

The Oregonian

Deaths of four homeless people expose how Portland is falling short (Opinion)

By William Russell

January 23, 2017

In the recent cold spell, four homeless people died from "exposure," because they did not have adequate protection from the cold weather.

The cold weather "exposed" something else - the deep inadequacy of resources for the homeless.

What do these tragic weather-related deaths expose about our community? Are we outraged that this is happening in our wonderful city? What are we willing to do about it?

There was empathy, and extraordinary efforts to protect people during the worst of it. An example of this is Mayor Ted Wheeler's opening the Portland Building as a temporary warming shelter. We experienced an amazing outpouring of concerned people donating sleeping bags, blankets and more at Union Gospel Mission as we expanded our services to help people survive the cold.

We need to harness that empathy and come up with better solutions. There are deeper problems - support for those struggling with mental illnesses, addiction and the increasing population of homeless women and children.

Portland today is like the Dickens' novel, "A Tale of Two Cities," - it is the best of times for those with resources. Home values are skyrocketing. Portland is the hot place to move to for talented professionals looking for a beautiful city with so much to offer. It is the worst of times for those on the bottom rung of the economy. Rent increases, lack of affordable housing, and long wait lists for any help. The city has grown, but has left those who are struggling behind.

Union Gospel Mission does outreach to the homeless camped around the city five nights per week. We give them basic necessities, encouragement and prayer. We tell them about the services available to them, but most of the time they have to be on a waiting list to access those services. They have to survive on the streets and wait. They have to hope. Hope that they don't get assaulted, or that their belongings don't get stolen, or that they can jump through all the hoops to get the services they need.

Those of us volunteering our time to work on the vision and planning for new "safe harbor" shelters as proposed by Homer Williams and Oregon Harbor of Hope recognize that one missing piece is a new 24/7 space where the homeless can safely be, belong and flourish. We must collaborate and pull all available resources together.

I have visited several other cities, including San Antonio's Haven for Hope. It's compassionate outreach to the homeless. There are other solutions in other cities that we can adapt for Portland, but we need to act.

Women's March crowd fills Portland streets: 'This is what democracy looks like'

By Kale Williams

January 21, 2017

They came from near and far. They came and they stood and they sang and they strode through the soggy streets of downtown Portland on Saturday.

And they came in unexpected numbers.

The gathering, billed as the Women's March and attended by crowds estimated as high as 70,000 to 100,000 -- well beyond the 30,000 that organizers expected as of Thursday -- was not just for women, and it wasn't just for marching. The massive throng that congregated at Tom McCall Waterfront Park on Saturday was no monolith and the causes represented were as diverse as the rally's participants.

The rally in Portland was just one of the dozens of offshoots of the Women's March on Washington. Just one day after Donald Trump took the oath of office on the National Mall, that same space was filled with hundreds of thousands of people opposed to his presidency. Similar marches took place across the country and around the globe on Saturday, from Atlanta to Albuquerque to Asia and even Antarctica.

Trump's policies -- including plans to repeal the Affordable Care Act and defund Planned Parenthood -- and his appointees for key positions in his cabinet spurred many of Saturday's marchers into action.

"I think we've gotten complacent," said Michele Mariana, of Portland. "We don't just vote and then think we've done our job. We need to take personal responsibility for the privilege of living in what's left of this country. We should be grateful for this moment because it's bringing us together. It's waking us up."

Pat Robison, a 70-year-old Portland resident who was among the thousands who braved sometimes-heavy rains and temperatures in the 40s on Saturday, said Trump's proposals have left her worried about her Social Security and Medicare.

"I don't know what's going to happen," Robison said. "I'm also concerned about others. I mean, I look at the plans to defund Planned Parenthood. I'm worried about women that don't have the income that won't have access to health care."

Many of the women came wearing pink, pointy-eared "pussyhats" to mock Donald Trump.

A smaller pre-rally, organized by local labor unions at Shemanski Park got underway two hours ahead of the main event. Shamus Cooke, 37, of Portland, wielded a black marker, writing slogans on posters such as "Workers Trump Capitalism."

"Trump's agenda is very non-union," said Cooke, contending that Trump's Labor Secretary choice, Andrew Puzder, chief executive of the Carl's Jr and Hardee's franchises, has an anti-labor record.

"They better back off," said Cooke, a Service Employees International Union member who works for the state of Oregon in child welfare.

That tone -- one of resistance mixed with solidarity -- carried through the day. By 10:30 a.m. a steady stream of rally-goers were headed into downtown over the Hawthorne Bridge and people were soon shoulder-to-shoulder on the waterfront.

The crowd was jubilant, almost to a person, which was in contrast to a protest that filled the same streets less than 24 hours earlier. Friday night's protest had a different feel and police said some in the crowd began throwing things at officers who were attempting to keep protesters off of bridges. Police deployed stun grenades and shot tear gas into the crowd.

That level of animosity was absent Saturday, though the message was nearly identical, said 16-year-old Peyton Roberts, who was at both the protest and the march.

"Last night, when there were police in riot gear the whole time, it was really interesting to see how it came out. It just felt like we were doing something wrong."

But she was out there to show love and community, she said. That's the spirit she felt at the Women's March. "It's a very different group with a very similar message," she said.

Roberts came on Saturday with her sister and her mom, Karen Roberts, who took in the size of the slow-moving crowd from the top of a parking garage at Southwest Fourth and Morrison and remarked "Portland turns out."

She said that the chant of the marchers -- "This is what democracy looks like" -- was perfect for the crushing crowd of women, men and children who waited for hours and wove through the streets.

"This is exactly what democracy looks like -- it's messy and slow. We were all going in a direction we wanted to go but maybe at different paces," Karen Roberts said.

They brought 20-year-old Emily Pappel of Eugene with them. It was her first march and the Roberts were proud to indoctrinate her.

"There are no words to the love and community I feel," Pappel said.

Many in the crowd were attending their first demonstration, galvanized by what they saw as the erosion of the respect for women under a president who has demeaned female celebrities publicly and was caught on tape bragging about sexual assault. Many others, though, were seasoned veterans of rallies like the one on Saturday.

Anne Morin of Portland marched with a walker and a large American flag with a peace sign in place of the stars. She said she's been marching since the 1970s when President Richard Nixon went into Cambodia. "I got my head bashed in," she said about that protest.

"I think our country has a cold and we need to help it heal and this kind of love," Morin said, tearing up, "it'll help I hope."

Paige Hasson, 65, said she shut down Interstate 5 in 1988 as part of a demonstration. She and her friends have been protesting most of their lives. Dede Helmsworth, 58, recycled one of her signs from a protest for education funding in Salem recently. Sally Swire, 58, took her children to LGBT rallies.

"We are the right generation to be here," Helmsworth said. "This is not our first protest."

Today, their group was marching to make their voices heard on all sorts of issues, but mostly because they think the election could be bad for education, civil rights and democracy.

"We're here for our sons and daughters," Sally Swire said.

Araya Trinidad, 9, wore a pink sparkly knit hat with Sulong Gabriela stitched across it in white letters. Gabriela is an anti-colonial heroine in the Philippines, and Araya and her mom, Alma, were invoking her spirit as they walked.

"As a Filipina woman, we hold onto those values and principles of standing firm and holding onto those values of determination and self-determination of rights and having a voice," Alma Trinidad said.

Araya held a sign that said "Love fights back," which she made because she doesn't like how Trump talks about women.

The Portland Women's March drew tens of thousands of people to downtown.

Crowds began to slowly dwindle around 2:30 p.m., as the cold and rain drove some people back across the bridges while others continued to march through downtown streets. Marchers throughout the rally, however, saw Saturday's event as a jumping-off point, not a one-off.

Nell Parker, a volunteer with 350PDX.org, arrived at 9 a.m. to Waterfront Park. She set up a small blue-tarped tent. It was enough to cover a white plastic table topped with clipboards and promotional material for the organization that fights "climate disruption."

By 12:30 p.m., she was surrounded by thousands of people standing shoulder to shoulder without the ability to move fast or far. Parker, who lives in Boardman, asked people to fill out and sign prepared postcards opposing the construction of power plants in her town.

"There was a point where we had 10 clipboards going, and we just kept getting more and more people," she said. At 2 p.m., she hadn't yet begun to count the number of postcards that were filled out.

Others in the crowd shared in her hope that the march was a starting point to build momentum toward a larger movement.

"What I'm hoping is that this will be the first of its kind," said Laura Gamble, of Portland. "I hope that people will marshal around their discomfort and upset and horror around what's happening and really organize. The best reaction in my mind is one that's going to be focused -- organized and focused."

At one point, the crowd filled the entire 1.3-mile route.

Jamie Tacker, who was marching with her 10-year-old daughter, Marcella, came out because "it's important to set an example for your kids," she said as she choked back tears.

"My goal is to do something," Tacker said, adding that she plans to volunteer at Planned Parenthood and help the Democratic party ahead of the next round of elections. "I think you definitely need to put action where your mouth is."

Demian DineYazhi, a 33-year-old Portland resident, said he marched mostly to support women.

DineYazhi, who identifies as a queer indigenous person, said Trump's presidency affects queer people in "unbelievable ways," including marriage rights, safety and access to health care and treatment.

DineYazhi, an activist since George W. Bush's presidency, said he thinks Trump's election will spur others to get more involved in activism.

"I feel like if Hillary were in office, there wouldn't have been as large of a crowd. I still feel like there are problems on both sides, the Democratic and Republican party, that need to be addressed, and so we shouldn't be comfortable. And this is kind of what Trump's presidency has reminded us of: Let's not be complacent with whatever president or whatever social power is in office. There's always cause to change things for the better."

100,000 people flock to Portland Women's March, organizers say

*By The Oregonian/OregonLive
January 21, 2017*

It was the question of the day: How many people streamed to Portland's waterfront for the city's version of the Women's March?

Shortly before 2 p.m., organizers announced that people filled the entire 1.3-mile route - stringing from the Morrison Bridge in a circuit to the Battle Oregon Memorial. That's 100,000 or so, they estimated.

The Portland Fire Bureau later said the masses numbered more than 70,000.

Portland police gave no numbers, but called it "easily one of the largest marches ever in Portland. 100% peaceful"

So, the verdict? Crowd estimation is an inexact art.

But clearly, the throngs were enough to overwhelm buses and trains at the start -- TriMet noted that they made up "likely the largest crowds in our history in such a short period of time."

Many people ended up hiking over downtown bridges for the march. They then walked, sauntered or shuffled depending on how packed they were at any given moment in the snaking line of humanity over a soggy several hours.

The turnout compares to:

- 52,000 who said they were coming to the Portland rally via Facebook.
- 72,000 who came to Tom McCall Waterfront Park in May 2008 for Barack Obama's first White House bid.
- 86,000 when Red Bull's Flugtag landed in Portland in 2015.

Other Women's March numbers:

- More than 500,000 attended the main march in Washington, D.C., according to unofficial estimates by city officials. The glut made the National Mall impassable.
- 150,000 showed up in Chicago - so many that organizers canceled the march portion for safety reasons.

- "Well over" 100,000 people in New York marched past the Trump Tower on Fifth Avenue.
- 100,000 seems to be the magic number: About that many in Seattle and more than 100,000 on the Boston Common and in Los Angeles.
- More than 7,000 people in Eugene, 8,000 in Spokane and 5,000 in Boise.

Thousands swarm downtown Portland to protest Trump inauguration

By Allen Brettman

January 20, 2017

Thousands of protesters marched Friday night through downtown Portland, outraged at the inauguration of Donald J. Trump as the 45th president of the United States.

Demonstrators shouted slogans and waved signs, maneuvering through several downtown streets and stopping only when they encountered walls of police outfitted in riot gear. The wave of marchers reflected the event's freelance nature - planners didn't seek a permit or share a marching plan with authorities.

The protest largely avoided the intense confrontations - and multiple arrests -- that followed Trump's election in November. But the rainy evening had its flashpoints.

Police used pepper spray at the Burnside Bridge, which was one of four bridges protesters tried to cross, and at least twice more in the evening. Officers used flash-bang grenades to move people from streets and intersections as the crowd spread over six blocks on their uncharted course.

In the fourth hour of the roving march, police fired what appeared to be tear gas to disperse a dwindling crowd at Pioneer Courthouse Square. By that time, a crowd that numbered perhaps 10,000 when the march began shortly after 5 p.m. had shrunk to no more than an estimated 1,000.

In a series of tweets throughout the evening, Portland police said protesters hurled road flares, bottles, eggs and chunks of ice left over from last week's snowstorm. While the demonstration had a chaotic nature, police appeared to have a clear plan that succeeded: keep them from crossing bridges into East Portland.

Police repeatedly closed Willamette River bridges to block protesters' access. Some cars were caught among marchers or in the ensuing traffic jams, but most downtown commuters appeared to leave early or avoid the area.

Donald J. Trump was sworn in Friday morning as the 45th president of the United States, and thousands of Portlanders take to the streets in protest.

TriMet said a car blocking tracks on the Steel Bridge, not protesters, interrupted MAX service early in the evening. But transit service in downtown Portland was later suspended during a standoff between police and protesters at the Pioneer Courthouse Square.

Shortly before 8 p.m. about an hour before the march broke up, protesters gathered in front of The Nines hotel near the square. More than a dozen riot police lined up in front of the

hotel, appearing to protect a man carrying an American flag. According to reports from witnesses, the man had been involved in a confrontation with protesters. He said he was an Army veteran and was carrying a gun but didn't pull it out.

"We're not against their First Amendment right to protest, we're against how they go about things," said Nick Morris of Gresham. He said he didn't agree with protesters blocking traffic and businesses closing early for fear of the crowd.

At about the same time, a line of advancing officers methodically moved protesters back toward the square. That's where the demonstration originally began with a handful of people burning American flags. A short time later, police announced that they were closing the square and that anyone still there would face arrest.

Gregory McKelvey, one of the protest's main organizers, complained that police roughed up some people unnecessarily. That included a high school student who got pushed to the ground and hit with a rifle, he said. Police spokesman Sgt. Pete Simpson said he couldn't confirm the encounter but that any use of force by police would be reviewed. Police said they arrested six people.

The demonstration was a prelude to Saturday's Women's March on Portland, an event that, according to its Facebook page, is expected to attract 35,000 people along a permitted marching route.

Before and during Friday's march, protesters shared their reasons for participating.

Gabriela Oh, 30, of Corvallis said she was "tremendously disturbed" by Trump's election and his plan to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

"I have health care because of the ACA," Oh said, "and I am tremendously concerned that the Republican administration is not going to replace it with something that will actually make it affordable for me to have health care."

Ricard Patton and his husband, Andy Johnson, flew to Portland from Missoula, Montana. They're concerned gay couples will lose marriage equality rights.

"We rushed our wedding to make sure we got married before Inauguration Day," Patton said.

John Dawson, a 30-year-old small farmer from Damascus, said Trump's presidency will affect him because he's a self-described "queer small farmer who's poor and who gets my health insurance through the ACA."

Connor Flynn, 29, a former Portland resident who now lives in Kalama, Washington, said he attended to hear about of other people's concerns about Trump's presidency.

Flynn said he wanted to "gauge people, look in their eyes, get an impression of people and how they're feeling about all this. And how to act myself and conduct myself as I go forward."

Ian Johnson, an organizer with the Oregon Working Families Party, said he was at the protest because Trump "is diametrically opposed to all of our values from economic equality, gender equality, racial justice and there is no way we can't stand up and be counted here."

The protest featured some chants that gained familiarity in November -- "This is what democracy looks like!" "Stay together stay tight!" "Take off your riot gear, I don't see no riot here!" "Tell me what democracy looks like! This is what democracy looks like!" and one that appeared not to acknowledge the inauguration earlier in the day in Washington, D.C.: "We reject the president elect!"

Downtown businesses prepared for the worst. Nordstrom, Nike and Sephora covered street-level windows with plywood. Some retailers closed earlier than usual.

But the intensity of the rally and march didn't match that of November's, with fewer confrontations between drivers and protesters, a few smatterings of graffiti and no major property destruction. At one point, a dance party broke out in Pioneer Courthouse Square to the strains of "We Are Family" while other demonstrators refused to leave a nearby intersection.

In November, a protest staged downtown on the day after Trump's election raged until 2 a.m. the following day. Vandals smashed cars at a Toyota dealership.

By 9 p.m. Friday, the Inauguration Day protest appeared to be over.

Why they're protesting: Voices from Portland rallies and marches on Inauguration Day

By The Oregonian/OregonLive

January 20, 2017

Here's why people said they decided to join rallies and protests Friday across Portland on Inauguration Day for President Donald Trump.

From downtown Portland:

Gabriela Oh, a 30-year-old Corvallis resident, said she was "tremendously disturbed" by the election outcome, specifically Trump's plan to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

"I have health care because of the ACA, and I am tremendously concerned that the Republican administration is not going to replace it with something that will actually make it affordable for me to have health care," she said at Pioneer Courthouse Square. "Plus, I am a woman and it is not safe to have Republicans in power if you are a woman because they want to just take all of our rights away. They don't want us to govern our own bodies."

She held a homemade sign showing Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin in a "coital embrace" overseen by Rex Tillerson, the nominee to become the next U.S. secretary of state. A globe burns in the sign.

-- Jim Ryan

Anne Henderson, 63, of Aloha, said she came to the rally at the square for solidarity. "I'm here because I think Donald Trump is not a legitimate president and I want to be with people who feel the same way," she said.

-- Noelle Crombie

John Dawson, 30, of Damascus, said Trump's presidency will affect him because he's a self-described "queer small farmer who's poor and who gets my health insurance through the ACA."

"I'm afraid of all of those things being in jeopardy," he said.

He said it took Trump a long time to pick a secretary of agriculture and that he thinks Sonny Perdue, former governor of Georgia, isn't too familiar with concepts such as farming subsidies.

"I'm imagining that farming subsidies could start going to subsidizing oil, that sort of thing. I don't particularly know, but ... if he has to raise taxes somewhere to account for his tax cuts for people who make more than I do, (I'm) just afraid."

Also: "I thought it would be better to come out and march than just sit at home and be crying about it."

-- *Jim Ryan*

Ian Johnson, organizer with the Oregon Working Families Party, said he was at the protest because Trump "is diametrically opposed to all of our values from economic equality, gender equality, racial justice and there is no way we can't stand up and be counted here."

He wants to send a "clear and loud message" that he and his group are disappointed in the election outcome.

As for what he hoped to accomplish by protesting: "The establishment needs to know it is being watched, that there are people who care, and there are people who will make sure that these injustices are noted and that they're addressed."

-- *Samantha Matsumoto*

"I am here because of all the reasons that Trump is not ready or capable to be a president and to stand up (for) all the people who can't be here themselves," said Ylluria Watersong, 40, of Portland.

-- *Noelle Crombie*

Ricard Patton and his husband, Andy Johnson, flew in to Portland from Missoula, Montana, to take part. They were concerned gay couples would lose rights attained under marriage equality.

"We rushed our wedding to make sure we got married before Inauguration Day" - on Jan. 1, Patton said.

He was realistic, though, about the impact of protests.

"It's not going to prevent an inauguration, it's not going to prevent him from being president, but just to show him that enough people in the U.S. hate him."

-- *Samantha Matsumoto*

Three young Portlanders attended the protest not so much because they worried policies might change in Oregon, but to show support for those in other states where gay marriage and access to abortion and birth control could be in trouble, they said.

Will Freeman, an 18-year-old Portland Community College student, said he thought gay marriage was safe in Oregon, but Vice President Mike Pence's stance on gay issues worries him. He's also worried about trans rights and that what happened in North Carolina could happen here.

Freeman and his companions Grace Glenn, 17, and Ilana Gottfried, 19, said they want to send a message to local politicians, because Trump isn't listening.

"I don't think he'll care," Glenn said.

And neither does his cabinet, Freeman said. "His cabinet was chosen specifically to protect his interests," he said.

-- *Anna Marum*

Ellis Stemple of Olympia said: "It's really saddening to see that someone like Donald Trump can take such a position of power."

Her goal in rallying is "standing against the new administration and standing for what we believe in and showing the world that this isn't our president, that this is not who we want in office."

-- *Samantha Matsumoto*

Connor Flynn, a former Portland resident who now lives in Kalama, Washington, said he wanted to gain an understanding of others' concerns about Trump's presidency.

Flynn, 29, said he wants to "gauge people, look in their eyes, get an impression of people and how they're feeling about all this. And how to act myself and conduct myself as I go forward. ... I want to know, like, 'Where are we at here, and how can we always continue to find common ground and get together and be progressive as Americans and humans?'"

He said Friday felt like a "huge day" and that there's "great concern" about Trump's presidency. Flynn was thinking about burning a Trump flag he brought with him, but he missed a flag burning event earlier at Pioneer Courthouse Square.

-- *Jim Ryan*

From Portland State University:

Donald Thompson III woke up early to watch the inauguration and said the moment felt surreal.

He didn't vote for Trump. As a black man, he said, he has felt at several times in his life that he's at danger because of the color of his skin and that the president's words did nothing to alleviate his concerns.

But watching the inauguration inspired him to be part of a Portland State University student walkout. Thompson, a junior, said seeing the crowd gathered in front of the student union made him believe the day was a "catalyst" for him and others to spend the next four years pooling their efforts to protect civil liberties.

"While I would rather not be in this situation, I think something beautiful has to blossom out of this," said Thompson, 23. "I truly believe that."

-- *Everton Bailey Jr.*

Andrea Cole, a 21-year-old Portland State student, said she's still having trouble accepting Donald Trump as president.

"I'm a bisexual, autistic woman and I'm terrified about what this administration is going to mean for me," she said. She held a sign with a caricature of Trump with a message that read "Trump making humanity primitive again."

-- *Everton Bailey Jr.*

Vacation rental site HomeAway sues Portland over regulations

By Elliot Njus

January 20, 2017

The vacation rental website HomeAway filed a pair of lawsuits against the city of Portland this week, opening a new round in its battle with the city over hotel taxes.

HomeAway, which helps match travelers with homeowners with rooms for rent, has been at loggerheads with the city for years over whether it should have to collect lodging taxes on behalf of its users.

The latest suits attempt to block the city from enforcing various parts of its ordinances against HomeAway, including the lodging tax collection.

The lawsuits argue Portland doesn't have the authority to impose lodging taxes on the company and various regulations on the vacation rental industry.

"HomeAway has sought to open lines of communication with city officials," the company said in a statement. "Unfortunately, those requests have gone largely unanswered. We welcome the opportunity to explore a policy solution that addresses the concerns of all stakeholders and is evenly applied to all platforms."

The city sued the company for \$2.5 million in 2015 over alleged violations of its vacation rental laws. Portland legalized short-term rentals in private homes in 2014, requiring homeowners to undergo an inspection and secure a permit. A permanent resident must also live in the home at least nine months of the year.

The city also required sites that facilitate the rentals, like HomeAway, to start collecting the transient lodging taxes typically paid by traditional hotels. The city expected to collect \$1.2 million a year, which the City Council agreed to put toward affordable housing.

The city in 2015 slapped HomeAway with a \$326,500 fine for failing to collect the taxes. The city's revenue bureau said it would continue to assess fines until the company complies by the city's rules.

HomeAway argued at the time that it wasn't like competitor Airbnb, which handles all payments for its users and is therefore in a better position to collect the lodging taxes.

HomeAway said many of its users don't accept online payments, and those that do use HomeAway Payments, which HomeAway described as a separate company.

The city then sued HomeAway for \$2.5 million, but its case highlighted some shortcomings in its code, including various references that didn't appear to address intermediary websites. The lawsuit was initially dismissed, but an amended complaint is still pending.

The Portland City Council passed various revisions to its code in December to address those shortcomings. Those revisions went into effect Friday, prompting HomeAway's latest lawsuits.

The lawsuit filed Thursday in Multnomah County Circuit Court argues that Portland doesn't have the authority under its charter or state law to levy lodging taxes against HomeAway.

Another lawsuit filed Friday in U.S. Circuit Court in Portland argues the city's requirements to register the names and addresses of individuals posting their homes for rental prohibits free speech and commerce online. It also said the city's ordinance violated its customers' rights because it doesn't give "affected customer the opportunity to obtain review by a neutral decision maker."

Portland attorneys declined to comment.

HomeAway is a subsidiary of the travel company Expedia, which is based in Bellevue, Washington. It also owns the vacation rental website VRBO, which has also faced fines from the city.

Willamette Week

Portland Mayor Calls Baby's Death "A Damnation of Our Response" to Untreated Mental Illness

It's not clear where the infant's mother is now.

*By Nigel Jaquiss
January 18, 2017*

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler says the death of an infant found at a bus stop last week is "a damnation of our response" to untreated mental illness on the city's streets.

The baby was found Jan. 9 in freezing temperatures with his homeless mother along Southeast Powell Boulevard. Local officials do not agree whether the infant died of exposure hours after being born outdoors or was stillborn.

Dr. Karen Gunson, the state medical examiner, says the baby was stillborn. But Oregon Health & Science University staffers who treated the baby disagreed, according to police reports obtained by *WW*.

Either way, the circumstances of the child's death highlight gaps in Portland's safety net that allowed a woman with a history of mental illness to give birth at a homeless camp behind a Chuck E. Cheese's.

"It's horrible," Wheeler says.

"It's a tragedy that exemplifies the holes in our system," says Kevin Fitts, executive director of the Oregon Mental Health Consumers Association.

Details of the infant's death were found in a Portland police report obtained by *WW* on Jan. 16.

Shortly before 6 am on Jan. 9, officers from the Portland Police Bureau responded at a TriMet bus stop at Southeast 91st Avenue and Powell Boulevard.

The 911 operator texted details to the responding officers.

"Baby was born in a transient camp near Chuck E. Cheese," the text message said. (There's a Chuck E. Cheese's at 9120 SE Powell Blvd.)

The birth occurred hours earlier, officers learned, and the baby had remained outside in weather that hovered near freezing. The texts indicated the baby was alive.

"Baby is conscious and breathing okay, but has been outside this entire time," read a second text. "Baby is ice cold."

An ambulance rushed the child to Oregon Health & Science University Hospital.

At the hospital, officers interviewed the baby's mother, 34. As two emergency room doctors worked to resuscitate the baby, records show, the woman told police a disjointed story.

She said she'd gotten pregnant "by the miracle of immaculate conception," and she struggled to answer basic questions about her address and ethnicity, and where the baby was born.

"It was very clear to me she was very mentally ill," Officer Justin Raphael wrote in his police report. (Records show the woman spent time at the Oregon State Hospital in 2015.)

Hospital staff used CPR for 25 minutes in an attempt to save the child. "The newborn was pronounced dead at 0641 hours," Raphael wrote.

Police soon encountered a difference of opinion about the circumstances of the baby's death, one that continues a week later.

Child-abuse Detective Robert Harley wrote in his report that the Oregon State Police Medical Examiner's Office said the baby—then still at OHSU—was stillborn.

Sarah Blackmon, the hospital's administrator on duty, and Dr. David Sheridan, a pediatric emergency room physician who'd treated the child, told Harley they didn't know how the medical examiner made that judgment.

Instead, "Dr. Sheridan told me it appeared to him the child was born at about 32 weeks," Harley wrote in his report. "Dr. Sheridan told me the child appeared to 'be viable'" —meaning the baby could survive if born under normal circumstances.

If the baby died of exposure or other causes, police would investigate. But if the child were stillborn, they would not.

Gunson, the state medical examiner, later disagreed with the OHSU doctor's assessment of the baby's condition.

"After an autopsy, we determined that the baby was stillborn," says Tom Chappelle, an investigator for the Medical Examiner's Office. "Dr. Gunson did the autopsy herself."

Chappelle acknowledges a contradiction remains. He blames a shifting story from OHSU officials, who originally told him the baby was stillborn then told police a different story. OHSU declined to comment on any aspect of this story.

It's not clear where the infant's mother is now.

In his report, Harley wrote that she would be held at OHSU "for a long-term evaluation." Portland Police Bureau spokesman Sgt. Pete Simpson says the woman later faced a civil commitment hearing, but he did not know the result.

"This is a horrible intersection of homelessness, mental illness and pregnancy that's just heartbreaking at every level," Simpson says.

The Portland Business Journal

Oregon marijuana tax revenues take late-year hit, still come in high

By Pete Danko

January 23, 2017

Marijuana tax revenue in Oregon declined late in 2016, but calendar year payments still came in way above early forecasts.

The Department of Revenue reported \$60.2 million in tax collections as of Dec. 31.

A few months before the November 2014 vote for legalization, the state's Legislative Revenue Office had forecast revenue of around \$16 million for fiscal year 2017. The analytics firm ECONorthwest put the figure at \$38.5 million.

But tax receipts, which began rolling in last February, quickly blew past expectations, and in April the Legislative Revenue Office radically revised its 2016 calendar-year forecast to \$3.7 million per month for the year.

Even that turned out to be on the low side as receipts climbed, more or less gradually, from \$2.5 million in January to \$7.8 million in October.

But October is when new testing regulations kicked in, squeezing supply. And payments, which are due by the end of the month following sales, fell in November, to \$6.5 million, and then again in December, to \$5.6 million.

Those troublesome testing regulations were revised a couple of times late last year in the hope of speeding the process while also reducing costs.

Meanwhile, at the beginning of 2017 the whole system shifted off the "Early Sales" regimen that prevailed in 2016, and which had set the tax rate at 25 percent.

As of the beginning of the year, all recreational sales are required to go through licensed retailers. The state tax rate is 17 percent, and many municipalities have tacked on a 3 percent tax of their own.