

The Oregonian

Amid public cries of racism and police brutality, Portland police chief and community leaders address arrests of 2 teens

By Aimee Green
September 24, 2019

As some parents, teens and an organizer continued to criticize the arrests of two 17-year-old boys at last week's student climate protest, Portland's police chief on Tuesday promised a review while reminding youths "to be aware the law applies to everyone."

Officers yanked the boys from a crowd and pinned them to the pavement in front of scores of teenage lookers Friday. The scene was caught on video viewed by more than 1 million people, and drew condemnation that the arrests undermined trust in police among youths and minority communities.

The boys are students and athletes at Cleveland High School, friends of the family said. They didn't respond to interview requests that The Oregonian/OregonLive asked friends to relay. One boy was African American and the other was white.

No court dates have been set in the case, and juvenile authorities have yet to make a decision about whether to prosecute the teens on allegations of disorderly conduct and interfering with police. Prosecutors could decide to pursue charges in juvenile court or could informally handle the cases by connecting the teens to resources and support.

350PDX, the environmental climate group that helped organize Friday's Climate Strike Rally, said it recognized that the viral Twitter video of police moving in on the African American youth could traumatize the African American community. The group denounced what it described as "police brutality and white supremacy in all its forms."

The demonstration drew thousands to its permitted rally in downtown Portland and march across the Hawthorne Bridge.

"We sincerely apologize to our black and brown community members who were unsafe or felt unsafe at the Climate Strike Rally," 350PDX wrote on its website. The group said it's working to support the two students by providing legal and financial support to them.

The group pledged a list of responses at future demonstrations, including training its volunteers in how to better intervene to "interrupt police violence with nonviolence" and to ensure "that white folks are at the front of any action in which police are present, keeping those folks of color protected within the crowd."

Mayor Ted Wheeler declined to speak to The Oregonian/OregonLive. His staff said his schedule was booked weeks in advance.

"We are aware of the incident and have been in touch with the Police Bureau regarding it," said spokeswoman Eileen Park. "We are waiting to learn the results of their thorough review."

Police Chief Danielle Outlaw didn't address concerns of racism in a statement released by the Police Bureau. But she did say that "a few individuals" acted in ways that "warranted law enforcement action."

“It is important for youth to be aware the law applies to everyone, which is why we communicated with event organizers prior to and during the event with our liaisons and with public messaging,” her statement said.

Outlaw said the Police Bureau, like with any event, will review what happened to determine “what went well and what can be improved upon for future events.”

She said the bureau values “our relationships with young people and I am very proud and thankful to the thousands of youth who participated in the event on Friday in a peaceful and safe manner.”

Climate protest participants, including those from Cleveland, told The Oregonian/OregonLive that the crowd was peaceful and police acted too aggressively. The 27-second video showed several officers quickly working their way past mostly white teenagers and toward two African American teens – including the one who was arrested.

Portland City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty said the officers “unnecessarily escalated a situation by pushing through a crowd of youth to single out two youth of color.”

Police dragged one of them away and arrested him on allegations that he had previously defied orders to stop leaning into traffic and endangering himself and drivers. In an interaction also caught on video, he and officers tussled earlier while he stood on a metal divider in the middle of the Hawthorne Bridge. Police said they waited until the teen was in a safer location, on the bridge’s east side, to arrest him.

A moment later, police also arrested the white teen, who they say interfered as they tried to take the black teen into custody. Video taken by The Oregonian/OregonLive shows police knocking the second teen to the pavement of a traffic lane and one of his shoes falling off.

Social media over the weekend exploded with angry comments directed at police.

“Every encounter with the public is an opportunity to build community trust, yet this is how these officers chose to interact with children peacefully engaging in direct action,” Hardesty said on her Facebook and Twitter pages.

In a Tuesday news release, police addressed complaints made by some community members that officers on Aug. 17 escorted right-wing protesters across the Hawthorne Bridge, which was closed to traffic. Critics have asked why police didn’t do the same for the young climate protesters.

The bureau said on Aug. 17, officers anticipated a large crowd and the possibility of violence with members of opposing protest groups converging along the waterfront, so they worked with Multnomah County and others to close the bridge “for a number of public safety reasons.”

When a right-wing group asked to be escorted across the bridge to leave, an incident commander agreed in order “to de-escalate the situation” and to “decrease the opportunity for physical clashes,” police said in the news release.

The bureau didn’t plan ahead of time to close the bridge for the climate protest because estimates hadn’t anticipated such a large crowd, police said. An incident commander that day authorized a shut down of the outer eastbound lane of the bridge to accommodate the crowd, but there “were not enough resources to conduct a full bridge closure,” the news release said.

“Thousands of participants crossed safely without engaging in dangerous or criminal activity in the process,” the news release said. “A few individuals were engaged in dangerous activity and were given repeated orders to stop. All but one of these subjects complied.”

Police said in the news release that the public can send comments about police officers' actions to the city's Independent Police Review division by going to <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/ipr/> or calling 503-823-0146.

The Portland Tribune

Council to appoint first five Clean Energy Fund committee members

*By Jim Redden
September 25, 2019*

Program approved by voters at the November 2018 election moving forward despite questions about it impacting more businesses than expected

The City Council is scheduled to appoint the first five members of the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund Committee on Wednesday, Sept. 25.

The committee will help administer the fund that was approved by city voters at the November 2018 general election. It is anticipated to raise between \$45 million and \$71 million through a 1% city business license tax increase on large retailers doing business in Portland. The funds are to be spent on clean energy projects that primarily benefit marginalized communities.

Although it was approved by 85% of voters, the fund has proved controversial after the city ruled it applies to more types of businesses than supporters said during the campaign, including garbage collection companies, which are raising their fees to pay it. As first reported by Willamette Week, the National Retail Federation has funded legal research into whether the fund can be challenged in state or federal court for violating the commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution, which limits states' authority to regulate business conducted across state lines.

The Portland Business Alliance, which opposed the measure, is staying neutral on the idea of such a challenge while seeking exemptions to the increase for certain kinds of businesses.

Once confirmed, the five committee members will nominate four others to be confirmed by the council on the board. After all nine positions have been filled, the committee will reviewing applications for funding and awarding grants for community clean energy projects. It will also maintain a public website of information on the committee's activities, membership, and policies.

Each council member has nominated a member to be confirmed Wednesday afternoon. The council members and their nominees are:

Mayor Ted Wheeler: Maria Gabrielle Sipin, a professional transportation planner, public health professional, and community health advocate with extensive experience working with low-income communities of color, people experiencing homelessness, and LGBTQ youth in clinical and community settings on mental health services, transportation access, and housing.

Commissioner Amanda Fritz: Dr. Megan Horst, an Assistant Professor in the school of Urban Studies & Planning, Portland State University. She brings substantial urban agriculture and local food systems expertise that is recognized both locally and nationally. Ms. Horst also brings a strong equity lens and experience in food justice work.

Commissioner Nick Fish: Michael David Edden Hill, a journeyman electrician who, in addition to experience in wind power design and deployment, also brings experience in construction

management on one of the largest solar photo voltaic systems in the country. Edden Hill has a solid understanding of informal support ecosystem necessary to support paths through pre/apprenticeship programs.

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty: Shanice Brittany Clarke, the Director of Community Engagement at Portland Public Schools. She brings deep community engagement experience having worked directly with 75 to 100 community organizations annually that serve Portland's diverse communities. In addition, Clark is also a national delegate on the Climate Justice Alliance and currently sits on the boards of OPAL Environmental Justice and the Coalition for Women's Identities.

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly: Robin Wang, a seasoned business, nonprofit, and community leader that with a passion for deploying capital to benefit underbanked communities. As a former owner of a small business focused on sustainable living, he brings a wealth of expertise in both sustainability and small business operation. Wang is also the executive Director of a local community development financial institution and volunteers on several boards.

[You can read the council materials about the fund and nominees here.](#)

Sources: Wheeler takes heat for Climate Strike arrests

By Jim Redden

September 25, 2019

Plus, Cider Riot! owner says city forcing him to sell and six degrees of Ukrainegate in Portland

Mayor Ted Wheeler is relearning the political risks of overseeing the Portland Police Bureau.

As the 2020 elections begin to heat up, the bureau's largely successful management of last Thursday's Climate Strike rally and march is being overshadowed by viral videos of officers pulling an African American teenager out of the crowd and wrestling him to the ground.

The incident took place on the Hawthorne Bridge after officers ordered him to get down from a railing next to a lane that was still open to traffic. Although a white teen also was arrested, social media comments show most viewers think police unfairly singled out the African American student because of his race.

Wheeler's office said the mayor will wait for the results of a police investigation into the incident. But although the videos only show limited views of the confrontation and arrest, mayoral candidate Sarah Iannarone was quick to criticize Wheeler's management of the police.

Cider Riot! owner criticizes city

Cider Riot! founder and owner Abram Goldman-Armstrong is selling the Northeast Portland taproom and cider production facility, but not because of anything to do with right-wing protesters.

Goldman-Armstrong is suing Patriot Prayer founder Joey Gibson for the May 1 brawl outside that business. Gibson and some of his followers have been indicted on felony riot charges for their roles in the confrontation with left-wing customers who had been relaxing after May Day protests. The Oregon Liquor Control Commission also has accused him of knowingly allowing his patrons to use "illegal weapons" against the right-wing agitators during the brawl.

But Goldman-Armstrong told the Portland Mercury that he is selling the business because he lost so much money waiting for the city of Portland to issue the permits to construct the cidery.

"It's such a typical thing to say 'Portland's a tough city to do business in,' but it really is true," the paper quoted him as saying Sept. 19. "If you want to build a condo (the city will) roll out the red carpet and put the red tape away. But if you're a small business, they don't make it easy."

Six degrees of Hunter Biden

The Portland Tribune published a Feb. 7 story about the city's connections to the "Russiagate" investigation titled "Portland's six degrees of Robert Muller."

Now it seems Portland also has links to "Ukraine-gate," President Donald Trump's alleged effort to get Ukraine's government to investigate Hunter Biden's business dealing there. Hunter is the son of former Vice President Joe Biden, who is running for president. As reported by The New Yorker in July, Hunter moved to Portland after graduating from Georgetown University.

"In July, 1992, after graduating with a B.A. in history, Hunter began a year as a Jesuit volunteer at a church in Portland, Oregon. During that time, he met Kathleen Buhle, the daughter of a Chicago schoolteacher and a ticket salesman for the White Sox. Three months after they started dating, Kathleen got pregnant, and the two were married in July, 1993," the article said.

Portland police tactics during climate strike under fire

Zane Sparling
September 24, 2019

Viral videos show a confrontation between Portland Police Bureau officers and two African American teens on bridge.

The Portland Police Bureau is back in familiar territory — engaging in what some might call Monday morning quarterbacking about crowd control tactics during a protest.

This time, it's an instant replay of the climate strike that sent legions of local students out of the classroom and streaming into downtown Portland on Friday, Sept. 20.

"This was an event with thousands of juveniles and very little supervision from adults," the authorities wrote in a news release on Sept. 24.

In the aftermath of the demonstration, which was attended by more than 6,000, some participants questioned why police directed marchers on the Hawthorne Bridge onto the south sidewalk and a lone closed auto lane — leaving the other three lanes open to traffic.

Others have accused several officers of racism after they arrested and ultimately charged two unidentified 17-year-old boys with second-degree disorderly conduct and interfering with police. Videos posted online show two teens, who are both African-American, standing on a guardrail separating the largely white crowd from vehicular traffic. But only one of the teens in the video was arrested.

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty said that when officers chose to "single out" two youth, they missed a valuable opportunity.

"Every encounter with the public is an opportunity to build community trust, yet this is how these officers chose to interact with children peacefully engaging in direct action," she wrote.

"It's disappointing that of the many ways this interaction could have happened, this is what ultimately transpired."

Police said their conduct during the tussle, captured in several viral videos, was a combination of environmental factors, the large crowd size and constraints on time, tactics and resources.

"While in a dangerous position, the individual involved did not comply with repeated verbal commands and resisted arrest," the bureau said. "Resisting arrest is against the law."

Candace Avalos — who is running for a City Council seat to be vacated by Commissioner Amanda Fritz — said the authorities' behavior was upsetting.

"I'm having a hard time thinking of any scenario that would warrant this kind of response," she said.

Bridge too far?

The Hawthorne Bridge was closed well in advance of the Patriot Prayer rally on Saturday, Aug. 17. But during a crucial moment, a police skirmish line opened for organizer Joey Gibson and some of his followers, allowing them to pass back to the east side of the city.

It's a study in contrasts acutely noticed by observers.

"On (Aug. 17), Hawthorne Bridge was blocked to traffic ALL day while white bigots descended on our city with hate," wrote mayoral candidate Sarah Iannarone, "but for a peaceful, permitted youth-led climate march police show up with yellow tape ad hoc?"

Police say it's apples and oranges. In their telling, concerns regarding street warfare between flag-clad conservatives and the masked anti-fascists known as antifa prompted the bridge closure, and re-opening it briefly was not a "predetermined decision."

"A decision was made by the incident commander to de-escalate the situation and temporarily open the bridge to foot traffic to allow that group (Patriot Prayer) to cross the bridge so they could leave and decrease the opportunity for physical clashes," police explained.

Local law enforcement say they did not have enough staff on Sept. 20 to shutter the entire bridge, which is owned by Multnomah County, and must be closed in compliance with maritime regulations. Plans must be made to reroute emergency vehicles as well.

Police additionally say they underestimated how many would attend the climate strike. An incident commander did close Southwest 4th Avenue near City Hall, however, and several other streets at times.

Willamette Week

Neighborhood Watches Have Gone Out of Fashion. Portland City Hall Aims to Remodel Them.

By Sophie Peel
September 25, 2019

The office Commissioner Chloe Eudaly runs tells WW that, as of July 1, “we are no longer involved in the traditional neighborhood watch model.”

Brian Harvey liked being the eyes and ears of his apartment block.

Each month, Harvey attended a city-sponsored meeting with his fellow tenants of the Yards at Union Station, an affordable housing complex on the northwest bank of the Willamette River.

The group, called Apartment Watch, brainstormed ways to stave off burglaries and trespassing. They put keypads on the laundry room, installed fences, and even covered electrical outlets so passersby didn't linger to plug in their cellphones.

Harvey used to regularly communicate with the Portland City Hall office that supervises and funds Apartment Watch. He says he hasn't heard from the city since July.

Harvey feels cast adrift, at a time when Portland's streets can feel increasingly lawless. City statistics show violent crime in Harvey's Old Town neighborhood, for instance, has risen significantly over the past five years.

"I would be curious about if we're even officially a group anymore," says Harvey. "There's been no word on what our status is."

WW has learned one possible reason: City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly is quietly changing neighborhood watches.

The Portland Office of Community and Civic Life, which Eudaly oversees, tells WW that, as of July 1, "we are no longer involved in the traditional neighborhood watch model." It will instead direct funds to other community events—including first aid trainings, walking kids safely to school, and potlucks.

That shift comes as Eudaly is locked in a high-profile fight with neighborhood associations over the future of the Office of Community and Civic Life, which handles civic engagement. But her move away from neighborhood watches has received far less attention.

The change follows years of attrition. In 2014, City Hall supported 597 neighborhood watches and related groups. In 2018, that number had dwindled to 367.

This summer, officials rebranded the program that coordinates neighborhood watches—changing its name from the "Crime Prevention Program" to "Community Safety"—and rewrote its goals to de-emphasize policing.

Proponents say the changes will remove the busybody stigma of neighborhood watches and encourage a more diverse array of people to invest in their streets.

"Safe communities don't come from just 'preventing crime,'" says Jenny Glass, who runs the Rosewood Initiative, a nonprofit that connects Southeast Portland residents to city resources, "but doing the hard work to build community, especially across differences in race, culture and socio-economic status."

But critics—including two former leaders of the program—say Eudaly's reforms amount to nothing more than intentional neglect of a service that has become unfashionable. They describe chaos in the department, and say the overhaul amounts to little more than a set of buzzwords.

"It's hard to tell the difference between rebranding and elimination sometimes," says Mingus Mapps. He oversaw the neighborhood watch program before he was fired in June. He's now running against Eudaly for City Council. "This is basically slowly starving the program through bad decisions, mismanagement and not filling vacancies."

The battle comes at a time when a recent, comprehensive survey of city residents found Portlanders are increasingly worried about crime—and "do not feel they have the power to influence city decisions that affect them." In other words, they feel abandoned by and alienated from their government.

Community Safety takes up a small sliver of Portland's budget—\$1.6 million a year, a figure that remains steady—but this fight reflects the larger tensions at play as Eudaly confronts neighborhood associations. These grassroots organizations have long had power over the look and feel of their own streets. Now they feel cut off by a commissioner who would rather hear from other voices.

Eudaly tells WW that she's not starving the Community Safety program—she's improving it. "Reducing harm requires that we get to the root causes of the challenges we are facing as a city," she says in a statement. "No single bureau can accomplish that, but we can make significant strides working together."

Most Portlanders probably didn't know neighborhood watches were funded and supervised by City Hall. But that's been the case since the late 1970s, under the Crime Prevention Program.

That program trained residents to police their own streets. Police officers and city bureaucrats would lead foot patrols, for example—taking groups of neighbors on tours of city streets and parks, teaching them how to spot and report petty crimes like illegal camping and bike theft.

Last year, the Office of Community and Civic Life eliminated foot patrols, according to a statement provided by the bureau.

Mapps objected. He says neighborhood associations will still form similar patrols—but now without regulations or supervision from the city.

"If [patrols are] organized by the city, we're going to train them and make them sign a piece of paper that says, 'When you go on foot patrols, don't bring your guns, don't bring your dogs, and be sober,'" says Mapps. "The thing that happens when you cut loose [patrols], is that they're still going to do the same activity, but they have no restrictions at all."

Foot patrols were just one of the things the Crime Prevention Program did. City officials still teach neighbors how to install lights and signs to deter break-ins. They also train watch groups when and how to report crimes.

Nearly 600 groups—including neighborhood watches, apartment watches, park watches and business watches—were sent regular emails and received visits from city officials. Now, all those programs have been wiped of their names and bundled under one title: Neighbors Together.

The city's description of the new programs makes this much clear: They will reduce policing. "Neighbors Together is a tool for communities to build resiliency by supporting neighbors and groups to organize and be better prepared to address a wide range of safety issues," the Office of Civic and Community Life said in a statement promoting the new program to neighborhoods. "If your community wants to advocate, build awareness, and/or organize around safe routes to school, natural disaster or emergency preparedness, youth empowerment, walking group, street art and improvements, potluck in the park, and more of the like, Neighbors Together is for you!"

The bureau tells WW the program rebranding occurred because of grassroots demand. "Many communities have asked for city responses to their community concerns that go beyond policing," says a spokeswoman for the bureau, Perla Sitcov. The bureau describes some neighborhood watches as "the outdated model of surveillance and racial profiling."

It's clear why some citizens would sour on neighborhood watches—the groups have come to symbolize fearful overreactions by homeowners to strangers. But they are beloved by many of the same people who hate Eudaly's ideas for larger reforms of neighborhood associations.

Neighborhood groups say they've been in the dark about impending changes to the program.

"We've basically had no communication from Crime Prevention since last December," says Chelsea Powers, president of the Brentwood-Darlington Neighborhood Association in inner Southeast Portland. "We don't even send people to [city offices] anymore because we don't even think they'll get help."

Mapps says that's because nobody inside the Office of Community and Civic Life knew what was happening, either. "We provided fewer and fewer services as we were trying to figure out what the hell we were actually doing," he adds.

Services dwindled as staff received muddled instructions from bureau leadership, Mapps says: "Almost day to day, it was very common to just randomly get an edict that says, 'We are no longer offering this service because....' Sometimes, there wasn't even an end to that sentence."

Bureau leadership maintains that the program is stronger than ever in building community and has increased its partnerships with other bureaus.

"This has been a win-win situation as public safety leaders are also working better together and collaboratively in recent years," Sitcov says.

Apartment Watch member Harvey worries. He doesn't know what the city plans to do.

"Being under the city gave us authority and legitimacy," says Harvey. "We don't know how or why that change is happening."

A 911 Dispatcher Dismissed a Report of Teenagers Beating a Homeless Man in Downtown Portland

*By Kelsey Harnisch
September 25, 2019*

The 911 dispatcher told the caller police wouldn't respond unless the victim of the assault reported the crime himself.

When Gary Granger saw four teenagers kicking and beating a homeless man in downtown Portland on Aug. 31, he called the cops.

It was almost midnight on a Saturday, and Granger, 60, was walking downtown, photographing nests of crows. He saw the four teenage boys assaulting the homeless man at the corner of Southwest 1st Avenue and Morrison Street, one block from where he stood. He photographed the attack as he called 911.

But he was astonished by what happened next: A 911 dispatcher told him police wouldn't respond unless the victim of the assault reported the crime himself.

"You don't need to follow them anymore because the guy that was assaulted didn't even call this in," dispatcher Adelaide Blanchard told Granger, in a recorded call obtained by WW via a public records request.

Granger hung up, called again, and again reached Blanchard. "Officers will contact you if the victim calls in," Blanchard told him. "That's how this works, sir, OK?"

Granger ultimately convinced Blanchard she should contact a police officer. He then waited 22 minutes for the officer to arrive. By then, the teens had left and the homeless man, who appeared mentally ill, had also left.

Officer Sydne Wheeler told Granger that without a victim, the case would be difficult to investigate. She wrote a report saying there wasn't sufficient evidence to warrant further investigation—even though Granger had taken photos that clearly showed the teens' faces.

After questions from WW, the Bureau of Emergency Communications now concedes Blanchard, the dispatcher, didn't follow "established bureau guidelines and values." The Police Bureau says the case is suspended—and that Wheeler, the officer, was correct in telling Granger that prosecutions are difficult without a victim.

Neither bureau has explained how Blanchard came to believe only a victim can call 911.

"I was trying to convince the dispatcher that they needed to send somebody," says Granger, who works as director of campus safety for Reed College. "I was pretty incredulous."

Granger's story comes at a key moment in the city's response to homeless people in distress. City officials, led by Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, are weighing a plan to send civilians, rather than police, to distress calls involving the 4,000 people living in the city without permanent residence.

WW reported earlier this year that the single most common reason Portlanders call 911 is to report "unwanted persons" trespassing on their property—a term that usually translates to homeless campers ("What's Your Emergency?" WW, Feb. 6, 2019). Yet with the city facing a police staffing shortage, this incident raises questions about the training emergency dispatchers receive in dealing with incidents involving the city's most vulnerable people.

Hardesty oversees 911 response. Hardesty tells WW she trusts the bureau director to "implement any necessary changes, including current work to upgrade our dispatch system."

Meanwhile, Granger has not been easy to placate. He once served as a security specialist in the U.S. Air Force. "To watch a person beaten when you've spent a lifetime trying to protect people, putting yourself in harm's way for other people, it is traumatic for me," he says.

The next day, he filed a detailed complaint with the Emergency Communications Bureau.

The bureau tells WW in a statement that Blanchard, a dispatcher in her third year at 911, has not been disciplined but is remorseful. "The employee has taken an active role in this meeting with her supervisor and has taken responsibility for her choices," bureau officials wrote. "The bureau believes she recognizes her error and that it is her intent to learn from this incident."

Granger still isn't satisfied. "The help that came was no help at all," he says. "As far as I know, no one went searching for that victim."

Don't Call Us, We'll Call You

Gary Granger made two calls to Portland 911 on Saturday, Aug. 31. These are partial transcripts. Listen to the full audio.

Call 1, 11:33 pm

Gary Granger: "On 1st Street headed north from Morrison. There are four teenagers that just beat up a guy on the corner of 1st and Morrison."

Dispatcher Adelaide Blanchard: "Did you see any weapons?"

"I did not see any weapons."

"OK, and is the person that was beat up still on the corner?"

"He's walking toward Naito on 1st."

"OK, the kids that were involved, how old are they?"

"They looked to be teenagers. Maybe 15 to 17."

"And three of them?"

"Four."

"Four of them, OK. And, do you have a description? What race?"

"I'm a block behind them."

"You don't need to follow them anymore because the guy that was assaulted didn't even call this in, so..."

"Well, he couldn't call it in, he's a homeless guy. He doesn't have a phone."

Call 2, approximately 11:45 pm

Blanchard: "Officers will contact you if the victim calls in. That's how this works, sir, OK?"

Granger: "The victim is not going to call in because the victim's a homeless person..."

"Like I said, if he decides to make a report, at that point we'll have a victim where we will have a crime to pursue, OK?"

"I need to report. I witnessed a crime."

"You can't make a report on his behalf."

"Yes I can. Is there a supervisor working?"

"I can have you talk to my supervisor or I can have an officer give you a phone call and explain it as well. Whatever you choose."

"So, I just witnessed four people attack someone in the street. They're marauding around the street right now. They're going to attack somebody else."

"OK."

The Portland Mercury

Latest Call For a Wapato Shelter Echoes Trump's Homeless Plan

*By Alex Zielinski
September 25, 2019*

This past week has seen a revived push by Portland's police union and local developers to turn North Portland's empty Wapato Jail into a homeless shelter. Like past iterations of this idea, the vague plan to shuttle homeless Portlanders to a mass shelter miles from the city center lacks buy-in from any public leaders, experts in homeless services, and—most importantly—the homeless community.

But there's one thing this that gives this revitalized attempt extra teeth: It echoes solutions recently touted by the White House.

Earlier this month, Donald Trump visited several major California cities, where he disparaged local governments for their large, visible homeless communities.

Trump complained that in California cities, people are living “in our... best highways, our best streets, our best entrances to buildings... where people in those buildings pay tremendous taxes, where they went to those locations because of the prestige.”

In a report published after the whirlwind visit, the White House encouraged cities to build more shelters and empower police to keep homeless people off the streets—ideas considered outdated, if not outright offensive, to national homelessness experts.

During the trip, White House officials met with the Los Angeles police union, where they talked about helping law enforcement move homeless people off the city’s streets and into a large shelter facility. Officials are allegedly eyeing the former West Coast headquarters of the Federal Aviation Administration as a place for police officers to relocate Los Angeles’ homeless. The building is located 20 miles from Los Angeles.

Days after Trump left California, the Portland Police Association (PPA)—the union that represents Portland’s rank-and-file officers—released a slick promotional video that outlines plan to turn Wapato Jail, a 150,000-square foot facility located 11 miles from downtown Portland, into a police officer drop-off spot for homeless Portlanders.

The pitch sounded familiar.

“Who is it that says that all these homeless folks have to be right downtown in the city center?” asked Portland developer Jordan Schnitzer, in the 10-minute video. Schnitzer purchased the North Portland detention center in April 2018, shortly after Multnomah County Board of Commissioners voted to sell the never-used county jail.

“[What about the] merchants downtown, who everyday come in and people are sleeping, defecating on their front door,” Schnitzer continues. “Where are the rights of the other folks in the community that are paying taxes, that are working hard, trying to make a living... There has to be a balance here.”

Schnitzer is joined in the video by three other Portland developers, PPA president Daryl Turner, Volunteers of America’s (VOA) Portland chapter director Kay Toran, a member of Montavilla Initiative (a group known for shaming people who use the county’s syringe exchange program), and one anonymous homeless person whose face is blurred.

All speakers call on city leaders to fund the so-called Wapato “wellness center,” which could offer job readiness training, basic medical care, mental health counseling, addiction treatment, and housing.

While the city and county already fund programs that offer all these services to houseless and low-income Portlanders, the Wapato center could fit them all under one roof.

But is this Trump-ish idea the solution Portland’s homeless need? To best answer that question, it’s important to understand Wapato’s long and winding history.

Wapato Jail was built for \$58 million in 2004, but budget cuts kept Multnomah County from ever opening its doors. For more than a decade, local lawmakers brainstormed ways to turn the jail into something more useful for the county—while continuing to pay around \$300,000 a year to maintain the building. In 2016, Multnomah County commissioned a study on the feasibility of turning the jail into a homeless shelter, and found it would cost more that \$1.5 million to remodel the detention center and get it up to code.

The county decided it was wiser to spend that money on programs proven to deter homelessness, like building long term low-income housing and supporting transitional villages. In 2018, county

commissioners voted to sell the Wapato property for a scant \$5 million to developer Marty Kehoe, who then sold it to Schnitzer.

Despite the county's own analysis, Schnitzer still believed the space could work as a homeless shelter. He began discussing a future shelter plan with Harbor of Hope, a nonprofit that has long attempted to construct a campus-like resource and shelter facility for homeless Portlanders. But the detention center was more costly to maintain than Schnitzer had expected. In September 2018, Schnitzer told Willamette Week that he'll demolish the place if the city doesn't rent the building from him as a shelter.

The city wasn't interested.

Instead, the city and county have spent the months since Wapato's sale opening permanent and transitional housing for formerly homeless people and building a peer-run walk-in center for homeless Portlanders in the city center. Most notably, the city and county partnered with Harbor of Hope to open the River District Navigation Center, a 24-hour resource for chronically homeless Portlanders in search of permanent housing.

"I understand Jordan Schnitzer's frustration," said Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury in an interview with the Mercury. "When [the county] owned Wapato, we spent seven years trying to figure out what to do with it. We had dozens of ideas... a business incubator site, a homeless shelter, a treatment center... it's just prohibitively expensive."

But, with a new promotional video (created by a conservative marketing firm famous for creating something called "The Snowflake Test"), Schnitzer's pitch to get the homeless into Wapato has only grown stronger.

"We need leadership to... show us how we can all work together to solve this problem," Schnitzer tells the camera. "That's what's missing in this community."

PPA president Daryl Turner believes Wapato could be staffed with mental health clinicians, allowing a place for officers to drop off homeless people in a mental health crisis that isn't jail or an emergency room.

While Portland already has health centers that cater to these scenarios, like Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare's Urgent Walk-in Clinic, Turner said Wapato's capacity would allow the program to go beyond the current options.

"We could fit five hundred, six hundred people inside," Turner told the Mercury. "There's no other place like that in the state."

Turner assures that a visit Wapato would be voluntary.

"We'll just be offering a safe place for people to be while they revive themselves," he said.

Turner has never contacted Kafoury—the region's top decision maker in regards to mental health and homeless services—about his group's proposal for Wapato Jail. He acknowledges the proposal includes services that are already being funded by city and county dollars.

"This isn't a hit on other resources that are out there," he said. "It's just giving people another choice."

That's how Kay Toran, director of the Portland VOA, sees Wapato working.

"We support what is happening right now in the community, but obviously it's not enough" Toran told the Mercury. Several VOA addiction recovery programs rely on funding from Multnomah County.

“We need to do more,” Toran said. “The homeless population is growing.”

A recent Multnomah County report, however, found that the region’s estimated homeless population in January 2019 was down nearly 4 percent from 2017.

Turner said he's unsure how much a fully-funded Wapato center would cost, and will leave that "up to the experts." He said there's no specific "next steps" for the campaign now that the video's been released.

"All I know is the longer that building sits unused, the longer people are suffering on the streets of Portland," he said.

Kafoury calls the Wapato plan a “unicorns and rainbows” proposal.

“You can’t expect that one facility—wherever it is—is going to solve all of society’s problems,” Kafoury told the Mercury. While she knows some people involved in the Wapato proposal have altruistic motives, Kafoury can’t ignore what she believes is driving the aggressive campaign.

“I do think that the underlying issue is that they just want the problem to go away,” she said.

Homeless advocates and those who’ve experienced homelessness have consistently said the plan to isolate houseless Portlanders 11 miles from the city center—where the majority of homeless service providers are located—is unappealing, if not outright inhumane

“The video is couched as a sympathetic response to homelessness,” said Greg Townley, a psychology professor at Portland State University (PSU) and research director for the university’s Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative. “But the plan is clearly just meant to sweep unhoused people out of the public space and warehouse them elsewhere.”

Townley was one of several PSU faculty members who worked with the city this summer to survey Portland’s homeless population about interactions with law enforcement and general needs. From that experience, Townley said, it’s clear a Wapato shelter isn’t what homeless Portlanders want to see.

“They want a safe, accessible place where they can rest, recover, and heal,” said Townley. “Wapato isn’t that. We already have the evidence of what works, and what the houseless community wants, and we are taking steps to make that happen.”

He points to peer-run tiny home villages and mobile hygiene stations as an example.

Townley and others see similarities between the White House report on homelessness and the revitalized call for a Wapato shelter. He believes the Trump administration's rejection of housing first policies could push national housing policy back “decades.”

Kafoury shares his fear—and worries the Wapato plan to segregate Portland’s homeless in a distant facility could attract federal support.

“This is a federal government that has no problem putting kids in cages,” she said. “I have no doubt that if they had the opportunity, they would put people they consider undesirable in a jail-like setting. It is truly terrifying.”

Kafoury and other homeless service providers will speak at a press conference at 10 this morning to address the Trump administrations' "alarming new rhetoric and policy direction on homelessness."

The Portland Observer

Police Action at March Criticized

By Beverly Corbell
September 24, 2019

Arrest of black teen comes under fire from community leaders

Thousands of local students, along with parents, grandparents and even babies in strollers, joined millions worldwide to protest inaction on climate change, but one incident involving police enforcement against some young people and the arrest of a young African American male drew complaints from civic leaders for brutality, including the Urban League of Portland and Portland City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty.

The student-led climate strike march on Friday was inspiring to many and largely peaceful and most students were provided excused absences from area schools, but Portland Police reported that three arrests were made during the protest.

One arrest was of an adult male who identified himself only as “Jake,” whom police said was using spray paint to deface the bridge. He was pepper sprayed after initially resisting arrest, officials said. But the arrest that drew the ire of the president and chief executive officer of the Urban League, Nkenge Harmon Johnson, and Commissioner Hardesty were videos showing officers “pushing through a crowd of white teenagers to pull a black teenager from their midst.”

Johnson accused the public safety officers involved of “unacceptable behavior toward our young people.”

The videos were viewed more than a half million times on social media, according to reports. One video showed officers trying to get two young people down from a metal railing on the bridge, and another showed the officers later pushing through a group to arrest one of the teens who had earlier been standing on the railing.

“I’ve said it before and will say it again. The Portland Police are out of control and need to be reined in,” said Johnson, as quoted in the Willamette Week.

Hardesty also said the action from police recorded in the videos was disturbing.

“Every encounter with the public is an opportunity to show community trust, yet this is how these officers chose to interact with children peacefully engaging in direct action,” Hardesty said. “I am so proud to have witnessed the power of our youth at last Friday’s Global Climate Strike and it’s unfortunate that the conduct of Portland Police officers during the protest—rather than the amazing show of power and resolve our youth showed that day—is what we are now talking about.”

The Portland Police Bureau defended its actions immediately after the Friday march. The department stated that the young black man they arrested had been leaning out into the traffic lane on the bridge, causing some vehicles to slam on their brakes. When they tried to arrest him, others in the crowd pulled him away and police backed off, but followed him “to a safer location” where he was arrested, police said. The third person arrested was another teen who tried to interfere when the first boy was arrested, authorities added. Both were later released “to the custody of responsible adults.”

The Police Bureau said safety was the utmost importance to police officers at the time and defended the officers using a common tactic to delay arrest to a time when it was safer to avoid a flashpoint and avoid the risk of having to use even greater force.

The PPB also said these were just a few selected arrests in a large scale event involving thousands of people spanning several hours.

“We are sincerely appreciative of the vast majority of participants who were entirely peaceful as they exercised their free-speech rights,” a news release from the police bureau concluded.

The march across the Hawthorne Bridge lasted about two hours as participants poured onto the OMSI grounds, where some heard speeches in an area surrounded by a chain link fence. There was no way for all the marchers to fit in that space, and many stopped to eat snacks they’d brought along and then left the area.

The march included many creative signs, including one held by a toddler that read, “3-Year-Olds for Earth Justice,” and another held by a teenager that read, “I See a Green Future and I’m Color-Blind. Why Don’t You?” Another popular slogan was “There is No Planet B,” and a couple of women dressed as nurses got their point across by carrying a stretcher with a giant, dead bumblebee on it.

The worldwide Climate Strike march was inspired by the Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg’s original solitary sit-in outside the Swedish parliament building, estimated by USA Today to include as many as four million people, likely the largest climate rally ever, “from New Delhi to Antarctica” to draw attention to the climate crisis ahead of the United Nations Climate Action Summit, which started Monday.

“This is the biggest climate strike ever in history and we all should be proud of ourselves because we have done this together,” Thunberg was quoted as saying.

OPB

Hardesty Accuses Police Of Targeting 2 Youth Of Color At Portland Climate Strike

*By Rebecca Ellis
September 24, 2019*

Portland City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty lodged a sharp critique of the police response to last week’s climate demonstrations, questioning why officers had targeted two black protesters in a crowd of student activists.

In a post on her official Facebook profile, Hardesty said officers had “unnecessarily escalated a situation by pushing through a crowd of youth to single out two youth of color.”

Hardesty appeared to have seen the now viral videos from Friday’s student climate protests in downtown Portland, which showed officers forcefully seizing two black teenagers standing on the guardrails that divide traffic on the Hawthorne Bridge.

“Every encounter with the public is an opportunity to build community trust, yet this is how these officers chose to interact with children peacefully engaging in direct action,” Hardesty wrote. “It’s disappointing that of the many ways this interaction could have happened, this is what ultimately transpired.”

One video shows two officers approaching a group of teens surrounding the railing and demanding two black teenagers get down. The officers forcefully pull the two protesters down from the rail, but the teens slip away and sink back into the crowd.

In a later clip, filmed off the bridge, officers push through another throng of students, in what appears to be an attempt to arrest the two teenagers from earlier. The young, mostly white crowd attempts to form a barrier around the teens.

After the arrests, the Portland Police Bureau quickly tried to provide context to footage circulating on social media.

In a statement, PPB said officers had made “numerous requests, orders, and warnings” to one marcher, who was leaning into the inside lane on the Hawthorne Bridge, where cars were speeding past. To avoid hitting the protester, drivers were being forced to slam on their brakes.

“Officers were concerned about the extremely unsafe circumstance and saw arrest as the only option,” PPB said.

After protesters pulled the person away from the officers, police followed him to “a safer location,” where they arrested him, according to PPB. The statement mentions only one of the two teens that officers pulled down from the railings.

The Bureau attempted to provide additional insight into officers’ actions Tuesday, noting in a release that the crowd size was far greater than the original 3,000-5,000 people organizers had estimated, and the majority of those protesting were “juveniles with very little supervision from adults.”

Hardesty was not alone in her critique of the officers’ conduct. Local political candidates have chimed in on social media with mayoral candidate Sarah Iannarone calling the Portland Police Bureau “out of control” on Twitter. City Council candidate Candace Avalos wrote that she couldn’t contemplate any scenario that would necessitate the response.

Nkenge Harmon Johnson, president of the Urban League of Portland, told the Willamette Week, that she found the conduct “shocking” and the use of force unwarranted.