

The Oregonian

Homelessness: Portland's Great Depression Hoovervilles vs. 'Hales-villes' (photos)

*By Joseph Rose
February 8, 2016*

Mayor Charlie Hales' [decision to tolerate homeless camps](#) popping up along the waterfront, in public parks and on busy downtown sidewalks [isn't winning him any popularity contests](#).

But the debate over what to do with unwelcome homeless habitats in Portland has been kicking up political dust storms since the Great Depression.

Eight decades before the Hales-villes, the city put up with shantytowns known as Hoovervilles.

Named after unpopular [Republican President Herbert Hoover](#), the rag-tag neighborhoods of shacks made from scrap wood, car parts, corrugated tin and cardboard boxes became a ubiquitous symbol of 1930s desperation.

The itinerant, unemployed population of Ross Island City, also known as the Happy Hooligan Camp, made up Portland's largest Hooverville. During the most severe years of the Depression, some 300 people called it home.

Located under the west end of the Ross Island Bridge, the village had its own elected mayor, commissary and post office. Its streets were called Hollywood Avenue and Main Streets. Residents paid "taxes" by going on garbage-collection patrols.

Its suburb of Hooeyville stretched into what is now the high-end neighborhood of South Waterfront. Hooeyville actually had a community Finnish steam bath and a flushing toilet, which, of course, drained into the Willamette River.

In 1933, the Hooverville's mayor, Otto Olsen, objected when he heard the new Sullivan's Gulch shantytown on the east side of the river boasted "the modernity of a telephone," The Oregonian reported.

"We feel that if some good citizen will help us get a phone we will be in a better position to get jobs," Olsen told the newspaper.

In 1936, the FDR-created Works Progress Administration sent photographer Arthur Rothstein to document Portland's Hoovervilles. Looking at Rothstein's photos, the problem of the city's modern Hales-villes, while alarming and in increasingly dire need of a solution, appears negligible by comparison.

Turns out, homelessness actually is a crime: Letters to the Editor

Steve Weaser

February 7, 2016

Homelessness is a crime: As Portland Mayor Charlie Hales and City Council consider [yet more reductions](#) in basic police and fire protection to fund a politically correct homeless monument to the mayor, reasonable people wonder how fewer emergency responders makes our city safer — and for that matter, whether any evidence exists that the cuts are necessary. The declaration of a "state of emergency" for the [homeless](#) was, after all, arbitrary.

Homelessness is loitering, trespassing, theft of services, environmental pollution (camp structures, needles, excrement), so homeless people are criminals — contrary to the politically correct mantra that homelessness is not a crime. Turns out it is.

People don't become homeless overnight; they're the roommates we had who always found money for their drug of choice but came up short when rent was due, the coworkers who call in sick on paydays and Mondays, then play the victim when they're fired. In other words, they're their own worst enemy, not victims. Not even the scheme from "PC Charlie" can protect someone from their own bad judgement. With everything being handed to them, the homeless have no incentive to practice responsible judgement. If the handouts stop or are reduced, they'll have an incentive to be more responsible.

In the absence of a credible explanation from Mayor Hales as to how throwing \$20 million of other folks' money at the problem will translate into the homeless becoming more responsible, this scheme is nothing but a plan to fail. And if it isn't brought under control, that [\\$20 million](#) will become seed money for a new city tax.

Portland Police's 48-hour rule a barrier to accountability: Editorial Agenda 2016

The Oregonian Editorial Board

February 7, 2016

It's not a stretch to say that someone's ability to recount an event is better immediately after it happens than, for instance, two days later. That's why it seems so reasonable for the U.S. Department of Justice to insist that Portland Police officers [submit reports about incidents](#) in which they shoot a suspect shortly after such an event, not 48 hours later.

Unfortunately, what's reasonable doesn't necessarily match up with what's allowable, at least when a union contract is involved. And thanks to a provision in the police union's contract, officers who use deadly force must receive at least 48 hours notice before the bureau's personnel investigators can require them to give an account of what

happened. That's plenty of time for an officer to accidentally or intentionally come across information that could color his or her account of what happened.

It's time for the bureau to pressure the police union to drop the 48-hour rule now, well before the contract's 2017 expiration. For one thing, the Justice Department is making the issue of getting more timely reports from police officers a priority, according to [The Oregonian/OregonLive's Maxine Bernstein](#). Under terms of a [police-reforms settlement between DOJ and the city](#), the bureau must revise its policies governing how quickly officers submit use-of-force reports in the aftermath of a shooting.

But the city should also recognize that doing away with the 48-hour rule would show the community that the police bureau is serious about its responsibility as an employer to hold officers accountable for actions that violate the bureau's policies and procedures.

It's important for the public – and even police leadership – to first sort out what changing the 48-hour rule may and may not mean.

An officer-involved shooting spurs two separate investigations: an administrative inquiry, conducted by internal affairs personnel to see if the officer violated workplace policies or procedures; and a criminal inquiry conducted by detectives and overseen by prosecutors to determine if the officer broke any laws.

In the administrative process, the bureau can compel the officer, after issuing the 48-hour notice, to give an account of what happened. That account is used in the bureau's evaluation of whether the officer followed police protocols or whether the employee violated policies that merit administrative disciplinary action, such as suspension or termination.

In the criminal investigation, detectives attempt to get a voluntary statement from the officer. They cannot and do not get access to the compelled statement in the administrative investigation. Rather, like any subject of a criminal inquiry, the officer has the right to remain silent – a Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination that carries throughout any criminal proceeding.

The police bureau, however, worries that compelling a statement from the officer for the personnel investigation [could cast a legal shadow on the admissibility](#) of voluntary statements that the officer later gives to criminal investigators – even though the criminal side never hears the compelled statement.

"In Oregon, there is a belief both from the district attorney and from city attorneys that once you compel somebody to give a statement that (it affects) any interview they give afterwards," Cmdr. George Burke, who leads the detective division, told [The Oregonian/OregonLive](#) editorial board.

That's not necessarily the case, however.

"A carefully walled off internal affairs statement, even if compelled, would not impair a criminal prosecution," said Multnomah County Chief Deputy District Attorney Don Rees. He did acknowledge that there could be logistical issues to guarantee such information is kept separate. "The devil is in the details," he said.

But the focus on how it might affect the criminal inquiry is also almost irrelevant. The reality is that few officers are ever charged criminally for shooting a person. Only one Portland police officer has ever faced criminal prosecution for force used on duty. While criminal prosecution should always remain an option if circumstances merit it, the public's best hope for an accountable and trustworthy police force lies in the job that the bureau does as an employer.

That means looking at whether the bureau sets professional standards, trains its officers and disciplines them if they violate policies. It also means conducting thorough investigations that rely on the best possible information when evaluating the actions of an officer who uses deadly force. Two-day old accounts, however, hardly qualify as best possible information.

Portland Police Chief Larry O'Dea deserves credit for the work the bureau has completed so far to improve training and transparency, whether required by the police-reform settlement or recommended by outside consultants. But his concerns about doing away with the 48-hour rule for rank-and-file officers are misplaced or solvable. Fortunately, lawyers for the justice department are to meet with city and county representatives this week to hash out the legal questions. How the city proceeds on the 48-hour question will show the depth of its commitment to holding its officers and itself accountable.

The Portland Tribune

Council to discuss homeless, affordable house and Superfund

*By Jim Redden
February 8, 2016*

Although public testimony is not allowed, the City Council will hold two important work sessions this week.

The first is an update on the state of the housing emergency the council declared last October. It is scheduled from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 8, in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

The session is expected to include presentations by Mayor Charlie Hales on his evolving policies to allow more homeless camping. Hales is also expected to discuss the work to increase affordable housing by A Home for Everyone, a partnership that includes Portland, Gresham, Multnomah County and Home Forward, formally known as the Housing Authority of Portland.

The session will take place as questions are continuing to be raised about the growing number of homeless camps in the city and the council is preparing to vote on moving the Right 2 Dream Too homeless camp in Old Town to a city-owned lot at Southeast Third Avenue and Harrison Street.

The second work session is an update on the Portland Harbor Superfund cleanup process. It is scheduled from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 9, in the Council Chambers.

The session is expected to include a presentation by a representative of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which has ordered pollution in the harbor to be cleaned up. The plan is still being developed, including what methods to use and who will pay for it. Cost estimates have ranged from \$445 million to \$2.2 billion. Both the schedule and potential costs of the clean up are expected to be discussed.

The city Bureau of Environmental Service has so far spent more than \$50 million in sewer ratepayer funds to help finance the process. That spending is being challenged in an ongoing lawsuit in Multnomah County Circuit Court by ratepayers who say BES is not the only city agency that contributed to the pollution. Although the spending has been described as including potential loans to other bureaus, the suit questions whether ratepayer funds can be loaned in such a manner.

As part of the process, city and nine other entities in the harbor have signed an agreement with the EPA to conduct a Remedial Investigation and develop a Feasibility Study for a clean up plan. Calling themselves the Lower Willamette Group, those in addition to the city include: Arkema Inc.; Bayer CropScience Inc.; BNSF Railway Co.; Chevron USA Inc.; City of Portland; ConocoPhillips Co.; Gunderson LLC; Kinder Morgan Liquids Terminals; NW Natural; Evraz Inc. NA, dba Evraz Oregon Steel; Port of Portland; Siltronic Corp.; TOC Holdings Co., and the Union Pacific Railroad Co.

The sessions can be watched live and in recorded form on the city's website at www.portlandoregon.gov/28258.

Portland wants Legislature to allow inclusionary zoning, but progressive economist says it won't help with housing crisis

By Steve Law

February 5, 2016

Portland city officials and affordable housing advocates are mounting another push to get the Legislature to allow "inclusionary zoning" in Oregon. That would enable Portland and other cities to require developers to build some affordable units when they build larger apartment complexes.

But on the eve of a pivotal committee vote in Salem, an influential economist is questioning whether such inclusionary zoning is worthwhile.

Joe Cortright, a Portland economist who serves as director of the City Observatory think tank, argues that

inclusionary zoning hasn't worked well in other big cities around the country, and that it will drive up housing prices and shift development outside of Portland, increasing suburban sprawl.

"It's basically tokenism masquerading as public policy," Cortright says.

In an article he posted this week on the City Observatory blog, Cortright wrote: "Evidence from Boston, where it's been in place for some time, suggests that inclusionary zoning will cause

fewer total new units to get built.” In New York City, he added, it’s produced less than 3,000 new units in a decade, not much more than Portland achieved in the Pearl District alone.

“In my view, it’s a really counterproductive policy,” Cortright said in an interview. Making developers build some affordable units, without granting them any public subsidies, will cause them to raise rents on their other units or move to suburbs without such policies, he said. “The people who develop apartments then have to make up the price somewhere else. If I’m an apartment developer, that’s essentially driving up the costs of Portland compared to everywhere else.”

That must be music to the ears of the homebuilders lobby and its allies that lobbied the Legislature to ban inclusionary zoning in Oregon cities. Cortright is generally seen as a progressive economist, a leading critic of the ill-fated Columbia Crossing Bridge to Vancouver, who heralded the economic importance of Portland becoming a magnet for “young creatives.”

Affordable housing advocates like to point out that only Texas and Oregon bar inclusionary zoning.

On Friday, Portland Housing Bureau Director Kurt Creager was reached just before heading into a legislative committee hearing to testify in favor of inclusionary zoning. Creager, who had just finished reading Cortright’s blog post, said he disagreed with the economist’s critique of inclusionary zoning, which he calls inclusionary housing.

“It is working in areas that are more like Portland than New York City or San Francisco,” he said.

Creager came to his Portland job last year after working in Fairfax County, Va., a suburban Washington D.C. area that has successfully used inclusionary zoning. For every apartment project of 50 units or more, Fairfax County requires 12 percent of the units to be affordable, Creager said, resulting in 2,700 affordable units. For transit corridors, the county requires 20 percent of units to be affordable, which has resulted in 4,500 approved units, though most of them are not yet built.

New York’s program has been voluntary, Creager said, and Mayor Bill DeBlasio wants to beef it up. Boston’s policy hasn’t worked that well, but the mayor is recalibrating it to be more effective, he said, just as San Diego recently did. San Francisco has a pending ballot measure to strengthen the affordable housing requirements in its policy, he said.

Portland has effectively used urban renewal financing in the Pearl District, South Waterfront and elsewhere to subsidize affordable apartments, Creager said. But by state law, urban renewal areas can’t take up more than 15 percent of a city’s land base. Portland’s urban renewal areas take up 13 percent of the city, and that will rise to 15 percent if Mayor Hales creates a new urban renewal area this year along a rapid bus line planned on Powell Boulevard and Division Street.

“Inclusionary housing would provide us with a tool that would be available citywide,” Creager said.

He envisions it being most helpful in Portland along transit corridors, and doubts it will cause developers to build elsewhere, because many people want to live in the city now, in close-in, walkable neighborhoods that are near urban amenities.

Creager testified Friday that if the bill before the Oregon Legislature had been in effect, Portland would have seen an estimated 4,000 additional affordable units from 2010 to 2014. No full figures are available for 2015, but his staff calculated that 803 more units would have been built through August.

Of course, that's somewhat speculative, because the policy would have driven up costs for developers.

"Our estimate is that about half of the (affordable) housing need can be addressed through inclusionary housing policies in the next 20 years," Creager said. The other half, he said, can come via public subsidies.

But Creager said the bills before the Legislature could die if they don't emerge soon out of committee.

GoLocalPDX

Portland Police Bureau Warns of Tax-Season Scams

By GoLocalPDX News Team

February 6, 2016

The Portland Police Bureau is asking all Portland residents to be alert and aware of phone scams in the city during tax season.

In 2015, the Police Bureau received reports of residents receiving calls from someone who claims to be from a local police or sheriff's department. The caller then tells the resident that the victim had missed jury duty, had outstanding fines, or a warrant for their arrest that could be taken care of over the phone with a payment.

Other victims have reported receiving calls from people claiming to be public utilities, the IRS, charities and home repair companies.

Callers usually instruct victims to purchase re-loadable cards and call them back with the numbers.

The Portland Police Bureau reminds all residents that:

- The Portland Police Bureau or any other legitimate law enforcement agency does not call community members seeking payment for outstanding traffic citations or warrants.

- The Portland Police Bureau does not call individuals and demand money from community members under any circumstances.

- Individuals claiming to collect debts may try to instill fear in potential victims to persuade them to forward money.

If you are a resident of Portland and fall victim to these scammers with financial loss, you are encouraged to file a report by calling the Portland Police Bureau's Non-Emergency line at (503) 823-3333.