

Cuts

continued from page 1

move forward is to right our ship and be on a stable long-term course. And we’re not now. We’re not on course.”

Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith says her phone has been ringing off the hook with complaints since the cuts were announced.

“I just think it’s unfortunate to balance the budget on the backs of young people,” she

which helps kids figure out potential career interests, provides job readiness training, targets academic skill-building, and provides 180 hours of paid work experience.”

Former Mayor Sam Adams, who championed the city’s youth program, issued a statement, saying he won’t immediately comment on his successor’s decisions, “at least for the next couple months.”

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-- Heather Ficht, WorkSystems

says. “I wish he would reconsider because this is a great program. I have seen how it changes the lives of young men and women. It’s been successful and we are still going to make it a priority.”

Smith is a strong supporter of the Summer Works internship program. Creating 25, county-funded youth internships was one of Smith’s first acts as a commissioner in 2011. In 2012 she added 25 more county-funded positions, and she hoped to add another 25 in 2013. But the bulk of last year’s positions, 96 of 315, were funded by the city, at a cost of \$200,000.

Across Multnomah and Washington counties, 17,000 youth are eligible for the program.

Kary Chisholm, co-founder of the Democrat blog, Blue Oregon, says Hales is breaking his first campaign promise.

“Never mind that those programs keep young people off the streets, create a pathway to long-term employment, and set a bunch of kids on the right path. Never mind that it’s good policy,” Chisholm writes.

“What’s interesting to me is that Hales specifically promised to protect - nay, expand - these programs should he become mayor.”

Chisholm goes on to quote from Hales campaign website:

“We need to increase job opportunities and workforce training to people living in poverty. Nationally, cities that do not have enough available jobs have the highest youth crime rates. Youths living in poverty often choose to go down the wrong path because they see no other opportunities. I would like to expand Mayor Adam’s successful Summer Youth Connect program,

But Adams did offer his take on the city’s budget shortfall, which he says is driven by three factors:

The Department of Justice finding that Portland Police Bureau violated the civil rights of citizens with mental illness, and the \$5.4 million annual cost to remedy the problem.

Creation of the new Library District, which will reduce the city’s property tax income by \$10 million.

Cuts to the general fund of \$8.6 million necessary to cover future projected maintenance and facilities expenses.

Heather Ficht, director of youth workforce investment for WorkSystems, says the cuts are happening during a time of unprecedented crisis. Pathways to work have disappeared, especially for low-income and minority youth, she says.

“Only one in four kids has a job,” Ficht says. “In communities of color it’s as low as one in 10. So 90 percent of those kids aren’t going to school and aren’t working in the summer. That is a huge crisis. We’ve never had such a low labor participation rate — since it’s been recorded in WWII.”

Summer Works’ students come from struggling families — 87 percent were youth of color and 97 percent were low-income. Students spent 180 hours getting work experience and being paid minimum wage. For some students the money meant a lot more than just bus fare and school clothes, Smith notes.

“The money she (an intern) earned over the summer helped her parents pay rent, and PGE bills,” Smith says of one of her interns. “Her mother was unemployed. A lot of these kids need jobs over the summer because they need to help their families.”

Once students are 16, their families do not receive child tax credit. Nor do they qualify for the Earned Income Tax credit.

Other cities, such as Boston, Philadelphia and Los Angeles have invested heavily in similar programs. In Los Angeles the Chamber of Commerce runs the youth employment program, which last year served 4,000 students.

About 60 employers fund those internships, said Marie Nieto, director of educa-

‘No More Evictions!’



Home foreclosure victims, from left, Debbie Austin, Patricia and Darren Williams, and a supporter picketed the Multnomah County Building along with about 50 protesters calling on Sheriff Dan Staton to stop evicting families disputing their evictions by banking corporations. Austin, a cancer patient, cried as she told the protesters that armed officers forced her out of the house wearing nothing but a t-shirt and underwear. After an all-night sit-in, Staton and County Chair Jeff Cogen agreed in principal to a moratorium on evictions, and the group We Are Oregon declared a victory.

tion and workforce development for the Los Angeles chamber.

“Employers are always more than happy to participate,” she says. “We have established relationships with a number of companies including Kaiser Permanente and Wells Fargo bank.”

Hartford, Conn., a city of under 125,000 people, but with a poverty rate of close to 33 percent, puts \$1.5 million into its summer youth employment program. Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra views the investment as an essential part of the public safety budget.

Ficht says it only makes sense that young people with no money and no productive activity, are at high risk of getting into trouble.

“It’s a prevention strategy, if you do the math,” she says. “You impact 1300 young people’s summer experience. If they don’t have opportunity to do something constructive, then what are they going to do with their time?”

“I don’t think it’s a big leap to think that there is going to be more (crime) ... anything from more tagging and graffiti to worse things...”

“How much time is that going to take from our public safety officers and distract

them from the important work they have, and then processing these kids through the system,” Ficht says. “Really is that the best way?”

At the same time, 50,000 retiring workers are expected to leave the workforce in the next five years.

The program helped young people see career opportunities and provided a valuable service to employers, Ficht says. About 95 percent of Summer Works students successfully completed their internships and 95 percent continued in school or college.

“It’s really important that we are being strategic in preparing the next generation for participation in the workforce. Also it’s a really good opportunity to increase diversity in the workforce. “

Ficht says the Summer Works program will continue, but without the City dollars, she’ll be looking for more support from other sources. Smith too says she’ll be issuing a call to employers and others to consider funding Summer Works internships.

Dan Ryan CEO of All Hands Raised, which coordinates the 9th Grade Counts program, said he understood the difficulty of meeting budget, but is grateful that Hales has committed to stay at the table.

Summit

continued from page 1

wellness expert Erica Brannon, the workshop includes meditation, holistic health, and natural body movements.

Other workshops address mental health, societal stereotypes and resources for families. A pizza feast and networking will be held at the end of the workshops.

Muhammad, a past winner of The Skanner News Drum Major for Justice Award, organized the first youth summit in 2007 after the fatal shooting of 14-year-old DaVonte Lightfoot, a Benson High School student and one of Muhammad’s former students at Victory Middle School in North

Portland.

Past keynote speakers have included Professor Griff of Public Enemy, Jasiri X, and the late Rob Ingram, director of the Portland Office of Youth Violence Prevention, and also a past winner of The Skanner News Drum Major for Justice Award.

The event is Saturday, Feb. 9 in the PSU Smith Memorial Union third floor, 1825 SW Broadway. Registration starts at 11 a.m., with the youth talent show begins at 6:30 p.m. Register in advance at www.portlandyouthSummit.org.

Garden

continued from page 1

ing the spot where each plant will be set in the soil.

Volunteers are welcomed to the planting days, which run from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. daily on: Tuesday, Feb. 19; Wednesday, Feb. 20; Thursday, Feb. 21; and Friday, Feb. 22 (if needed).

Parks spokesman Mark Ross says the cel-

ebrations commemorating the park’s centennial this summer will be action-packed — and free of charge.

“There’ll be a big shebang with kids activities, rose garden historical presentations and a movie in the park, just to name a very few elements,” he says. The Parks Bureau is also planning a string of events

leading up to the June celebration.

Meanwhile, some 30 volunteers per planting day in February are sought, and people are encouraged to being a shovel if you have one. Lunch on those days is provided from 11 a.m.-noon.

Sign up at penrosevolunteers@gmail.com

.The Friends Group has also raised cash for

a new sign, which will be unveiled June 7 from 10:30-noon.

“Be sure to wear outdoor work clothes to keep you warm and dry, including sturdy boots and gloves,” Ross says.

Make a contribution to the garden mulch fund at www.portlandparksfoundation.org.