

## Budget cont'd from pg 1

which would be earmarked for programs that place people in permanent housing;

- \$300,000 to hire tax collectors to collect taxes from Portland businesses, which observers say are more than \$9 million in arrears on city taxes;
- \$100,000 in ongoing funds to perform additional data collection and analysis relating to equity and diversity, including analysis of the Portland Police Bureau's stops data and hiring decisions, and an additional \$50,000 for a one-time partnership to analyze police stops data;
- Authorization for two additional staff in the records division, to

decrease the amount of time the city takes to fulfill public records requests;

- The creation of a full-time community health manager within the fire department, dedicated to mitigating "high-utilizer 9-1-1 calls, providing homeless outreach, and providing community health outreach and education";
- The closure of Fulton Park (Southwest Portland) and Hillside (Northwest Portland) community centers.

Wheeler told reporters Monday he will ask city bureaus to find places they can cut their budgets by 1 percent without harming services.

## Michael Alexander to Become PSU's interim VP for Global Diversity and Inclusion

Portland State University President Rahmat Shoureshi has named Michael Alexander, the former president and CEO of the Urban League of Portland, as interim Vice President for Global Diversity and Inclusion.

Alexander headed the Urban League from 2012 to his retirement in 2015, when he was widely credited for restoring fiscal discipline to the organization and reconnecting it with community partners. Prior to that, he served in executive roles at Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon, Magellan Behavioral Health, Human Affairs International and Aetna, including four years as vice president and executive director of the Aetna Foundation.

He currently sits on the boards of The Black United Fund, the Northwest Health Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Oregon, Wells Fargo Community Boards, the Port of Portland Commission and the Black Male Achievement Steering Committee.

Alexander started May 2 at PSU. A national search for a permanent vice president will start in the coming months. President Shoureshi thanked Julie Caron, Associate Vice President and Title IX Coordinator for Global Diversity and Inclusion, for leading the office on an interim basis in recent months.

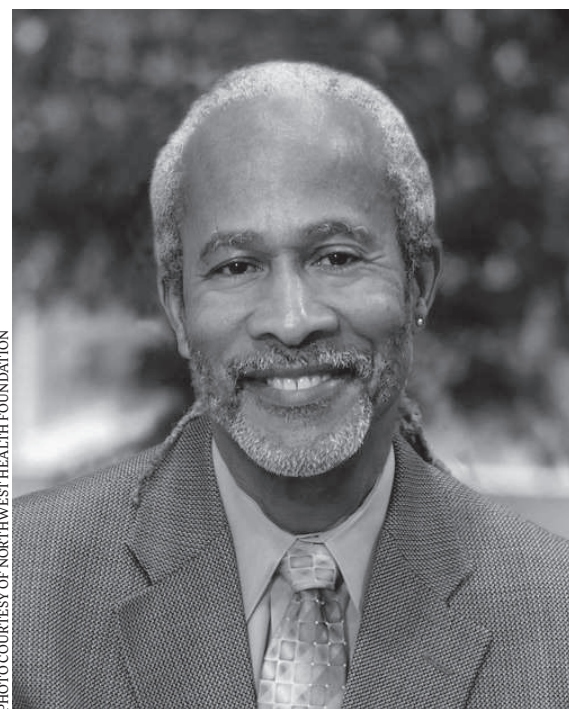


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## Neals cont'd from pg 1

Born in Norway to a Norwegian mother and an African American father, Neal's family moved frequently when he was a child, finally settling in southern California when he was 10. He started his career in Orange County and started his college career in his late 20s, graduating at 31 from California State University at San Bernadino with a bachelor's degree in sociology.

In 1992, Neal and his wife, Robin, moved to the Portland area, the result of a compromise: she wanted to relocate somewhere north of Ventura, California, and the couple considered the Eugene area, but Neal wanted to move to an area with more diversity.

Initially, Neal worked in Clackamas County as a probation officer, and he and his wife bought a house in Northeast Portland. He worked for Clackamas County for 15 years total and has worked for Multnomah County for the last 10. He's worked in both juvenile and adult parole and probation services,

creating a re-entry coordination program for the county and, most recently, adopting a culturally specific program for African Americans on parole and probation services.

Habilitation Empowerment Accountability Therapy, or HEAT, is a national

**“The population of people of color have moved east and the services still tend to be downtown**

curriculum used by 20 corrections departments nationwide, and the only one Neal could find that addressed African Americans specifically.

“It's a good program for males who oftentimes struggle to be involved in dominant culture programs,” Neal said. The DCJ is also adapting the program

for African American women, who, like their male counterparts, are over-represented in Multnomah County's criminal justice system.

With a grant from the MacArthur Foundation, the county is also opening a 38-bed transitional housing development in Gresham.

“The population of people of color have moved east and the services still tend to be downtown,” Neal said, which can make it difficult for people who re-entering society after incarceration — who are likely to be transit-dependent — to access everything they need.

Neal, with deputy director Erika Preuitt, is also looking at shining a light on racial disparities in the system. One of the challenges with parole and probation, he said, is that officers don't have the power to arrest or prosecute, but probation officers do have the ability to “sanction” individuals they're supervising, resulting in re-incarceration. Neal's department will be mon-

itoring trends in who is more likely to be sanctioned and for what offenses.

The DCJ has also been beset with complaints of discrimination and low employee morale. Neal said the department is a microcosm of society, and many of the external debates around race are mirrored within the institution — but also said the department has adopted a strategic plan for improving communications and morale with staff.

“There's a unique stress to the work we do. That can be wearing on our staff. We're trying to promote encouraging staff to take care of themselves,” Neal said.

He also said he and Preuitt are committed to engaging with the whole community and addressing public concerns about striking a balance between keeping the community safe, and treating parolees appropriately.

“We're here to address their concerns around the safety of the community,” Neal said.

## Seniors cont'd from pg 1

viding monthly rent subsidies to senior citizens with the very lowest income.

Newell is now living in a duplex in East Portland. At just over 600 square feet, the apartment costs \$1,350 a month — a price she never could have afforded. But through her rent voucher, she pays only \$129. With stabilized housing, her health is improving too.

“The doctors are telling me it will take up to six months to improve, with just not having to worry anymore,” said Newell. “It's a wonderful place and I am getting better day by day.”

Nationally, Housing Choice Vouchers — a program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development — have been slashed by 30 percent since 1994. Also referred to as “Section 8” vouchers (due to an amendment in the US Housing Act), they offer low-income individuals a permanent rent subsidy.

But the demand in recent years has stretched the dwindling supply into a shortfall. In Multnomah County, the waiting list for Section 8 vouchers closed in September 2016.

For low income seniors, their reality grows more vulnerable each year. In Portland, soaring rents have contributed to the number of people over the age

of 55 that are experiencing homelessness in the county. According to its biennial Point in Time count, 816 seniors were counted as homeless in 2017. That demographic is rising faster than the number of people experiencing homelessness overall.

**“Rents have far outpaced the low incomes of seniors**

The underlying culprit is that rents have far outpaced the low incomes of seniors. If the cost of rent or food increases just slightly — coupled with the loss of a job or a spouse, or even a medical condition — they could be at risk of living in a shelter or even on the streets.

According to NWPP, “only one in four eligible households secure a housing choice voucher nationally, leaving many of our low-income neighbors and community members without the financial means to cover the cost of housing.”

Housing advocate Bobby Weinstock, with NWPP, had been germinating an idea for a local voucher for well over a decade. And together with executive

director Laura Golino de Lovato, they set out to create their own funding stream, completely independent of federal aid.

With the help of local housing authority Home Forward, as well as \$350,000 from the Joint Office of Homeless Services (funded by Multnomah County and the City of Portland), and an additional \$150,000 from Meyer Memorial Trust, the Long-Term Rent Assistance Program was born.

Since Feb. 1, the program has provided monthly rent vouchers to 35 seniors — seven of whom were homeless. On average, the vouchers provide \$700 towards keeping their rents permanently affordable. The additional 10 seniors will be receiving subsidies in the coming months — five of which are in a partnership with Care Oregon.

To determine who was eligible for a voucher, NWPP turned to their existing pool of clients, all of whom have



Sharon Newell and her therapy dog, Gracie.

COURTESY OF MULTNOMAH COUNTY

incomes from zero to 30 percent of the median family income.

“For this program, we looked at the people who have the lowest of that group, including those who have no income,” Golino de Lovato told *The Skanner*.

Her organization then reviewed the level of vulnerability of this subset, taking into account disabilities, chronic medical conditions, seniors over 80 years of age, and those who spend over 70 percent of their monthly income on rent.