards for earthquake retrofitting."

But the word "prescriptive" means the city is only offering suggestions, not mandatory regulations. And since no one in Oregon or Washington has any requirements about how a residential seismic retrofit has to be done, contractors don't need any extra training to do the work.

Let me put it this way: Probably once a week, we are retrofitting a seismic retrofit that was permitted and installed by a seismic retrofit contractor who does nothing but seismic retrofits. It's the Wild West," said Wieber.

Dr. Mary Lu had her Portland house seismically retrofitted three years ago. She recently wanted more work done so she brought in structural engineer BJ Cure of Cascadia Risk Solutions. But Cure, who specializes in retrofitting, had some troubling news.

Instead of using clips that guard against the side-to-side motion of an earthquake, the previous contractor used brackets meant to keep a house from lifting off the foundation in a hurricane.

Cure said without the proper clips, Dr. Lu's house could "actually slip."

"I go out to houses all the time where I see shoddy work," said Cure. "It's like a link in a chain. You have to look at every little link. If you're missing one link, that can be the failure point."

Commercial concerns over residential

Whitehill told KOIN 6 News he has not heard any talk of changing the codes for houses to ensure homeowners are getting what they think they're paying for. He points to the city of Portland's failed efforts to force the owners of commercial unreinforced masonry buildings to do seismic retrofitting.

"We haven't had the best luck when we try to do seismic ordinances of late and so as much as we know how important this is, if you don't have support out there in the community for this kind of work, it makes it really tough to put requirements in place," he said.

But residents like Dr. Lu want to feel safe under their own roofs.

"If I can at least have a little bit more certainty that I can be in this house and it's not going to fall down on my head and crush me — that's really the peace of mind I'm looking for," she said.?

Something is better than nothing

Though Wieber and Cure are concerned homeowners are not always getting what their homes need in a retrofit that can cost between \$4,000 to \$80,000, they aren't necessarily calling for more regulations. They're concerned added expenses that come with more government codes would prevent more people from having their homes retrofitted.

Wieber and Cure encourage anyone who owns a house on a hillside or a house that has an unusual shape or construction to hire an engineer, not just a contractor, a sentiment shared by Brad Hilliard with the Oregon Division of Financial Regulation, which has jurisdiction over earthquake insurance companies.

Hilliard said hiring a licensed engineer helps homeowners cover all of their bases; from making sure the right materials are being used based on a home's location to getting a retrofit that's scaled to match the projected earthquake.

"Could it be an extra expense versus just going with a contractor? Yes. But if you're gonna do it, make sure it's done correctly," Hilliard said.?

Earthquake insurance: Retrofit required??

"Insurance companies are going to have different standards and it's all going to depend on how old your house is and what type of construction you have," Hilliard said. "So there may be some type of a retrofit requirement because it could also be based on where it's located."

Factors insurance companies may consider include the age of a home, what kind of soil it rests upon and whether it's on a hill.

What a homeowner can expect from an insurance company also depends on whether a home is paid off. Hilliard said insurance companies will write a check to a homeowner after an earthquake but the name of their mortgage company will also be included as a recipient.

The mortgage company may choose to use the insurance money to first pay off the homeowner's loan and whatever is left can be used to rebuild or the homeowner can use the full amount to rebuild and continue to pay their mortgage.

"A lot of times, mortgage companies in disaster situations will say, 'OK, we'll sign off on the check but we need to see the estimate, we need to see the signed contract and we need to see that work is starting before we just hand the money over,'" Hilliard said.

In Oregon and California, just 15% of homeowners actually have earthquake insurance. In Washington only 11% have coverage.

Oregon's earthquake insurance market

For those who opt to purchase it, Hilliard said they shouldn't expect a speedy rebuild of their homes in the event of a 9.0-magnitude Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake. Critical infrastructure like hospitals and roads will be prioritized. But they can rely on additional living expenses like lodging, food and clothing during the years it could take to rebuild.

"It's just a matter of weighing the cost of the premium, weighing the cost of the deductible versus your comfort level — how you'll be able to get back on your feet if you lose everything," Hilliard said.

Oregon's new housing mandate faces fans, foes throughout state

*By Jim Redden
November 12, 2019*

HB 2001 calls for multiple units on residential lots in practically every city of any significant size in the state

To hear housing advocates tell it, Oregon is on the verge of addressing a wide range of social problems by effectively eliminating single-family zoning throughout the state.

During a housing conference held at Portland State University last week, several speakers said the mandate approved by the 2019 Oregon Legislature will create more affordable housing, ease the homeless crisis, compensate for past racial discrimination and fight climate change. House Bill 2001 requires that most cities allow a duplex on every lot, and up to four units on some lots within single-family zones.

"We all know that more and bigger isn't sustainable anymore. They don't leave us fulfilled," said Metro President Lynn Peterson, who kicked off the 2019 Build Small, Live Large conference held Thursday and Friday, Nov. 7 and 8.

Not everyone in the region is on board, however. The Portland City Council is moving toward achieving and maybe exceeding the goal by approving the Residential Infill Project, which was in the works before HB 2001 passed.

The West Linn City Council, on the other hand, is considering ignoring the requirement, which must be completed within a couple of years because of budget and other concerns.

During an Oct. 21 council meeting, West Linn Mayor Russ Axelrod called the change "stupid," saying the city's infrastructure is not designed for so much potential more density. Councilors Teri Cummings and Richard Sakelik agreed. They also said they were worried the new units might not be affordable to many households.

"This seems like it will create more issues than it will solve," Axelrod said.

West Linn Councilor Jules Walters acknowledged that the bill's mandates may not be perfect, but seemed opposed to directly defying them.

"I'm not sure perhaps this is the best way, but at least it's a step forward and I'm very encouraged by that," Walters said. "And also be aware that we — I believe all of us at this table — are very

supportive of our urban growth boundary and I'd rather have a cottage cluster next to me than to start building mansions on farms."

The Lake Oswego City Council is also considering imposing a \$15,000 fee on the demolition of existing homes to fund parks programs. Though not specifically related to HB 2001, it could reduce the number of new units envisioned by it.

Resistance may be futile, however. HB 2001 includes a model set of requirements that will be imposed on cities that do not revise their zoning. Some speakers at the conference were scornful of the two cities for challenging them.

Portland supports density increases

In contrast to West Linn and Lake Oswego, the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability has been drafting a proposal to increase residential densities in single-family neighborhoods for years. The current recommendations would allow up to four units on practically every single-family lot. Some City Council members have said up to six units should be allowed. Such relatively small multifamily projects are frequently called "missing middle" housing.

The first council hearing on the residential infill project — or RIP, as it is commonly called — is set for Wednesday, Dec. 18. Others already are scheduled in January 2020.

Although work on RIP began well before the 2019 Oregon Legislature passed HB 2001, it would implement most of the new state requirements. The rest could be accommodated with a follow-up measure.

The plan is controversial. Many housing supporters, developers, land use planning advocates and social justice activists support it as a means to create more lower-priced housing. Some preservationists and neighborhood activists argue it will change the character of Portland and strain city services without guaranteeing that many people will be able to afford much of the new housing.

An independent Johnson Economics report commissioned by the city concluded the plan would have mixed results. The report, which was released in November 2018, said most of the new housing would be investor-owned rental units with few home ownership opportunities. Existing lower-cost homes likely would be demolished for the new housing in Lents, Brentwood-Darlington, Montavilla and other lower-income neighborhoods.

At the same time, the Portland region needs to accommodate approximately 250,000 new residents over the next 20 years, requiring many more housing units of all kinds to be built. The report found the current RIP recommendations would result in 38,115 new homes being built over the next two decades — nearly three times the 13,665 predicted under the city's current zoning.

The report only predicts a relatively small increase in demolitions the recommendations are adopted — from 1,384 to 1,501 over the next 20 years. But the net increase of 24,333 units is much greater because so many multifamily projects will replace them.

Even some of the speakers at last week's housing conference acknowledged that many households might not be able to afford much of the new housing. The report predicted average rents for the new units would be \$1,823, more than 35% higher than the current average. But the speakers said some of the new units will be built by nonprofit developers that keep rents low to serve low-income families. And they noted that both Portland and Metro have passed bonds to fund larger affordable housing projects in the city and region.

Willamette Week

“We’re Gonna Be in Good Hands if the Old Folks Don’t Just Destroy the Planet Before the Young Folks Take Over,” Says Portland City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty

By Crystal Conteras

November 11, 2019

We sat down with the commissioner to discuss activism and civic engagement, running for office, and how to maintain hope while trying to build a future we want to see.

When Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty agreed to sponsor a youth climate justice protest at City Hall in March, she was told to expect about 200 people.

The day of the protest, the commissioner was in her office when she noticed students starting to trickle in. More showed up. Then more. And more. They kept coming in droves until all Hardesty could see on every corner around City Hall were students, from elementary school to college age and their allies, rallying in the name of climate justice. What was supposed to be a modest protest ended up drawing close to 2,000.

This was when Hardesty realized she was witnessing a level of youth activism she hadn't seen since the civil rights movement. Armed with instant access to information, younger people are taking us into a new stage of activism. "If the old people just get out of the way," Hardesty says, "and just let the young people do their thing, we'll be a lot better off." We sat down with the commissioner to discuss activism and civic engagement, running for office, and how to maintain hope while trying to build a future we want to see.

G!G: Throughout your career you've worked as both a community organizer and an elected official. I've seen you lead marches and an impromptu sit-in at City Hall. What's changed for you in regards to community activism now that you're on the other side of things, so to speak?

Not much. I will say that I still extremely value community voices and making sure that the people most impacted have a voice in the outcomes that we seek. Just last night, I had a community listening session, my third since I've been in office, because when I ran I said that getting downtown at 9:30 am on Wednesday mornings is not convenient for most people in the city of Portland. It's my job as an elected leader to make sure I am engaged with the people that I serve, so we've been doing these meetings all over town, in different parts, one a quarter, because I just think it's important to keep that dialogue going. It did my heart good, let me say, last night, to see the diversity of people and ages and experiences that came out to the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon's new building to have that conversation.

How does one go about approaching City Council with their concerns?

People call, they write, they email, they tweet. I don't do policy by tweet, by the way. They set appointments. I meet with anybody that wants to meet with me. Of course, it takes a little while to meet because I'm one person and there's quite a few people in the city of Portland. But that's one of the reasons why I do the community meetings, that's one of the reasons why sharing with people how they can come and testify at City Council is really important. I try to encourage, especially organizations that have a story to tell, to use those three minutes wisely, so if there's four of them, three minutes a piece, you can tell a very compelling story in that time period. I've

seen it done very, very well and I've seen it done not so well. What is the tool that you use, right? Which one feels most comfortable to you? So if it's writing that feels more comfortable, then write. If you want to come in and have your voice heard, you want to organize a peaceful protest. I mean, all of the above work. Everything depends on the issue, and then the timing, because the City Council gets a little annoyed when people are talking about things that aren't on the City Council agenda or are not City Council business. It's not the public's job to know that, it's our job to educate the public on which is the right government, what is the right venue for them to have their voice heard in, and I think we could do a much better job, we, the City Council, City Hall, in engaging people where they are, rather than trying to fit people into slots based on what City Hall thinks they should be talking about.

What advice do you have for younger people who are interested in running for office?

Know yourself, trust your gut, and if you're planning to run for office, tell people who you are, and then be that. One of my biggest surprises has been how many people come up to me and say, "Oh my gosh, you're doing exactly what you said you would do." How sad is that, right? That that's, like, "a thing." Don't you expect people to do what they said they were gonna do? "Well, yeah, but they never do!" So why do you keep putting those people back in those same positions if they're not doing what they said they were going to do?

Over the years you and many others have been tirelessly involved in organizing for police accountability over the shooting death of Keaton Otis. This fight has been going on since 2010.

Before that, because Kendra James was before that. And so were a bunch of others.

As time goes on, how do you keep your resolve when engaging in an ongoing fight for justice? How do you remain optimistic?

I think some days that's probably the hardest thing, is to remain optimistic. Again, I go back to history, because I am a child of the civil rights movement. I understand that movements have ebbs and flows.

What's different is, we now have people in positions of power who can really have an influence on how we move policing into the future. For example, what gives me hope now is people don't want to be Portland police officers. Well, what a great time to actually rethink how policing should be in the city of Portland, because if you can't hire people for positions that you've had open for well over a year, then that should tell you that you need to do it a bit differently. And I don't think lowering the requirements, either education or physical requirements, will do anything to get us better Portland police officers.

But what brings me hope is that I have the rest of the first responder system in my portfolio and so the Portland Street Response, which fundamentally rethinks how we respond to 911 calls by sending the right responder to the right situation at the right time, will significantly reduce the number of calls for police services. So at the same time we're rethinking the police contract, we're redesigning the first responder system and the 911 call center, which means that we are going to be moving towards a more globally appropriate direction once all those pieces are in place. It's gonna take a couple of years to have all those pieces in place, but the contract comes up next year for Portland police.

What are the most pressing issues for young people? Do you think it's climate, jobs and police accountability?

I think those are the top three, and if I was going to add a fourth, I would say transportation and transportation infrastructure, because we can't go green and expand freeways at the same time and young people get that. It's like, "Well, that didn't make sense, how are you going to do that?" and it's like, "Hey, I hear you." That's probably why I get along so well with them, because when you don't have a filter, you're just like, "It either makes sense or it doesn't," and that's why I love spending time with young people. I've spent a lot of time in the classroom, and let me tell you that the best definition I've ever heard of intersectionality came from a group of third graders. I was speechless. So here we are with a generation that has access to information at the drop of a dime and a fearlessness about connecting the dots with other folks. So we're gonna be in good hands if the old folks don't just destroy the planet before the young folks take over.

City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly Comfirms: She's Running for Re-Election

*By Nigel Jaquiss
November 10, 2019*

Eudaly already has already drawn two serious opponents.

City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly has written on social media and spoken out about the difficulties of her job, particularly since her attempt to revamp the city's venerable neighborhood association went sideways.

That led to questions about whether Eudaly would stand for re-election next year.

But her spokeswoman, Margaux Weeke, says Eudaly will soon make it official that she'll defend the seat she won in an upset victory over former Commissioner Steve Novick in 2016.

"Commissioner Eudaly is running for re-election," Weeke tells WW.

"I don't have information on the timeline for an official announcement/campaign kickoff plans."

Eudaly previously told WW in September that she would seek re-election. But three other candidates have announced before she has.

Those three opponents, Seth Woolley, a programmer and campaign finance reform advocate; Mingus Mapps, a former academic turned neighborhood activist; and Jack Kerfoot, a retired renewable energy consultant, have already announced they're running for Eudaly's seat.

Mayor Ted Wheeler Won't Use City's New Public Campaign Financing Mechanism

By Nigel Jaquiss
November 8, 2019

The incumbent will fund his campaign with private donations. His leading opponent, Sarah Iannarone, is pursuing public funding.

Mayor Ted Wheeler today said he will not seek public funding for his campaign for re-election next year.

Here's the statement Wheeler released through his campaign this morning:

"Many have asked if I will participate in Portland's new public financing system. While I support the intent of the program, I will not be opting in for this election. What I do not want to do is to divert limited taxpayer dollars to a newly-formed program at a time when we are asking more from our public employees, non-profit partners and law enforcement in the face of so many pressing challenges. In my last campaign, thousands of Portland residents from all walks of life stepped up to support our effort. I am committed to a grassroots fundraising approach this time around as well."

The 2020 cycle will be the first for the new system of public financing, which requires candidates to both limit the source of their donations—only individuals can give, not businesses or organizations such as labor unions—and the amount of those donations, in exchange for matching funds from the city.

[Here's more about how the program works.](#)

Wheeler's leading opponent, Sarah Iannarone, has begun the process of qualifying the the six-to-one match the program provides candidates on donations of up to \$50.

Wheeler's deputy campaign manager, Amy Rathfelder, says Wheeler will release information about whether and how he will limit contributions "in the next few days."

Wheeler's previous contributions are already the subject of considerable scrutiny. This week, he said he would give away \$16,000 in past donations from Gordon Sondland, the Portland hotelier turned diplomat at the center of a presidential impeachment investigation.

The Portland Police Association Joined Other Police Unions in Opposing Reform Candidate in San Francisco District Attorney's Race

By Nigel Jaquiss
November 11, 2019

Police along the West Coast and from New York gave to defeat Chesa Boudin but he won anyway.

The Portland Police Association's political action committee is a good-sized player in local elections.

The union's PAC, Keep Portland Safe, gave \$20,000 last year to former Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith last year, for example, hoping to help her defeat now-City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, an outspoken police critic.

But it's rare if not unprecedented to see Keep Portland Safe venture beyond local races or candidates—except in the extraordinarily close race for an district attorney's seat in San Francisco decided last week.

Keep Portland Safe gave the San Francisco Police Officers Association—which supports Suzy Loftus, the law-and-order candidate—\$5,000, the San Francisco Chronicle reported, matching the amount given by the Seattle police union. The Los Angeles officers union gave \$150,000; a New York police sergeants' union gave Loftus \$25,000 and unions from San Diego and San Jose also contributed to help Loftus.

Loftus was defeated by a reform candidate, Chesa Boudin.

Although Boudin, a Yale-educated public defender ran to Loftus' left, the reason for the unions' generosity, the Chronicle says, is more about an historic crime: in 1981, his parents, members of a domestic terrorist organization called the Weather Underground, took part in a robbery in which two police officers and an armored vehicle guard were killed. His mother served 22 years for the crimes. His father is still in prison and may stay there for life.

Portland Police Association President Daryl Turner wasn't immediately available for comment.

The Portland Mercury

Portland Moves Toward a Future With More Bus-Only Lanes

*By Blair Stenvick
November 8, 2019*

New details and a timeline for the Rose Lane Project—the Portland Bureau of Transportation's (PBOT) plan to add bus-only lanes to streets throughout the city—emerged at Thursday evening's Portland City Council meeting. The project's overarching goal will be racial equity in commute times, and it will also aim to make public transit a more viable option for all Portlanders.

Specific plans for the Rose Lane Project won't be announced until later this month, but Thursday's meeting marked the kick-off for the project's public review phase. Commissioner Chloe Eudaly introduced a report on the project by noting that in order to achieve the city's goals of reducing carbon emissions and traffic fatalities, more Portlanders need ditch their cars more often.

“For those of us who live in walkable, bike-able, transit-rich neighborhoods, that should be easily achievable,” said Eudaly, who oversees PBOT. “But for the nearly 50 percent of Portlanders who don't live in such neighborhoods, or have such long commutes that public transportation is not a viable option, we have to do better.”

Eudaly announced her plans to add red-painted, transit-priority lanes to Portland streets in a Willamette Week article earlier this year. Just last week, PBOT painted its first red bus lane in downtown Portland—but while that red paint was used to distinguish a lane that was already

bus-only, the Rose Lane Project will take things a step further by transforming some car lanes into bus-only lanes for many blocks at a time.

Jamey Duhamel, who serves as Eudaly's policy director, said that planning for the Rose Lane Project is focused on the “ways transportation can improve lives, create economic opportunity, decrease displacement, increase safety, and slow down the impending climate catastrophe.”

Duhamel named five key goals for the project, outlined here in a slide:

“We found there was a big difference in average commute times when broken down by race,” Duhamel said when explaining the project’s overarching goal of making commute times more equitable. “The data tells us that the average Black commuter spends an extra five minutes, one-way, just to get to work.”

Duhamel noted that while five minutes “doesn’t sound like a lot,” it adds up to 40 hours a year. She added that by aiming to close that commute time gap, PBOT would inherently be working toward other valuable goals: speeding up public transit, reducing carbon emissions, and giving people more control over where they choose to live and work.

“When we center justice for people of color, we are also centering climate action, and economic opportunity,” she said.

After PBOT unveils the street-specific plans for the Rose Lane Project later this month, it will hold three open houses for public input in December. The plan is expected to go before City Council for a vote in February. PBOT hopes to begin installing Rose Lane Project lanes next year.

Comissioner Eudaly to Delay Update to Neighborhood Association Rules For Three Years

*By Alex Zielinski
November 8, 2019*

Since bursting into public consciousness in July, a city proposal to revamp Portland's aging guidelines for the Office of Community and Civic Life (OCCL) has been met with strong opinions.

The plan, which would grant community organizations the same kind of representation as neighborhood associations in City Hall, was embraced by Portlanders who have long felt excluded from the neighborhood groups (whose memberships are often dominated by white, home-owning, middle-class residents).

But for those who believe neighborhood associations are the backbone of civic engagement, the changes felt like government censorship.

These proposed tweaks to OCCL's city code—guidelines that define a bureau's function—originated from a volunteer committee formed by the OCCL. But it's been City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, the commissioner who oversees the OCCL, who's received the brunt of the public outrage.

After a firestorm of personal attacks, angry emails, and a coordinated effort to unseat Eudaly in her May 2020 reelection campaign, the commissioner is pumping the brakes. On November 14, Eudaly will present a resolution to Portland City Council that pushes a decision to change

OCCL's code to November 2020 at the earliest, delaying a vote that was expected to take place before the end of 2019.

"What became really clear, was that even though the proposal was about adding voices and not removing the voice of neighborhood associations," says Winta Yohannes, policy advisor for Eudaly, "it still was creating so much anxiety about what that impact would look like."

While the delay may come as a victory for incensed neighborhood leaders, it guarantees the proposed changes will go further than its original goal. The resolution calls for the creation of a multi-bureau work group to create a plan to erase inequities within public involvement across city bureaus—not just within OCCL.

"What we're doing is bringing the rest of council into the conversation," says Yohannes. "This extension gives room for a process."

If the resolution gains City Council approval, the work group will present their plan about the code change to City Council in November 2020. The next three years would be spent engaging with the public—including neighborhood associations—to fine-tune that plan before a June 2023 City Council vote. Here's a peek at that timeline.

Yohannes says one goal of the work groups is to truly understand the role the city's seven neighborhood coalitions, the nonprofits paid by the city to coordinate neighborhood associations in a special geographic area.

Their main job, Yohannes says, is to inform neighborhood associations about city policy changes and other city updates. But, while these coalitions were informed about the proposed code changes well in advance, Yohannes says some of them withheld the information from their neighborhood associations.

Thus, when the OCCL announced the proposal in July, many neighborhood associations felt blindsided.

Problems with neighborhood coalitions were already underscored in a 2016 city audit of the OCCL (then called the Office of Neighborhood Involvement). While Eudaly's office has been trying to improve transparency within these coalitions, Yohannes says the new game plan will move those conversations into the public sphere.

City commissioners will not be voting to pass the resolution at the coming November 14 meeting—that will be reserved for a future council session. Instead, city staff will present a new report on the purpose of the OCCL code change, introduce the resolution, and ask for public testimony.

Yohannes is confident this new process won't be met with the same resistance seen in OCCL's first code change push.

"There are lessons and things we could have done better, but I'm confident we're getting to a good place," she says. "This process affirmed consensus for a more inclusive and equitable vision. This resolution offers us a path to get across the finish line."

Mayor Wheeler Will Not Use Public Election Program to Fund Re-Election Campaign

*By Alex Zielinski
November 8, 2019*

Mayor Ted Wheeler will not be relying on the city's new public campaign finance program to run his re-election campaign. In a statement sent to the Mercury, Wheeler said that while he supports the "intent" of the Open and Accountable Elections program, he doesn't want to bankroll his campaign with public dollars that could be going to other city programs.

"What I do not want to do is to divert limited taxpayer dollars to a newly-formed program at a time when we are asking more from our public employees, non-profit partners and law enforcement in the face of so many pressing challenges," said Wheeler, who announced his re-election campaign in mid-October.

The Open and Accountable Elections (OAE) program, which was approved with a council vote in 2016, aims to level the campaign playing field for candidates without a wealthy donor base.

To qualify for the program, candidates must first collect contributions of less than \$250 from 250 Portlanders (mayoral candidates, however, require 500 donors). At that point, the city will match all previous and future campaign donations up to \$50 at a six-to-one rate, using money from the city's general fund. That means if a candidate collects 500 contributions of \$25, the city will turn their \$12,500 total into \$75,000.

Portland's May 2020 primary election is the first campaign where candidates can use the new funding mechanism. As of now, a total of eight candidates in various Portland city races have signaled their intent to participate in OAE, and two have received enough small donations to officially qualify for the program. One of those qualified candidates, Sarah Iannarone, is running against Wheeler for mayor.

Wheeler, who recently gave up \$16,000 in donations from Trump lackey Gordon Sondland, currently has \$85,465 in his campaign war chest. After receiving an October 24 deposit of \$85,755 from the OAE program, Iannarone's total campaign funds have risen to \$89,981.

Wheeler's decision to opt out of the program means he'll be able to collect up to \$500 from individual donors (a new limit for candidates participating in Portland elections), far beyond the OEA matching rules. Since announcing his candidacy last month, Wheeler's campaign hasn't reported any contributions to the state.

Wheeler appears confident that he won't need the OAE program to hold onto his office.

"In my last campaign, thousands of Portland residents from all walks of life stepped up to support our effort," Wheeler said. "I am committed to a grassroots fundraising approach this time around as well. I look forward to running a transparent, accountable re-election campaign gaining support from across Portland."

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Portland may step further away from demolition

By Sam Tenney

November 8, 2019

A unique ordinance requiring deconstruction of older houses in the city of Portland is likely to soon become more expansive.

The city in 2016 became the first in North America to enact legislation disallowing mechanical demolition of homes of a certain vintage. The Deconstruction of Buildings Law requires builders seeking a demolition permit for houses and duplexes built before 1917, or those designated as historic resources, to disassemble the structure using a licensed deconstruction contractor.

An amendment to the ordinance would broaden the law to encompass homes built in 1940 or earlier.

Currently, approximately one-third of all demolition permits are subject to deconstruction regulations. Officials anticipate that expanding the date threshold will double the number of home deconstructions performed annually in the city.

The ordinance was enacted with the stated purposes of maximizing the salvage of reusable building materials, lowering the amount of demolition waste in landfills, reducing carbon emissions from mechanical demolition equipment, and minimizing emissions of hazardous materials including asbestos and lead.

Expanding the law, Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler said during a City Council meeting on Wednesday, is in keeping with the city's sustainability goals.

"Deconstruction nourishes our continuing initiative to build a circular economy, where we move away from a linear model of using something once and then throwing it out and having it go to the landfill, instead finding ways to creatively reuse materials," he said.

The ordinance was phased in with incentives beginning in 2015, when the city provided owners with grant funding to help offset the cost of deconstruction. More than 200 houses in the city have since been dismantled, with 2.4 million pounds of materials salvaged for reuse instead of being burned or sent to a landfill.

Following Portland's lead, cities including Milwaukee, Minneapolis, San Antonio and Vancouver, British Columbia, have either enacted similar ordinances modeled on Portland's approach or installed grant programs and other incentives for deconstruction.

The change to the date threshold to 1941 was originally set forth in as a goal of the 2016 ordinance. Three years in, according to Bureau of Planning and Sustainability construction waste specialist Shawn Wood, the city's infrastructure for supporting deconstruction has grown. There are now 12 city-licensed deconstruction contractors, along with three more in training. Also, at least two new salvage retail operations have opened.

"Because of the increased competition and innovation, the cost to deconstruct has come down over the past three years," Wood testified before City Council. "During that same time period the cost to mechanically demolish has gone up."

In 2016, Wood said, deconstruction costs were about \$8,000 higher than those of mechanical demolition. Today, due in part to shrinking markets for wood as industrial fuel as well as new site and dust control requirements implemented by the Bureau of Development Services, the city

estimates that deconstruction costs have dropped to anywhere from \$3,000 higher than demolition to equal in cost.

Those figures are disputed by the Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Portland, which opposes expanding the date threshold.

“We believe that the cost (of deconstruction) is significantly more expensive, and that cost hasn’t been appropriately represented by city staff,” said Ezra Hammer, HBA’s director of policy and government relations.

The city is miscalculating the true cost of deconstruction, according to Hammer. The city’s figures fail to take into account the carrying costs associated with a longer deconstruction timeline – up to 21 days longer than mechanical demolition, he said. With carrying costs of a standard lot in the city of Portland around \$7,000, and a higher contractor fee for deconstruction, Hammer estimates the process to cost around \$10,000 more than demolition.

Those costs, Hammer said, will be passed on to buyers and renters and exacerbate the city’s ongoing housing affordability crisis. Further, city staff is not supporting an exemption sought by the HBA that would allow demolition in cases where houses would be replaced by affordable projects. The city’s lack of support for the exemption will mean more public subsidies are needed to ensure affordable housing gets built, Hammer said.

“In many regards, the city speaks in a consistent voice with its desire to support affordable housing,” he said. “Unfortunately, it’s not doing that here, and we feel that its failure to do so is a disconnect from its overall policy of advancing and supporting affordable housing.”

Applications for demolition permits have declined steadily since 2016, when 121 were received for pre-1916 houses. That number is projected to be 58 for 2019, along with 58 more anticipated for structures erected between 1917 and 1940. The proposed change of the date threshold would thus increase the total number of deconstructions to around 2016 levels.

According to Wood, it is an ideal time to increase the threshold. The businesses that have started in response to the deconstruction ordinance have expanded their capabilities with investments in staff, equipment and retail space, and are primed to take on more work. Doubling the number of permits presents little risk of overwhelming the city’s deconstruction infrastructure, he said.

“The industry has a firm footing, and has adapted in ways we couldn’t have imagined,” he said. “I have no reason to believe that won’t be the case going forward as the landscape changes.”

The ordinance proposal will receive a second reading before City Council next week and appears to have universal support. During a straw poll, Wheeler and commissioners Chloe Eudaly, Amanda Fritz and Nick Fish indicated they would vote yes. Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty took exception with what she argued would be insufficient fines for violations, which Fish suggested could easily be updated by the city’s Development Review Advisory Committee.

Housing affordability still top of mind in Portland

*By Chuck Slothower
November 8, 2019*

A development bonus being considered by the Portland City Council would allow developers to build apartment buildings with no parking in exchange for providing deeper affordability.

For buildings with at least 50 percent of units rent-restricted at 60 percent of area median income, developers would not have to meet parking minimums.

The bonus is already available to projects within 500 feet of frequent service transit or 1,500 feet of a light-rail station. The proposed amendment would eliminate parking requirements for deeply affordable housing throughout the city.

Mayor Ted Wheeler said the aim of the proposed amendment, and others, is to entice such development throughout the city.

“The intent is to expand affordability,” he said at Wednesday’s council meeting.

New affordable housing buildings often include some parking for residents’ use, although typically fewer spaces are provided than at comparable market-rate apartment buildings. There is also affordable housing in historic buildings throughout downtown and Old Town Chinatown that do not have parking.

“For affordable housing, we do have parking sometimes,” Dan Valliere, CEO of REACH Community Development, said in an interview. “It depends a lot on the affordability level and the location. At a close-in location, sometimes that’s not necessary.”

The no-parking bonus is likely to raise opposition from neighbors concerned about street parking and density. Proximity to transit can make a difference, Valliere said.

“The majority of people that rent affordable housing apartments that REACH manages do not have a car and are able to not have a car because the majority of our units are located close to transportation,” he said.

The amendment would be part of Better Housing by Design – a city zoning project to encourage denser development in multi-dwelling zones. Those zones are by land area only 8 percent of the city, but tend to be near transit – a mapping analysis found 89 percent of multi-dwelling zone properties are within 1,500 feet of frequent service transit.

Parking has been an obstacle to development of affordable housing, according to a city analysis. Structured parking typically costs around \$40,000 per space, and takes up area that could be used for housing, according to the city.

Affordable housing developers have broadly supported the Better Housing by Design proposal.

Valliere said it often makes sense to build some parking. At times, REACH goes beyond parking minimums. But any flexibility is welcome, he said.

“We appreciate the option not to require any number of spaces,” he said.

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty has expressed concerns, saying Better Housing by Design fails to address Portland’s history of racist zoning.

“I still believe if we pass this as is – not even addressing the amendments – that we are once again solidifying racially discriminatory policy and reaffirming that past bad practices continue on,” she said.

Hardesty also criticized program aspects that discourage demolitions in historic districts and in some cases apply to only one property. An amendment pitched by Wheeler would rezone the Anna Mann house in Laurelhurst for use as an 88-unit affordable housing project.

“Writing exceptions for individual properties are very problematic to me,” Hardesty said.

Commissioners heard more than three hours of public testimony on the proposal Wednesday, but did not take a vote. The council will again take up the matter on Nov. 21. It will be the third hearing for Better Housing by Design after an initial council hearing on Oct. 2.

Written testimony will be accepted until Nov. 21, but commissioners closed the record on oral testimony.

The Skanner

Two Local Nonprofits Announced as Grant Recipients for Portland-Area Programs

November 7, 2019

Bank of America has named Financial Beginnings Oregon and Portland Parks Foundation as its 2019 Neighborhood Builders winners. The nonprofits are being recognized for providing essential services that benefit the Portland-area community and promote economic and social progress.

Through the Neighborhood Builders program, each nonprofit receives \$200,000 in flexible funding, a year of leadership training for the executive director and an emerging leader at the organization, a network of peer organizations across the country and volunteering support from BofA.

“We recognize the critical role that local nonprofits play to build pathways to economic progress in the Portland community. Through Neighborhood Builders, we connect nonprofits like Financial Beginnings Oregon and the Portland Parks Foundation to the funding and leadership development resources they need to further scale their impact,” said Roger Hinshaw, Bank of America’s Market President in Oregon and Southwest Washington. “Both of these nonprofits do extraordinary work, so I am pleased we are able to bring forward this additional support at a particularly strategic time for them.”

Financial Empowerment Fellowship

Financial Beginnings Oregon will use their award to establish the “Bank of America Financial Empowerment Fellowship.” With Bank of America’s funds, they will recruit and train a cohort of diverse student leaders each year to serve as Fellows. Fellows will receive leadership and skills training, and will then bring financial education programs back into their own communities. Overall, the organization anticipates the Fellows will provide free financial education to an additional 5,000 Oregonians each year.

“The \$200,000 investment will help us reach more Oregonians with critical financial literacy training,” said Kate Benedict, Executive Director of Financial Beginnings Oregon. “We know that communities learn best from a member of their own community. The Bank of America Financial Empowerment Fellowship is our chance to make sure Portland-area communities attain valuable financial teachings from their own student leaders. This program will help us reach significantly more Oregonians than ever with life-changing, free financial education programs.”

Summer Free For All Lunch + Play Program

The Portland Parks Foundation — Portland Parks & Recreation’s (PP&R) nonprofit fundraising partner — will use the funding to significantly expand PP&R’s Summer Free For All Lunch + Play program, which brings free, healthy meals to parks in communities where 50 percent or

more of kids under 18 are eligible for free-and-reduced lunches. The program serves as a nutritional bridge during the summer months for kids who rely on school lunches. Additionally, the Neighborhood Builders investment will enable the purchase and design of customized vehicles to deliver needed community services via PP&R's Mobile Lunch + Play program in neighborhoods without good access to parks.

"Thanks to Bank of America, thousands more Portland children will receive a free, healthy meal," says Portland Parks Commissioner Nick Fish. "The Neighborhood Builders grant strengthens our long-standing partnership with Bank of America. Thanks to our philanthropic partner the Portland Parks Foundation and to Roger Hinshaw and Monique Barton at Bank of America for their commitment to Portland families."

Randy Gragg, Portland Parks Foundation's Executive Director, added: "The Bank of America Neighborhood Builders grant will allow us to bring a lot of the fun of a park directly to kids, right where they live. With our city growing so quickly, Mobile Lunch + Play is a fast, effective and innovative way to better serve more of our city's children and reach new neighborhoods."

Monique Barton, senior vice president at Bank of America in Portland, added that both nonprofits have long histories of partnering with Bank of America through traditional foundation grants that span many years. Over that time, both nonprofits consistently demonstrated impact, reach and successful two-way partnership.

"We remain impressed by the visions of Financial Beginnings and Portland Parks Foundation.

"They are both doing tremendous work to elevate opportunities available to young people in Portland, and we look forward to seeing what more they're able to achieve with this additional investment," Barton said. "The programs they are earmarking the funds for are very worthy causes with the potential to make a real difference in helping local youth and families."

Portland Parks Foundation: The Portland Parks Foundation is dedicated to connecting Portlanders to nature and to each other through the city's parks, public spaces and natural areas. We lead, develop partnerships and raise money to fund new facilities, enhance existing ones, and support programs to put our parks system within reach of all. More information on Portland Parks & Recreation's Mobile Lunch + Play and other Summer Free For All programs, can be [found here](#).

OPB

Portland Paramedics Get Defensive Training In Wake Of Attacks

*By Gillian Flaccus
November 11, 2019*

Trisha Preston was transporting a patient in a mental health crisis in the back of her ambulance when suddenly the woman undid her seatbelt, jumped off the gurney and began attacking the veteran paramedic, punching her and pulling her hair. By the time Preston's partner wrestled the woman to the floor, Preston had a concussion and bite marks on her arms.

"It took me a good couple of months to get it out of my head. I was constantly thinking about it," Preston said. "We're all on high alert these days."

Her experience is part of a rash of attacks in recent months on paramedics in this Pacific Northwest city as they respond to a growing number of 911 calls for patients in mental health or drug-related crises. The uptick in violence is so severe that the private ambulance company that holds Portland's 911 contract is training more than 500 of its employees in defensive tactics.

The company is trying to better understand what's happening in the field.

"The frequency appears to be increasing. The severity appears to be increasing," said Robert McDonald, an operations manager with American Medical Response. "This has gone unreported in so many ways that it's difficult for us to get our arms around."

The increase in assaults dovetails with a new policy for the transport of patients in a mental health crisis that grew out of a 2012 federal investigation that found police used excessive force against those with mental illness.

Now, paramedics — not law enforcement — routinely take patients on mental health holds to the hospital, most often to a new psychiatric emergency room created specifically to stabilize those in the throes of a psychiatric crisis. In the past, police transported these patients in the backs of patrol cars, in handcuffs, to traditional emergency rooms less equipped to help them.

The policy puts the city at the forefront of a growing national movement to decriminalize mental health by treating a psychiatric crisis as a medical emergency similar to a heart attack — not as a crime.

Portland drew key parts of its new approach from Alameda County, California, where paramedic transports and a psychiatric emergency room model have reduced hospitalization rates for mental health emergencies by 85%, said Scott Zeller, vice president for acute psychiatry for Vituity, a multistate medical consultancy group. Cities from Billings, Montana, to San Bernardino, California, are also re-examining how they treat people in a psychiatric emergency.

"If an ambulance comes to your house and takes you somewhere versus if the police come and take you away, that's a whole different thing," Zeller said. "These are medical issues ... and when you have an exacerbation, you need the same type of emergency help that you would get if you fell down the stairs."

For paramedics, however, the shift that began in 2016 has meant a significant change in their daily work.

For the past three years, the ambulance company has seen 911 calls for behavioral health increase 3% to 5% each year, while overall call volume has also increased. Behavioral health calls come with specific challenges, "where we may have a patient who is compliant, calm, easy to work with, and for whatever reason, they turn," McDonald said.

The policy on ambulance transportation is also paired with a new approach toward handling police calls for those in a mental health or drug-related crisis. Under the settlement with the federal government, Portland now deploys a team of specialized officers who are paired with outreach workers from a local organization called Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare. The force has also given 100 front-line officers enhanced training to address mental health issues that arise on service calls.

"Policing was never set up to have a police officer diagnose and evaluate somebody who's in mental health crisis. So at least, and with these professionals ... it's in the medical arena," said Sgt. Brad Yakots, Portland Police Bureau spokesman. "And it's a better fit."

Mental health advocates applaud the changes but caution the fallout for paramedics points to a much larger problem with the mental health care system in Oregon and nationwide.

Oregon's mental hospital is so overcrowded that the state recently was sued for making court-ordered patients languish in jail as they awaited beds. Overall, the state lacks mental health care options that fall between the extremes of going to the emergency room and being institutionalized for weeks or months.

Walk-in options for people who recognize they are in crisis — or headed that way — are almost nonexistent, making paramedics the front-line caregivers when those symptoms reach a crisis point, said Chris Bouneff, executive director of Oregon's chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Advocates also worry headline-grabbing violent incidents reinforce the stereotype that people with mental illness are dangerous.

“People with a mental health diagnosis are much more likely to be the victim of a violent crime (than) the perpetrator. So it's important to bear that in mind,” said Sarah Radcliffe, a managing attorney at Disability Rights Oregon, which advocates for mental health patients.

At one defensive tactics training, paramedics in sweatpants and sneakers practiced deflecting blows from an instructor who was trying to hit them with padded batons, dodged a fake knife and worked up a sweat wrestling their way out of choke holds. Several described recent scary situations on the job, including a patient who attempted to hijack a moving ambulance.

Tifphany Hofstetter, a lead paramedic, recounted how she had to jump out the side door of her ambulance after her patient unbuckled his seatbelt, crawled to the front seat and wrestled the steering wheel away from her partner.

“He was answering our questions and was redirectable, and then he just kind of snapped all of a sudden,” she said. “He was really close in my face and confrontational and definitely a threat.”

Instructor Jeff Birrer said he's also noticed more attacks on ambulances from people who are not patients but are at or near a 911 response. The week before, he said, a man threw a rock at his ambulance, and another man pounded on its windows from the outside.

“At some point in time, as a society, we stopped waging a war on poverty. We stopped taking care of people. And as EMTs and paramedics, that's absolutely what we do. We are the safety net,” he said. “The question is how do we do that and keep the providers safe?”

Annual Portland Leaf Day Pickup Runs Through Dec. 20

*By Jonathan Levinson
November 11, 2019*

You've pulled out your winter clothes, the mercury has dropped and so have all the leaves. Which means annual leaf day is back in Portland, and Bureau of Transportation is clearing the streets.

PBOT public information officer Dylan Rivera said every fall, trees leave thousands of cubic yards of leaves on the city's streets.

“If we didn't clear the leaves what happens is the leaves are washed into the storm drains, clog the drains, and cause street flooding,” Rivera said.

The bureau's annual leaf cleanup began Nov. 7 and will run through Dec. 20, covering a few neighborhoods every day.

To prepare, PBOT asks residents to rake leaves into the street, leaving about a foot between the leaves and the curb. Residents are welcome to put leaves from their yard but are asked not to include branches or anything else that could damage the trucks. PBOT also asks that residents move their cars. In some neighborhoods, cars may be towed if they remain on the street during cleanup.

While Portlanders wait for their turn to clean up, PBOT is asking for assistance to keep drains clear.

"Between now and leaf day, adopt a storm drain near your home and business," Rivera suggested. "Keep leaves off of it so there's a clear path for water to reach the drain and prevent street flooding for everyone this fall."

To find out when leaf day is coming to your neighborhood and learn more about how you can prepare, head over to PBOT's website.

Wheeler Will Not Participate In Portland's Public Campaign Financing

*By Amelia Templeton
November 8, 2019*

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler says he will not participate in Portland's new public campaign financing program.

The program awards matching dollars to candidates who agree to take only money from individuals, not businesses or unions, and limit those contributions to \$250 per donation. The matching dollars are paid for by the taxpayer-supported general fund.

In a written statement explaining his decision to opt out, Wheeler said he did not want to "divert limited taxpayer dollars to a newly-formed program at a time when we are asking more from our public employees, non-profit partners and law enforcement in the face of so many pressing challenges."

Wheeler said he is committed to running a "grassroots" campaign.

During his previous campaign for mayor, Wheeler raised more than \$850,000. An analysis by the Sightline Institute found that more than half of that came from just 400 large donations. Oregon has no limits on political contributions.

So far two candidates have opted in Portland's public campaign financing and have racked up enough grassroots support to qualify for matching funds: mayoral candidate Sarah Iannarone and City Council candidate Carmen Rubio.