

The Oregonian

Portland Mayor Supports Aim of ICE Protesters, But Not Makeshift Camps

*By Gordon Friedman
July 27, 2018*

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler said Friday that, while he supports protesters' rights to express their views in public venues in the city, they should not erect large, semi-permanent camps as part of their demonstrations.

Wheeler on Friday held the first of what he has billed as experimental monthly on-the-record conversations with Portland's press corps. The press conference ranged in topic from neighborhood planning to environmental policy.

But reporters homed in on the five-week protest at the city's Immigrations and Customs Enforcement field office, which Wheeler ordered disbanded Monday. Protesters demonstrating against the Trump administration and asking for the abolishment of ICE had set up a large camp near Southwest Macadam Avenue and did not leave for weeks, disrupting agency workers and area businesses. They left behind a junk heap of astonishing size, which drew criticism even from supporters of their cause.

Wheeler on Friday reaffirmed that he views the Trump administration's former policy of separating children and parents after illegal border crossings as abhorrent and mean-spirited. He said he does not have enough information to draw a conclusion on whether ICE should be abolished.

But he said he does not support building large camps, as the ICE protesters did, because they pose problems for demonstrators' health and safety and block area visitors.

The mayor went further, saying he believes it "deters from the main message" when protesters leave "piles of garbage" in their stead as they decamp. The city and Trimet will pay for the cleanup of trash and makeshift buildings left by protesters; the total cost is not yet finalized.

With future demonstrations, Wheeler said he would prefer to force camps to disband "sooner rather than later."

Columbia CEO-Funded Homeless Shelter Already \$500K Over Budget

*By Gordon Friedman
July 30, 2018*

A business leader's project to launch a full-service center for the homeless in downtown Portland is half a million dollars over budget, raising the possibility it will not open on time or at all.

The overspending stems from the cleanup of the city-owned two-acre site beneath the Broadway Bridge where the shelter is to rise, said Lisa Marandas, deputy director of Oregon Harbor of Hope, the developer-run nonprofit overseeing the project.

Soil on the lot is contaminated from nearby railroad tracks and must be covered with a protective cap estimated to cost \$170,000, city documents show.

Harbor of Hope has blown past its \$100,000 budget for site cleanup and spent “in the \$600,000 range,” Marandas told Portland’s development commission at its July meeting.

“The costs are starting to rise and we’re looking at every avenue we can,” she said.

Mayor Ted Wheeler said Friday he is “aware of the issue.” He said the city had done its part to smooth the way for the project by waiving permit fees and making the land available at no cost.

Columbia Sportswear CEO Tim Boyle announced with great fanfare in April that he had donated \$1.5 million to get the center built and operating in Northwest Portland along the Willamette River next to and under the iconic red bridge. A spokesman for Boyle declined to comment Friday.

That the project is already so far overbudget is a foreboding sign. Portland’s previous mayor, Charlie Hales, examined a similar homeless “navigation center” concept, only to conclude such a center would be prohibitively expensive.

The plan hatched by Oregon Harbor of Hope is to mimic other West Coast cities that operate navigation centers, facilities that offer food and shelter to the homeless and referrals to social service agencies.

Boyle jumpstarted the project with his \$1.5 million donation. He and dozens of business, government and education leaders – including the mayor and county chairwoman – rolled out their plans at a press conference.

“This is a great day for Portland,” developer and Harbor of Hope chairman Homer Williams said during the announcement. He did not return a call seeking comment Friday.

Project backers set an aggressive timeline, saying the shelter would open this fall. Marandas said they are still hoping to make that deadline. So far, no structures have begun to be erected.

A representative of Wheeler signaled the city will cut its losses if the project doesn’t work out.

“We’re not going to throw good money after bad ... if it doesn’t pencil, it doesn’t pencil,” Berk Nelson, a senior advisor to Wheeler, told the development commission.

Nelson said the city is working to ensure “everything is going to be feasible” given the intense public interest and news coverage of the proposed shelter.

“We know that the entire city, possible the country, is looking at the project,” Nelson said.

Marandas said in an interview there is “always a possibility” the shelter will not be constructed due to cost overruns. But she painted the high spending as a glass-half-full scenario.

“I think actually it’s a positive,” she said, because overspending figures “could be a lot higher.” She said cost-cutting measures already put in place staved off a possible million-dollar overrun.

The Portland Tribune

Did ICE Protest Matter? 'Absolutely' Says Mayor Wheeler

By Zane Sparling

July 27, 2018

Ted Wheeler talks Immigration and Customs Enforcement clean-up at Portland City Hall on July 27.

So clean you could eat off the ground.

That was Mayor Ted Wheeler's description of the former site of the Occupy ICE camp — now scraped clean of detritus after a five-week protest outside the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in Southwest Portland ended peacefully.

Local authorities posted eviction notices about 24 hours before the sweep began at 4:30 a.m. on Wednesday, July 25. By that time just a dozen demonstrators remained on the site where several hundred once slept. Police said no arrests were made.

Representatives of the news media peppered the mayor with questions about the vanquished encampment during a Friday, July 27 news conference at City Hall. Several journalists asked why Wheeler ordered the \$12,000 clean-up while still allowing right-wing protesters to hold rowdy marches along downtown streets.

Wheeler acknowledged that the gatherings have become "organized street brawls," but said the city's role is to allow everyone the ability to express their first amendment rights safely.

"The Portland Police Bureau does not get to pick ideological sides," he responded. "I've told you my particular objection to the Trump Administration policy, and it is a strenuous objection."

Wheeler also said he has no plans to pull Portland's participation from the Joint Terrorism Task Force, alluding to the threat of white-power domestic terrorism in the Rose City and noting that "the work of the JTTF happens whether we're apart of it or not."

He said he expects the City Council to revisit the issue in 2019.

Wheeler dodged a question about whether he supports calls to abolish ICE, saying he wants immigration reform but doesn't know enough about the agency's other responsibilities. When asked if he believed protesters had "accomplished" anything, his reply was unequivocal.

"The answer in my mind is absolutely," Wheeler said. "There's no question the president changed his mind when he saw people around the nation were very, very upset."

Overall, Wheeler appeared pleased by the drama-free disassembly of the tents, portable toilets, couches, canopies, wooden barricades and miscellaneous flotsam that comprised the Occupy ICE outpost.

Flanked by Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, he announced the decision to clear the camp on July 23, calling it "unsustainable" due to safety and sanitation issues. Prior to his decision, a faction dubbed #AbolishICE said it would leave the camp because occupation was "a tactic and not a strategy."

"With humility, we acknowledge that this fight has been fought long before us, and we have much to learn," the group said in an email. "This move will decentralize the movement and allow it to exist indefinitely."

Wheeler kept the Portland Police Bureau away from the camp for most of its short shelf life — a decision that prompted the Federal Protective Service to patrol the property and block all traffic on Southwest Bancroft Street, which was technically outside their jurisdiction.

Wheeler said that caused cancer patients to voice their concerns about driving to Oregon Health & Science University's riverfront hospital campus. Yet it was the closure of the ICE-adjacent Happy Camper coffee cart that grabbed more headlines, especially after the nonprofit's owners said protesters' harassment of customers forced them to go out of business.

Occupation leadership later circulated screenshots showing that the coffee cart had been listed as for sale on social media since June 14, three days before the protest began.

The news conference at City Hall may become a tradition of sorts, as city staffers have promised access-hungry journalists monthly opportunities to lob questions on all topics at the mayor. Additionally, a third-floor space will now serve as a pressroom for credentialed media.

The change comes as the mayor's former spokesman, Michael Cox, is elevated to chief of staff. Sophia June has been named the communications coordinator.

"This is a bit of an experiment," Wheeler said at the start of the well-attended meeting, sipping from a coffee cup emblazoned "The Rooster Personality."

"My expectation and hope is that over time this actually becomes more of an in-depth and meaningful policy conversation."

E-Scooters Storm Into Downtown Portland

*By Zane Sparling
July 29, 2018*

The electric scooters are available during a four-month trial overseen by the Transportation Bureau.

Hundreds of Portlanders are trying out the new electric scooters darting about the streets of downtown Portland.

Three e-scooter companies — LimeBike, Bird and Skip — were issued permits on Wednesday, July 25 or Thursday, July 26 for a four-month trial period ending on Nov. 20.

Users must download a company-specific smartphone app to purchase time on a scooter, with current rates set at about 15 cents a minute plus a \$1 unlocking fee. Helmets are not provided but are legally required, and only those 18 or older are allowed to ride them on the roads.

It was clear that the novelty factor hadn't worn off by Saturday, July 28, as dozens of scooter operators could be seen zipping along the Better Naito section of Southwest Naito Parkway.

Others dared to ride among the crowds filling the Waterfront Park Trail, where the scooters are banned (as they are on all other city parks and sidewalks).

"They're super fun," said Sam Kane during his first-ever ride on Naito. "I'd use it pretty regularly in the summertime, especially as an alternative to Uber."

Kane said he thought his Bird scooter was clocking in at 20 miles per hour downhill, though he said their performance is significantly weaker when traveling back up.

"I'm not getting openly sweaty during my commute, as I would with a bike," added scooter user Caitlin Drost. "Being aware of your surroundings is really important."

Whether the electric scooters will prove to be efficient addition to the transportation network — or an e-scourge of epic proportions — remains to be seen.

The rentable two-wheelers are banned in San Francisco, despite the fact that they initially caught on around California beaches and boardwalks, which are relatively dense and flat. Official concerns include the fact that the scooters can be "docked" anywhere, leading to irksome clusters on the sidewalk or even toppled over piles in the street.

That's probably what an anonymous Portland Bureau of Transportation staffer was thinking about when they used an official social media account to write that "they're toys that tech bros leave lazily strewn about, blocking corner ramps needed for people with disabilities."

The Bureau later apologized for the snarkiness and said the message didn't reflect their views.

It's reportedly possible to receive a citation for driving under the influence of intoxicants while piloting an electric scooter — or for failing to use a helmet — though that doesn't appear to have happened yet.

The scooter system also creates a new opening in the gig economy for chargers who will collect and re-charge the scooters each night, as most of the scooter companies do not allow rentals after dark.

The Tribune's tech reporter, Joseph Gallivan, travelled to Venice Beach to learn about the lifestyle of so-called scooter "juicers." [You can read his report here.](#)

The Portland Business Journal

Portland to Fund Affordable Housing and Mental Health Services

*By Elizabeth Hayes
July 27, 2018*

The Portland Housing Bureau is teaming with three other public agencies to provide more than \$12 million for projects that combine housing and mental health services to combat chronic homelessness.

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler and Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury on Friday announced the funds available for the Innovative Supportive Housing Pilot.

The housing bureau is chipping in \$10 million in capital funding. Oregon Housing and Community Services is contributing \$2 million from the Mental Health Housing Fund and the Joint Office of Homeless Services and Multnomah County Mental Health & Addiction Services is giving \$350,000 a year for services funding.

"This innovative pilot is the first of its kind — leveraging state, county and city partnerships in a targeted effort to better use our dollars to address chronic homelessness, with an emphasis on providing crucial mental health services," Wheeler said in a statement. "Homelessness is a national humanitarian crisis. It will take more than cities — but regional, state-wide and federal partnerships to solve it."

People with mental health disabilities represent the fastest growing segment of the homeless population in Multnomah County. Local officials want to expand permanent supportive housing by 200 units per year.

Health systems and Central City Concern also came together in recent years to build three housing projects for the homeless.