

# The Portland Tribune

## City Council winnows list of priorities for short session

By Jim Redden

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### Still to be decided is whether to support Multnomah County's request for \$12.5 million for proposed Behavioral Health Resource Center

Portland has a shorter list of priorities for the upcoming 35-day session of the Oregon Legislature than it had for the longer one that took place last year.

Still to be decided by the City Council is whether to support a \$12.5 million request by Multnomah County for the Behavioral Health Resource Center to be located in a building it has purchased at 333 S.W. Park Ave. The total renovation cost is estimated at \$25 million.

The council's support for additional mental health funding is so broadly written, the council does not need to formally vote for the project if a majority of the members indicate they favor it.

The 2020 State Legislative Agenda is just four pages long compared to 14 for last year. According to Elizabeth Edwards, director of the city's Office of Government Relations, that is largely because far fewer bills will be considered during the session that starts in February. State senators are only allowed to introduce one and Oregon House members are limited to just two. Committees each get three bills and the Executive Branch, under Gov. Kate Brown, gets five.

The council's priorities include supporting a healthy environment, public safety and accountability, public health and housing, and local decision-making.

Some of the current priorities are bills that did not pass last year but will be reintroduced during the session scheduled to start Feb. 3. They include support for the cap-and-trade bill intended to fight climate change that was blocked by Senate Republicans in 2019. Another is a bill to bar arbitrators from overturning police discipline under certain circumstances. It was unanimously approved by the Senate last session but died in the House.

Both are expected to be reintroduced in the 2020 session, with the cap-and-trade bill being revised in an effort to win Republican support.

The police accountability bill is largely unchanged since it passed the state Senate unanimously. It was opposed by the union representing rank-and-file Portland Police Bureau employees.

Another priority is a \$9 million funding request for additional mental health services, largely intended to reduce the homeless crisis. The most recent Multnomah County homeless count showed the number of chronically homeless living on the streets increased over the past two years. Many of them are believed to have mental health and addiction issues. The county would receive \$2 million if the request is approved.

Much of the agenda opposes potential state efforts to supersede local control over issues ranging from the regulation of autonomous driving vehicles to system development charges that add thousands of dollars to new home construction projects.

The previous agenda also listed: building codes, cannabis, civil law, economic development, education, elections, emergency management, employment and labor, health care and benefits, infrastructure, land use, the public employee retirement system, public records, tax and finance, transportation, and water and wastewater. Those issues likely will be restored for the longer 2021 session of the Oregon Legislature.

You can find a link to a previous Portland Tribune story on Multnomah County's planned Multnomah County for the Behavioral Health Resource Center [here](#).

## **DEQ: Portland discharged untreated wastewater into Columbia Slough**

*By Jim Redden  
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### **State regulators propose to fine the city \$40,200 for discharging 263,670 gallon of untreated wastewater in 2018**

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality is proposing to fine the city of Portland \$40,200 for discharging 263,670 gallons of untreated wastewater into the Columbia Slough.

According to DEQ, the discharges from the Columbia Boulevard sewage treatment plant happened between Sept. 12 and 17, 2018. State filings says the city has responded by reconfiguring its automated alarm system, replacing pumps, rerouting processed water, training staff and taking other steps.

The city's response was considered in determining the amount of the fine.

The proposed fine was included in a list of 16 other proposed fines for water quality violation released by DEQ on Wednesday, Jan. 22. Fines ranged from \$2,800 to \$49,979. Alleged violations included operating a waste disposal site without a permit, failing to control erosion and sediment runoff from construction sites and discharging partially treated wastewater into local waterways. All of those proposed to be fined have 20 days to pay or appeal.

You can read the DEQ notice to the city at [www.oregon.gov/deq/nr/112719coPortland.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/deq/nr/112719coPortland.pdf).