

The Oregonian

Portland mayor: Right-wing demonstrators could not articulate purpose, showed ‘ultimate cynicism’

August 19, 2019

By Shane Dixon Kavanaugh

[Portland mayor says city kept protests non-violent, accused Proud Boys of ‘ultimate cynicism’](#)

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler on Monday suggested it could be hard to replicate the city’s full-scale push Saturday to curtail chaos during rival downtown demonstrations, even as right-wing activists from out of state threatened to return soon.

“Clearly sustaining the kind of investments we made are going to be difficult,” he told The Oregonian/OregonLive in an interview at City Hall.

But the mayor also expressed skepticism whether outside agitators — who have repeatedly targeted Portland for its progressive self-image as well as its bands of militant leftists — would make another strong appearance.

“I don’t know if they’ll come here again or not,” he said, speaking of the group who organized the weekend’s right-wing rally. “Honestly, the Proud Boys could not articulate why they were here.”

Wheeler’s remarks came two days after a tense but relatively uneventful face-off in Oregon’s largest city between opposing political factions.

The heavily policed event, with very little violence or drama between the opposing sides or with police, marked the first such confrontation in nearly three years that ended in a victory for city officials.

The Proud Boys, who describe themselves as “patriots” and “Western chauvinists,” and their supporters converged on the city’s waterfront to condemn anti-fascists, or antifa, and push to have the left-wing activists labeled as “domestic terrorists.”

Counter-protesters ranging from black-clad anarchists to people in banana costumes turned out to oppose them, claiming they promote racism, bigotry and violence.

Despite a few skirmishes, no major bloody brawls or riots broke out in the streets, as happened during protests past. Police largely refrained from clashing with counter-protesters or deploying less-lethal munitions into crowds of left-wing activists that roamed downtown after the Proud Boys wrapped up their rally.

“We planned for the worst,” Wheeler said. “Fortunately, on the whole, it was a non-violent day.”

But the efforts made by the city and its police force to keep the peace were unprecedented.

The Portland Police Bureau drew on local, state and federal law enforcement to provide 700 officers for the day, more than one cop for every two of the estimated 1,200 protest participants. City officials spent weeks on preparation and logistics.

All told, Wheeler said he estimates taxpayers will be on the hook for millions of dollars.

Those costs do not include the impact that a day of disruption had on downtown during the height of summer tourism. Multiple businesses closed and employees stayed home. Events were cancelled.

“They lost money. That hurts them. And that hurts their families,” said Wheeler, who added that the city planned to lead a public push to support downtown businesses this weekend.

In the interview, the mayor once again argued his belief that Oregon’s liberal free speech laws prevent him from keeping people from showing up in Portland to exercise their First Amendment rights — regardless of the costs or consequences.

He also brushed aside ongoing criticisms from the left and right that the city and police favors their political opponents. “Everybody feels like their side is being held more accountable than others,” the mayor said.

Wheeler, however, did accuse organizers of Saturday’s right-wing rally of intentionally attempting to disrupt the city and inflict financial harm on businesses and taxpayers.

“That’s not really an articulated political message,” he said. “That’s just menacing.”

One of the right-wing demonstration’s main organizers, Joe Biggs, a Florida resident and former staffer for the right-wing conspiracy website InfoWars, did not respond to a request for comment.

But Biggs and a few of his fellow Proud Boys did release a video Sunday that poked fun at the mayor, lashed out at antifa and promised they’d be back.

“Thanks for footing the bill on our \$2 million weekend in Portland,” said Biggs, who was splayed on a backyard trampoline and wearing swimming trunks. “We came in here and exposed you and your criminal element and we’ll continue to do so until you’re fired.”

Wheeler, in response, sounded a little nonplussed.

“Who does that?” the mayor said. “I think it’s the ultimate cynicism. I think it speaks to the character of the man.”

The Mercury

The Proud Boys Came to Portland and Are Threatening to Return. Now What?

August 19, 2019

By Alex Zielinski

The protests that drew hundreds of far-right agitators, anti-fascist protesters, and armored police officers to Portland’s waterfront Saturday, August 17, attracted far less violence and mayhem than predicted.

In the hours following the highly-anticipated protest, Portland leaders, law enforcement, and the

public let out a collective sigh of relief.

But the conflict that's made Portland a playing field for bigoted extremists isn't over.

Those behind the initial protest—the Proud Boys, a national far-right organization with white supremacist ties—have threatened to return to Portland unless the city takes an authoritarian stand against its liberal residents. The city's growing community that identifies as anti-fascists, meanwhile, are calling on law enforcement to do more to protect Portlanders from alt-right interlopers. Some are taking legal steps to make that happen.

As the dust settles from Saturday's expansive demonstrations, Portlanders want to know: Now what?

Around 200 Proud Boys descended on Portland Saturday to decry protesters who identify as anti-fascist—colloquially called “antifa.” Joe Biggs, the Florida-based Proud Boy who arranged the protest, seems to believe that antifa has turned Portland into a lawless, progressive “anarcho state,” and calls them “domestic terrorists.”

Saturday's counter-protest was orchestrated by an activist group called Popular Mobilization, or PopMob. PopMob encouraged participants to dress in colorful costumes, play instruments, and generally emulate what it means to “keep Portland weird” to counter the Proud Boys' hateful rhetoric.

The Proud Boys briefly met at Tom McCall Waterfront Park around 11 am, encircled by hundreds of armored law enforcement officers. On the other side of the police line, nearly one thousand counter-protesters—some dressed in silly costumes, others in all black—gathered to condemn the presence of an identified hate group in their city.

“Instead of hiding in fear alone in our homes, we chose a joyful display of community resilience — a reminder of the power we have when we come together,” wrote PopMob spokesperson Effie Baum in a Sunday press release.

After a half hour, the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) allowed the Proud Boys to march over the Hawthorne Bridge to the east side of the Willamette River, where many had parked their vehicles. Until that point, PPB had closed the bridge to any vehicle or pedestrian traffic. According to PPB, this decision was made to keep counter-protesters safe and expedite the Proud Boys' departure.

But for anyone who watched the swarm of men—wearing “Make America Great Again” hats and shirts advocating for violence against LGBTQ+ people and Muslims—cheering as they took the Hawthorne Bridge completely unopposed, PPB's decision felt more like an endorsement.

Most of the Proud Boys retreated to Vancouver after posing for a group photo on the Eastbank Esplanade. But some of the group's far-right allies remained near the city center. Many of them appeared to seek out confrontation and fist fights with members of the public, regardless of whether or not they were part of the counter-protest.

In PopMob's press release, Baum condemned the PPB for "jeopardizing the safety of our city" by granting the Proud Boys access to the Hawthorne Bridge.

"It is outrageous that the Portland Police Bureau bends over backwards to accommodate violent, out of town extremists like the Proud Boys again and again, while leaving Portlanders vulnerable to attack," Baum said.

By 3 pm, the Proud Boys had claimed victory in a press release.

"The gathering was never about bringing carnage or violence to the City of Portland, it was about financially crippling the progressive hotbed until they take action against antifa," read the release, which was emailed to elected city officials and reporters. Since the city claimed to have spent millions on preparing for and staffing the protest, the Proud Boys said, the visit was a success.

And then, a threat: According the press release, the Proud Boys will return to march in Portland every month until Mayor Ted Wheeler "removes" anti-fascists from the city.

"The path forward for Mayor Wheeler is simple, free your city from the grip of antifa, take direct and meaningful action," said Biggs in the press release. "Otherwise, the citizens will grow weary of you wasting tax dollars and the time of first-responders with your ridiculous political posturing."

In a press conference later in the evening, Wheeler further confirmed the Proud Boys' financial impact.

"These kinds of demonstrations cost millions of dollars," Wheeler said. "They are misusing public taxpayer resources, and I hope they think about that."

It's not just public funds that were hurt by the Proud Boys' visit. According to the Portland Business Alliance, downtown businesses have estimated the protest cost them nearly \$3 million in lost revenue.

On Monday, the *Mercury* asked Wheeler's office how the city will keep the Proud Boys from draining city funds in the future. In a statement emailed to the *Mercury*, Wheeler said: "I have one clear message to anyone who says they're going to continue wasting the city's resources over and over again: Stop wasting our time. Stop wasting taxpayer dollars. Stop hurting our businesses. We have a city to run and lives to lead."

It's still unclear if the city will take further action to keep the Proud Boys at bay.

PopMob has pledged that, if the Proud Boys return next month, they will be greeted by an even larger group of anti-fascists.

"If [Saturday] showed us anything, it's that when we come together as a strong, united

community, we can hold down our public space and keep it safe from fascists,” PopMob’s Baum said. “The state does not protect us, we protect us.”

Attorney Juan Chavez, however, is hoping to use the state’s tools to shield Portland from these future visits.

Chavez, who works for the Oregon Justice Resource Center (OJRC), filed a lawsuit against the Proud Boys’ Biggs and other members of the far-right group on August 17 on behalf of Luis Marquez, a member of Portland’s anti-facist community. According to the lawsuit, Marquez received multiple death threats from people associated with the Proud Boys leading up to the August 17 protest. Marquez’s lawsuit accuses the group of defamation, false light, intentional infliction of emotional distress, and negligence.

Chavez is intending on filing a preliminary injunction this week, which would request a judge bar members of the Proud Boys from convening in Portland with any type of weapon with the intention to inflict violence.

“The Proud Boys are organizing in a manner to commit violence, which is not protected speech. We have laws on unlawful behavior,” Chavez told the *Mercury*. “We’re simply restricting defendants from organizing a lynch mob.”

But, Chavez noted, he’s not the only one who can use the courts to keep right-wing extremists out of Portland.

“Mr. Marquez is just one person in this town,” says Chavez. “Meanwhile, we have a city government that could also seek an injunction with damages... Will they take action?”

With the threat of ongoing visits from a hate group intent on wasting the city's dollars, the public's waiting for an answer.

The Skanner

Far-Right and Antifa Groups Both Claim Victory at Portland

August 19, 2019

By Gillian Flaccus, Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — With both the left and the right declaring victory following a long-hyped rally that had Portland, Oregon, on edge it seems the liberal city will continue to be a flashpoint in an increasingly divided country.

City officials were mostly relieved that a downtown gathering Saturday of more than 1,000 far-right protesters and anti-fascist counter-demonstrators wasn’t as violent as feared.

“I’m grateful this was largely a peaceful event,” Mayor Ted Wheeler said. “We were preparing for and planning for a worst-case scenario.”

There were 13 arrests and police seized bear spray, shields, poles and other weapons. But by using barriers and bridge closures — and allowing a large contingent of right-wingers to leave when they asked to — authorities were able to mostly keep the two sides apart. Six minor injuries were reported.

Joe Biggs, the organizer of the right-wing gathering that featured the Proud Boys, Patriot Prayer and other far-right groups, said they accomplished their goal of drawing attention to black-clad anti-fascist protesters — known as antifa — who showed up to meet them.

‘Organization of Terror’

President Donald Trump tweeted early Saturday that “major consideration is being given to naming ANTIFA an ‘ORGANIZATION of TERROR.’” It wasn’t immediately clear what he meant by that because there’s no mechanism for the United States government to declare a domestic organization a terror group.

Biggs told The Oregonian/OregonLive he was pleased the rally attracted Trump’s attention.

“He talked about Portland, said he’s watching antifa. That’s all we wanted,” he said.

Biggs said he and the right-wing groups would keep coming back to Portland so long as antifa was around.

But Eric K. Ward, executive director of the Portland-based Western States Center, said the right-wing rally was a bust.

“Portland won today, and far-right leaders like Joey Gibson and Joe Biggs lost,” Ward said in a statement.

The Western States Center stated mission is to increase inclusive democracy.

In an interview, Ward said Biggs’ groups cut short a planned five-hour rally after only one hour and left.

“The white nationalist, alt-right coalition that came to Portland were denied what they sought to create, which was large-scale civil disturbances,” Ward said.

While antifa protesters get a lot of attention, Ward said there were many others who came out to oppose the right-wing groups. He also praised police and city officials for their actions.

“What I saw yesterday was the first step in Portland really putting together a citywide response,” he said.

Wheeler, Portland's mayor, said at a Saturday evening news conference that Biggs and anyone espousing hate or violence was not welcome.

"We do not want him here in my city. Period," Wheeler said.

Rising White Nationalism

Wheeler tied the demonstrations to "a rising white nationalist movement" and a growing sense of fear in the country.

"Portland being a very progressive community is always going to be at or near ground zero of this battle."

Wheeler emphasized that there are hundreds of protests every year in Portland, and most don't get any attention.

The latest rally began late Saturday morning. Flag-waving members of the Proud Boys, Three Percenters militia group and others gathered downtown, some wearing body armor and helmets like the antifa protesters.

More than two dozen local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, including the FBI, were in the city for the right-wing rally.

As of early afternoon, most of the right-wing groups had left the area. But hundreds of people remained downtown and on nearby streets, and there were tense skirmishes, mostly with antifa protesters who were trying to find right-wing rallyers, throughout the day.

Gibson Surrenders

Patriot Prayer's Gibson, who organized similar rallies in 2017 and 2018 that erupted in clashes, surrendered Friday on an arrest warrant for felony rioting. He was at a confrontation that broke out on May 1 outside a bar where antifa members had gathered after a May Day demonstration.

In a video he livestreamed on Facebook, Gibson accused the police of playing politics by arresting him but not the masked demonstrators who beat up conservative blogger Andy Ngo at a June 29 rally that drew national attention.

A video of that attack went viral and led the Proud Boys, who have been designated a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, to organize Saturday's event.

Gibson was also at Saturday's rally.

Ward said even if right-wing groups return to Portland he is confident in the community's ability to turn out and stay true to its values.

"The tables have really turned in a significant way," he said.