

# The hiring line

Advocates call for transparency, competitive bidding and cultural diversity in the selection of the specialist who evaluates police recruits

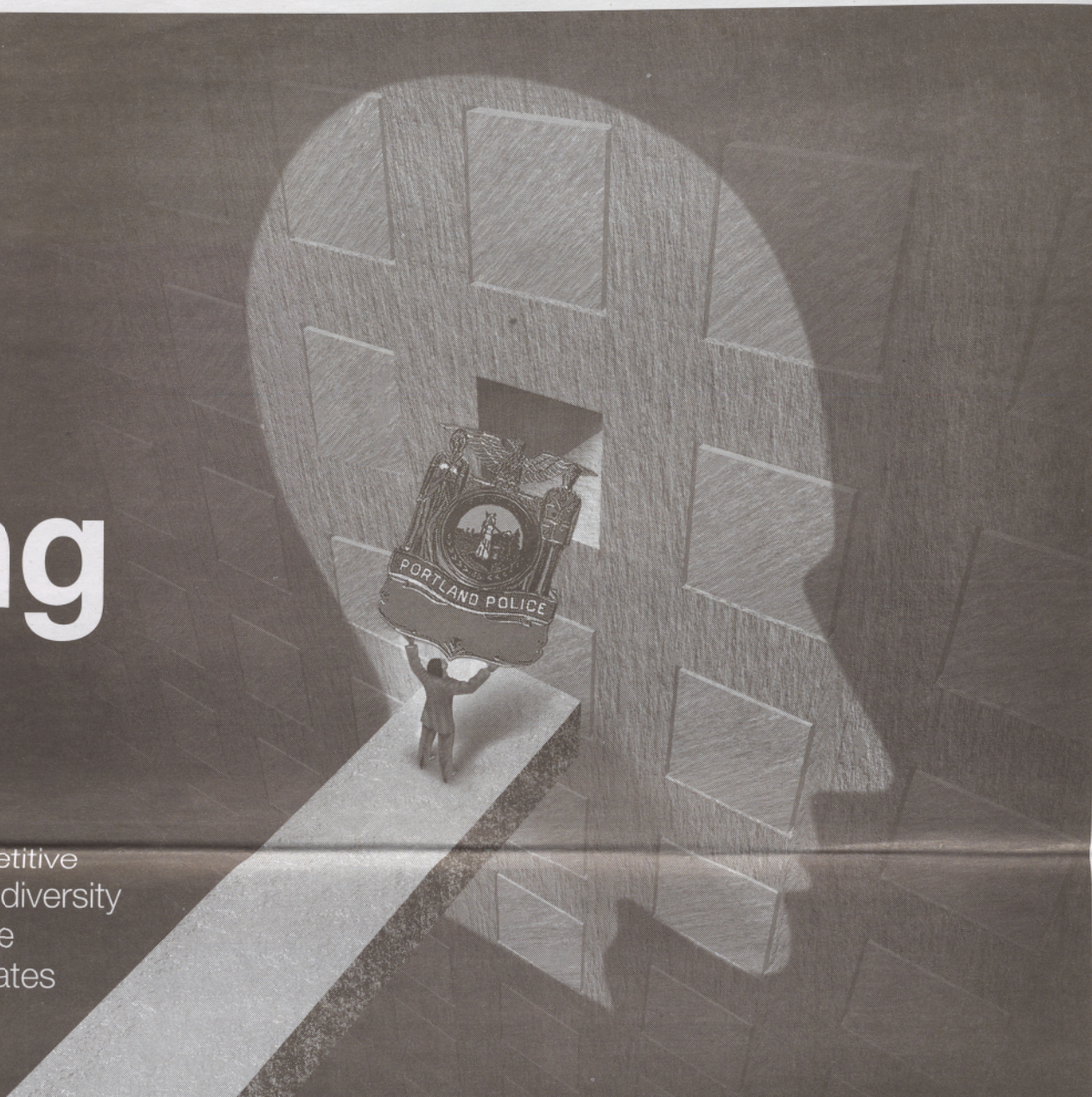


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BY AMANDA WALDROUPE  
STAFF WRITER

Advocates for police accountability and for Portland's African-American community are once again asking the city of Portland and its Police Bureau to be more transparent in how a contract is awarded to a Lake Oswego-based psychologist.

Dr. David Corey is responsible for psychologically assessing new hires for the Portland Police Bureau. His contract was approved by the city in 2012. At that time, a committee made of diverse groups was involved in the selection, and then-Mayor Sam Adams pledged that the process would be more transparent moving forward. But Corey's contract was renewed for another three years in 2016 without a City Council vote or any public notice. The contract is now set to expire in August 2019.

The contract extension follows a pattern of extending the contract without public process or solicitation of bids from other potentially qualified applicants, despite years-long demands from activist groups that the process be more transparent and culturally inclusive.

"(The contract) should be on the City Council agenda," said Dan Handelman, of Portland Copwatch, which advocates for police accountability and transparency.

Handelman stressed the importance of Corey's work: ensuring, essentially, that anyone hired by the Portland Police Bureau does not have a severe mental illness or personality disorder and can handle the stresses and potential trauma of being a police officer.

The office of Mayor Ted Wheeler, who is in charge of the Police Bureau, did not respond to multiple requests for comment on this story.

Corey has worked as the police psychologist since 1999. He is responsible for conducting pre-employment psychological evaluations of people who have been given an initial offer to work for the Police Bureau. The assessments involve a written questionnaire of hundreds of questions, as well as a face-to-face interview with Corey.

From 1999 to 2012, Corey's Lake Oswego-based firm, Corey & Stewart, also conducted fitness-for-duty evaluations, an in-depth psychological evaluation officers

must undergo to determine whether they can return to duty after they've been involved in a "critical incident," such as an officer-involved shooting or other traumatic event. When Corey's contract was approved in 2012, fitness-for-duty evaluations were contracted out to another psychologist, Beaverton-based Dr. Sherry Harden.

In the time that Corey has held the position, the city sought competitive bids for the contract only three times: in 1999, when he was first hired, in 2003 and in 2012.

In an Oct. 9 letter to the City Council and Police Chief Danielle Outlaw, advocacy organizations asked that the hiring process be transparent and competitive and that there be a group of psychologists – not just one – who evaluates Portland police officers. That group should also be culturally diverse, said the organizations – Portland Copwatch, the Albina Ministerial Alliance, and the Portland chapter of the National Lawyer's Guild.

"One benefit of a diverse panel of psychologists is to ensure people of color are comfortable with the interviews and have culturally appropriate questions asked, thus ensuring the diversity of recruits," the

letter read. "In addition, such a panel can draw out more from people who pose potential problems regarding race based on their own life experience than a white psychologist can."

Handelman, of Portland Copwatch, said that his hope, by sending the letter in October, was that it would give the City Council enough time to develop a request for proposals, or RFP, in which the city solicits competitive bids from individuals and organizations to hold a contract with the city. The lack of such a process, Handelman said, all but ensures Corey will continue working as the Police Bureau's psychologist, holding a "monopoly" on the position.

Handelman said that commissioners acknowledged receiving the letter but that he has received "no substantive response."

Assistant Chief Chris Davies forwarded the Oct. 9 letter to Corey on Oct. 25. (Street Roots obtained the email thread following a public-records request.) Corey responded the next day, writing that Corey & Stewart collaborates with Dr. Sandy Jenkins, "an African-American psychologist and specialist in multicultural assessment, who frequently

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