

Toilets: City struggles to counter damage to public restrooms

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Johnston said the city could eventually opt for a permanent solution through the more expensive Portland Loo, the durable, stainless-steel toilet kiosks in Portland that are resistant to graffiti and other vandalism. The city Parks and Recreation Department has struggled to counter repeated damage to the public restrooms downtown, at the Doughboy Monument to World War I soldiers and at Tapiola Park.

City Councilor Zetty Nemlowill asked how the city would measure whether the portable toilets are effective at solving the problem. She shared anecdotal reports of public urination and defecation near restaurants even though there were restrooms nearby.

“What we hope to see — and this won’t be evident probably until end of next summer — is that the kind of behaviors we’re seeing this summer go away,” Johnston said. “And it will take time to determine whether that’s true or not.”

City Councilor Drew Herzig, who serves on the homeless task force, said before the unanimous vote Monday night to support the portable toilets that “if we are asking people to change behaviors, but not providing the means to change that behavior,” then “it’s a fool’s errand kind of thing.”



Daily Astorian/File Photo

The Astoria public restrooms on Exchange Street. The city plans to add three new portable toilets near the Astoria Riverwalk after complaints about the homeless.

Crossing: Residents didn’t hold back their criticisms of the signs

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Price doubted whether the improvements — other than at Irving and Eighth — were really necessary. The city, the councilors learned from city staff, will have to eventually adopt the “Except Right Turn” signs anyway for compliance reasons.

Herzig took specific issue with a proposal for new roadway striping on Niagara Avenue between Eighth and Seventh Street that engineers thought would enhance traffic flow but Herzig feared would cause even greater driver confusion.

“I think we actually are creating more confusion and putting people at more risk,” Herzig said.

City Councilors Zetty Nemlowill and Russ Warr preferred to listen to the expert recommendations, but they were outvoted.

Daryl Moore, who serves on the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee, said he found it odd that people would not accept the professional advice. “These are professionals who made a career out of traffic engineering — that’s part of their career,” he said. “And people who aren’t traffic engineers are judging them, basically judging their work.”

“And I don’t understand that.”

Eager to judge

Some residents who wanted the city to remove the “Right Turn Permitted Without Stopping” signs were eager to judge.

“I guess I can judge the professionals’ work on this, and I think it sucks,” said Chris Farrar, a retired geologist who lives on Harrison Avenue near 33rd Street, an intersection with one of the signs.

“I think they missed the basic point. And I’m basing it on my own practical experience.”

Farrar called it “a stupid rule. And any of you that can’t see that are also stupid.”

Nemlowill apologized to Chris Maciejewski, the consultant with DKS Associates, for Farrar’s remarks. “I would like the council and the public to come to an agreement at some point where we don’t talk to each other like that,” she said. “It’s ridiculous. It makes me sick.”

Herzig said a robust discussion — a hopefully courteous one — is not meant to insult professional work. But he called a government run by professionals a “technocracy.”

“Government by the people is a democracy,” he said. “I don’t want to live in a technocracy.”



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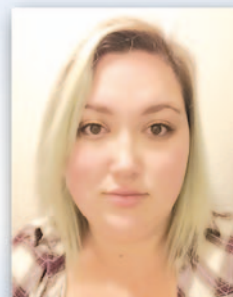
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