

48
years of
community service
‘City
of
Roses’



The Pen is Funnier than the Sword

Featured Muslim cartoonist to visit city; share works
See Metro, page 9

Whole Health Focus

Expanded Garlington Center gets a preview
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The Portland Observer

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month
Volume XLVI • Number 43



www.portlandobserver.com
Wednesday • October 25, 2017



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Portland police keep the peace while monitoring an intersection, downtown, in this archive photo. As policies relating to potential conflicts between police, the mentally ill and people of color are investigated, a new report puts a greater emphasis on officers using de-escalation practices to defuse violence.

Less Force, More Empathy

Changes due after report finds police use too much force

BY DANNY PETERSON
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Some insiders within the Portland Police Bureau and social justice advocates outside of it are hopeful for progress in officer training that will put a greater emphasis on de-escalating conflicts between police and the public, while others are cautious about empty promises.

A group of national consultants recently found that the Portland Police Bureau is not training its officers enough

in de-escalation techniques as an alternative to force, especially as it studies deadly force and investigates potential conflicts between police and the mentally ill and people of color.

The consultants wrote in early October that Portland Police training needed to put “greater emphasis to building verbal communication and de-escalation skills.” To date, however, insufficient training time and a lack of quality instruction has been devoted to these important behaviors, the report said.

By observing three of Portland’s annual police training cycles, the consultants noted how in many instances police were often escalating tensions rather than defusing them. Some of the examples involved officers trying to get suspects to follow commands by lacing verbal orders with profanity and a raised voice. While officers recorded

these interactions as “non-force,” techniques, the consultants said they were the opposite.

The report said de-escalation techniques are those that are used to calm an agitated subject, promote rational decision making and gain non-fear based, voluntary compliance.

“There appears to be a large-scale confusion regarding the intent of de-escalation with the bureau and the confusion has yet to be adequately rectified through training and the evaluation of force events,” the consultants wrote.

Portland civil rights organizer Jo Ann Hardesty, who has been working with police to incorporate community relations into training, told the Portland Observer that the idea of stronger de-escalation training would be “one

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