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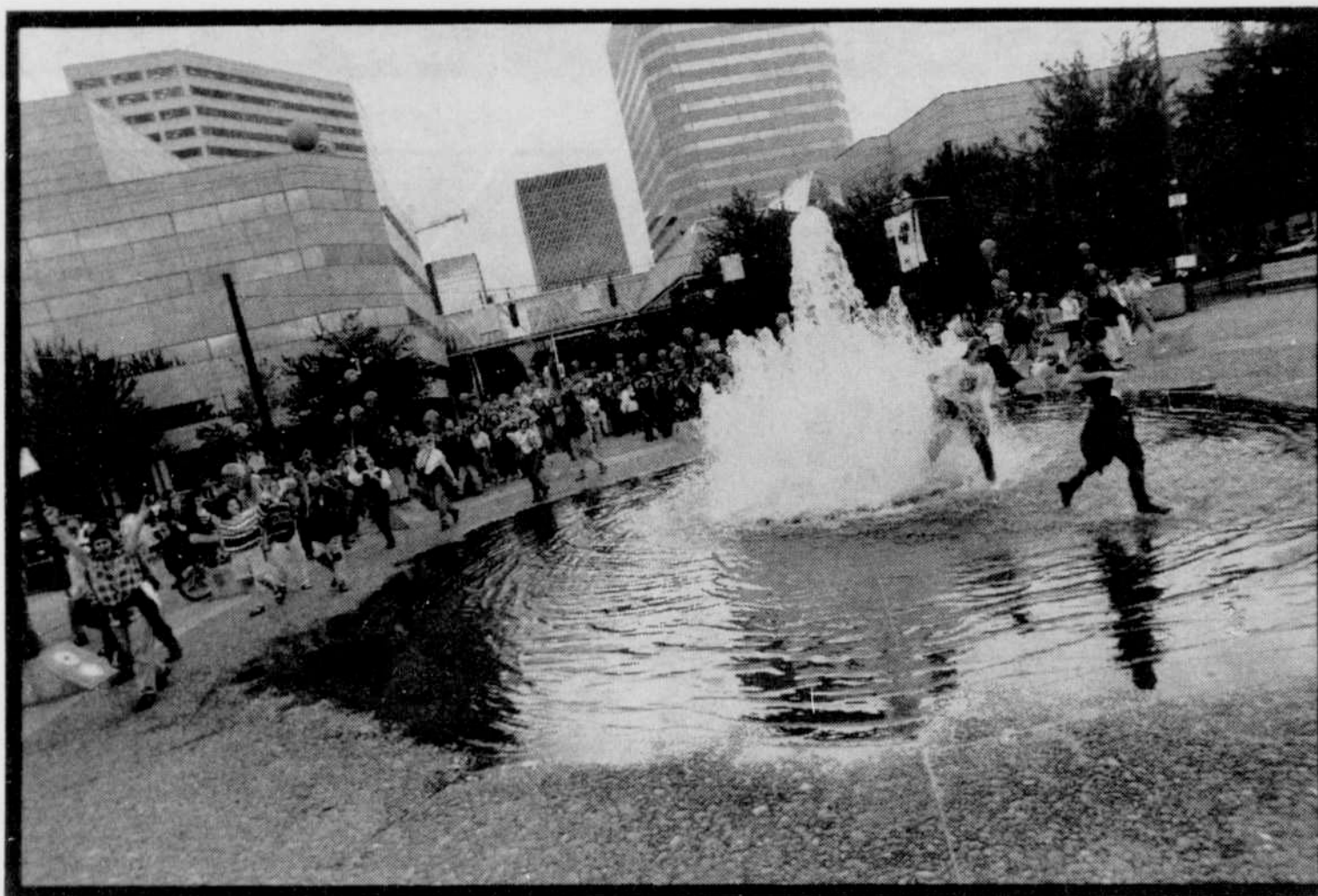


PHOTO BY LINDA KLEWER

guest editorial

A disappointing turn

New police liaison's absence from Sexual Minorities Roundtable meetings does not set a positive tone for establishing rapport with our community

by Teri Ventura

Cmdr. Mike Garvey with the Portland Police Bureau recently proposed an ordinance and amendment to the City Code that would adopt regulations for the underage nightclubs that many sexual minority youth frequent. The proposed regulations have been the primary topic of discussion at the last two meetings of the Sexual Minorities Roundtable, held June 13 and July 11. The Roundtable is a forum for the Portland Police Bureau and the sexual minorities community to discuss issues of mutual concern.

Although the June and July meetings were well attended by adult members of the sexual minorities community, there were few queer youth at either meeting. Many of the people present raised concerns and questions about the proposed ordinance, yet none of the three police representatives at the second meeting were able to officially respond. I am troubled by the scant attendance of queer youth at these meetings, and by the lack of meaningful police representation and participation at the July 11 meeting.

The absence of queer youth is disturbing, because this proposed ordinance could directly impact those who go to underage nightclubs. Their opinions should be solicited and considered in determining the merits and deficiencies of this proposed ordinance.

At the June 13 Roundtable meeting Cmdr. Garvey agreed to slow the enactment of the ordinance in order to conduct outreach to queer youth to get their input. I take Garvey at his word and assume outreach was done. I am nonetheless disappointed that there was neither an identifiable increase in youth present, nor an update about outreach efforts at the July 11 meeting. Unfortunately, Garvey wasn't there to respond to our

questions—nor was the police liaison to the sexual minorities community, Assistant Chief of Police Bruce Prunk.

Granted this is a time of transition, as Prunk was only recently appointed liaison, replacing Assistant Chief Dan Noelle who was just elected Multnomah County Sheriff. I don't know why Prunk wasn't present for the July 11 meeting, and one missed meeting does not destroy a relationship. But leaving early from his first meeting June 13 and not attending the second meeting July 11 does not set a positive tone in establishing a rapport with a community.

Discussion of the proposed city ordinance had been carried over from the June 13 meeting to the July 11 meeting. It was a topic of considerable interest to the group. Prunk's decision to miss that second meeting would have been less disheartening if he had arranged to have someone there in his absence who could respond substantively to the concerns that over 20 representatives from the sexual minorities community had come prepared to discuss.

Although I give Prunk every benefit of the doubt, these experiences are frustrating. I trust that he will take this as constructive criticism and act to ensure that the opinions of gay and lesbian youth are sought and considered by the Sexual Minorities Roundtable, and that he will arrange adequate police representation at future Roundtable meetings to allow significant discussion of scheduled agenda items.

Just Out encourages anyone interested in the Sexual Minorities Roundtable or the proposed city ordinance to attend the monthly Roundtable meetings. Contact Mary Otto, Bureau of Police, at 823-0296 for meeting times and location.

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