

Sidewalk control bill rolls into state Senate

STAFF REPORTS

A bill that will clear the way for new, and likely more strict sidewalk laws in Portland awaits passage in Senate chambers, having cleared the State House earlier this month.

House Bill 2963 would prohibit the state from preempting a city's authority to control or regulate the use of its sidewalks. It's been preemption that twice in the past eight years has sidelined anti sit-lie laws considered discriminatory against people experiencing homelessness.

The bill passed out of the House by a vote of 57 to 2.

Opponents of the bill, including Street Roots, the ACLU and the Oregon Law Center, say the state's protections are necessary to prevent police from wholesale sweeping homeless people out of the downtown corridor. The ACLU says the protections in the state constitution are necessary to prevent people from being cited for disorderly conduct or for being a nuisance without any measure of intent.

They also say the bill is not the product of a community-wide effort to improve Portland sidewalks, but rather the political maneuverings of one special interest group, the Portland Business Alliance.

The PBA has pushed the bill in an effort to clear obstacles to a new sit-lie ordinance, which is expected to hit City Hall soon after the bill clears the State Capital. The PBA has argued for more strict interpretations of sidewalk use.

On multiple occasions over the past 10 years, the city's attempts to regulate sidewalk use have been ruled unconstitutional because it oversteps state statute. State law prohibits obstructing traffic on a sidewalk, but only when there is "intent to cause public inconvenience, annoyance, etc." The conflict was that the city's ordinance went further, prohibiting obstruction regardless of any intention, so state law prevailed. In 2009, a Multnomah County Circuit Court judge came to the same conclusion that it was unconstitutional on these grounds.

The current ordinance came into being two years ago, allowing a compromise that people can sit or lie on the sidewalk, at least eight to 10 feet away from buildings on the curb, with a cleared walking area for pedestrians. It is enforced from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily.

Finding a new path, and partner in life

BY ANN-DERRICK GAILLOT
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Eileen Vizenor's life changed completely last December when she lost her home and all of her possessions in the span of a few weeks. The experiences were devastating, but none more than losing her two beloved cattle dogs after she couldn't take care of them anymore.

But these days Eileen has a new companion to share life's ups and downs with, a pudgy, loveable Corgi who ambles by Eileen's side. Eileen found Mollie Mae

VENDOR PROFILE Eileen Vizenor

through a listing on Craigslist, and though they have only been together for a couple weeks, Eileen has already come to love her new companion. "It's a hoot," Eileen says with a laugh. "I mean, we're still getting to know each other. I can tell she's just got a big ol' kind heart."

Mollie Mae is just one part of a large support group Eileen, who was born and raised in Portland and Oregon City, has found over the past few months as she has determinedly worked to build a new life. Since December, Eileen has begun selling Street Roots, entered transitional housing, and returned to church. She visits The Downtown Chapel (St. Andre Bessette Church) almost twice a week and sells Street Roots after services.

"The priest there and that church community are just awesome," she says, wiping tears from her eyes. "They're just so helpful and nice and people can't believe that, to look at me, that I was homeless, but my motto is just because I don't have a home doesn't mean I have to look like I don't have a home. I'm getting my pride back and my self-esteem. I'm learning to like myself again and like what I see in the mirror."

Eileen has also found support in the many wonderful women she's met through the different centers and shelters around



PHOTO BY COLE MERKEL

town. She hopes to be able to give back to these organizations in the future.

"If it wasn't for these programs, this person and that person, this case manager, that case manager who has been kinda herding me through, I wouldn't be where I am today. I'm a much better, stronger person, a much, you know, obviously sober person. So I'd definitely like to give back to the community."

She is especially happy, though, to have begun taking classes at Portland Community College, returning to school after nearly 30 years. This summer term she will be studying business administration and hopes to be able to volunteer at a dog day care and adoption center. "But my personal goal is that within 10 years I'd like to be a owner of my own doggy day care," says Eileen. "I'd like to combine my love of animals with my business administration, working for doggy day cares or a humane society or an animal shelter. You've got to have goals."

Indeed, what Eileen has accomplished in just a few short months would feel impossible to most after such personal losses. However, Eileen has managed to build up a network of support and a store of personal strength simply from allowing herself to be open to others and welcoming the experiences and knowledge they share. In turn, she hopes to reciprocate this kindness through public service and, later, publishing a book of her experiences to be placed in women's resource centers around town.

If ever you see Eileen and Mollie Mae selling Street Roots outside of The Downtown Chapel or at Union Station, stop by and say hello. Eileen has compassion and wisdom to share while Mollie, though shy, welcomes the petting of kind strangers. Together they make a heartwarming pair, set to make their own mark on Portland's spiritual and service communities.

Answers to puzzles on page 15

D	N	E	S	R	S	O	E	V	E	R	S	O	O	M
O	I	C	L	E	M	I	R	A	G	E	M	A	D	A
N	A	V	A	R	I	T	I	L	I	T	A	N	D	A
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6	8	1	2	9	3	5	7	4
5	2	4	7	8	1	6	9	3
3	7	6	5	4	9	1	2	8
8	1	6	9	3	7	4	5	2
4	5	3	6	1	2	8	9	7
7	9	2	8	5	4	9	3	1
1	6	7	4	2	5	3	8	9
9	4	5	3	8	7	2	1	6
2	3	8	1	9	6	7	4	5

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VENDOR WORK ADS

Work Wanted

Dog walker; House cleaner; Care giver. Dog lover who is honest, sober and reliable. Rate: Private treaty. Eileen V. (message) 503-228-5657

Need a worker? Can do almost anything, light or heavy. References supplied. \$10 an hour. Ask for Cassidy Morse, 503-228-5657 (SR office), or 503-875-6504 (cell).

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