

The Oregonian

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler urges non-violence as feds decline to revoke Sunday rally permit

By Jessica Floum

June 1, 2017

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler urged those planning to participate in Sunday's demonstrations to "exercise common sense" and "reject violence" after federal officials announced Wednesday that they will not revoke the permit for a pro-Trump free speech rally set to take place across from City Hall Sunday.

Wheeler had asked federal officials to revoke the permit in a Facebook post Monday following the double murder of two heroes protecting teens from racist and islamophobic vitriol on the MAX. He said the demonstration would "only exacerbate a difficult situation."

The request drew criticism from free speech advocates, the American Civil Liberties Union and local conservative leaders.

The federal Government Services Administration announced Wednesday that they would not revoke the permit for Sunday's demonstration because it was lawfully obtained.

The agency oversees the Terry Schunk Plaza property across from Portland City Hall, where the rally is set to take place.

Wheeler said in a statement Wednesday that he respects federal officials' decision, but remains "concerned about the safety of Portlanders, both in and around the protest."

Several protests have organized in opposition to Sunday's pro-Trump free speech rally.

About 1,000 people indicated on Facebook that they plan to attend an event sponsored by more than 30 immigrant rights, mental health and religious groups. The coalition, Portland Stands United Against Hate, has planned a demonstration opposing the pro-Trump rally.

Nico Judd, coalition organizer and a member of the Portland International Socialist Organization, said the city approved a permit for the event on Wednesday, promising a presence from the Portland Police Bureau. Police officials did not respond to multiple requests for comment. Police told her they plan to close Southwest Fourth Street, between City Hall and the plaza.

Judd said she thinks the mayor contributed to a "culture of fear" in the city by attempting to shut down the Trump rally.

A group of Portland-area labor union leaders and activists also plan to "stop" the pro-Trump rally Sunday.

Portland Labor Against the Fascists group launched last week, denounced the fatal stabbings of two men on the MAX Friday afternoon.

In a press release, the group called suspect Jeremy Christian a "Muslim-hating Nazi," noting he had attended a rally in East Portland hosted by the same organizers of Sunday's rally.

"We're all pretty sick and tired of the bigotry and attacks," organizer Ashley Jackson said.

Jackson said the group plans to have speakers and a large presence. When asked about the mayor's calls for non-violence, Jackson said "we can't rely on the city or the government to stop these people."

Trump rally organizer Joey Gibson told The Oregonian/OregonLive on Tuesday that he has "nothing to do with Jeremy Christian." Gibson said organizers asked Christian to leave after he yelled racial epithets and "Die Muslims!" and threatened Gibson at the April rally.

"Jeremy Christian hated me," Gibson said.

Gibson said he has arranged for unofficial private security, some of whom will have permits to carry concealed hand-guns and some of whom are separately affiliated with militia groups.

James Buchal, chair of the Multnomah County Republican Party told The Oregonian/OregonLive Tuesday that his party is considering using alternative methods to keep people safe. He told The Guardian Monday that his group is looking at using militia groups like the Oath Keepers, an anti-government group, and the Three Percenters, a group that pledges armed resistance against efforts to restrict gun ownership.

Neither will be at the rally in an official capacity, Gibson said, but he acknowledged that some of the private security officials are separately affiliated with the groups.

The private security will be tasked with keeping the pro-Trump rally participants from becoming violent or getting provoked, Gibson said. They will not make citizen arrests.

About 50 people indicated on Facebook that they plan to join the labor group Sunday, while more than 350 on Facebook said they planned to attend the pro-Trump rally as of Wednesday afternoon.

Wheeler urged Sunday demonstrators to help keep the peace.

"There will be local and federal law enforcement on the ground to ensure everyone has the right to express their beliefs and to protect everyone's safety," Wheeler said. "I urge everyone participating to reject violence. Our city has seen enough."

Gibson insists his message is about freedom and love.

"I'm going to talk about freedom, and I'm going to talk about God, and I'm going to talk about love, no matter what it takes.," Gibson said.

Gibson said a rally for President Donald Trump in San Jose during the presidential campaign inspired him to speak out. He watched a girl in a Trump jersey get eggs thrown at her, he said.

"That was the second I believed I needed to get involved," Gibson said.

Gibson's goal, he said, is to bring the conservative movement to the streets.

"There has never been anything like this where libertarians and conservatives are hitting the streets," Gibson said. "I think that's what people are thirsty for."

Feds will not revoke permit for pro-Trump rally despite Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler's plea

By Jessica Floum

May 31, 2017

The federal agency that issued a permit for a pro-Trump free speech rally in Portland planned for Sunday will not revoke the permit after Mayor Ted Wheeler called on the agency to do so.

Wheeler made the request in the wake of the double murder of two heroes protecting teens from racist and islamophobic vitriol on the MAX.

The United States General Services Administration announced Wednesday morning its decision to allow the event to continue, saying in a statement, "since the permit was lawfully obtained to assemble at this federal location, GSA has no basis to revoke the permit."

The agency oversees the Terry Schunk Plaza property across from Portland City Hall, where the rally is set to take place.

The organizer of Sunday's event, Vancouver native Joey Gibson, said he plans to continue Sunday's demonstration with or without a permit. Gibson applied for the permit on May 10 and received approval for his demonstration on May 15.

"It doesn't matter what they do," Gibson said. "We'll be down there regardless."

He added that revoking the permit would have posed a constitutional issue.

Wheeler called on the federal agency to "IMMEDIATELY REVOKE" the permit for Sunday's demonstration and not to issue a permit for an anti-Muslim event scheduled for June 10 in a Facebook post Monday, saying the events could "only exacerbate an already difficult situation."

The anti-Muslim demonstration organizer, Scott Presler, announced Wednesday that he would cancel the event, saying that Wheeler's "inflammatory" requests to cancel protests could endanger people who might attend.

Wheeler's request drew criticism from First Amendment advocates, the American Civil Liberties Union and local conservative leaders.

"I am a firm supporter of the First Amendment, no matter the views expressed," Wheeler said in a statement about the feds' decision Wednesday. "I believe we had a case to make about the threats to public safety posed by this rally at this place and at this time."

The mayor said it's his job to protect public safety. He urged organizers to "exercise common sense and to help us keep the peace." Local and federal law enforcement will be present, he said.

"I urge everyone participating to reject violence," Wheeler said. "Our city has seen enough."

Anti-Muslim march organizers cancel June 10 event in Portland, citing mayor's comments

*By Noelle Crombie
May 31, 2017*

Organizers of an anti-Muslim demonstration planned for June 10 announced Wednesday that they've canceled the event.

Organizer Scott Presler cited Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler's "inflammatory" requests to cancel other protests, which he said endangered people who might attend them.

Wheeler this week asked that federal officials revoke the permit for a separate pro-Trump free speech rally scheduled Sunday at Terry Schrunk Plaza across from City Hall. The federal government services administration announced Wednesday that they would not revoke the permit for Sunday's demonstration because it was lawfully obtained.

Wheeler also said the city won't issue permits for such events and appealed to the organizers to cancel them. He asked the federal government not to issue a permit for Presler's event.

Presler, in a comment posted to Facebook, blasted Wheeler, calling the mayor's efforts an "astonishingly blatant attempt to suppress freedom of discourse" and accusing him of making "disparaging and patently false statements" about his organization, ACT for America.

"Due to Mayor Wheeler's inflammatory comments and what we feel is an incitement of violence, he has shamefully endangered every scheduled participant," Presler wrote.

"Consequently, in order to ensure the safety of those who had planned on attending, we have taken the decision to cancel the Portland March Against Sharia."

Presler said a demonstration is expected to still go on in Seattle.

Presler, 29, could not be reached for comment. His mother, Carol Presler, said he lives in Virginia, as do she and her husband. She told The Oregonian/OregonLive Wednesday that Presler coordinated anti-Muslim rallies in 18 states.

Presler said her son is getting "lots of death threats on Twitter."

"This used to be America, where you were allowed to have your own opinion," Carol Presler said.

Meanwhile, another rally is planned for June 4.

The organizer, Vancouver native Joey Gibson, said Monday that Wheeler's plea won't convince him to cancel the event.

"We'll be down there regardless," Gibson told The Oregonian/OregonLive Wednesday.

Gibson told The Oregonian/OregonLive on Tuesday that he has arranged for informal security officers, some with permits to carry concealed handguns, to help keep participants in order.

Revoking the event permit, Gibson said, would pose more safety risks because it would limit the ability of the rally organizers to promote peaceful demonstration and to remove anyone peddling hate speech.

Wheeler called himself a "firm supporter of the First Amendment" in a statement Wednesday. He said he believed the two events posed a threat to public safety. He urged participants to "reject violence", saying "our city has seen enough."

"My job is to protect the safety of everyone... protesters, counter-protesters, and bystanders alike," Wheeler said.

Willamette Week

Feds Reject Portland Mayor's Pleas to Revoke Permit, So Alt-Right Rally Will Proceed in a Shaken City

Rejecting Ted Wheeler's request, the feds say they will send officers to patrol.

*By Elise Herron
May 31, 2017*

Federal officials told Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler today they will not revoke a permit for an alt-right "free speech" rally planned for downtown Sunday, meaning the event will proceed in a city still reeling from the slaying of two people, allegedly by a white supremacist.

Wheeler had asked the federal government to revoke the permit for Joey Gibson and his alt-right allies to use Terry Schunk Plaza on June 4. Wheeler wanted to block the rally, but the park across from Portland City Hall is federal property.

The United States General Services Administration today responded to Wheeler: No.

"All rules and regulations were followed by the applicant for the permit, including the timeframe for review," the GSA said. "Since the permit was lawfully obtained to assemble at this federal location, GSA has no basis to revoke the permit."

But the GSA did make a concession to Wheeler: It will send Federal Protective Services officers to patrol the event.

Wheeler also promised a massive police presence—a sign that the city's approach to alt-right protesters, which has previously been conciliatory, has shifted.

"There will be local and federal law enforcement on the ground to ensure everyone has the right to express their beliefs and to protect everyone's safety," Wheeler says. "I urge everyone participating to reject violence. Our city has seen enough."

Jeremy Joseph Christian, who described himself as a foot soldier of a new fascist empire, is accused of murdering two men and wounding another who intervened May 26 as he harassed two teenage girls with an anti-Muslim screed on a Portland MAX train. Multiple witness accounts say he cut the throats of three men who confronted him.

Wheeler on Monday asked the feds to cancel the rally, organized by Vancouver, Wash.-based blogger Joey Gibson and expected to draw some of the biggest celebrities on the "alt-right," a collection of extremists and provocateurs who seek violent confrontations with leftists.

The mayor's efforts were immediately criticized by civil-liberties watchdogs as a violation of the First Amendment. Today, Wheeler defended his actions.

"I am a firm supporter of the First Amendment, no matter the views expressed," he said in a statement. "I believe we had a case to make about the threats to public safety posed by this rally at this place and at this time. My job is to protect the safety of everyone... protesters, counter-protesters, and bystanders alike."

Gibson has told WW he intends to go forward with his event, and disavowed Christian. Multiple left-wing groups, including labor unions, have vowed to peacefully confront the alt-right Sunday. Another event planned by Gibson, a June 10 march against Muslim Sharia law, announced today it is canceling its Portland protest and concentrating on a Seattle protest.

The full response from the GSA reads as follows:

“The U.S. General Services Administration Northwest/Arctic Region received a request from an applicant on May 10 to assemble at the Terry Schunk Plaza in Portland, OR, from 2-4 p.m. Sunday, June 4.

The applicant submitted the appropriate form (form GSA3453), which includes a terms and conditions section. The form can be found here.

GSA reviewed the application, and in accordance Title 41 of the Code of Federal Regulations part 102-74, Subpart D, approved it May 15.

All rules and regulations were followed by the applicant for the permit, including the timeframe for review.

Since the permit was lawfully obtained to assemble at this federal location, GSA has no basis to revoke the permit.

GSA and Federal Protective Services (FPS) are working closely with the City of Portland law enforcement and the Mayor’s Office to prepare for the June 4 event.

The City Of Portland, GSA, and FPS ask those who attend the event to assemble safely and allow all to exercise their constitutionally protected rights.”

The Mayor's full response reads as follows:

“Portland has a proud history of protest. I am a firm supporter of the First Amendment, no matter the views expressed. I believe we had a case to make about the threats to public safety posed by this rally at this place and at this time. My job is to protect the safety of everyone... protesters, counter-protesters, and bystanders alike.

There will be protests and counter-protests this weekend in Portland. We have reached out to the organizers to call upon them to exercise common sense and to help us keep the peace. There will be local and federal law enforcement on the ground to ensure everyone has the right to express their beliefs and to protect everyone’s safety. I urge everyone participating to reject violence. Our city has seen enough.”

Why Are Electeds on the Portland City Council Called “Commissioners?”

To people in other cities, this seems provincial, or just stupid.

By Marty Smith

May 31, 2017

Why are electeds on the Portland City Council called "commissioners?" To people in other cities, this seems provincial, or just stupid. Should we change one or the other for consistency? —*Why the Foolishness*

Don't take this the wrong way, Foolishness, but you sound like one of those people who has a stroke if someone doesn't zero out the last 4 seconds on the microwave timer.

You're not wrong—just as members of the U.S. House of Representative are usually called "congresspeople," Portland city councilors are usually referred to as "commissioners." But it's one of those things like McGeorge Bundy's name—unfortunate, but we let it slide.

Originally, our councilors were just councilors (or, more commonly, "councilmen"). Each was elected from one of 15 separate wards throughout the city, like senators in a miniature congress. The police commissioner, city assessor, treasurer and mayor were elected directly.

But in 1913, voters approved a plan in which just five councilors would be elected at large. Now, instead of running for commissioner of a specific bureau, you'd just run for City Council in general, and let the mayor decide who was most qualified to run, say, the Bureau of Environmental Services.

It's like the gate attendant on every airline flight looked over the folks waiting to board and then picked somebody who might be good at flying the plane—sometimes you luck out and get an actual pilot, but if not, oh well. (To be fair, the old method was analogous to letting the passengers pick the pilot, which doesn't sound that great either.)

In any case, don't sweat it: Appointing people to head huge, complex bureaucracies they hadn't heard of before last week is pretty much how we run the whole country. Even our beloved revolutionary sweetheart Barack Obama named Democratic megadonor Penny Pritzker to head the Department of Commerce, presumably based on the fact that, as a billionaire, she knew about, like, buying stuff.

But let's save the limitations of democracy for another time. Our electeds are both "councilors" and "commissioners," and—let's be honest—"commissioner" sounds way more badass.

Organizers Cancel Portland's June 10 March Against Sharia

The Facebook announcement reads: "In order to ensure the safety of those who had planned on attending, we have taken the decision to cancel the Portland March Against Sharia."

Scott Ryan Presler, co-host of the June 10 March Against Sharia, took to the event's Facebook page earlier today to announce that the march has been canceled.

*By Elise Herron
May 31, 2017*

Last Friday a horrific fatal stabbing left two dead and one injured after they attempted to squelch racial slurs directed toward two teenagers on a MAX train, one of whom was wearing a hijab. In response, Mayor Ted Wheeler urged the federal government to rescind permits for two alt-right rallies scheduled to take place in Terry D. Schunk Plaza.

Presler announced that the cancellation of the June 10 rally is, "due to Mayor Wheeler's inflammatory comments and what we feel is an incitement of violence, he has shamefully endangered every scheduled participant."

In addition to the assertion that Wheeler's comments would lead to violence, Presler also took issue with categorizing the rally as alt-right. "Our March Against Sharia includes all religions, genders, sexual orientations, and walks of life," he said.

In a response, Wheeler told OPB Tuesday, "Given where this city is now, in terms of the mourning we're going through collectively, the anger that is currently focused on what I would describe as the alt-right, this is not the right time for those groups to come into our community and hold a rally."

The rally was to be part of nationwide anti-Sharia law rallies. In his post, Presler advises participants to join the Seattle March Against Sharia, which is still scheduled to take place.

"Our city is in mourning, our community's anger is real, and the timing and subject of these events can only exacerbate an already difficult situation," Wheeler said in a statement last Monday.

The June 10 anti-Sharia law march was one of the events that Wheeler sought to see canceled. The other was a June 4 pro-Trump, free speech rally, also planned for Schunk Plaza. That event has not been canceled.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

BDS' Permit Center to close temporarily to honor slain employee

By Garrett Andrews

May 31, 2017

The city of Portland will close its Permit Center on Monday so employees can attend the memorial service of slain Bureau of Development Services employee Rick Best.

The Permitting Services office on the second floor of the city's 1900 Building will also be closed on Monday, but BDS inspections will be conducted as scheduled, according to bureau spokesman Ross Caron.

According to court documents, Best, 53, and another man, Taliesin Myrddin Namkai-Meche, 23, suffered fatal stab wounds on a TriMet MAX light-rail train on May 26 after standing up to a passenger, Jeremy Christian, 35, who was verbally abusing two teenage girls. A third victim, Micah David-Cole Fletcher, 21, survived the knife attack.

Best had been a BDS technician in the Permitting Services office for just over two years.

He retired in 2012 from a 23-year career in the Army having served in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to a profile in the Catholic Sentinel.

He had a wife and four children ages 19 and younger.

Christian was arraigned on murder charges Tuesday in Portland.

BDS will close for part of the day Thursday so employees can attend a Rick Best Remembrance Event.

Best's funeral will be held at 10 a.m. on Monday at Christ the King Church.