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What's on your list today?.

LOCAL NEWS

Drawing a Bridge

Jefferson Smith on mayoral race and portland police

BY MINDY COOPER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Mayoral candidate Jefferson Smith is assuring voters of his liberal credentials to reform the Portland Police Bureau, saying needed changes in the bureau won't be sacrificed because the union representing police officers recently endorsed his candidacy.

Smith, 38, a northeast Portland Democrat who was elected to Legislature in 2008, received his degree in political science from the University of Oregon and attended Harvard Law. He has been viewed throughout the campaign as the most progressive of the three leading candidates for Portland mayor, including businesswoman Eileen Brady and former City Commissioner Charlie Hales.

Smith said he believes his relationship with police will be a positive one for the future of the city, where he hopes to re-build communication and trust between police officers and the people.

"They (the bureau) trust what I say," he said. "If you can still trust me to have the good of the city in mind, I think we have the opportunity to see something new that we haven't seen in the last 20-years."

According to Smith, even though he was the only candidate this year who disagreed with the police association on their most public of policy issues, the union trusts him to tell the truth, which is the most important attribute in leadership.

"This gives us a chance to come together in a different way," he said, adding that there needs to be strong leadership from the Mayor next year.

We need a cultural shift within the Police Bureau, a city where the people are empowered, problems are solved, and police are accountable for their actions, he said, "But I don't think we can do this by primarily attacking the Police Bureau. We want a safe community, with trust between the people and the police."

Smith hopes his new relationship with the bureau will help bridge this gap if he is elected mayor this year.

We need to train the police, so when they arrive on

the scene, they are there to solve the problem, he said. "We would start with the younger police officers in order to change our focus."

Smith spoke of the late Rob Ingram, a dedicated advocate from the African-American community who worked to reduce youth violence within the city. Smith said Ingram was a good friend, whom he had met in high school at Grant.



PHOTO BY MINDY COOPER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Jefferson Smith tackles police issues in his race for Portland Mayor.

Like Ingram, Smith said in order to truly tackle the rise in gang violence, "we must start early."

"We need to also try to have more uniformed police because it makes it easier to have community policing," he said. "And we need a good Gang Task Force."

Smith remembers when Julio Marquez was tragically killed several months ago. "He was killed 10 blocks from my house," he said. "I pass that spot every single day."

One way to address youth violence, he said, is

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Police Mistake Costs City \$250,000

A man who was mistaken by Portland police as a graffiti tagger and then hit with a stun gun over and over has won a \$250,000 settlement with the Portland City Council.

Dan Halsted was innocently walking home in northeast Portland, when an officer stunned him five times with a Taser in the back because he thought he sprayed some graffiti on a wall nearby in the Sullivan's Gulch neighborhood.

When a sudden flashlight met his eyes, Halsted said he immediately stopped, and then heard a voice say 'Get Him!'



Dan Halsted (KATU photo)

In the pitch dark night, Halsted said he thought he was being jumped, because the officers chasing him never identified themselves as the police.

According to Halsted, the entire process has left him with a deepened distrust in police, especially

after the trial when the city's attorney tried to use Halsted's classic kung fu film collection against him, saying it proved he was violent.

Halsted is both a film collector and an employee at the Hollywood Theater.

The settlement comes not long after a city audit, which recommended police limit the times a person's stunned.

Most police agencies train officers to stun suspects up to three times. According to the Police Bureau, officers recently completed refresher training on the use of Tasers.