

Council approves cruising ordinance

● The measure was drafted after West End and Parkside residents complained of motorists circling for sex partners.

By **STEVEN G. VEGH**
Staff Writer

Any motorist cruising Portland neighborhoods risks prosecution under an ordinance adopted Monday that seeks to stop blatant solicitation of sex partners.

The Portland City Council approved the ordinance 9-0 after several residents offered both support and dubiousness on the measure.

"The message we're trying to send with this ordinance is, we're not going to tolerate cruising or any kind of that activity ... anywhere in the city," Councilor Thomas V. Kane said.

The ordinance was drafted after West End and Parkside residents complained that male motorists cruise their neighborhoods in search of female prostitutes and male sex partners.

But Councilor Charles W. Harlow, like several colleagues, rejected suggestions that the ordinance subtly targets gays.

"I don't think any of the councilors thought of this as a heterosexual or homosexual issue," said Harlow. He chairs the council's Public Safety Committee, which called for an ordinance.

The committee members' request

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reflected their uneasiness with the police department's tactic of sending cautionary letters to the owners of cars seen cruising.

Under the ordinance adopted Monday, police can still stop motorists and give them warnings that they are violating the city's cruising ordinance. The police will

discontinue their practice of sending such letters to the homes of the owners of the cars seen cruising.

The ordinance — which takes effect April 3, 30 days after approval — lets police designate no-cruising areas, which would be posted with signs banning cruising.

Cruising would be defined as driving past any site chosen by police three times within two hours. The site would have to be in or next to a no-cruising area.

Exempted from the ban would be

taxis, buses, vehicles used for business purposes, ambulances, police and fire vehicles, and cars owned and used by governmental agencies.

A first offense would carry a minimum fine of \$100. The minimum would rise to \$300 for a second offense, and to \$500 for third and subsequent convictions. Attorneys' fees and court costs also would be paid by the offender.

In other action Monday night, councilors amended Portland's leash law to require leashes in the city's most heavily used parks. Those parks, which include the Eastern Promenade, Deering Oaks and Payson Park, now let dogs run free if they are under their owners' "voice control."

The new requirement would allow leashes as long as 25 feet.

Dogs would be allowed to run

freely, but under voice control, at the city's less popular parks. Those include Capisic Pond Park, Riverton Park and Baxter Woods.

Western Cemetery, an area hugely popular with dog walkers, was granted a nine-month continuance of its voice-control policy. The grace period allows dog owners to prove their animals won't be a nuisance and don't need the 25-foot leash requirement sought by the city's groundskeepers.