

The Oregonian

Portland mayor gathers civic leaders in continued push against protest violence

*By Shane Dixon Kavanaugh
August 14, 2019*

Mayor Ted Wheeler convened a broad coalition in Portland's so-called living room Wednesday to promote the city's progressive self-image and liberal free-speech tradition, and to denounce the prospect of violence during rival political demonstrations scheduled this weekend.

The gathering, unprecedented in recent memory, brought together Oregon's federal prosecutor and law enforcement critics as well as prominent labor and business organizations to Pioneer Courthouse Square.

Even the Unipiper, an icon of the city's offbeat culture, and Timber Joey, the brawny mascot for Portland's major league men's soccer team, joined the array of around 100 civic, religious and elected leaders.

The display of solidarity comes as right-wing activists from throughout the nation plan to hold an event Saturday at Tom McCall Waterfront Park to condemn self-described anti-fascist activists, or antifa, and push to have their political adversaries labeled as domestic terrorists.

Hundreds of people, including anonymous black-clad leftists, are planning to counter-protest, prompting fears of physical clashes like the ones that repeatedly have erupted at dueling demonstrations in Portland.

"Right now, we're all witness to a national rhetoric that has whipped racialized violence into a frenzy, causing harm, causing pain, causing fear for many people in our community," Wheeler said.

"We stand in opposition to the rising national tide of hate, intolerance, bigotry and white supremacy, especially rhetoric aimed at women, people of color and immigrants."

More than a dozen speakers followed the mayor's remarks.

While the news conference aimed to deliver a unified message against members of rival protest groups who have rioted and waged bloody battles in Portland's streets over the past 2½ years, the participants often diverged in their views.

"It's extremists across the political spectrum who come not to demonstrate but to engage in criminal acts of violence and property damage," said Oregon's U.S. Attorney Billy Williams. "The actions of a few, who include masked cowards and marauding thugs, have tarnished the reputation of Portland."

But Rabbi Debra Kolodny, representing the group Portland United Against Hate, offered a defense of counter-protesters who have physically confronted those espousing hateful or bigoted views.

"Creating false equivalencies between violent white nationalists and those willing to defend our city against their violence is unacceptable," she said to an eruption of applause. "Pandering to a climate that accuses Portland of being soft on antifa is unacceptable."

The gathering marked the latest move by city leaders and police to publicize the work they are doing in anticipation of Saturday.

Wheeler and Portland Police Chief Danielle Outlaw have promised a larger turnout by police and vowed to use the full force of the law against those who commit acts of violence and vandalism.

City officials have been working with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to secure the officers and equipment necessary to respond, Outlaw said.

The mayor and chief also have gone on video and given interviews, pledging to do what it takes to keep the city safe during the demonstration and urging trouble-seeking participants to stay away from Portland.

Some of those who joined them Wednesday spoke of the moral imperative Portland faces during this tumultuous political time.

“We come as peace-makers and peace-keepers,” said Avel Gordly, a longtime civil rights leader and the first black woman elected to the Oregon Senate. “We Portlanders stand together for peace, love, fairness, justice, harmony and reconciliation. Words and intent matter.

“I come to you today with a plea,” Gordly continued. “Let’s be more kind with our day-to-day dealings with each other. All we have on this planet — while we still have this planet — is each other.”

Family of John Elifritz seeks sanctions against city for late disclosure of videos showing police shooting

By Maxine Bernstein

August 14, 2019

Lawyers for the family of John Elifritz, who was shot and killed by police last year inside a Southeast Portland homeless shelter, are seeking sanctions against city attorneys for what they called the “extremely belated” disclosure of dozens of additional videos that captured the shooting.

In mid-March, the city shared videos from within CityTeam Ministries with the Elifritz legal team as part of discovery in the family’s pending wrongful death case. Police say they shot Elifritz when he lunged at officers with a knife.

Though a deadline in the civil case was extended to July 5 to share evidence in the case, lawyers for the city withheld 47 additional videos of the shooting for another month, according to lawyers representing members of Elifritz’s family. The family’s lawyers filed a motion in federal court Wednesday, seeking sanctions against the city for the delay.

One of the withheld videos contains “the clearest evidence” that a barrier of two rows of chairs separated police officers and Elifritz at the moment he was shot and shows the shooting from the officers’ vantage point, according to the family’s lawyers.

“Then officers are shown moving the rows of chairs out of the way so that it appears, after the fact and misleadingly, that there was an unobstructed pathway between the corpse on the floor and the shooting officers at the moment of the shooting,” attorneys Timothy Volpert and Carlton Odum wrote to the court.

Not having that video footage available when the Elifritz attorneys questioned at least seven officers involved in the shooting and other police supervisors for depositions was prejudicial to their case, they argued.

“This video evidence is critical to the question whether, with the barrier of two rows of chairs between Elifritz and the officers, the officers had a reasonable fear of being harmed by Elifritz at the moment they fatally shot Elifritz,” they wrote. “The video evidence withheld by Defendants is critical information independent of the evidence given by the shooting officers in depositions and post-incident investigative interviews regarding their relative positions.”

The 47 new videos recently turned over to the Elifritz legal team are among evidence that is sealed under a protective order, according to the family’s lawyers.

Barbara Elifritz and the couple’s daughter, Stormy, the representatives of his estate, sued the city and Portland police in May 2018, alleging police stormed into the CityTeam Ministries shelter on April 7, 2018, with AR-15 rifles and a police dog and used excessive force against Elifritz. His family says John Elifritz was experiencing a mental health crisis and posed no threat to the officers.

John Elifritz, a suspect in a carjacking, had burst into the shelter on Southeast Grand Avenue armed with a knife, police said.

VIDEOS THAT POLICE PREVIOUSLY RELEASED:

The Elifritz legal team asks a judge to strike the city’s motion to throw out the case. The lawyers also ask a judge to allow them to amend their original complaint based on the new video evidence and have the city pay for their costs and attorneys’ fees for the depositions they already took of the seven officers and other police supervisors without the benefit of the withheld videos.

The city’s lawyers contend the late disclosure isn’t prejudicial because they show another camera angle as previously produced videos, according to court papers.

Deputy City Attorney J. Scott Moede said the city would respond in a formal court filing soon to the motion for sanctions.

The family’s lawyers say the new videos bolster their case.

“It should go without saying that it is not for Defendants to decide whether and how these videos potentially support Plaintiff’s claims and theories,” Volpert wrote. “It should also be plainly apparent that different camera angles can be critical in determining what happened, especially in the context of the use of deadly force, as is indeed true here – the late-disclosed video includes footage from the shooting officers’ vantage point and is hugely significant.”

The family’s suit seeks unspecified compensatory and punitive damages from the city, as well as a request to order the city to halt its alleged policies and practices that encourage the use of unreasonable force, particularly against people suffering from mental health challenges.

In response, the city said Elifritz’s behavior -- his failure to drop his knife after repeated police commands and his decision to lunge at officers -- led police to shoot and kill him. They’ve argued in court papers that the 48-year-old’s death was his fault alone.

The city also cited Elifritz’s use of methamphetamine that day, his carjacking of an SUV that he then drove dangerously and the cutting of his neck while he was moving erratically around the crowded shelter as examples of his reckless actions.

"City defendants are not at fault in the actions pled by plaintiff because the death of Mr. Elifritz was the sole and exclusive fault of Mr. Elifritz," the city’s response said.

The Portland Tribune

Protest, counter-protest loom over city

By Zane Sparling

August 15, 2019

Police chief warns of 'political show' in Portland on Saturday as dueling demonstrations are scheduled downtown.

Rising tensions, not-so-veiled threats and a fever of rumors have set the stage for a looming weekend rally in downtown Portland.

As many as 1,000 clashing demonstrators are expected to converge at Tom McCall Waterfront Park and surrounding areas for an unpermitted protest and counter-protest beginning at 10 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 17.

In the buildup, city and law enforcement leaders embarked on a media blitz of podcasts, interviews, opinion columns and online videos, each harmonizing on a single refrain: violence is not welcome in the Rose City.

"Extremists from across the political spectrum have used our city, our home, to commit acts of violence," Mayor Ted Wheeler said. "This is why I continue to empower and direct the Portland Police Bureau to use whatever means necessary — and amass whatever resources necessary — to ensure public safety and to uphold the law."

Police Chief Danielle Outlaw issued a preemptive warning as early as Aug. 2, noting that some prospective attendees were publicly expressing "criminal intentions."

"We're being thrust into this political show," she said. "I want to reassure our community that we have their best interests at heart. And we're doing what we can to assure that our city is safe for all of us."

Members of the City Council and a large coalition of allies from organized labor, religion, civil rights, sports, business and the community at large announced a gathering in Pioneer Courthouse Square at 10 a.m., Wednesday, Aug. 14, for a peace vigil.

The conservative rally, "End Domestic Terrorism," is being organized by Joe Biggs, a Florida veteran who gained notoriety while working for the conspiracy-pedaling site InfoWars. Local liberal counter-protesters — including some who call themselves anti-fascists or antifa — have vowed to challenge that rally.

"We call on the community to defend itself, as it has countless times before," Rose City Antifa wrote online.

The Proud Boys, a men-only fraternity whose members label themselves "Western Chauvinists," also are mobilizing. A leader of the group, Enrique Tarrío, said in a statement that groups of "deranged and unstable" antifa have "run amok for far too long."

"Their days of operating with impunity are over," Tarrío promised.

The tension has increased since a spate of mass shootings across the nation. A 21-year-old armed man, Thomas Bartram, who was briefly detained outside a vigil in El Paso, where 22 people died, later told NBC News he was headed to Portland.

And with the planned brawl a chance to relitigate three years' worth of conflict — most recently the June 29 protest that left the conservative writer Andy Ngo bloodied — it's anyone's guess what acts will ultimately unfold on Saturday.

Portland's crystal ball, much like the City of Roses, remains overcast.

Leaders: No violence at Saturday protests

*By Jim Redden
August 14, 2019*

Mayor Ted Wheeler organizes a coalition that says those planning violence are not welcome at scheduled demonstrations

Mayor Ted Wheeler, other elected leaders, and representatives of nearly 100 organizations and businesses denounced violence at political demonstrations on Wednesday.

During an hour-long morning rally and press conference in Pioneer Square organized by the mayor's office, Wheeler and the others said anyone planning to incite violence at the dueling demonstrations scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 17, are not welcome in Portland.

"This is our city, this is our home, we don't want your violence here," Wheeler said after denouncing what he called a rising national tide of racism and white supremacy.

Also speaking were city commissioners Amanda Fritz and Jo Ann Hardesty, Portland Police Chief Danielle Outlaw, former State Sen. Avel Gordly, State Rep. Janelle Bynum, Multnomah County Commissioner Susheela Jayapal, Metro Council Chair Lynn Peterson, Western States Center Executive Director Eric Ward, Oregon U.S. Attorney Billy Williams, and more.

Although most speakers criticized right wing agitators, Williams said, "We need to call out violent perpetrators on the right and left, and stand up for civility."

The crowd gathered on the steps of the square around 10 a.m. on Aug. 14. The organizations included city agencies, labor unions, universities, civil rights groups and others.

A small group of hecklers associated with the right wing Patriot Prayer group showed up and occasionally shouted denials at the speakers. There were no physical confrontations between the two groups, however.

Far-right activists have announced they will demonstrate against far-left activists, and counter-protests are expected.

The conservative rally, "End Domestic Terrorism," is being organized by Joe Biggs, a Florida veteran who gained notoriety while working for the conspiracy-pedaling site InfoWars. Local liberal counter-protesters — including some who call themselves anti-fascists or antifa — have vowed to challenge that rally.

"We call on the community to defend itself, as it has countless times before," Rose City Antifa wrote online.

The demonstrators will be located between the Morrison and Hawthorne Bridge and 4th Avenue and the Waterfront. Police ask anyone not protesting to avoid the area.

"Public safety is our number one priority for this event and for the entire city," said police spokeswoman Lt. Tina Jones.

Because of the violence that has broken out at previous protests, ever Portland police officer is expected to be working on Saturday.

According to the mayor's office, the following people and representatives of the following organizations were expected to be at the Aug. 14 rally: Portland Timbers; Portland Thorns; U.S. Attorney Office, District of Oregon; Multnomah County Sheriff; Travel Portland; Portland Business Alliance; Venture Portland; Business for a Better Portland; Oregon State Representative Janelle Bynum; former Oregon State Senator Avel Gordly; Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs; Laborers Union; Portland Public Schools; Portland Public Schools Board of Education; Oregon Commission on Black Affairs; Oregon Commission of Hispanic Affairs; Somali American Council of Oregon; Coalition of Communities of Color; Native American Youth and Family Center; Latino Network; Muslim Educational Trust; Chinese American Citizens Alliance; Black Male Achievement; Multnomah County Commission; Multnomah Youth Commission; Portland Office of Government Relations; Portland City Attorney's Office; Portland Office of Equity and Human Rights; Portland Office of Community Technology; Portland Bureau of Emergency Management; Portland Office of Management & Finance; Portland Bureau of Development Services; Portland Office of Community and Civic Life; Portland Police Association; Portland Fire and Rescue' Portland Police Bureau; Portland Water Bureau; Portland Children's Levy; Downtown Portland Clean & Safe; Joint Office of Homeless Services; Word is Bond; Friends of the Children; Unite Oregon; Portland United Against Hate; Portland Parks & Recreation; Pearl District Neighborhood Association; Reed College; Concordia University; Warner Pacific University; Northwest Labor Council; AFSCME; SEIU; IAFF 43; Oregon Federation of Nurses & Health Professionals; Oregon Alliance for Retired Americans; Mayor of Oregon City; Police Chief of Oregon City; AFT Oregon; Leisure Hour Jr. Golf Program; Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc-Omicron Theta Chapter; Weird Portland United; Portland State University; Portland State University Campus Public Safety Office; Portland Saturday Market; Dr. T Allen Bethel; Dr. Steven Holt; Rabbi Michael Cahana; Rev. Katie Larsell; Interfaith Alliance; Western States Center; Parkrose School District; Building Owners and Managers Association of Oregon; IRCO; APANO; Salvation Army; PTE; Building Trades; Portland Bureau of Fire & Police Disability & Retirement; Prosper Portland; Portland Bureau of Planning & Sustainability; Lewis & Clark College; Mayor of Vancouver; Mental Health Association of Portland; Oregon State Senator Lew Frederick; Portland Bureau of Emergency Communications; Portland Bureau of Environmental Services; Oregon Coalition Against Hate Crimes; Mayor's Office of Youth Violence Prevention; Portland Housing Bureau; Portland Bureau of Transportation; City of Portland Auditor's Office; and University of Portland.

Suspect arrested in possible bias crimes

*By KOIN 6 News
August 15, 2019*

UPDATE: Neighbor charged with making Molotov cocktails left outside two homes

Two people found Molotov cocktails in their yards in Southeast Portland this week, prompting a bias crime investigation that resulted in the arrest of a 27-year-old man who lives in the neighborhood.

Jesse David Bennett was arrested by Portland police Wednesday afternoon and booked on two counts of possessing a destructive device and two counts of the unlawful manufacturing of a destructive device.

Court records reveal that Bennett has been arrested before — for identity theft and stalking.

Both Molotov cocktails were found outside separate homes in the 3900 block of Southeast 104th Avenue — one Monday afternoon and the other Tuesday morning.

The victim of the second Molotov cocktail also got text messages from an unfamiliar number saying they were targeted for their sexual orientation.

Before the arrest, a neighbor told KOIN 6 News he is filled with fear not knowing who is behind the actions.

"It's a hate crime thing all that," neighbor Curt Erickson said. "That's unusual for this neighborhood. We know everybody. We all hang. So where does that come from?"

Others say they all know each other and are keeping watch and installing cameras. Some have also put up signs of support for their neighbors.

No one has been injured but police believe there may be more victims and encourage anyone to contact Det. Meredith Hopper at 503-823-3408.

"We recognize that these incidents can generate fear in our community," Chief Danielle Outlaw said in a statement. "These cases are taken seriously and I am proud of Detective Meredith Hopper's resolve and swift apprehension of the suspect."

Willamette Week

An Uneasy Coalition of Civic Leaders Warns the Proud Boys to Stay Out of Portland

*By Aaron Mesh
August 14, 2019*

Several speakers gently chastised the mayor for what they described as language that equated antifascist activists with the right-wing forces they oppose.

Three days before a posse of far-right muscle is expected to descend on Portland, an unprecedented gathering of civic leaders told them to stay out of town.

A coalition of more than 100 elected officials, business owners and social-justice advocates gathered in Pioneer Courthouse Square this morning to affirm Mayor Ted Wheeler's message that political violence wouldn't be tolerated at a rally planned for Aug. 17 by a right-wing men's group called the Proud Boys.

"To any white supremacists who are planning on coming to our community on Aug. 17: You are not welcome here," Wheeler said.

The press conference was the culmination of a full-court press by City Hall in advance of the Proud Boys' visit. In the past week, police arrested three right-wing protesters for the May 1 assault of a woman, and this morning Wheeler appeared on Fox News to repeat his no-tolerance policy for brawls.

But it was an uneasy coalition gathered on the brick steps. Several speakers gently chastised the mayor for what they described as language that equated antifascist activists with the right-wing forces they oppose. At the same time, Police Chief Danielle Outlaw pledged that police would be "neutral" toward demonstrators, not favoring one group over another.

The result was a show of unity with visible cracks: a reflection of larger debates between centrists and leftists about how to respond to white supremacists emboldened by the White House.

Eric Ward, executive director of the Western States Center, spoke this morning even though his nonprofit has been repeatedly critical of Wheeler and police response to right-wing violence.

"I know the danger presented by by far-right paramilitary groups," Ward said. "We won't keep Portland safe with false equivalencies about violence on all sides. We will only truly be safe when good speech drowns out hate."

Noticeably absent from the event was the movement that right-wing protesters describe as their reason for invading Portland: antifascists, or antifa. (A right-wing talk radio host organized the Aug. 17 event as a rally to demand antifascists be classified as domestic terrorists, and he has openly fantasized about physically harming the masked protesters.) Antifascist organizers denounced this morning's press conference before it occurred, saying that calls to stay home on Saturday were misguided and Portlanders should instead join leftist demonstrators in the streets to oppose the Proud Boys.

Mayoral candidate Sarah Iannarone, who is challenging Wheeler from the left, tells WW she'll be peacefully protesting with antifascists on Aug. 17.

"Mayor Wheeler telling people to say 'stay home' on Saturday belies his lack of understanding of and support for the fight for civil and human rights underway in our streets," she said. "I'll be counter-protesting in solidarity with #EverydayAntifascists on Saturday because that's what my community needs and wants from me."

The mayor's office disputed that characterization of its message.

"We've never said for peaceful demonstrators to stay home," says Wheeler's spokeswoman Eileen Park. "Sarah is mischaracterizing the community's message. We've been very clear. To those who plan on committing violence, stay home."

A handful of the people expected to be at Saturday's protests appeared this morning to heckle the officials calling for calm. A leftist protester interrupted Wheeler and Outlaw through their remarks, earning a rebuke from the chief: "This isn't your show today." And right-wing protest organizer Haley Adams, who also yelled objections to the speeches, began walking swiftly toward City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty before being slowed by three men.

Hardesty continued undeterred. "We have right-wing radicals trying to create fear and distrust among others because they don't look like you," she said. "This has been the existence of people of color since we landed in this country."

For a brief moment, the interruptions threatened to overshadow the message of non-violence. But everyone, even the hecklers, hushed for former state Sen. Avel Gordly (D-Portland), the first black woman elected to the Oregon Senate.

"We are not in denial of the white supremacist origins of the state of Oregon," Gordly said. But she rebuked leftists for saying police protect fascists. "We absolutely reject the false narrative that the Portland police have chosen the side of white supremacists," she said. "That is a lie."

Gordly, 72, compared the actions of contemporary protesters unfavorably with the civil-rights marches she led in prior decades. "Owning a part in public safety, that's what we did," she said.

She concluded by asking people in the streets this weekend to recognize each other's humanity.

"I come to you today with a plea," she said. "Let us be more kind with our day-to-day dealings with each other. All we have on this planet—while we still have this planet—is each other."

Mayor Ted Wheeler Cancels Participation in San Francisco Panel on Homelessness Rather than Cross Picket Line

By Nigel Jaquiss
August 14, 2019

Kaiser workers are gearing up for a strike in California as well as the Pacific Northwest.

After imploring Portlanders and out-of-town troublemakers this morning to refrain from violence at a planned Aug. 17 protest, Mayor Ted Wheeler was scheduled to appear tonight in San Francisco as part of a panel on homelessness.

But Politico reports that Wheeler, who is running for re-election next year, joined Oakland Mayor Libby Scharf and San Francisco Mayor London Breed, who all pulled out of a "Solving Homelessness" panel at San Francisco's Commonwealth Club sponsored by Kaiser.

The move came as Kaiser workers in California prepare to walk out.

"Union officials confirmed Monday that Kaiser Permanente employees in California overwhelmingly authorized a strike in October, following a two-week voting period. More than 37,000 union members, or 98 percent, voted in favor of striking, according to SEIU-United Healthcare Workers West," Politico reported.

"Union leaders explicitly asked the mayors to withdraw and they agreed, SEIU-UHW spokesman Sean Wherley told POLITICO, arguing that it was important that elected officials recognize 'the role Kaiser plays in perpetuating income inequality in the Bay Area and across California.'"

Kaiser workers in Oregon and Southwest Washington also voted last week on whether to strike this year. The results of that vote have not yet been released.

Wheeler's spokesman, Tim Becker, confirmed the mayor will miss the San Francisco event.

"The mayor has a firm policy to never cross picket lines," Becker says in an email. "That, coupled with the urgency of the planned protests both played into his decision to cancel the trip to San Francisco."

Portland Developer Suggests Defecating on Mayor's Porch

By Aaron Mesh
August 14, 2019

"People should be bused up to his mansion to pee and poop on his front porch."

A right-wing protester named Haley Adams held a small rally last month in front of Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler's house, complaining he was coddling antifascists. She posted a photo of herself in his front yard on Facebook.

Among the commenters: real estate investor Marty Kehoe, who also expressed frustration with the mayor.

"People should be bused up to his mansion to pee and poop on his front porch," Kehoe wrote July 21. "Then he might understand how the rest of us feel. Maybe then, Ted Weasel would put on his big boy panties and do something for our city."

Kehoe's comment came five days before he donated a 22-acre West Hills property to the Audubon Society of Portland.

Reached by WW this week, Kehoe said he didn't remember leaving the comment, but said he's alarmed by homelessness and drug addiction in the doorways of his downtown properties.

"I own a lot of properties in downtown and I can show you pictures of people shitting and pissing in my doorways," he said. "I have a lot frustration."

Wheeler tells WW he hopes Kehoe will join city efforts to reduce homelessness.

"When he's ready," Wheeler said Tuesday, "I look forward to having Marty Kehoe join other business leaders and community partners who are working with the City in investing and addressing homelessness, public safety, and livability."

The Portland Mercury

Portland Leaders Deliver Unified Message Against Hate Prior to Proud Boy Protest

By Alex Zielinski

August 14, 2019

Nearly one hundred Portland leaders met in Pioneer Courthouse Square this morning to address people intent on spewing hate and throwing punches at a Saturday, August 17 protest.

"We've come here together, united as one, putting aside any differences we may have to send a clear and unifying message," said Mayor Ted Wheeler, who coordinated the morning event. "We stand in opposition to the rising national tide of hate, intolerance, bigotry, and white supremacy."

Wheeler's comments were followed by short speeches by a range of progressive politicians, activists, and business leaders. Some explicitly decried the Proud Boys—the alt-right group behind the weekend demonstration—and others condemned any protesters seeking a fight. But despite their varied phrasing, the group's collective statement against hate was a rare sign of unity in a city that's been splintered by divisive protests.

"We are here to use our words to help our community resist fascism strategically and intelligently," said Avel Gordly, a civil rights leader and former Oregon state legislator. "We are here because our children need to see us in this act of standing together. Our children need to see us acting to protect them in a time of traumatizing fear in this nation."

The planned demonstration, orchestrated by a Florida member of the Proud Boys, is expected to attract far-right extremists and agitators from across the country. Portland leftists, including those who identify as anti-fascists (more commonly known as "antifa"), are planning to counter the Proud Boys' demonstration with their own organized protest. According to Police Chief Danielle Outlaw, every Portland police officer will be working the day of the protest.

Outlaw and Wheeler have both shared concerns that the clash will turn violent, based on past Portland alt-right events and threats of violence already being made on social media.

“It’s extremists from across the political spectrum who come not to demonstrate but to engage in criminal acts of violence and property damage,” said Billy Williams, U.S. Attorney for the State of Oregon, calling these individuals “masked cowards and marauding thugs.”

Eric Ward, director of the Western States Center, pushed back on this so-called “both sides” narrative during his speech.

“There is a right way and wrong way to tackle threats,” Ward said. “We won’t keep Portland safe with false equivalencies about violence on all sides. False equivalencies did not protect Ricky Best or Talesin on the Portland [MAX].”

But, he continued, “I’m not here to blame the mayor or law enforcement. I’m here to hold a mirror to the face of Portland, Oregon. It is time for us to stand up and support our leadership. We are facing a political crisis and it is ineffective and unwise to place the entire burden on city leadership and law enforcement to find a solution.”

Those planning on counter-protesting the Proud Boys event have said the city’s messaging around the coming clash borders on fear-mongering—and has the potential to stifle free speech. At the morning event, only a few speakers openly supported those counter-demonstrators.

“If you are planning to come to protest white supremacy,” said Kayse Jama, director of Unite Oregon. “Bring a picture of someone who inspires you to be a non-violent activist.”

Jama was also the only speaker to identify the dueling groups—Proud Boys and antifa—by name. Like Ward, he argued that comparing the two groups of people to each other was wrong.

“I unequivocally support people who stand up to white supremacists,” said Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty who, frequently organized left-wing demonstrations before entering City Hall. “We can expect everyone to behave with dignity and respect for people who show up to stand firmly against white supremacy.”

Before leaving the podium, Hardesty spoke directly to white nationalists planning on visiting Portland this weekend.

“This is not your city. If you want to be hateful, stay home,” she said. “We don’t want you here, we’ve never wanted you here, and if we find you we will expose you to the light of day.”

Portland Police Investigating Two Possible Anti-LGBTQ+ Bias Crimes

*By Blair Stenvick
August 14, 2019*

Update, 7:15 am Thursday

Last night PPB announced they have arrested Jesse David Bennett, 27, in connection with the case. Bennett lives in the same neighborhood as the victims. He has been charged with two counts of possession of a destructive device, and two counts of unlawful manufacture of a destructive device.

Bennett was previously arrested in 2014 for making violent threats.

"We recognize that these incidents can generate fear in our community," said PPB Chief Danielle Outlaw in a press release. "These cases are taken seriously and I am proud of Detective Meredith Hopper's resolve and swift apprehension of the suspect."

Update, 5:15 pm Wednesday:

PPB has confirmed that they arrested a suspect in this case today. Makus said that she believes the suspect lives in her neighborhood. As of now, PPB is not releasing the suspect's name.

Original story:

Two unlit Molotov cocktails have been found in front of different Portland homes this week—and there's reason to believe that the actions were motivated by anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment.

According to a press release sent Tuesday evening by the Portland Police Bureau (PPB), the unlit Molotov cocktails were found by two homes at the intersection of SE Powell and SE 104th, in the Lents neighborhood. The first was found on Monday, and the second on Tuesday. Both instances were reported to PPB.

Erin Makus, who lives in one of the targeted homes, told the Mercury that her wife discovered the Molotov cocktail on their front lawn on Tuesday morning. (She asked that we not use her wife's name because of privacy concerns.) At first, the weapon looked like a random piece of litter.

"It's not really unusual to find trash in our yard, so she didn't think too much of it," Makus said. "But as she came closer, she realized it had something coming out of the neck of it, a paper towel was shoved in there. So that scared her.... We were a little freaked out, but we didn't want to think too much of it."

Makus reported it to the police, who initially said there was little PPB could do about the matter. But just 10 minutes after a PPB officer left their home, Makus' wife received text messages from an unfamiliar number. The texts referenced a rainbow flag, which the couple has flown outside their home for the past four summers.

"I dislike your type and the rainbow flag you displayed on the street too," the messages read. "Anyway I left something in your front yard like I did with some other people in their yards during the past few days. It's about my feelings on your culture. On the edge of your yard. Enjoy!"

The person sending the text messages included both the couples' first names, and referenced the line of work Makus' wife is in. Makus suspects the sender researched their address and found that her wife's business was registered under it.

The couple contacted PPB again, and officers again visited their home and spent a couple hours Tuesday afternoon interviewing them and their neighbors. It was then that the couple learned a neighbor of theirs had also been targeted on Monday, though that neighbor does not have any LGBTQ+ symbols outside their home and did not receive any strange text messages.

PPB is investigating both cases as possible bias crimes, and has declined to share the police reports from these incidents with the Mercury because they are part of an ongoing investigation.

Makus said that she doesn't think the person who left the Molotov cocktails intended to cause physical harm—as they were both unlit—but that she suspects it was "a jerk trying to intimidate, trying to make us feel bad for who we are."

"We are feeling some fear and anxiety," she added. "It's unsettling, especially if it ends up being someone sort of nearby us—to me, that's the worst-case scenario."

This isn't the first time this year that possible anti-LGBTQ bias crimes have occurred in Portland. In February, a rumors of multiple anti-LGBTQ+ attacks circulated on social media and put Portland's queer community on edge. Makus posted about finding the Molotov cocktail both

on Nextdoor and on her personal social media pages, but said that there is a “tough balance between wanting to alert the community, and not causing harm.”

“I know when you make a post about something happening, it gives people a lot of fear and anxiety,” she added. “We weren’t sure if we should put it out there or not, but ultimately we wanted the queer community to be aware of it.”

Police investigators believe there may be other victims, and ask that they call PPB’s emergency line at 503-823-3333. People with additional information, including surveillance video of the incidents, are asked to call the detective working the case at 503-823-3408.

“I think we both hope the detectives make some progress,” Makus said, “so we can get some peace of mind.”

The Portland Business Journal

Downtown rally denounces violence, hatred ahead of Saturday demonstrations

By Hannah Sievert

August 14, 2019

On Wednesday morning, a coalition of business leaders, activists, residents and city leaders gathered in Pioneer Courthouse Square to publicly denounce any violence at a rally planned for this Saturday on the Portland Waterfront.

The coalition, made up of over 100 people, stood together on the steps of the square, with some holding letters that spelled out the phrase “Our City Our Home.”

During the morning gathering, several business and city leaders, including Mayor Ted Wheeler, Police Chief Danielle Outlaw, U.S. Attorney Billy Williams and Portland Timbers' Joey Webber, spoke out against violence and discrimination.

“To those of you who plan on using Portland on Aug. 17 as a platform to spread your hate, you are not welcome here,” Wheeler said. “To those who promote violence during otherwise peaceful demonstrations, you are not welcome here. To those who perpetrate racism, sexism, bigotry, you are not welcome here. And to any white supremacists who are planning on coming to our community on Aug. 17, you are not welcome here.”

Several of the speakers mentioned they'd never seen such a large coalition come together in a call for peace.

“This is the first time I’ve seen such an amazing coalition of people come together,” Outlaw said. “Thank you for coming forward and stepping up to say we will not tolerate violence.”

The coalition of people was organized in response to the “End Domestic Terrorism” rally that right-wing activists, including Proud Boys, from across the country have planned for this Saturday. The rally is a show of force against anti-fascists, or antifa.

Rose City Antifa, Portland’s group of anti-facist activists, has called on supporters to come to the rally in response and “defend the city” against the right-wing groups.

City officials and police have sought to show a strong front condemning any violence that might take place. Almost all of Portland's nearly 1,000 police officers will be on patrol on Saturday, and Portland will get help from Oregon State Police and the FBI.

At the Wednesday gathering, Outlaw said that Portland Police leaders have met with state and federal partners to create a plan to ensure the community is safe. She emphasized that the police's focus on Saturday would be preventing violence, not favoring sides.

"Our bureaus are well-trained and they are neutral," she said. "They focus on behaviors, not sides."

While the police prepare for Saturday, several local businesses have had to prepare for the weekend, too.

Terrapin Events has moved its Roses on the River 5K walk and run from the west side of the river to the east side. And at least one Starbucks in the area has planned to close on Saturday.

Kells Irish Pub had planned to host its annual exhibition amateur boxing match, called the Summer Smoker, in their back parking lot on Saturday afternoon.

The event raises money for local charities and draws in more than 400 people per year, but with the pub only a block away from the Waterfront, Kells owners Gerard and Lucy McAleese didn't want to risk patron safety. They canceled the event and refunded tickets.

"We just didn't want to put anyone at risk," Lucy McAleese said. "The bottom line is that people come first and profits come later."

While Portland streetcars will still be in operation on Saturday, the Portland Streetcar Scavenger Hunt originally scheduled for this weekend has been postponed, according to Dan Bower, executive director of Portland Streetcar Inc.

Bower said they'll be on standby with the Portland Police on Saturday to hear if they need to change regularly scheduled routes or shut down operations in some areas.

"We were going to be low on staff that weekend anyway, so the added uncertainty of the day made the decision obvious," Bower said. "If we can take a variable out of the day that's totally in our control, that seems like the right move right now."

The Portland Observer

Police Brace for Clash of Protests

August 14, 2019

History with hate groups adds to dynamic

Portland police are mobilizing to prevent clashes between out-of-state far-right groups planning a rally for downtown Saturday and the homegrown anti-fascists who oppose them.

The rally — and the violence it may bring — are a relatively new reality for police, as an informal coalition of white nationalists, white supremacists and extreme-right militias hones its focus on Portland as a stand-in for everything it feels is wrong with the U.S. At the top of that list are the masked and black-clad anti-fascists who turn out to violently oppose right-wing demonstrators as soon as they set foot in town.

"It's Portlandia, and in the public mind it represents everything these (far-right) groups are against," said Heidi Beirich, director of the Intelligence Project at the Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks hate groups. "It's progressive, and even more offensive to them, it's progressive white people who should be on these guys' side."

The groups know they will get a headline-grabbing reaction from Portland's so-called "antifa," whose members have issued an online call to their followers to turn out to "defend Portland from a far-Right attack." Portland's Rose City Antifa, the nation's oldest active anti-fascist group, says violence against right-wing demonstrators is "exactly what should happen when the far-right attempts to invade our town."

Portland leaders are planning a major law enforcement presence on the heels of similar rallies in June and last summer that turned violent, and the recent hate-driven shooting in El Paso, Texas. None of the city's nearly 1,000 police officers will have the day off, and Portland will get help from the Oregon State Police and the FBI. Mayor Ted Wheeler has said he may ask Gov. Kate Brown, a Democrat, to call up the Oregon National Guard.

"There's no winning for the cops in a situation like this. There just isn't," Beirich said. "This is hard-core stuff, and I don't think you can be too cautious."

Experts who track right-wing militias and hate groups warn that the mix of people heading to Portland also came together for a Unite the Right rally in 2017 in Charlottesville, Va., which ended when a participant rammed his car into a crowd of counter protesters, killing one person and injuring 19.

The rally is being organized by a member of the Proud Boys, who have been designated by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a hate group. Others expected include members of the American Guard, the Three Percenters, the Oathkeepers and the Daily Stormers. American Guard is a white nationalist group, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, while the Three Percenters and the Oathkeepers are extremist anti-government militias. The Daily Stormers are neo-Nazis, according to the center.

Portland's fraught history with hate groups adds to the complex dynamic.

Many of today's anti-fascists trace their activist heritage to a group that battled with neo-Nazis in Portland's streets decades ago, and they feel this is the same struggle in a new era, said Randy Blazak, the leading expert on the history of hate groups in Oregon.

White supremacists murdered an Ethiopian man, Mulugeta Seraw, in Portland in 1988. And by the 1990s, Portland was known as Skinhead City because it was the home base of Volksfront, at the time one of the most active neo-Nazi groups in the U.S. As recently as 2007, neo-Nazis attempted to gather in Portland for a three-day skinhead festival.

"When I'm looking at what's happening right now, for me it's a direct line back to the 1980s: the battles between the racist skinheads and the anti-racist skinheads," Blazak said. "It's the latest version of this thing that's been going on for 30 years in this city."

Police, meanwhile, have seemed overwhelmed by the cultural forces at war in their streets.

At the June rally, masked antifa members beat up a conservative blogger named Andy Ngo. Video of the 30-second attack grabbed national attention and further turned the focus on Portland as a new battleground in a divisive America.

Republican Sens. Ted Cruz, of Texas, and Bill Cassidy, of Louisiana, introduced a congressional resolution calling for anti-fascists to be declared domestic terrorists, and President Donald Trump echoed that theme in a tweet last month. Portland's City Hall has been evacuated twice

due to bomb threats after the June 29 skirmishes, and Wheeler, the mayor, has been pilloried by critics who incorrectly said he told police to stand down while anti-fascists went after right-wing demonstrators.

"I don't want for one minute anyone to think that because we're being thrust into this political show, that I or the public have lost confidence in (police officers') ability to do what we do," said Police Chief Danielle Outlaw, who is regularly heckled as she leaves City Hall by those who feel the police target counter protesters for arrest over far-right demonstrators.

Police have noted the violence in June was limited to a small area of downtown Portland despite three different demonstrations that lasted more than five hours, with hundreds of people constantly on the move. They also made two arrests last week in a May Day assault on an antifa member that became a rallying cry for the city's far-left.

"We'll be ready for the 17th here in little Portland, Oregon," Wheeler, the mayor, told The Associated Press. "But at the end of the day, the bigger question is about our nation's moral compass and which direction it's pointing."

Blazak, the Oregon hate groups expert, said he worries the extreme response from a small group of counter protesters is starting to backfire. Many in the city oppose the right-wing rallies but also dislike the violent response of antifa, which provides social media fodder for the far-right.

"The opposition is playing right into the alt-right's hands by engaging with them this way," he said.

OPB

Portland Community Groups, Mayor: White Supremacists Are Not Welcome Here

*By Amelia Templeton
August 14, 2019*

For the past two years, Portland Police Chief Danielle Outlaw and Mayor Ted Wheeler have been on the defensive when it comes to their handling of the persistent political violence between out-of town far-right groups and local antifa.

But Wednesday, they went on offense.

More than 50 community organizations, unions, business groups, local politicians and a few beloved city icons including Timber Jimmy Storm Large, and the Unipiper joined Wheeler and Outlaw at a rally in Pioneer Courthouse Square.

They stood for an hour in the hot sun to show support for the city and condemn white supremacy as Portland braces for a demonstration on Saturday.

Wheeler kept his message simple.

"To those of you who plan on using Portland on Aug. 17 as a platform to spread your hate, you are not welcome here. To those who promote violence during otherwise peaceful demonstrations, you are not welcome here," Wheeler said.

"And to any white supremacists who plan on coming to our community on Aug. 17, you are not welcome here."

Many high profile members of Portland's law enforcement community stood alongside some of their sharpest critics and political opponents. Billy Williams, the U.S. attorney for Oregon, spoke, as did City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, who butted heads with Williams when she pulled the city out of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force.

Portland Police Association president Daryl Turner, who has repeatedly clashed with the mayor in the past, stood several rows behind him.

Shortly after Outlaw took the microphone and said the city's reputation has been tainted by a few individuals with a violent agenda, a woman in the crowd began to yell in opposition.

"This isn't your show today," Outlaw responded, and calmly continued with her speech.

The event was an attempt to "denounce violence of all forms," according to a press release from the mayor's office.

But for many of the speakers, it was also a rebuke to an unrealistic portrayal of the city, particularly in conservative media, as a place where police and the mayor tolerate violence and antifa attacks conservatives with impunity.

"It is time for us to stand up and support our leadership," said Eric Ward, executive director of the Western States Center. "We are facing a political crisis, and it is ineffective and unwise to place the entire burden on city leadership and law enforcement to find a solution."

While Outlaw and Wheeler were careful to avoid mentioning any groups by name and steered clear of any partisan political messages, the community speakers explicitly called out groups they said have fueled the cycle of violence in the city.

"We reject the puppet administration of hate and chaos in Washington, D.C., and the plague of fear unleashed upon the land," said Avel Gordley, a former Oregon Democratic state senator and longtime civil rights leader.

A former staffer for the conspiracy theory website Infowars is organizing the gathering along with members of the Proud Boys, a far-right group that attracts white supremacists and has engaged in violence. Some III Percenters militia members from Oregon and Washington have also said they will participate.

"White supremacy. That is the problem we're dealing with," said Kayse Jama, a Somali immigrant who directs the advocacy group Unite Oregon. "I do not agree with antifa's tactics, but they are not equal to the Proud Boys and III Percenters. These are well-trained, armed militia, and we have to deal with it."

The groups have vowed to "end antifa" after an independent journalist, Andy Ngo, was badly beaten and hit in the head at a rally in Portland on June 29 by several masked demonstrators. Ngo has made his career writing and shooting video, often featuring antifa, for conservative outlets.

Multiple groups are planning counter-protests, including Rose City Antifa. The group espouses "direct action" against people it identifies as fascists, ranging from publishing their identities online to fighting with them in the streets.

With the country on edge after two mass shootings, Wheeler and Outlaw have repeatedly warned the dueling demonstrations have the potential to turn violent and have said they are particularly concerned about people who intend to bring weapons to the event

None of Saturday's demonstrations have been permitted with the city.

Wheeler personally became a target of criticism and vitriol after the last protest, much of it based on allegations by conservatives, that he hasn't allowed officers to be aggressive enough in their tactics against antifa. Wheeler and Outlaw have repeatedly said the mayor isn't involved in tactical decisions.

The Portland Police Bureau is encouraging residents to avoid Saturday's rallies and to enjoy the day as they normally would.

"The demonstrations will be impacting a very small area of Portland," Outlaw said in a news release. "I encourage everyone to enjoy what will likely be a beautiful day engaging in fun activities at a number of community events."

The Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) Tuesday advised people to expect a number of road closures downtown for the demonstrations.

PBOT stated that the public should avoid the area from Southwest Madison Street to Southwest Alder Street and from Southwest Fourth Avenue to Waterfront Park Saturday from 11 a.m. into the afternoon.

The bureau also encouraged Portlanders to take part in other community activities such as the Portland Thorns game at Providence Park.

Some events that were scheduled in the area have been relocated due to the demonstrations such as the Roses on the River 5k Run and Walk, which was originally scheduled at Waterfront Park and is now taking place at the Eastbank Esplanade.

Kells Irish Pub also canceled the Summer Smoker, a live amateur exhibition boxing match that was scheduled for Saturday and is refunding hundreds of tickets it sold ahead of time.

The owner, Gerald McAleese, is an immigrant from Northern Ireland who became a U.S. citizen this year. He was worried about the safety of his staff and patrons.