

The Oregonian

Portland City Council meeting shut down again by protesters

By Molly Harbarger

February 22, 2017

Chanting, shouting and singing, a small group of activists who have confronted Mayor Ted Wheeler at past City Council meetings once again shut down the public session Wednesday.

Wheeler wasn't even at City Hall -- he had jury duty about a block away at the Multnomah County Courthouse. Three people were later arrested after they refused to leave a City Hall entryway.

Mimi German, one of the group's organizers, said Wheeler has failed to deal with homelessness, the [fatal police shooting of an African American teenager suspected in an armed robbery](#) and police handling of anti-Trump protesters taking to city streets from the hundreds to the thousands. She called for his resignation.

Wheeler has met with German, an organizer with Don't Shoot Portland, in the past. He responded to questions informally [after she led protesters to shut down a council meeting in January](#). His staff also recently met with her and other activists.

A protest over a baby that died on Portland streets stretched into a disruption of a City Council meeting, where Mayor Ted Wheeler agreed to meet informally with protesters.

She said the mayor's staff members responded positively to the protesters' suggestions on how to deal with the homeless crisis but haven't implemented them.

Wheeler also [responded Tuesday to criticism](#) from the ACLU and others that police have used excessive force against protesters marching without permits and blocking city streets.

He said he and Police Chief Mike Marshman will "meet with concerned parties and members of the community to discuss how we can best reduce tensions moving forward. It is my expectation that policing in Portland will improve. I ran on a platform of police accountability and I intend to see it through."

Another group of demonstrators filed an application to march Wednesday afternoon to the mayor's house, but later canceled the plan.

For the first time, the group had sought a city permit for its rally. But by Tuesday night, the city considered the permit request to be closed at the wish of its applicant, group leader Gregory McKelvey.

German and Star Stauffer, another activist who has helped interrupt council meetings three times this year, made statements at 9 a.m. in front of City Hall. They then walked into council chambers with about a dozen other people.

Some protesters were already inside, nearly filling the first floor of the room.

Council President Chloe Eudaly opened the meeting by reading guidelines tailored toward the protesters so they could participate in the meeting.

Immediately after, German walked in front of the dais and began loudly calling for Wheeler's resignation. Eudaly called a recess after unsuccessfully urging German to allow the meeting to proceed.

For about 45 minutes, protesters chanted, sang and talked about their grievances into the live microphones where residents can give public testimony to the council.

Eventually, most of the group broke off for work or to chant outside.

Eudaly sat down with German in the chambers and offered to restart the meeting and listen to her public testimony. German refused, saying that the group would leave if police came to arrest them, but otherwise planned to keep the meeting on pause.

"This is a really uncomfortable position for me to be in because I share your concerns and want to hear what you have to say, but this is not an effective use of our time," Eudaly said. "You guys are deciding your voices are more important than anyone else in this room."

Disrupting meetings is the only way to have their voices heard, German said. "We need to make a point. This can't be business as usual."

Eudaly left, security guards cleared the room of protesters and the council meeting resumed.

Police said they arrested three protesters -- Christopher McGregor, Zachary Pursley and Jeffrey Singer -- around noon after they refused to leave a City Hall entryway. They had been asked to leave the building, police said, and stayed there unlawfully. Others left when officers got there, according to police.

Jail records show the trio faces interfering with a peace officer and second-degree trespassing charges. McGregor and Pursley also face second-degree disorderly conduct charges, according to jail records.

Each of the men were booked into jail. Records indicate Pursley and Singer were released on their own recognizance Wednesday.

McGregor remained in Multnomah County's Inverness Jail on \$5,000 bail. Court records show he was sentenced in January to two years of probation and 60 days in jail, with credit for time served, for third-degree assault.

Portland City Council overturns exoneration of police officer who hit bicyclist with stun gun six times

*By Jessica Floum
February 23, 2017*

In September 2014, a Portland Police officer deployed a Taser on a Portland bicyclist six times within 15 seconds in a use of force that drew years of scrutiny and conflicting opinions on whether Officer Bradley Nutting's actions were appropriate.

The Portland City Council remained conflicted Wednesday and, on a 3-2 vote, overturned the Police Bureau's decision to exonerate Nutting for deploying a stun gun on Portlander Matthew Klug.

The council did not suggest Nutting receive any discipline, however.

Mayor Ted Wheeler, who doubles as police commissioner, and Commissioner Dan Saltzman wanted to sustain Police Chief Mike Marshman's decision to clear the officer, but were outvoted.

Nutting hit Klug with a stun gun six times for resisting arrest after he yelled at a driver he said struck his bike. At least two of the hits occurred as Klug lay face down on the ground with three officers over his back.

The chief concluded Klug struggled with officers in a threatening manner that justified Nutting's use of force.

The Tasing on a Northwest Portland street came after a 2012 federal investigation found a pattern of Portland police using excessive force against people who had or were perceived to have mental illness. Investigators also found that police improperly deployed stun guns against suspects.

Several witnesses to the 2014 incident told investigators it was clear to them that Klug was undergoing a mental health crisis. Reports from advocacy groups say that Klug had experienced a traumatic brain injury.

The council's decision came after a years' long process in which a citizen review panel and the bureau tried and failed to come to an agreement on the findings.

In the end, the Citizen Review Committee unanimously determined that the officer's use of force was inappropriate.

The appeal of the Police Bureau decision was the first brought before the council in more than a decade, city commissioners and attorneys said.

Commissioners struggled to agree on whether to uphold Marshman's decision that Klug had acted aggressively toward several officers trying to handcuff him and that repeated Taser strikes were in line with department policy.

"I'm listening to different accounts of the same incident and I don't draw any conclusions, so I'm going to err on the side of exoneration," Saltzman said.

Commissioners Nick Fish, Amanda Fritz and Chloe Eudaly voted to not sustain the chief's decision.

Wheeler and the commissioners agreed that the task before them--determining whether a reasonable person would come to the same conclusion as Marshman after reviewing evidence of the case--was extremely difficult.

They all noted differing accounts from officers, witnesses and Klug, confusing evidence and unclear standards for reviewing use of a Taser.

"While I support all of the broader principles discussed here today... when it comes back to this case and the standards by which I'm supposed to judge it, I have to answer that question in the affirmative," Wheeler said.

A 15-second video of the incident shot at a distance by a bystander shows three Portland police officers pushing Klug toward a wall and then onto the ground as someone yells: "You are a f---cking idiot." Face-down, Klug yells "ow" multiple times as the three officers pull his arm behind his back and try to secure his kicking feet. A Taser light flashes, and Klug kicks Nutting to the ground. Nutting straddles Klug and appears to use the stun gun on him again.

The Taser's internal system registered six deployments.

Marshman said Nutting only intended to deploy the stun gun three times, but the design of the device, which the police force had recently begun to use, likely resulted in accidental triggering.

He argued that Klug bucking on the ground and kicking the officer was "active aggression," a vaguely defined term in the department's Taser use policy that Marshman argued warranted Nutting's use of force. Marshman also argued it was unlikely all six Taser activations happened while the device was touching Klug.

"They did not have control of him," Marshman told the council during public testimony Wednesday. "I would rather have the officers use the Taser with no residual effect. If they punched him or used a metal stick, my question would have been 'Why didn't you use the Taser?'"

The Citizen Review Committee, made up of 11 volunteer community members, unanimously disagreed with Marshman's assessment that the actions were appropriate. The commission concluded Klug was resisting police commands but not exhibiting active aggression.

"Even if it was an accident, it was a use of force on a civilian," committee chairwoman Kristin Malone said. "That should come with a consequence."

Malone said she understood the police bureau's inclination to empathize with Nutting. She said the City Council likely feared overstepping in a decision that was supposed to defer to and respect the police chief's conclusions.

The brevity and speed of the incident, the grainy and distant video picture and unclear definitions of what constitutes "active aggression" conflicted all of the City Council's members in their decision.

"There are too many unique circumstances in this case that trouble me," Fish said. "I am very torn by the evidence before us. I am troubled by the documentation of six different tasers. I am concerned about the mental state of the suspect, who appeared to be in crisis."

While the council agreed on the decision's difficulty, it failed to agree on if or how the Police Bureau should move forward on disciplining Nutting.

"A not sustained is better than letting the chief's decisions stand without conversation," Fritz said.

The Portland Tribune

City crews warm up shovels for pothole Patch-a-thon

By Pamplin Media Group

February 22, 2017

Got a nasty pothole in your neighborhood you'd like to see patched? Thursday might be your day.

Portland's Bureau of Transportation's plans a Patch-a-thon beginning Feb. 23 to fill hundreds of potholes around the city caused by the winter storms.

The bureau has a backlog of more than 1,000 potholes reported by city employees and citizens. Thursday's Patch-a-thon will dedicate bureau crews to filling most of those. The bureau will send out 12 to 15 crews to fill the potholes, far more than the usual two or three crews that usually do the job.

City crews usually fill more than 8,000 potholes a year.

Transportation Commissioner Dan Saltzman kicks off the effort by helping a crew fill a pothole Thursday morning near Northeast Weidler Street and Sixth Avenue. Weather permitting, the bureau will send crews out nearly every day until the pothole backlog is cleared.

Portlanders can report potholes by sending a detailed description and photos to transportation bureau dispatchers by email pdxroads@portlandoregon.gov, or by using the [PDX Reporter App](#). They can also call 503-823-1700, PBOT's 24-hour pothole repair line.

Protesters chant, shout and commandeer City Council meeting -- again

*By Pamplin Media Group
February 22, 2017*

A couple dozen chanting and shouting protesters forced Portland's City Council to suspend its weekly meeting Wednesday morning.

It's one of several times in the few weeks that protesters have commandeered the council chambers. Above the council podium, a large video board showed a "will return in a moment" message on the city's live council meeting broadcast. A loop of soft jazz from the video board provided background music to the gathering.

Protesters began shouting and chanting shortly after the council began its Feb. 22 meeting at 9:30 a.m. in City Hall. At one point, the group chanted the name of Quance Hayes, the 17-year-old African-American shot and killed Feb. 9 by Portland police officers after an early morning Northeast Portland armed robbery.

About a half-hour after the council left the chambers, protesters took to microphones to call for Mayor Ted Wheeler's resignation. Their messages focused on helping the city's homeless, providing clothing and food for those without houses.

At one point, a woman sang an impromptu protest song into the council microphones as others clapped.

After about an hour, the crowd thinned and only a handful of people remained in the council chambers. The council resumed its meeting about 20 minutes later.

City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly returned to the chambers before all the protesters left and talked for several minutes with a couple of people in the crowd.

Three people were arrested about an hour and a half later as Portland police tried to clear City Hall's Southwest Fifth Avenue entrance.

Police said 21-year-old Christopher August McGregor was arrested on charges of interfering with a peace officer, second-degree disorderly conduct and second-degree criminal trespass. Zachary Pursley, 24, was arrested on charges of interfering with a peace officer, second-degree disorderly conduct and second-degree criminal trespass. Jeffrey Richard Singer, 29, was arrested on charges of interfering with a peace officer and second-degree criminal trespass.

The arrests happened at about noon as police told a crowd of people gathered in the entry to leave the building.

R2DToo lawyer 'confident' homeless camp will be relocated

By Jim Redden

February 22, 2017

Mark Kramer, the attorney for the Right 2 Dream Too homeless camp, says he is "confident" a new location for it can be found before the April 7 deadline for it to move.

Kramer also represents Michael Wright one of the four owners of the property at Northwest 4th and Burnside where the camp sits. Wright and the other owners are under increasing pressure to evict the camp if no new home can be found. The Portland Development Commission has agreed to buy the property on April 7, but only if it is free and clear.

In not, the PDC could cancel the purchase and force the owners to repay approximately \$320,000 they have received in monthly payments since the purchase was approved.

"I am working zealously with the Mayor's Office, PDC, the Owners and others to secure R2DToo's occupancy (for now) at 4th and Burnside while a new site is found and I'm confident that will happen, but beyond that I cannot provide you with further information at this juncture," Kramer told the Portland Tribune in a Wednesday email.

"The city is committed to moving R2DToo from its current site by April 7," says Mayor Ted Wheeler's spokesman Michael Cox. Wheeler has not promised to find the camp a new location, however, although the city is reviewing numerous possibilities, Cox adds.

Wright and the other owners knew of the condition when they approved the sale and began accepting the payments. But they also knew the City Council was working to relocate the camp with approximately \$846,000 provided by Old Town/China Town developers who wanted it moved.

But the council's first plan to relocate the camp to a piece of industrial property was blocked by the state Land Use Board of Appeals following a legal challenge from area residents and businesses. And a more recent plan by Commissioner Amanda Fritz to move the camp to a city-owned parking lot on Southwest Naito Parkway fell apart when Mayor Ted Wheeler objected to it last week. Relatively little of the original money for the move remains.

In the meantime, two Old Town/China Town developers have recently sued Wright and the other owners, claiming the presence of the camp has reduced their property values by around \$900,000.

Although city officials have supported some homeless camps with portable toilets and other resources, they have never officially established or moved one. Negotiations about creating a city permit for the Hazelnut Grove homeless camp fell apart when former Mayor Charlie Hales staff stopped meeting with representatives of the Overlook Neighborhood Association, which represents the area where the camp is located.

You can read the PDC purchase agreement [here](#).

Willamette Week

Tenants' Group Warned About Failing to Disclose Its Lobbying of Portland Officials

By Rachel Monahan

February 22, 2017

Renters' rights group Portland Tenants United championed the groundbreaking city ordinance earlier this month requiring many landlords to cover tenants' moving costs in the event of no-cause evictions or 10 percent rent increases.

But the group never registered its lobbying activity, even as it had at least 10 contacts with one city office and approached other city officials.

That's the allegation in a Feb. 15 letter sent to PTU by city Elections Officer Deborah Scroggin, warning the group about a possible violation of city ethics rules.

The city requires organizations to register as lobbyists within three days of spending at least eight hours lobbying or preparing to lobby city officials, even if the groups spend no money.

PTU organizer Margot Black says her group was unfamiliar with the requirement. She submitted registration for PTU on Feb. 21.

The Portland Mercury

Two City Documents Dictate Opposing Fates for Right 2 Dream Too

By Dirk VanderHart

February 23, 2017

Right 2 Dream Too's uncertain future could be decided by two weirdly contradictory city documents.

As [first reported](#) by the Mercury, the respected homeless rest area last week lost the opportunity to move to a parking lot on SW Naito, when Mayor Ted Wheeler shot the idea down. With no other plots of land being considered, that left the camp with less than two months before an apparent deadline to clear out of its home of nearly six years.

As we [also first reported](#), R2DToo's attorney is confident his clients won't be tossed out so easily. Mark Kramer cites a 2014 city ordinance [[PDF](#)] that says if the City of Portland purchases the land where R2DToo sits, it has to find a new home for the camp before evicting it. Kramer wouldn't go into specific strategies, but suggested that that clause would be a safeguard ensuring the camp's continued existence.

It's not that simple, though. A purchasing agreement [[PDF](#)] the Portland Development Commission signed eight months after the city ordinance could make that provision unwieldy to enforce, since it mandates the camp be gone before the city buys the land.

So in essence: If the city buys the land, it has to keep R2DToo around, but in order to buy the land, the city is demanding that R2DToo clear out. It's a bizarre ouroboros that officials are still puzzling out.

The PDC is interested in the R2DToo plot, at the corner of West Burnside and Fourth, as part of its ongoing efforts to revivify Old Town Chinatown. The agency's Purchase and Sale Agreement—inked with landowner Michael Wright and others on October 7, 2014—says that the city will pay \$300,000 (\$10,000 a month) for the landowners to not sell the plot to anyone else for 30 months (or two and a half years). It also sets a series of incremental deadlines that are supposed to be met in that time.

One of those was [already blown](#). Within 2 years of the agreement's signing date, Wright and his business partners were supposed to have R2DToo off the lot. But that October 7, 2016 deadline fell through along with a plan to move the camp to the Central Eastside, and the PDC opted to push the moving date back six months, to April 7.

What's the significance of April 7? It's the closing date on which the city can purchase the property for \$1.2 million, or let Wright et. al. shop it around to other people. And the PDC is being clear: If it's going to consider buying, it wants the land empty.

"The position hasn't really changed," PDC spokesperson Shawn Uhlman told the Mercury on Wednesday. "What we've been clear on is that it needs to be clear— vacant of the camp and everything else."

If that doesn't happen, Uhlman notes, nothing compels the PDC to fork over \$1.2 million for the land.

And what if R2DToo does clear out, and the PDC opts to buy? The city's ordinance could compel the agency to house the camp, until another lot is found. Here's the exact language:

- b. Further, the Mayor and Commissioner Fritz are delegated the joint authority to:
 - i) Work cooperatively with PDC so that if the 4th/Burnside Property should become a PDC owned site, then R2DToo will be allowed to stay at that site until the City finds a suitable alternate site to relocate R2DToo;

"Sounds like a lawsuit," said R2DToo co-founder Ibrahim Mubarak, asked about the situation on Wednesday. Mubarak is [no longer with the camp](#), but is in contact with its leadership, he says. He wasn't suggesting the camp would file suit, as much as joking about the confusion.

Wheeler's office is still looking into what all the competing language means, a spokesperson said on Wednesday.

Kramer hasn't yet responded to requests for comment on the competing documents. We'll update if he does.

Hall Monitor: Staying Power

An Imperiled R2DToo Might Have One More Trick Up Its Sleeve

By Dirk VanderHart

February 22, 2017

Until last week, it had never seriously entered into my mind that Right 2 Dream Too was in any jeopardy.

There was too much goodwill behind the homeless rest area that has sat at the corner of West Burnside and 4th since 2011; too much agreement—from elected leaders, advocates, and even among some groups that often present roadblocks to progress—that this was a worthwhile enterprise.

“They’ve proved me and other people wrong,” City Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who’d once overseen the levying of thousands of dollars in fines against the camp, said last year.

Similar sentiments have abounded in Portland in recent years. The camp seemed politically bulletproof.

It’s not. That began coming into focus last Friday, when Commissioner Amanda Fritz called with some surprising news.

For years, Fritz has been working to move the camp to a new home, and has twice failed in serious attempts—first to move R2DToo to the Pearl District, then to the Central Eastside.

But with a fast-approaching April 7 deadline for R2DToo to leave its current spot, Fritz had a new plan. The Oregonian reported on February 10 that she’d been working to site the camp on a long, thin parking lot on SW Naito. The lot is held by Portland Parks and Recreation, which Fritz controls, and there appeared to be zoning justification for a mass shelter on the land.

Fritz failed to secure one last, necessary thing, though: [Mayor Ted Wheeler’s assent](#).

“The mayor has decided we will not move forward,” Fritz told me on Friday, adding she’d be turning over the job of finding a place for R2DToo to Wheeler.

Wheeler’s got outsize say in this matter because he controls the Office of Management and Finance (OMF), which has long been a pillar of plans to move R2DToo. Without OMF’s help, a move probably won’t work, and Wheeler has decided OMF won’t help—at least not in moving the camp to the property Fritz had proposed.

“The mayor has spoken to businesses, workers, and residents of the area and they are nearly uniform in their opposition,” Wheeler spokesperson Michael Cox said on Friday.

The more crucial thing—unspoken until I chatted with Cox later that afternoon—is that Wheeler’s also not going to kill himself finding R2DToo a new home. “Our commitment is to addressing the challenges around homelessness writ large,” Cox told me.

But if Wheeler’s content to let R2DToo disappear, his predecessor was not. Mark Kramer, a long-time attorney for the camp, points out that the Charlie Hales-led city council of 2014 committed, via ordinance [[PDF](#)], that “R2DToo will be allowed to stay at [its current] site until the City finds a suitable alternate site,” if city officials take control of the plot as planned.

Kramer won’t talk much about his strategy, but says he’s working on a “plan A and a plan B.”

“In either case R2DToo will be on its own site,” Kramer said Tuesday afternoon. He thinks the camp could remain on its current site for six months, or a year. “Maybe longer.”

Quest for Rest

Oregon Lawmakers Are Focused on Renter Protections. Will They Ignore a Push to Help the Homeless?

*By Dirk VanderHart
February 22, 2017*

Oregon's housing woes have been great at attracting attention to the plight of renters, but that hasn't always translated to compassion for the folks who've already lost their homes.

Consider: As the state was in the teeth of a widely acknowledged housing crisis last year, the city of Roseburg adopted a new "exclusion zone" policy that critics say allows officials to ban people cited for homelessness-related crimes from setting foot downtown.

And in the Central Oregon town of Prineville, leaders took steps in September to more easily exclude homeless campers and others from city parks.

Of course, similar laws—Portland's [camping ban](#) comes to mind—have been on the books for decades. Now, with legislators in Salem promising to drill down into the housing crisis during this year's new legislative session, advocates for the homeless see an uncommon opportunity to give those policies the boot.

"Sitting down, sleeping—these are minor fucking crimes," says Paul Boden, executive director of the San Francisco-based [Western Regional Advocacy Project](#) (WRAP). "The history of local governments using and criminalizing the presence of people they don't like and discriminatorily enforcing laws against people is as old as this country is."

For the second time, WRAP this year has convinced Oregon legislators to consider the [Oregon Right to Rest Act](#), a multi-pronged piece of legislation that would bolster protections for homeless Oregonians and effectively roll back local laws that can criminalize people for not having homes.

If passed [as currently written](#), the bill would explicitly allow homeless people to rest in public spaces—including in vehicles on city streets—so long as they're not closed off to the public in general. It would make clear that campers have a "reasonable expectation of privacy" even if they're living outside, meaning police would need search warrants to look through tents in many instances. And if authorities breach those and other rights set forth in the bill, the act says they can be sued, or fined by the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries.

The legislation, House Bill 2215, is WRAP's latest attempt at getting lawmakers to take up what Boden calls his organization's "list of demands." In 2015, a nearly identical bill died in committee after being opposed by the law enforcement lobby, the League of Oregon Cities, the Portland Business Alliance (PBA), and others.

"We believe instead we should be increasing shelters, transitional housing, and services," the PBA's Marion Haynes told lawmakers at the time.

But we're a long way from 2015. Since the earlier bill was allowed to perish, Portland formally declared a housing and homelessness emergency, and state leaders have begun talking seriously about Oregon's housing problems.

In last year's short legislative session, lawmakers passed new, incremental protections for Portland renters. This year, under direction from House Speaker Tina Kotek (D-Portland) the

legislature will consider allowing rent control in Oregon—a controversial step Kotek and others see as necessary for stemming displacement in a tight, unforgiving housing market.

“Addressing the housing crisis is a priority for House Democrats,” says Scott Moore, a spokesman for House Democratic leaders. Still, Moore can’t say that the Right to Rest Act has his bosses’ support—a necessity if the law has a prayer of making it to the Senate, let alone passing.

“It’s still early on in the session, so there are still discussions about this bill to come,” Moore says.

Those discussions are playing out as Portland is on the verge of getting a firmer grasp on how dire its homelessness issues are. On February 22, officials are slated to begin the city’s biennial point-in-time homeless count. Used throughout the country, these counts are an imperfect means of estimating the severity of homelessness. Nonetheless, they are the best measure that exists, and 2015’s point-in-time count found nearly 2,000 people living without shelter in Multnomah County.

Given the Portland region’s recent focus on homelessness—which has brought hundreds of new shelter beds, stepped up placements in affordable housing, and more assistance to renters in danger of being tossed on the streets—you might expect the city to be better off. Local leaders certainly did. In 2015, the homelessness task force A Home for Everyone crafted a plan for cutting homelessness in half in Portland by doing the very things elected officials have carried out.

Despite those efforts, many people suspect homelessness has increased.

“We can expand capacity, but the housing market right now presents an enormous challenge for our ability to actually see that... lead to an actual decrease in point-in-time homelessness,” Marc Jolin, director of the county’s Joint Office of Homeless Services, told city and county officials in a briefing on February 14. “Right now we’re seeing a lot of new people in our systems.”

In other words, the steps the PBA argued for in 2015 have been carried out, and it’s possible there are more people living on the streets.

Which isn’t to say the Right to Rest Act will fix the homelessness crisis. Supporters say it’s a way to ensure people aren’t criminalized merely for living in difficult circumstances. To the extent that it helps anyone escape homelessness, it might be by easing the fines or court dates hanging over their heads.

But the law faces skepticism, too—and not only from the usual suspects. Some homeless advocates the Mercury spoke with expressed concern that some parts of the bill—for instance, how it defines “rest” and “public space”—could lead to difficult legal questions.

Meanwhile, HB 2215 has the support of the ACLU of Oregon. The Bureau of Labor and Industries, which would have new enforcement duties under the legislation, says it’s neutral on the law.

One of the bill’s chief sponsors, state Rep. Carla Piluso (D-Gresham), brings an interesting history to her support. Over her career as a Gresham police officer and police chief, she often dealt with homeless people living along the Springwater Corridor.

“You bet I made those arrests,” says Piluso, referring to times when someone was brandishing a weapon or there’d been an assault. But she adds that the idea of people’s fundamental right to live was driven home for her recently in a presentation from homeless advocates.

“It just reinforced that some people make a choice to live outside... and should have every right to do so as long as they’re not really breaking laws or causing grief to others,” she tells the Mercury.

Whether or not other lawmakers agree remains to be seen. HB 2215 is currently before the House Judiciary Committee, with no hearing date set. Rep. Mitch Greenlick (D-Portland) is the lone sponsor of the bill to sit on that committee, and says he’ll push its chair, retired Portland police Lt. Jeff Barker, to give the bill consideration.

“I think it’s tragic to have people sleeping on the street,” says Greenlick, whose district office sits in Old Town. “On the other hand, I don’t think you should be arresting them when they sleep in the street. The problem is that they’re homeless, not that they’re sleeping on the street.”