

The Oregonian

Portland Commissioner Eudaly Blasts Portland Public Schools for Ousting Special Education Program

*By Bethany Barnes
March 5, 2018*

Portland City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly weighed in over the weekend on a Portland Public Schools plan that's been generating opposition for months: oust a program for special education students from its building in favor of a larger program for gifted students.

Since the announcement of the change in November, parents and staff from the special education program, Pioneer, have regularly protested at school board meetings and even shown up at board members' workplaces to protest. The optics have been awkward for the district from the beginning. Officials botched announcement of the change by accidentally telling families in the gifted program before Pioneer families about the move.

Time hasn't soothed tensions.

School board members have said the decision is a done deal. Access Academy, which serves more than 350 highly gifted students, is being ejected from the former Rose City Park Elementary building because that facility is needed to reopen as a neighborhood school. So, the 120-plus students now served at Pioneer will be moved to two smaller sites over the summer, they say, reinforcing Superintendent Guadalupe Guerrero's choice.

I want to see Portland Public Schools become a model for how we serve our most vulnerable and deserving students. This plan helps us farther along that path.

Board members have indicated that, while the move was spurred by a building shortage, they feel it is also a change needed to improve service for some of the most vulnerable students in the district.

Many Pioneer parents and teachers are skeptical that the change will lead toward anything resembling improvement. Oregon's largest school district, critics argue, has a poor track record. The fast timeline to split up and relocate the special education students is a setup for failure not success, they say.

Eudaly, whose own child is in special education at a Portland school, wrote a lengthy Facebook post that decried the decision. In response to comments questioning if Pioneer is currently serving these students well she wrote:

"I'm well aware of what Pioneer is and I have issues with it but that's not relevant to this conversation. It's not like the school district is offering an improvement."

Read Eudaly's entire post below:

"I had a couple brief encounters yesterday that left me feeling very sad about the general lack of understanding and support for students with disabilities. As an accelerated learner who struggled in school and ultimately dropped out, and the parent of a child with multiple disabilities, I understand how our public schools often fail learners who deviate from the 'norm.' I empathize with parents desperate to see their children achieve their potential when their educational needs are not being met. (Talented and gifted) and special education students have something in common in this regard (sometimes a student qualifies for both). However, their standing in our

district, community, and society are not the same. Their struggle is not the same. Their outcomes are not the same.

Chances are your accelerated learner is white, and/or middle class, and/or does not have a disability. I mention this not to shame or guilt trip but to point out relative advantage. I bet you tell them they can do and be anything they set their mind to and you believe it. There are numerous programs, resources, and opportunities inside and outside of school available to them that many students with disabilities cannot access. In fact, many parents of children with disabilities are too busy fighting to protect their children's civil rights and get their most basic needs met to even think about extracurriculars (even if they were welcomed and included, which they are often not). And many of us have been denied the basic experience that most families take for granted — getting to choose and remain at a school and be a part of a community.

I am deeply disappointed to see our school district continue to treat students with disabilities and their families like second-class citizens and not full members of the community. Our children belong as much as anyone's and should not be shuffled around like surplus furniture. We know that changing schools can have detrimental effects for any student. How can we justify repeated moves for our most vulnerable students?

I spent years feeling cheated by my public school experience, where I was literally stuck in a corner and given busy work while other students received instruction. Could I have gone further, faster given a more appropriate education? Absolutely. But you know what? Things worked out for me. I can't say the same for many of my classmates with disabilities, or the students who followed them over the next 30 years, or most painfully, my own son.

This Pioneer/Access debate reminds me of an encounter I had years ago at Chapman Park (ironically attached to our neighborhood school, which Henry would later be denied access to). I was pushing Henry on the single adapted swing (the only accessible feature) when a mother and her able bodied child expressed their impatience for their turn. I looked at them and said, 'You've got the entire park and playground to explore. This is the only thing my son can enjoy.' And I turned back around and kept pushing. I'm going to keep pushing for the students who are getting the short end of the stick — students with disabilities, students of color, students from low income households, (English language learner) students — in our shamefully inequitable system. Please stand with me for all students beginning with the ones who are most in need."

Portland Sets 'Better Naito' Debut for May 1, Says One-Way Bike Trips Approached 400,000

*By Andrew Theen
March 5, 2018*

It's back.

Portland transportation officials said Monday the city will once again convert one lane of northbound traffic on Naito Parkway to pedestrians and bicyclists.

'Better Naito' as the city calls it, will return May 1 and stretch until Sept. 30. It affects one lane of travel from the Hawthorne Bridge to Steel Bridge.

The project runs in conjunction with Portland's, ideally, warmer weather and the busy festival season at Tom McCall Waterfront Park.

It's the second full year of the program since the city approved a five-year pilot project to study the lane conversion during a handful of summer festivals. Volunteers led the effort during 2015 and 2016 on a limited basis.

Don't expect any changes in how the project looks and feels in the second year.

Transportation officials also released a report detailing ridership numbers from last season.

The city said the lane saw 393,173 one-way bike trips during the five-month period, and more than 12,000 people walked it during the Waterfront Blues Fest last July.

According to its survey, cyclists were twice as likely to choose Better Naito over the Waterfront Park trail.

City officials said the project had "minimal impact" on cars and trucks trying to navigate the area.

Northbound traffic from Southwest Clay Street to Southwest Stark Street increased by 1 minute and 28 seconds between 7 and 8 a.m., and travel times jumped 1 minute and 33 seconds from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The Portland Business Alliance expressed concern in 2017 about the project adding to congestion, and the chamber ramped up opposition last year by trying to get people to share negative complaints about the program through the city website.

Instead, the city received overwhelmingly positive feedback about the program.

PBA did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the program.

Dylan Rivera, a transportation spokesman, said the city regularly meets with the chamber and downtown business community to discuss Better Naito "and a variety of projects we have in the downtown area."

"We've been gratified by the overwhelmingly positive reception Better Naito has had," he said.

When asked if the city was discussing making the lane permanently set-aside for bikes and pedestrians, Rivera said they hear that "all the time" from people who want that to happen. "For now, we have five years of funding," he said.

Portland Closes O'Bryant Square and Underground Garage 'Indefinitely' for Safety Concerns

By Andrew Theen

March 5, 2018

O'Bryant Square, a city park and popular hangout spot for food cart patrons in Southwest Portland, will be closed "indefinitely."

Parks and transportation officials issued a joint statement Monday morning saying the park would be fenced off immediately because of structural concerns related to the city's parking garage beneath the brick plaza.

"After hearing the expert opinions of engineers who have studied this facility, we feel it is necessary to close off access to O'Bryant Square Park and the O'Bryant Square SmartPark Garage," Transportation Director Leah Treat and Parks & Recreation Director Mike Abbate said

in a joint statement. "This closure will ensure the public is safe while we consider long-term options."

All options are on the table, according to transportation spokesman Dylan Rivera, including rehabbing the garage or demolishing the structure altogether.

"We need more time and information," he said.

The urban plaza is a popular gathering place for rallies and public marches and has been known as "Needle Park" or "Paranoid Park" in the past because of illegal drug use and other activities.

Sgt. Chris Burley, the Portland Police Bureau's public information officer, said cops responded to the public square on 112 different occasions from March 1, 2017 to March 1, 2018.

"While officers have responded to the location regarding multiple calls for service over the preceding year time span," Burley said in an email, "officers acknowledge this location is a very visible location that has a high volume of traffic because of its location."

The closure comes at an inopportune time for the neighborhood, according to nearby business-owner and spokesman for the loosely-affiliated group Friends of O'Bryant Square, Steven Lien.

Lien, who owns a men's underwear and swimsuit business, said the park and its underground garage are critical to the neighborhood.

The largest food cart pod in the city is steps away, and hungry patrons often step into nearby businesses. "In the summer time it's one of the busiest parks per square foot in the city," Lien said.

Parking is already tight in the West End neighborhood, he said.

Construction at another city SmartPark on Southwest 10th Avenue just began and will continue until 2019, with two floors of the building's six parking areas closed at any one time. The building has 800 parking stalls overall.

"This couldn't come at a worse time," Lien said.

He's concerned that the city has no plan for the park.

O'Bryant Square Park is a half-acre site bordered on the east and west by Southwest Park and Ninth avenues and Southwest Stark and Washington streets to the north and south.

The city received the property as a donation in 1971, and its original design featured rose bushes and a bronze fountain in the shape of a rose, according to the city's website. The park opened in 1973 and is named for Hugh Donaldson O'Bryant, the city's first mayor.

Portland runs a 100-space underground parking garage at the property, and it closed the garage on Sept. 4, 2017, because of safety concerns.

At the time, the Transportation Bureau said the closure wouldn't affect the park itself.

But a more thorough analysis found "deficiencies in joists, walls, columns and footings that lead officials to believe it would not be safe to allow crowds of people to use the park."

Parks officials say there is no current plan for what to do with the park. "We will be working on a long-term plan for the park in the future," spokesman Mark Ross said in a statement.

The Portland Tribune

City Hall Update: Eudaly Seeks \$750,000 to Defend Migrants

*By Jim Redden
March 6, 2018*

Plus, tenant protection hearing continued and Affordable art recommendations OK'd.

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly said last week that she will request \$750,000 to help fund legal services for local migrants threatened with deportation. She hopes Multnomah County will contribute an equal amount.

Eudaly made the promise in response to a report presented to the City Council Thursday by the the Welcoming/Inclusive/Sanctuary City Task Force. It was created by the council on March 22 to "coordinate efforts to support and protect the immigrant and refugee communities."

The report recommended the creation of an independent Office of Immigrant Support to administer such a legal defense fund.

Tenant protection hearing continued

The City Council ran out of time to vote on making a revised version of its rental protection policy permanent after a lengthy hearing Wednesday. It will continue the hearing this week.

The temporary policy was first approved in February 2016. It requires landlords to pay relocation assistance ranging from \$2,900 to \$4,500 to tenants subject to no-cause evictions or who choose to move after their rent is raised more than 10 percent in a year.

The council originally exempted landlords with just one unit from the requirements. The proposed permanent policy would narrow that exemption to just a few circumstances. Many landlords oppose the change, which is supported by tenant advocates.

Affordable art recommendations OK'd

The City Council on Wednesday adopted a set of recommendations to protect and expand affordable art spaces.

The Plan for Preserving and Expanding Affordable Arts Space in Portland was crafted by Commissioner Nick Fish with the assistance of Mayor Ted Wheeler and Commissioner Chloe Eudaly. It responds to the increase in property values that have displaced many artists and prompted the redevelopment of low-cost art spaces.

The vote follows a council work session in January. The plan encourages collaborative, proactive action by the city, private and nonprofit partners, community groups and artists. You can read it at: tinyurl.com/y73sya6x

Safety Concerns Prompt City to Close O'Bryant Square

*By Pamplin Media Group
March 5, 2018*

During a scheduled summer repair project to seal cracks and stop leaking from the park, city officials discovered additional spalling concrete damage.

Downtown Portland's O'Bryant Square park and Smart Park garage were closed indefinitely Monday, March 5, because of structural problems in the underground parking area.

Portland's Bureau of Transportation and Parks & Recreation said engineers working since September on the garage decided to close it after finding deficiencies in joists, walls, columns and footings that lead officials to believe it would not be safe to allow people to use the park.

"After hearing the expert opinions of engineers who have studied this facility, we feel it is necessary to close off access to O'Bryant Square Park and the O'Bryant Square SmartPark Garage," PBOT Director Leah Treat and PP&R Director Mike Abbate said in a joint statement. "This closure will ensure the public is safe while we consider long-term options."

O'Bryant Square is a half-acre site at 808 S.W. Stark St. with a small inactive fountain. An underground garage provides 100 parking spaces.

The garage was closed Sept. 4 because of safety concerns in the garage. During a scheduled summer repair project to seal cracks and stop leaking from the park, city officials discovered additional spalling concrete damage. Based on the advice of engineers, the transportation bureau decided to temporarily close the garage and have an engineering firm assess the structure.

O'Bryant Square was fenced off March 5, and could stay closed to the public until the underground garage is determined to be once again structurally sound. The city is trying to find alternate locations for two public event permit-holders, who have been notified, and the Square's occasional food cart vendor.

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Japanese Hotel Chain's Project Proposal Advances

By Chuck Slothower

March 5, 2018

That fenced-off hole in the ground at Southwest Third Avenue and Oak Street, in downtown Portland, might not be around much longer if a Japanese hotel chain can win design approval for a new development.

Toyoko Inn is proposing a 19-story, 486-room hotel on the parcel. The hospitality group is scheduled to meet with Portland Bureau of Development Services staff during a pre-application conference on March 29.

The downtown Portland hotel would be Toyoko's first U.S. location.

"It's kind of a budget hotel for business travelers," said Richard Kalb, a Chicago architect who is designing the project. "They basically market clean, efficient, economic quarters for the business guy, etc."

Toyoko purchased the property for \$1,024,000 from the Portland Development Commission (now Prosper Portland) in September 2016.

The property has some history. It was once a jail annex that neighbored police headquarters on the block. The city of Portland vacated the block in 1984, and then struggled for the next 30 years to find anyone to develop the southwest corner of the property. Those efforts were complicated by a 99-year lease on an underground parking lot. The PDC made annual payments to satisfy the parking encumbrance.

Meanwhile, the police headquarters building was redeveloped for office use and the Westshore Apartments, a subsidized affordable housing complex, was constructed on the block.

In 2015, the PDC marketed the remaining quarter-block property and entertained three offers before settling on the Toyoko Inn chain. It was identified in PDC documents as the largest hospitality chain in Japan, with more than 240 hotels in that country and elsewhere.

The PDC estimated the property would bring in more than \$300,000 annually in property taxes.

Menashe Properties also bid on the property, said Jordan Menashe, principal at the family-owned Portland firm.

Menashe acknowledged Menashe Properties' bid was lower than Toyoko's, but said the PDC should have made a counteroffer.

"They should have come back, but they didn't," he said. "Now we're going to have a very low-end hotel. ... I don't think the PDC chose the correct use for that area."

The hotel would come after a rush of other hospitality projects, although none matches Toyoko's budget business hotel model. Projects such as the 600-room Hyatt Regency Portland at the Oregon Convention Center and the Graves Hospitality boutique hotel in the West End are on track to be completed sooner.

The Toyoko design could be required to change as it enters Portland's design review process. Some of the Toyoko hotels in Japan have large "toyoko-inn.com" lettering on the upper floors that may run counter to a guideline that says signs "should have only a minimal presence in the Portland skyline."

No design renderings of the project were available, Kalb said. A Toyoko Inn official did not respond to an email message seeking comment.

The Portland Business Journal

'Better Naito,' a Bike- and Pedestrian-Friendly Option, Returns for 2018

By Andy Giegerich

March 6, 2018

Portland officials said they'll again implement the "Better Naito" pro-bike and -pedestrian strategy alongside Gov. Tom McCall Waterfront Park.

Better Naito dedicates the northbound lane of Naito Parkway, from the Hawthorne Bridge to the Steel Bridge, to bike and pedestrian traffic. The strategy begins May 1 and ends Sept. 30.

In revealing the program's second year, Portland's transportation bureau also unveiled its "2017 Better Naito Report," which tracks travel times, traffic volumes, mode-splits and more.

The city called the project "incredibly popular with people walking and biking." During the Waterfront Blues Fest, 2,896 cyclists and 12,373 pedestrians traveled on Better Naito. On July 13, a non-event day, 1,598 cyclists and 1,013 pedestrians used Better Naito.

The Portland Business Alliance wrote the city last May expressing concern about the project, citing "significant congestion south of the lane closure and impacts to the downtown street grid, and questions reducing the capacity of a key north/south route through the central city."

The city acknowledged that, during the period Better Naito was implemented, drivers spent on average between 46 and 54 more seconds navigating the blocks between Southwest Clay Street and Southwest Stark Street, with a high of 1 minute and 33 seconds around the 4 p.m. hour.

Between 94 percent and 96 percent of those responding to the option on the "Ride Report" app deemed strategy "great."

OPB

Compromise in the Works on Relocation Aid for Poorest Portland Renters

By Amelia Templeton

March 5, 2018

Portland's city council will vote Wednesday on expanding a policy that requires landlords to pay tenants after certain evictions or rent increases. But the council is still debating whether the rule should apply to housing nonprofits.

Here's the issue: Portland has thousands of units of regulated affordable housing, in which the rent and utility costs a tenant pays are fixed as a percentage of their income, generally 30 percent.

"As people's income rises, they can graduate up to afford market-rate housing, making the unit available for the next extremely low income household," says Martha McLennan, executive director of the nonprofit Northwest Housing Alternatives.

The broad definition of "rent" in the council's original relocation ordinance left housing nonprofits concerned that their sliding rent scales might trigger Portland's hefty relocation payments.

The original ordinance exempted all units regulated as affordable housing by federal, state or local authorities for at least 60 years.

That prompted tenants' rights groups to worry that people in affordable housing wouldn't be adequately protected from an actual rent increase. After listening to their testimony, Commissioner Dan Saltzman introduced an amendment striking the exemption for affordable housing providers.

Housing nonprofits are now working with the Portland Housing Bureau on a compromise. They're trying to clarify the limited situations in which tenants in affordable housing would be eligible for relocation aid.

"There may be nuanced, rare scenarios that should trigger relocation assistance for tenants of rent-regulated affordable housing where residents are paying the full rent amount," said Tim Collier, spokesman for the nonprofit Home Forward, the largest affordable housing provider in the state.

Portland's city council faces an April deadline to pass its expanded renter relocation aid policy. The original relocation bill, approved last year, expires that month.

Leaders at the Housing Bureau say they expect the council to vote on the bill as planned, and then direct the bureau to work on developing a more narrow set of exemptions for affordable housing providers.

“The important thing is that we move this policy forward and move it to some permanent status,” said Shannon Callahan, interim director of the Portland Housing Bureau.