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December storms bring flooding, landslides, record rainfall to Southwest Portland

By Jack Rubinger
The Southwest Portland Post

If you think the weather has been particularly wet and wicked this December, you're not imagining things. At the height of the storms, 25 roads were closed in Portland.

Relentless rains hit Southwest Portland hard for the first half of December causing severe flooding, bus delays, and damage to homes. At press time, sandbags and sand were available at Gabriel Park (Southwest 42nd and Vermont Street).

According to Dylan Rivera, Portland Bureau of Transportation, there were reports of more than three inches of rain in one 24-hour period. "We typically get about five inches of rain during the whole month of December," said Rivera.

"The 24-hour road hazards hotline took more than 500 phone calls for 3 days," said Rivera. "We normally field about 80 calls a day this time of year, but with the bad weather, we addressed roadway hazards, flooded roadways,

backed up storm drains, damaged traffic signals, landslides and downed trees."

Rivera's staff fields calls at 503-823-1700, which is staffed 24/7/365 with live dispatchers.

"The latest storms provided a one/two punch. First, the intense wind ripped off shingles from our roof, and next – the heavy rains have managed to take advantage of the first storm – to cause some leaks we have to get repaired," said Mark Paul of AutoAp in Beaverton.

While there fortunately were no storm related fatalities or injuries in the city, Southwest Portland at the time of this article had two of the three remaining road closures. Southwest Montgomery Street from Vista Street to 14th Avenue was closed due to a landslide that took out a 25-foot section of the shoulder.

"Want to come to my backyard, where the wind and rain blew down an entire section of fence, breaking posts out of the concrete?" asked Barb Anderman, who lives at the crossroads

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A tree lands on a car and takes down a power pole at Southwest 28th Avenue and Custer Street. This photograph was taken the morning of Dec. 9. (Photo courtesy of Gregory Quick)

School district faces overcrowding; boundary issues discussed at forum

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

If one watches Portland Public Schools' video *Growing Great Schools*, one gets the impression that many schools in Portland are not adequate for the projected

increase of student enrollment in the coming decade.

The district is expecting 5,000 more students by the year 2025 and needs to come up with a plan to address the enrollment increase. Many schools are overcrowded and require more teachers to provide academic programs. Some schools are building portables and others are cramming people in spaces not conducive to learning.

But many people, especially parents, are skeptical at yet another set of changes proposed for schools across the district.

On Nov. 23, Portland Public Schools officials came to Markham Elementary School for a community forum to discuss these proposals with approximately 75 parents, teachers, students, and most surprisingly, people without children in the school system at all.

Some schools are under-enrolled and need extra funding to offer core academic programs which limit the range of electives

available.

Portland Public Schools has proposed changes in some kindergarten through 8th grade schools. Some are drawing boundary lines around neighborhoods.

"This analysis," said Judy Brennan, Enrollment Director for PPS, "is not a measurement of which schools are not doing well, nor will every school experience a change. It's just a snapshot of the current conditions and allows for a discussion about possible improvements."

A 26-person committee called the District-wide Boundary Review Advisory Committee was established with parents, PTA members, administrators, and community leaders to review all comments and submit a recommendation to PPS Superintendent Carol Smith by mid-January.

Testimony after testimony pleaded with school administrators to leave the system alone. One of the schools most impacted by the plan is Bridlemile Elementary School, a kindergarten through 5th grade school built in the 1950s north of Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway.

The district has proposed that all Bridlemile students that live north of Patton Road will attend West Sylvan Middle school and then go onto Lincoln High School.

"This has been the way it has always been for nearly 30 years," commented Brad Nelson, a Bridlemile Elementary School parent of two. Nelson, who is part of the Bridlemile Foundation,

took time recently at the annual Christmas tree and pancake event to speak to *The Post*.

"The plan call for students who live south of Patton [Road]," Nelson explained, "to attend Robert Gray [Middle School], and then go on to Wilson High School."

"PPS has even said that in five years," he continued, "Lincoln [High School] enrollment will be at about 1,200 and Wilson [High School] to over 1,800."

"We proposed a voluntary dual assignment where the families decide where their child goes onto secondary school."

It's called a forced split and parents and students alike are upset at breaking up friendships forged in the early years. Sarah Beagle, another Bridlemile parent said that this forced split will cause more problems, not due to academic changes, but with relationships.

"These friends will be split up with different paths to different schools, maybe to never interact again," she said. "You must investigate other options."

Hazel, a fourth-grader at Bridlemile, bravely stood up in front of the imposing crowd reading from her speech about leaving the boundaries alone.

Other changes include moving the Odyssey program from Hayhurst to East Sylvan, building more portables at Capitol Hill, and not reopening Smith Elementary School [in Ashcreek] any time soon.

Scott Anthony, a D-BRAC member, was on hand at Markham to just listen.

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Bridlemile Elementary School Foundation member Brad Nelson and his fourth-grader Chloe stop to get warm at the annual Bridlemile pancake breakfast and Christmas tree sale. Their school could be impacted by upcoming boundary decisions. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)