

The Portland Tribune

Sources: Who's the most progressive candidate of all?

By Jim Redden

November 27, 2019

Plus, Bruce Broussard files for mayor and wants to make Wapato a priority issue.

The first time Ted Wheeler ran for mayor, he and former state Rep, Jules Bailey each claimed to be the most progressive candidate in the race. This time around, Wheeler is not likely to do the same thing with urban policy consultant Sarah Iannarone, who has released an 11-page list of "public safety priorities" for to the left of anything he will endorse.

Among other things, Iannarone wants to abolish the Portland Police Bureau's Gun Violence Reduction Team, remove the bureau's School Resource Officers from public schools, end all cooperation with the FBI Portland Joint Terrorism Task Force, create homeless shelters in every neighborhood, support the creation of supervised drug injection sites, end the city's role in homeless camp sweeps, legalize prostitution, prevent the police from arresting or citing a homeless person for "engaging in actions that a houseless person might reasonably need to do outside."

"It is imperative that we come together as a community for a critical rethinking of what public safety means, and for whom," read the document, titled "Rethinking public safety."

Broussard: Wapato an issue in mayor's race

The 2020 race for Portland mayor is beginning to get crowded. Six candidates have no filed with the City Auditor's Office. They do not yet include incumbent Ted Wheeler, who has announced for reelection.

Among the most recent candidates is Bruce Broussard, an African-American veteran and business owner who has run for numerous offices in the past, including Multnomah County Commissioner District 2. His filing says he is employed by No Veterans Left Behind Oregon, a nonprofit corporation he and his wife started in 2017 to vet other veterans organizations.

Broussard tells Sources that he intended to make opening the former county-owned Wapato Jail for the homeless a priority. Owner Jordan Schnitzer has delayed demolishing it in hopes of finding an operator who will run its as a residential drug and alcohol treatment center.

Willamette Week

The Next Target in Portland's War on Pollution? Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers

By Nigel Jaquiss

November 27, 2019

The city hopes to replace 300 gas guzzlers with electric models next year.

The city of Portland hopes to take 300 city-owned, gas-powered leaf blowers offline by Jan. 1, 2021.

Parks Commissioner Nick Fish will introduce a resolution Dec. 4 to snuff the hand-held versions of the world's most annoying appliance and convert to battery-powered blowers. (When technology permits, the city will also switch to larger backpack models.)

The rationale? Gas-powered blowers are four times louder than electric ones, advocates say, and emit tiny, toxic hydrocarbon molecules that are bad for the environment and the public's health.

It's the latest ban by a city that has proudly put the kibosh on plastic foam takeout containers, plastic bags and single-use plastic straws.

This effort might not be as controversial: The city isn't telling private businesses what to do—at least not yet. "We will also begin a working group next year to consider an equitable, citywide transition in the future," says Asena Lawrence, a Fish staffer.

The City of Portland Wants to Change the Way It Responds to 911 Calls. Public Safety Unions Are Hopping Mad.

*By Nigel Jaquiss
November 27, 2019*

The unions are threatening legal action about a program that starts with one team.

The Portland City Council took what might look like a baby step last week toward more efficient handling of non-emergency 911 calls.

In a break from current practice, in which uniformed, armed police officers in squad cars or a truckload of firefighters respond, commissioners approved a pilot project in which a new "third branch" of the first-responder system, staffed by a specially trained firefighter and a contracted crisis worker, would respond to some non-emergency situations.

The program starts with just one two-person team.

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, architect of the two-responder pilot project, called Portland Street Response, framed it as a much bigger deal.

"This is revolutionary," Hardesty said. "We have not changed our first-response system since the late 1800s."

Police officers and firefighters agree it's significant, but not in a way they like.

In fact, they find the new program so threatening, WW has learned, the police and firefighters' unions took the unusual step of trying to block the Nov. 21 council vote—and threatened legal action if the council did move forward.

"This pilot program is expressly intended to transfer [emergency medical service] bargaining unit work from the Portland Firefighters Association bargaining unit to 'crisis workers' outside our unit," wrote Barbara Diamond, an attorney for the PFFA, in a Nov. 20 letter to the city's labor relations manager, copying Hardesty and the city attorney.

The Portland Police Association also raised objections through its attorney in September and October emails, demanding the city enter into bargaining because Portland Street Response, which is slated to serve part of the Lents neighborhood, jeopardized the status quo.

Last week, on the eve of the council vote, Sgt. Daryl Turner, president of the Portland Police Association, broadcast the union's opposition.

"Part of the Street Response project is built on a false premise and perception that Portland police officers are ill-suited to address mental health and homelessness issues in a constructive and safe manner," Turner said in a Nov. 20 statement. "Nothing could be further from the truth."

The full import of Turner's press release was unclear at the time. But documents WW obtained through a public records request since then show public safety unions will fight any incursion on their turf.

Portland Street Response will serve two purposes: deal with the vast number of 911 calls related to homelessness, addiction or mental illness; and acknowledge looming financial challenges.

As Hardesty noted, public safety bureaus have changed little over time. But in recent years, their work has changed dramatically.

Last year, for instance, records show Portland Fire & Rescue responded to more than 87,000 calls for service. Just 664 of those calls were to report "structure fires" in which homes or other buildings were ablaze. That's fewer than 1 percent of calls.

Similarly, the Portland Police Bureau responded to about 262,000 calls in the past year. Most did not result from a serious crime; instead, they involved homelessness, mental illness or addiction.

In February, WW reported that the most common reason Portlanders called 911 was to report "unwanted persons"—that is, people trespassing or camping on private property ("What's Your Emergency?," WW, Feb. 9, 2019).

Call volume for both bureaus has grown much faster than staffing, leaving first responders feeling overworked and under supported by City Hall.

One solution is to shift responsibility for non-emergency 911 calls to two-member teams specifically trained to work with people dealing with homelessness, mental illness or addiction, rather than to fight crime or fires.

That's what a 30-year-old program in Eugene, called Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets, has been doing. Last year, CAHOOTS handled 25,000 non-emergency calls, sending unarmed, non-uniformed civilians to respond.

That private nonprofit model offers a sense of where Portland could go, a possibility not lost on unions here.

"We have fear, absolutely, that they want to reduce our staffing to pay for other things," says Jason Lehman, vice president of the firefighters' union. "We are absolutely not in favor of that."

When Tom Rinehart, the city's chief administrative officer, explained the policy behind Portland Street Response last week, he cited a need to "reimagine how we allocate public safety resources."

The budget realities are stark: Although fires are rare and crime is in a decadeslong decline, public safety budgets consume most of the city's general fund dollars—53 percent last year, up from 49 percent a decade ago.

In its Nov. 20 letter, the firefighters' union said it was filing an unfair labor practice complaint and pushed for a city response.

"The union demands that the status quo be maintained pending any lawful negotiations," the letter said.

"The city is evaluating the demands and will fulfill any obligation to bargain in good faith," says City Attorney Tracy Reeve.

But Mayor Ted Wheeler, who worked with Hardesty to launch Portland Street Response, says it's the future. He complimented the work of police and firefighters last week, but his enthusiasm for the program signals he is prepared to lock horns with public safety unions as he enters an election cycle.

"As our community's needs change, so too must our response to those needs," Wheeler tells WW. "The Portland Street Response program represents a common-sense solution for addressing the needs of people who are in crisis on the streets, especially when criminal activity is not involved."

Both Leading Candidates for Portland Mayor Ride E-Bikes

*By Rachel Monahan
November 27, 2019*

Finally, something in common.

Portland's 2020 mayoral race now includes an interesting wrinkle: The two leading candidates both ride electric bicycles.

In challenging Mayor Ted Wheeler in this coming year's election, Sarah Iannarone has made a point of the way she commutes: often by e-bike, as her introductory campaign video showed.

But in the past couple weeks, Wheeler has joined the e-biking crowd. About two weeks ago, he had hernia surgery, he tells WW. His choice of ride during his recovery? An e-bike from the city's fleet of 21, two which were ordered in 2017 for the mayor's staff to use. "I decided it would be better for my recovery to use the e-bike rather than my personal bike," Wheeler says.

Here's how the candidates' rides compare.

Sarah Iannarone

Bike: iZip E3 Moda

Where did you get it?

Cynergy E-Bikes

How often have you used it?

3,375 miles since Nov. 22, 2018

What do you like?

"I love the connection to the streets and my neighbors that I get from exploring the city outside a motor vehicle. I love experiencing the city I love at the street level. I love the fresh air and exercise. I love the freedom from congestion and long waits on transit. I love not circling the block looking for parking. I love not having to think about what route I'll take to avoid that big hill. I love that my e-bike gets me around town faster than driving."

What do you not like?

"I don't like that my e-bike only gets about 30 miles distance at top speed before needing a recharge. I don't like cold fingers and toes in winter. I don't love that my eyeglasses don't come with windshield wipers. And I hate almost getting mown down by motorists every single day I'm riding around town. I hate having to ride defensively even when I have the right of way just to make sure I get home at the end of the day."

Mayor Ted Wheeler

E-bike: City-owned PIM Bicycle

Where did you get it?

Part of the city fleet. In 2017, Wheeler requested two e-bikes for his staff.

How often have you used it?

Every day for the last two weeks.

What do you like?

"What's really remarkable about it is, I can wear a suit and a tie and not break a sweat. The opportunity with e-bikes is to open up biking to people who maybe physically don't believe they're up to it. There's a sense of convenience and freedom you don't have when you're in a car. When I'm on my bike, I don't have to stress about where I'm going to park if I have two more minutes until my next meeting."

What do you not like?

"The reality right now is, cost is a huge barrier. It's hard to sugarcoat that."

Portland Officials Created a Policy to Keep Homeless People From Camping Outside the Timbers' Soccer Stadium

By Kelsey Harnisch

November 26, 2019

When WW asked questions this week, several city officials claimed ignorance of the plan, and Commissioner Chloe Eudaly disavowed the idea.

Providence Park reopened this fall after \$85 million in renovations, with 4,074 new seats for Timbers and Thorns fans, new snack bars for Hot Lips Pizza and Podnah's Pit, and an outdoor concourse over Southwest 18th Avenue.

That last feature also created a warm, dry portico on the sidewalk—and set off alarm bells in Portland City Hall about the alcove's potential as a homeless camping spot.

And for more than a year, city officials have been working on a way to keep homeless people away from the soccer stadium, according to a document obtained by WW.

The result of that effort? A draft of a new city ordinance, also obtained by WW, that would prohibit sitting or lying down, erecting structures, including tents or shanties, or receiving any kind of payment on the sidewalks outside popular downtown event spaces—and not just Providence Park.

Last week, an official with the Portland Bureau of Transportation briefed members of a local homeless advocacy workgroup on the scope of the proposed ordinance. PBOT says the draft ordinance would cover multiple locations, specifically sidewalks around publicly owned event spaces. Those would include Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall and performance venues along Southwest Broadway.

Federal case law prohibits cities from imposing blanket bans on sleeping outdoors. But the city has prohibited camping in parks and along specific high-traffic areas downtown and the

pedestrian plaza Ankeny Alley, adjacent to Voodoo Doughnut. The Event Space designation would expand those no-sit zones.

When WW asked questions this week, several city officials—including the office of Mayor Ted Wheeler—claimed ignorance of the plan, and the commissioner overseeing PBOT disavowed the idea.

But Jordan Schnitzer, a prominent investor whose mother's name is on the concert hall, says it's a sound plan. "If people are fearful of being approached on the street," he tells WW, "then it's in the city's interest to help support cultural institutions that provide hundreds of jobs and help create quality of life in Portland that we all enjoy."

According to the draft ordinance, the new regulations are intended to manage traffic and pedestrians and enforce security in areas around popular event spaces.

The plan emerges the same week Salem city officials considered—then abandoned—an ordinance to restrict sitting or lying on city sidewalks.

As with other city efforts to strike a balance between care for people living on the streets and a welcoming environment at downtown attractions, the Portland proposal has sparked controversy.

Advocates raised objections—at the meeting and afterward. "It's another example of criminalizing homelessness," says Barb Rainish, who attended the meeting and serves on the Disability Services Advisory Council as a community advocate for the homeless. "I don't understand what the point is, in a way, because I don't think it's a big deterrent. It's just another ticket and essentially another court date and another fine somebody can't pay."

"[They] are going to exclude and be very detrimental to our vulnerable population of people who live on the streets and people within poverty altogether," adds Art Rios Sr., an advocate for the homeless who attended the meeting.

One elected official already says she wants nothing to do with the plan. City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, who oversees the Portland Bureau of Transportation, says she was unaware of her employee's involvement until WW started placing calls on the issue.

Eudaly says she has since directed the bureau to stop work on the ordinance.

"It's my understanding that camping hasn't been much of an issue in this area, so I'm not sure why this is necessary," Eudaly says. "Regardless, policies that target members of our houseless community are antithetical to my values. PBOT won't be participating in this process any further."

The ordinance's prospects now appear dim. Wheeler's office said it hadn't seen the ordinance, and the Portland Office of Management and Finance—which helped draft the proposal—said it was not "interested in pushing it any further."

The Timbers and the Thorns declined to comment.

Documents reviewed by WW show the city proposed a camping and sitting exclusion around entertainment venues. The documents say the policy was created by the City Attorney's Office, the Police Bureau and the Spectator Venues Program—with Providence Park specifically in mind.

"During the approvals process for the [Providence Park] expansion project, City Council raised concerns that this new, large covered sidewalk that will be lightly used much of the time, has the potential to attract unwanted activities, such as homeless camping," reads a document from September 2018. "While the first Event Space will be established around the stadium, the code is

written to allow Council designation of additional Event Spaces in the future should the need arise."

Portland police would be tasked with enforcing the new policy, with warnings, citations and exclusions. Exclusions from the defined areas could last up to six months.

Portland has a long history of trying to establish exclusion zones and "no sitting or lying down" policies, but citizens have often responded with protests and legal action.

In the 1990s, the Portland City Council established drug- and prostitution-free zones, which an outside study found discriminated against black residents. These findings were one reason then-Mayor Tom Potter allowed the ordinances to expire in 2007.

Throughout the 2000s, the city of Portland tried numerous times to establish laws against loitering on public sidewalks, known as sit-lie laws. The policies resulted in large protests and, when challenged in court, were found unconstitutional.

Yet City Hall remains beset by complaints from downtown businesses. Last week, WW reported on the city's move to require social service permits for charity organizations after downtown businesses complained about the volunteer group Free Hot Soup, which feeds the homeless in Director Park ("No Soup for You," WW, Nov. 20, 2019).

Homeless advocates argue that because many of Portland's homeless services are consolidated downtown, the new code would negatively affect people looking to access severe-weather shelters, food services, and drug and alcohol treatment centers.

"If you start mapping out a lot of those things around the theaters and Providence Park," says Rios, "you would see all the different services that would be around there for people who need to utilize them."

Murmurs: City-Owned Housing Complex Is Leaking

November 27, 2019

In other news: Amazon warehouse in Troutdale under scrutiny.

City-Owned Housing Complex Is Leaking: Headwaters Apartments, a city-owned complex erected in 2007 in Southwest Portland, has told every resident of the top floor to get out by Nov. 27 after the roof showed signs of failing. The 100-unit building in Multnomah Village cost \$14.7 million to provide high-quality, environmentally sustainable housing for tenants making no more than median income. Renters in top-floor units were offered help by building managers to find an Airbnb or hotel, in a letter from the complex. "Costs associated with moving will be covered by the owner of the property," the letter states. The Portland Housing Bureau recently learned that severe winter weather could further damage the roof. "Structural engineers advised swift precautionary action," says bureau spokeswoman Martha Calhoon.

Amazon Warehouse in Troutdale Under Scrutiny: As shoppers gear up for the holidays, reporting by The Atlantic and Reveal from the Center of Investigative Reporting offers a sobering look at the human cost of Amazon's deliver-it-now business model. Reporters gathered safety data for 23 of Amazon's 110 warehouses and found rates of serious worker injuries were more than twice the industry average. The most dangerous facility, according to the piece, is Amazon's warehouse in Troutdale, Ore., which had a serious injury rate of 26 per 1,000 workers, more than six times the industry average. An Amazon spokeswoman disputed the premise of the investigation. "While many companies underrecord safety incidents in order to keep their rates

low, Amazon does the opposite," company spokeswoman Shevaun Brown tells WW. "We take an aggressive stance on recording injuries no matter how big or small."

Racial Disparities Rise in Multnomah County Incarceration: A new report published by the W. Haywood Burns Institute shows rising racial and ethnic disparities in Multnomah County incarceration rates. The report finds that black adults are almost five times as likely as whites to have a case reviewed by the court and be prosecuted and convicted. The report compares the racial disparity of jail bookings based on similar offenses: Black adults in Multnomah County are 4.6 times more likely than white adults to get jail time for a misdemeanor and 4.7 times for a felony offense. Bobbin Singh, executive director of the Oregon Justice Resource Center, says he's "disturbed by the lack of will and urgency around the issue of race discrimination and structural racism." He adds, "Unless we actually talk about the root causes and how our system treats people and why it was created, we'll always see these disparities."

Artists Feel Chill at Milepost 5: Residents of Milepost 5, an affordable housing complex for artists, have been suffering from heat outages. It's the latest in a string of problems at the complex. Community Development Partners, an affordable housing developer that owns the complex, has already offered tenants in 27 of the apartments repayments for failing to notify them before entering units as required under state housing law. They're also offering tenants compensation for janitorial, security and maintenance issues, after tenants demanded it. But in the case of heat, the complex's management company has blamed "someone in the building" for "tampering with the flow valves that control the boiler," according to a Nov. 22 letter to tenants.

The Portland Observer

New Approach to Homeless

*By Beverly Corbell
November 26, 2019*

City approves first Street Response Team

The city of Portland is trying a new approach to helping the city's homeless population by stressing compassion and crisis prevention with designated first responders instead of strictly law enforcement by police. The Portland City Council last week approved the plan advocated by City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty that outlines a pilot program called Portland Street Response.

A two-person team will form the first Street Response team and will respond to 911 calls in the Lents neighborhood of southeast Portland that don't involve weapons or use of violence, and will be qualified as trained crisis workers rather than police officers. Examples of non-emergency calls could be about someone lying in the street, people making excess noise in city parks or suspected drug use.

The council approved \$500,000 in May for the pilot program, which is set to start next spring, also drawing support from Mayor Ted Wheeler.

"Historically, it's been up to the police to shoulder most of the responsibility as first responders in crisis calls, but in many cases, police are not the right resources to respond," Wheeler said.

Darren Golden of the Urban League of Portland told Oregon Public Broadcasting the new Street Response effort could help with the relationship between communities of color and the police.

“It’s no secret that the black communities in Portland have deep-seated, well-earned mistrust with the Portland police and that is magnified for our black houseless neighbors,” Golden said. “It’s time for Portland, being the progressive city that it is, to stop taking active steps to criminalize poverty and instead adopt a public health approach to begin repairing our community.”

OPB

Portland Wants To Rescue Its Park System. Where Will The Money Come From?

*By Rebecca Ellis
November 26, 2018*

Portland’s parks need to be saved.

The city’s stock of water fountains, restrooms, and community centers have deteriorated to the point that it would cost nearly half a billion dollars to fix it all. Trails, playground equipment and water fountains have been roped off due to a lack of funds for repairs. If nothing changes, Portland Parks & Recreation warns the same fate will befall one in five of the park’s assets within 15 years.

At a City Hall meeting Tuesday, Portland’s commissioners made it clear they have no intention of letting the city’s treasured park system fall apart on their watch. But how exactly they will right the ship of the deficit-plagued bureau remains to be seen.

Earlier this year, the bureau unearthed a \$6.3 million shortfall in revenue. Commissioner Nick Fish, who oversees the bureau, said the problem was two-part: The department wasn’t getting its fair share of resources from the general fund and was overly reliant on fees, which the department wanted to keep low in order to keep its programs and classes accessible to the public.

A brutal budget session ensued, with the bureau cutting 50 jobs and scaling back a handful of community centers. A task force was sent to the drawing board to figure out how to make the city’s cherished park system financially stable.

That task force returned Tuesday to outline three potential funding scenarios. The first option, presented as “a story of decline,” showed what would happen if funding levels were kept the same.

It was quickly shut down.

“Can we just take scenario one off the table right away? It’s completely unacceptable to the majority of Portlanders,” said Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who oversaw the bureau before Fish. “I can’t imagine being the council that would preside over the demolition of Portland’s parks.”

The second option showed what it would take to maintain Portland’s park system, but not expand it. Estimates presented by the bureau show it would need to receive an additional \$1 billion over the next 15 years.

And then there’s the third option, which would allow the bureau to steam ahead with its ambitious agenda to bring park amenities within reach to all Portlanders. Adena Long, the director of Portland Parks & Recreation, outlined the bureau’s goal Tuesday to create a natural area within a half mile of every Portlander, a full service community center within three miles, and a lush tree canopy covering as much as possible.

That plan isn't cheap. To reach all of its service goals, the bureau estimates it'll need an additional \$2.5 billion within 15 years.

But commissioners appeared eager Tuesday to get the department where they want it to go.

"We're going to go big home or we're going to go home," said Mayor Ted Wheeler. "Let's make a play for history – one we can be proud of for generations to come."

"I agree with that, Mayor, that we need to think big," echoed Commissioner Chloe Eudaly. "We need to find a big pot of money and get this done."

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty was absent from the work session.

Fish said he saw the praise by those in attendance as a clear endorsement of scenario three.

"I think it was pretty clear that my colleagues – and virtually everyone in the audience – took scenario one off the table. Scenario two is simply just a status quo option, it's just limping along," he said. "Scenario three is reinvesting in the system that we want."

The question then becomes how to pay for it. The task force laid out a menu of options for commissioners Tuesday including a general obligation bond, a special district, a local option levy, and new taxes on cellphone bills, temporary lodging, and food and beverage tax.

Commissioners also appeared interested in the possibility of a local income tax.

Wheeler pushed back on the cell phone tax, which he said would likely be viciously lobbied against by telecom companies, while Fritz expressed interested in the proposed food and beverage tax.

"That is the only option put on the table that takes care of the deficit. It's a huge amount of money coming in," she said, noting the city's admirable reputation among foodies.

But no consensus was reached. The ideas are so novel that Wheeler decided to take an informal vote with the audience to gauge a crowd-favorite (The food and beverage tax appeared to garner the greatest show of hands, the levy received the least, the rest got a handful).

The parks department will return to council sometime next year with fine-tuned recommendations.