

The Oregonian

Editorial Agenda 2019: Mixed successes, mixed messages on criminal justice reform, Portland governance

*By The Oregonian Editorial Board
December 29, 2019*

Last week, The Oregonian/OregonLive Editorial Board assessed the state's progress in addressing two of four priorities for 2019 --- transforming education for students and keeping Oregon solvent. This week, we look at how state and city leaders fared in addressing the other two -- working toward more even-handed justice and putting Portland on the right track.

Working toward more even-handed justice

The state adopted one of its most consequential judicial reforms in decades this past year, with its revision of Measure 11. The tough-on-crime law, approved by voters in 1994, established mandatory minimums for serious crimes and required that teens 15 to 17 years old be treated as adults if charged with a Measure 11 crime.

But as research and experience have shown over the past 25 years, the law has been overly punitive to Oregon youths, denying the reality of their cognitive development and their capacity for growth. In a show of bipartisanship, the Legislature adopted several changes to the law centered on the truth that teens aren't the same as adults and shouldn't automatically be treated as such. Among other things, Senate Bill 1008 now requires a judge to sign off on moving a teen's case to adult court; grants juvenile offenders the chance to serve the second-half of their sentence under community supervision; and calls for the parole board to review the sentences issued to juvenile offenders after they have served 15 years of a sentence.

Unfortunately, the Legislature paired that success in criminal justice reform with other moves that betrayed a disappointing lack of courage.

Despite widespread support for ridding Oregon of a constitutional amendment that allows non-unanimous verdicts for convicting people of most felonies, legislators haven't put the question before voters. While a U.S. Supreme Court case may strike down the law in the coming year, it's not a certainty -- especially considering Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum is arguing in defense of the law, which has its roots in anti-Semitic and xenophobic sentiment. Oregon is the only state in the country that allows non-unanimous verdicts.

Legislators also balked at asking Oregonians to abolish the death penalty. They opted to skirt the constitutional issue and instead significantly restrict which crimes are eligible. While that might lead to a temporary reduction, past history suggests that lawmakers will simply expand the definition again in the future. Legislators also inflamed public sentiment by making the new law applicable to defendants in active cases for crimes that occurred decades ago, bringing uncertainty and confusion to victims' families as well as the court system and apparently, lawmakers themselves.

Putting Portland on the right track

When the year began, the city was in the midst of a housing emergency with homeless people pitching tents by freeways and sleeping in doorways. Lawless driving and poor infrastructure were putting pedestrians, cyclists and other drivers at risk. Portland Police was a frequent target

of criticism for its policing of protests and its use of force against individuals that at times turned deadly.

And as the year ends? On those counts, the city doesn't look a lot different, even with some clear wins this year. The city will face the same challenges in 2020 that it did in 2019. More often than not, its leaders seem to be pulling in different directions, leading to policy reversals and mixed messages on how best to move forward.

This, however, is not a new phenomenon and indicates a problem due at least in part to the structure of Portland's government along with leadership. Portland's commission form of government, in which the mayor and commissioners act as both legislators setting policy and individual executives in charge of city bureaus, encourages short-sighted actions by elected officials intent on protecting their bureaus rather than arms-length decisions guided by a city-wide view of what city priorities and policies should be.

Portlanders have seen that dynamic play out to detrimental effect. For years, budget officers have warned of structural problems in the budget for Portland Parks and Recreation. As the commissioner in charge, however, Amanda Fritz failed to take meaningful action to address rising expenses amid stagnant revenue. Such delay has meant the deficit ballooned to a \$6.3 million gap that, under Commissioner Nick Fish, is now translating into program cuts and layoffs.

It was also on display in Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty's announcement early in her tenure that the fire bureau, under her management, would not enforce an ordinance passed by the City Council to require warning signs on unreinforced masonry buildings, which pose a greater hazard to the public than other buildings in the event of an earthquake. The ease with which a single commissioner can block an ordinance passed by the council is a clear defect in city government structure. Hardesty somewhat made amends by later seeking a change in the ordinance from her fellow commissioners. While such a rapid policy reversal is far from ideal, it at least reflects the will of a legislative body rather than the whims of a single commissioner.

The city itself seems to reflect that divided leadership, with residents arguing over how best to absorb the growing population and whether to change the role neighborhood associations play in city politics. Those questions are certain to persist into the new year.

The year wasn't without wins. Hardesty led the way in bringing a new way of responding to low-priority 911 calls involving people who are homeless or who may be in a mental health crisis. A pilot project in which the city dispatches an emergency medical technician and a mental health worker to such calls is set to begin next year.

After sharp criticism from many on Portland Police's handling of protests that often turned violent, police handled a tense August clash between right-wing demonstrators and counter demonstrators with skill and professionalism. The city has added hundreds of affordable housing units with a city housing bond. And it has installed new traffic signals and is seeking other changes to improve safety.

But as any Portlander can attest, the list of issues is only getting longer. If Portlanders want to break out of a cycle in which the city is scrambling on the same problems year after year, then 2020 should be the year to embrace a more fundamental change.

The Portland Tribune

Tree replanted after vandalism hits world's smallest park

By Lisa Balick/KOIN 6 NEWS

December 28, 2019

A stump was found at Portland's 452-square-inch greenspace, but someone already replaced the damage done.

A stump of the tiny Douglas fir is all that's left at the world's smallest park on SW Naito Parkway. It appears the tree—decorated for the holidays—at Portland's Mill Ends Park was cut down. Many people are scratching their heads over why.

But late Friday someone stepped up and replaced the tree, KOIN 6 News reports.

In a statement to KOIN 6 News, Mark Ross with Portland Parks & Rec said it's gratifying to see so many people express their concerns about the tree at Mill Ends Park.

"It appears that someone did cut and remove the tree. Perhaps someone whose heart is two sizes too small? That's just speculation," Ross said. "The leprechaun family which lives at the park is visiting family in Ireland for the holidays, but we've notified them about the loss. Our staff will evaluate the adjacent park topography and plantings, and find a suitable new tree to plant in the park. Portland Parks & Recreation will not be filing a police report in this instance. The cost of a replacement tree is estimated at around \$3-5, though there has already been at least one offer of a donation to mitigate that cost."

A tree ceremony is planned for next week, officials said.

Mill Ends Park is located in the median strip of Southwest Naito Parkway near Southwest Taylor Street. It's the smallest park in the world — measuring a whopping 2 feet in diameter, according to Guinness World Records.

"Portland is weird," said resident Elena Moog. "That is what belongs in Portland—weird, little things like that. I don't know why someone would vandalize it. That's just mean."

Thievery has happened here before. It was stolen in 2013, but later returned—root ball and all. However, by the time the original tree was recovered, it had already been replaced.

The 452-square-inch space was created in the 1940s by a journalist named Dick Fagan. He planted some flowers in the hole that was originally supposed to be used for a light pole. It got its current name after pieces of wood leftover from making lumber. Mill Ends Park was fittingly dedicated as an official city park on Saint Patrick's Day in 1976.

Free and discounted rides offered New Year's Eve

Jim Redden

December 27, 2019

The Portland Bureau of Transportation and TriMet urge partygoers to take safer transportation option when celebrating the new decade.

Portland and TriMet are offering free and discounted rides on New Year's Eve to reduce traffic accidents. They include lower-cost taxi, Uber and Lyft rides — and no-cost bus, MAX and Portland Streetcar trips.

City and regional transit agency officials are urging residents celebrating the end of 2019 and the beginning of the new decade to take advantage of these safe transportation options.

"Are you celebrating for the holidays? Make sure a Safe Ride Home is part of your plans. Nearly half of Portland's fatal crashes involve impaired driving. You can help make our streets safer by planning an alternative ride if you plan to drink," PBOT says.

The city's Safe Ride Home program includes discounted taxi and ride-sharing company rides nightly between 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. from Dec. 18 through Jan. 1, 2020. Taxi rides are discounted \$20 with a paper coupon available online or at numerous businesses. Uber and Lyft rides are discounted \$10 with a promo code.

Details, downloadable coupons, participating businesses, and promo codes can be found at www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/76611.

In addition, TriMet is offering free bus, MAX and Portland Streetcar rides after 8 p.m. on New Year's Eve.

"You can get to the celebration — and home again — the safe and smart way," TriMet said.

You can find more information at trimet.org/nye/index.htm.

Report: Portland police stop using embattled sobering center

Jim Redden

December 25, 2019

The immediate and long-term future of the Central City Concern operation in downtown Portland is uncertain.

The future of the sobering center operated by Central City Concern is more uncertain than ever.

The center at 526 S.E. Grand Ave. accepts clients from law enforcement agencies throughout the region who need a safe place to sober up. It had decided to only accept them from the Portland Police Bureau after Friday, Dec. 20, but reversed that decision after complaints from some agencies outside Portland.

But then Portland police decided to stop bringing clients to the center on Wednesday, Dec. 23. The decision, which has not been officially announced, was first reported by Willamette Week.

It is unclear how much longer the center will continue operating. Portland provides the majority of its financing on a per-client basis. Central City Concern did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

According to Amanda Risser, the organization's senior medical director, the changes were being made because of the potentially dangerous behavior of an increasing number of people being brought to the center. Risser said that growing number of clients are on drugs that make them a danger to themselves and the staff trying to help them.

Central City Concern has notified Portland that it will not renew its contract to operate the center, which expires on June 30, 2020. Portland had begun looking for another operator.

"No one has been hurt yet, but need to make the changes we've made," said Risser.

Clackamas County Sheriff Craig Roberts objected to the original decision to stop accepting clients from outside Portland, saying it would cause a crisis throughout the region. Roberts said his jail is not equipped to accommodate people who need a safe place to sober up. He only learned about the partial closure on Wednesday, Dec. 18, two days before it was scheduled to take effect.

"I feel like we've been kicked to the curb," said Roberts. "Our jail isn't set up for detox."

The majority of the clients — 85 percent — have been brought to the center by Portland police, however.

According to Central City Concern, the center treated 3,187 clients during the last fiscal year. Most, 2,725, were from Portland. The second largest number was 222 from Washington County. Clackamas County was third at 116. Milwaukie was fourth with 57 people.

Risser said she understands the changes are creating challenges in the region. Central City Concern is committed to working with all of the stakeholders to find alternatives, she said, explaining that hospitals and other medical provider in the region need to be part of the solution.

But Willamette Week reports Portland police unexpectedly announced they would immediately stop turning clients to the center during a Wednesday, Dec. 23, meeting with Central City Concern.

According to the story, Portland police will try to bring people who need a safe place to sober up to hospitals, but may have to take some to jail.

The sobering center is different than the Hooper Detox Stabilization Center operated by Central City Concern at 1535 N. Williams Ave. in Portland. It is not changing.

Portland's 2,800 e-scooters will stay until Dec. 31, 2020

*By Zane Sparling
December 21, 2019*

Portland Bureau of Transportation announces extension of pilot program, which was set to expire in April, 2020.

Portland has added more time to the clock for the city's electric scooter fleet.

Instead of a year-long trial running until April 26, 2020, the Portland Bureau of Transportation will keep the welcome mat out for e-scooter companies until Dec. 31, 2020 — an extension of about 36 weeks.

"E-scooters have the potential to provide a convenient, climate-friendly transportation option for thousands of Portlanders, but safety is my top priority," Portland City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, who oversees PBOT, said in a Dec. 20 announcement. "I remain committed to preserving sidewalk access vital to the well-being of seniors and people with disabilities."

The Transportation Bureau said the extension will allow further study of whether e-scooters ease congestion on streets, reduce emissions or can help underserved communities get around, among other factors. The bureau says no additional operators will be permitted during the prolonged pilot, above the six already allowed: Bird, Bolt, Lime, Razor, Shared and Spin.

But Bolt suspended its deployment of 214 scooters earlier this month.

Spin, on the other hand, will boost its fleet by 192 two-wheelers, as a reward for communicating with transportation staff, hosting safety workshops, exploring geofencing technology and featuring an affordability program.

Geofencing is a virtual perimeter such as an electronic "no-go" zone around a park.

That means there are now 2,865 e-scooters in Portland, a slight dip from the peak of 2,887, though transportation officials has hinted that more fleet increases are coming in January.

Save Our Sidewalks — a local group that believes scooter scofflaws are a menace to themselves and others — slammed the decision as being made without public input.

"Study after study show that e-scooters are not climate-friendly, due to production and short life spans, transporting them with fossil fuel vehicles, and so on," the organization wrote.

From April 26 to Nov. 30, rental scooters in Portland traversed 1.01 million miles during 954,000 trips, with the majority happening downtown or in the central Eastside. The Transportation Bureau requires 15% of all e-scooters distributed daily to be in East Portland.

A heat map distributed by the government agency shows some scooters are even making it beyond city limits into Rockwood.

Need an e-scooter?

Here are the biggest players in the Portland market:

Spin – 833 scooters

Lime – 782 scooters

Bird – 525 scooters

Razor – 525 scooters

Shared – 200 scooters

Despite problems, Wheeler upbeat about the future of Portland

Jim Redden

December 20, 2019

Mayor highlights accomplishments of some of his bureaus during a Friday morning press conference at City Hall.

Mayor Ted Wheeler delivered a mostly upbeat end-of-the-year message to Portlanders during a Friday morning press conference at City Hall.

Appearing Dec. 20 with officials from some of the agencies he oversees and the city-county Joint Office of Homeless Service, Wheeler said city government was made good progress addressing the most serious issues facing Portland in 2019. Among other things, he said homeless funding was at a record \$34.1 million; the Portland Housing Bureau had opened a record 878 new affordable housing units; and work is about to start on redeveloping the Broadway Corridor area at the southern end of the Broadway Bridge into a new neighborhood.

"As the mayor of Portland, I am proud of what we accomplished in 2019," said Wheeler, who is running for reelection. "We did not shy away from the difficult work at hand, nor did we back

down from those who threatened to stir up fear and violence in our community. Instead, we came together in an incredible show of unity, rolled up our sleeves and worked tirelessly to make Portland the most livable, vibrant, progressive city in the country."

The positive tone was at odds with recent polls that show residents are losing faith in the future of the city. For example, a new FM3 Research poll conducted by the Metro regional government found that, between July 2016 and December 2019, the portion of residents who think the city is heading in the right direction fell from 46% to 34%. Those who think the city is on the wrong track increased from 43% to 48%.

Asked about the poll, Wheeler acknowledged the growing unease. He blamed much of it on the changes that are taking place as Portland grows into a big city with big city problems, like homelessness, congestion and street trash.

"Change is hard, especially for people who have lived here a long time," Wheeler said.

He also blamed the partisan political split in the country and dysfunction in Washington, D.C., for creating feelings of hopelessness.

"We have a cancer that is killing our democracy. Unfortunately, we don't have the luxury of name-calling in Portland. We have to find solutions that work, and I believe we have," Wheeler said.

Among the other accomplishments in 2019 that Wheeler highlighted are:

- Appointing an advisory committee for the Portland Clean Energy Fund approved by the voter — the first of its kind in the country — that will infuse social equity into the city's commitment to reduce carbon and move the city closer to meeting 100% renewable energy goals by 2050.
- Launching Portland Means Progress to drive the hiring of local young people of color; to promote intentional purchasing from small businesses owned by people of color; and to create more inclusive, equitable company cultures.
- Announcing nine new Portland Affordable Housing Bond projects this year, bringing the total to 12 and exceeding the promised 1,300 new units of income-limited housing.
- Increasing the city's capacity to clean up problematic homeless camps from fewer than 10 to up to 60 per week.
- Preventing the worst-case scenario when white supremacists threatened to stir up hate and violence in Portland with a demonstration on Aug. 27.

"I remain optimistic for the future of Portland," Wheeler said.

Willamette Week

Portland Transportation Director Orders His Agency to Shift Proposed Hotel Loading Zone Off Flanders Street Greenway

*By Nigel Jaquiss
December 28, 2019*

Chris Warner listened to concerns from neighborhood groups and cyclists.

Portland Bureau of Transportation director Chris Warner brought holiday joy to cyclists and concerned neighbors by coming down squarely on their side in a dispute over the design of a new Hyatt hotel at the corner of Northwest 12th Avenue and Flanders Street.

The plan presented to the city's Design Commission on Nov. 21 called for a passenger loading zone on Northwest Flanders, where the city plans to build a greenway bike path linking Northwest Portland and the downtown waterfront next year.

Neighborhood groups and bike advocates hated that location for the loading zone. Warner listened. "A high-turnover passenger loading and unloading zone is likely to create operational issues along the neighborhood greenway," Warner wrote in a Dec. 18 memo.

He directed staff to put the loading zone on 12th instead.

Reza Michael Farhoodi, co-chair of the Pearl District Neighborhood Association's planning and transportation committee which had expressed opposition to using the hotels Northwest Flanders frontage as a loading zone, called the decision "good news."

"The PDNA Planning and Transportation Committee commends PBOT for listening to our concerns and working to find a solution that allows for curbside loading while maintaining the integrity of the Flanders Greenway," Farhoodi says in an email. "In the future, adopting a consistent right-of-way standard for major city bikeways would provide clarity for new development and help prevent this issue from recurring."

City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly Says She Won't Vote for An Upcoming Multiple-Unit Building Policy Without Added Tenant Protections

*By Rachel Monahan
December 26, 2019*

The policy proposes changes including allowing four units to be built on a single-family lot.

City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly says she won't vote for a controversial zoning change next month without countermeasures to protect renters from eviction by developers seeking to build new units.

The policy the Portland City Council is considering is called the residential infill project. It would allow up to four units to be built on single-family lots.

Eudaly is calling for a "tenant opportunity to purchase," which might require landlords to give tenants 90 days' notice and right of first refusal on a property.

She also wants the city to allocate funding to finance construction of backyard cottages and other accessory dwelling units to give middle-class homeowners the means to build.

"We have to ensure we're not doing further harm," Eudaly said at a Dec. 11 work session. "That is my biggest fear. That means we have to have meaningful anti-displacement measures in place when we pass RIP."

Portland Police Have Stopped Transporting Intoxicated People to Longtime Sobering Center—Effective Immediately

*By Sophia Peel
December 24, 2019*

The abrupt end of a nearly 35-year partnership comes amid safety concerns and choppy communication between city and county leaders.

On the eve of the holidays, a longtime service for Portlanders suffering from intoxication is sharply reducing the number of people it serves.

The Portland Police Bureau tells WW that effective Dec. 24, officers will no longer transport intoxicated people to the Central City Concern sobering center at 444 NE Couch St.

Last week, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported that the sobering center, run by Central City Concern through a contract with PPB, would be closing June 30, 2020, after 35 years of operation.

The issue: the people transported to the sobering center, many of whom are meth-affected, have become increasingly violent and Central City's staff determined it can no longer serve them appropriately and safely.

The sobering center serves about 10 people per day, most of whom are brought in by Portland police.

But the timetable for winding down the sobering center's services changed dramatically on Dec. 23, when the Police Bureau determined it would no longer transport people there.

The decision caught Multnomah County officials by surprise. Earlier in the day, Mayor Ted Wheeler met with county board Chair Deborah Kafoury to discuss the sobering center.

According to the county, the two discussed a scenario in which PPB would stop transporting people to the center on March 1, four months before the contract is set to expire.

Later that day, however, Wheeler's staff met separately with PPB representatives.

Out of that meeting came the decision that PPB would immediately halt transportation to the center, rather than there being a transition period through early 2020.

"The bureau recognizes Central City Concern's safety concerns and will no longer be transporting individuals to the sobering station," PPB spokeswoman Lt. Tina Jones told WW in a Dec. 24 statement. "PPB's number one priority is to provide intoxicated individuals with the safest solution and currently that is a hospital."

Multnomah County officials expressed confusion at that announcement.

"Yesterday, when the Mayor met with [Kafoury], they shared an understanding the sobering station would stop taking police drop offs March 1, 2020," county spokeswoman Julie Sullivan said in a statement. "That's what makes the sudden about-face later that afternoon especially shocking."

Central City Concern attributed its desire to end its work at the sobering center to shifting substance use trends in Multnomah County, particularly spikes in methamphetamine use that require more intensive care and present potential safety issues.

Dr. Amanda Risser, senior medical director at Central City Concern, says that last week the sobering center implemented a new screening process for admittance based on a person's risk of violence and self harm.

She says that new screening process weeds out "many, if not most" people that are brought to the center.

Risser says she "can't really explain why the county was so surprised" at the announcement that the bureau was immediately halting transportation to the center. She adds that the ultimate closing date is still unclear. (Central City will continue to provide services to the small number of people brought from Washington and Clackamas counties, and to people brought in by the agency's roving van, Risser says, as long as they pass the screening process.)

PPB said it expects to take most of the people it previously transported to the sobering station to area hospitals, but the county fears some of those people may be taken to jail, instead.

"We are now left scrambling to figure out how this decision will affect our staff and the folks on the street who will be taken to a jail or an emergency room tonight instead of the sobering station," Sullivan says.

PPB knew it was going to need to find a new contractor to replace Central City Concern.

On Dec. 9, PPB issued a formal request for proposals from interested parties. The bureau's deadline for responses is Jan. 9—suggesting the city did not anticipate the premature shuttering of PPB's transportation services.

Kristin Dennis, Wheeler's chief of staff, has been closely involved with efforts to handle the closure of the sobering center. She said the county's reaction is puzzling.

"Because an imminent closure of the facility or significant reduction of services has been in discussion for at least a couple weeks, and the county has been intentionally included in those conversations, it is disappointing that they would characterize the decisions made by PPB and CCC in this manner," Dennis said. "Safety of those individuals receiving services is of the utmost importance, and we cannot in good faith bring individuals to a place where the experts are telling us is not safe for them or for the people providing them care."

Dennis says the county's assertion that Wheeler and Kafoury agreed the center could remain open until March 1 is inaccurate.

"The Mayor and the Chair had a brief discussion on Monday wherein the Mayor expressed his hope that we could find a way, with the cooperation of CCC, to safely keep the facility open," Dennis said. "No promise or understanding was reached, because a separate conversation with PPB, City Attorney's Office, Mayor's Office, and CCC was also scheduled to happen that day to determine whether there was a safe and appropriate path forward. The Mayor and the Chair did not have enough information at their disposal during their meeting to come to an agreement about the complex situation still under negotiation."

Dennis added that the city and Central City Concern are still talking about alternative solutions and are hoping to minimize any burden placed on emergency rooms.

OPB

This Year, Portland Saw The Most Fatal Traffic Crashes Since 1997

*By Meerah Powell
December 27, 2019*

In 2019, Portland has seen the most traffic fatalities, including pedestrian deaths, since 1997.

Forty-nine people have died in traffic-related crashes since the beginning of this year. That number, tracked by the Portland Bureau of Transportation, does not include suicides, homicides or people who died more than 30 days after being injured in a crash, to stay consistent with nationwide tracking.

With those elements added in, the number stands at 52, according to the Portland Police Bureau.

That does not include a fatal crash from Dec. 27, which police say may have been “preceded by a medical event,” according to preliminary information.

“The rate of traffic deaths in Portland is actually far lower than many cities of our size,” said Hannah Schafer, a spokesperson for PBOT. “And our population has grown significantly in the last 22 years since 1997.

Schafer said PBOT has not pinpointed a specific cause for the increase in fatal crashes.

“Our Vision Zero team in particular emphasizes that one year in particular is not a trend,” she said. “Prior to that, we’ve had years that are more optimistic.”

PBOT’s Vision Zero team has a goal to eliminate all deadly and serious traffic crashes. Schafer said that team will continue to work next year on projects related to that goal.

“We’re approaching that in many different ways — through education, through engineering our streets to make them safer for all travelers and working with Portland Police who are stepping up enforcement, especially this time of year,” she said. “They’re out keeping an eye out for people who are driving under the influence of intoxicants.”

Schafer said PBOT is offering discounted taxi, Lyft and Uber rides through its Safe Ride Home program through Jan. 1 in attempts to cut down on impaired driving.

New Sapling Takes Root In Portland's Smallest Park Day After Being Vandalized

*By Donald Orr
December 29, 2019*

A new sapling has taken root at the world’s smallest park.

Just a day after someone chopped down the lone tree at Mill Ends Park over the Christmas holiday, someone planted a new tree in its place.

KOIN reported the replacement tree was planted late Friday evening.

On Sunday afternoon, people passing by took photos of the freshly planted tree – adorned with tiny holiday ornaments – in the concrete median of downtown’s SW Naito Parkway.

“It’s pretty cool someone else came and planted another tree, but also maybe a bit sad if the city has to remove it to plant an official tree,” said John Vassallo, who was riding his bicycle past the park.

“It looks like a healthy little sapling; it’d be cool if it were allowed to live.”

FOX 12 reports that Portland Parks and Recreation isn’t behind the planting, and that a horticulture team with the department will determine the best new tree for the park.

When OPB stopped by the parks bureau on Thursday, head of customer services Shawn Rogers said he didn’t know what happened to the original tree, only that it was more common for passersby to drop things off at the park than remove them. Whoever sawed the tree — and whoever replaced it — still remains a mystery.

Mill Ends, deemed the world’s smallest park by Guinness World Records, drew national attention six years ago when someone stole the park’s lone sapling — only to drop it back a few days later. The Douglas fir was later replanted in Mount Tabor Park.