To: Mayor Snyder and Members of the Portland City Council  
CC: Danielle P. West, Interim City Manager  
From: F. Heath Gorham, Interim Chief of Police  
Date: April 7, 2023  
Re: Police Response to April 1, 2023 Rally

On Saturday, April 1, 2023 a Neo-Nazi group known as the National Socialist Club (NSC131) held a rally in Portland. The group of approximately 15–20 individuals marched on the sidewalks downtown, carrying a large banner and yelling derogatory slogans and statements to people in the area.

The Portland Police Department was not previously informed of the rally, but were made aware by concerned residents who called the Portland Regional Communications Center when they observed the rally already underway. Officers were dispatched to the area at approximately 12:57 p.m. and monitored the rally from a distance. At approximately 1:36 p.m., when the group was in front of City Hall (389 Congress Street), a fight broke out.

From their vantage point, officers were not able to see who or what started the fight. When the first officer arrived seconds later, he was faced with a large, agitated crowd. He drew his weapon and began giving verbal commands to the group. The involved individuals were separated, and the PPD supervisor, who had just arrived on scene, consulted with the first officer to arrive.

The officer relayed that he had observed a fight taking place, but did not know its cause. Due to the need to deescalate the agitated crowd and an inability to take enforcement action (explained in additional detail below), the sergeant allowed the groups to separate, and advised those involved that they could leave.

The sergeant on scene also asked the smaller group if they had been punched and if they were injured, and told them he would like to get a statement from them. They stated that they did not want to write a statement or report and asked if they were free to leave. The conversation was cordial and one member stated that he appreciated the offer to take a statement or file a report.
Officers continued to monitor the rally until it ended. No additional violence was observed.

Due to officers’ vantage point at the start of the fight, their inability to observe how the fight was initiated or which individuals were directly involved, and individuals’ unwillingness to provide statements describing what had occurred, officers were unable to take any enforcement action related to this incident.

The speech and actions of NSC131 are not in keeping with the values of the Portland Police Department, and we condemn that group’s hateful views. During rallies or protests on public property (whether permitted or not)\(^1\), the Department’s role is to facilitate a group or individual’s ability to exercise their First Amendment right to express themselves freely, as well as to ensure such events are executed safely and lawfully regardless of our personal opinions. The officers who responded to this rally and fight did so fairly, safely, and in accordance with the high standards and values of our Department and City.

\(^1\) In this case, in accordance with Sec. 18-40(a) of City Code, no event permit was obtained or required.