

Police Unity Pledge

continued **▲** from front

appointed Reese.

Turner, a 19-year veteran of the force, was elected president of the police union last month. He is the first African American to hold the position. His predecessor, Sgt. Scott Westerman, recently resigned after being involved in two widely-publicized road rage incidents.

Controversy also erupted late last year, when the police union held a massive demonstration and a vote of no confidence on Sizer and then-Police Commissioner Dan Saltzman after a controversial police officer was suspended for shooting a girl at a MAX stop with a beanbag gun.

Both Reese and Turner said that they want to work together in their respective capacities for the good of police morale and the public.

"A lot of times when we defend our members, we defend the policies and procedures of Portland Police Bureau also, and we want everyone to know that we're going to do our best to not only to work toward a safer Portland, but a better work environment for our officers," said Turner.

Turner and Reese had just finished up a July 28 patrol of Old Town before stopping to talk to reporters. Reese noted that many

people along the ride were well acquainted with Turner.

"He's been committed to this area for a long time and you can tell that people are already missing him," said Reese, who also noted that he had worked with Turner on the Drugs and Vice Division and while Reese was commander at Central Precinct.

Turner said that his biggest priority as union president was wrapping up negotiations over its labor contract with the city. He also said that he wanted to keep the lines of communication open with the police management and the community it serves.

"Besides the contract, the biggest challenge, again, is not for our officers to do anything differently because they do it every day. They go out there, they engage the community, they talk to people, they give them information," added Turner.

He also said that he would keep his ear to the ground to get a sense of the concerns of officers, and would be present at neighborhood association meetings listening to Portlanders.

Reese said that when he first began his career in law enforcement, much of the work was centered around violent crime. However, it's now shifted to dealing with more social issues, he said. During the patrol he had just finished up with Turner he had to call

in mental health workers to deal with a mentally ill person sleeping in a park.

"That is the type of work officers are having to do now. It's difficult; it's a tough environment," he said.

Turner acknowledged that funding for mental health services has been "guttled," and police are often the first to deal with these issues. Just the same day, City Council approved a record \$1.6 million settlement with the family of James Chasse, a schizophrenic man who died during an encounter with the police.

The day after the settlement Turner released a statement defending the officers involved in the incident, saying that they had followed their training and were not at fault.

He was also asked about recent moves by City Council to bring greater oversight to the police, which he has sharply criticized in the union's newsletter, "Rap Sheet."

"Well I think there is going to be change. But I also think we'll be able to open the lines of communication. I think they're passionate about what they do, serving the public, and I think we're passionate about what we do," said Turner, who noted that police still have good judgment and he would stick up for them.

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