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OREGON

Oregon Supreme Court finds Damascus disincorporation valid

Final ruling Thursday, Sept. 3, upholds 2016 vote to dissolve city, surrender charter

by: Christopher Keizur/Portland Tribune

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PORTLAND, Ore. (**PORTLAND TRIBUNE**) — After a nearly eight-year fight that stretched from community gatherings, voting booths, the Oregon State Legislature and multiple courtrooms — disincorporation of the city of Damascus has officially been upheld.

On Thursday, Sept. 3, the Oregon Supreme Court declared the process by which Damascus was undone as a city to be valid — putting an end to any legal questions around the status of the rural community that was thrust into the spotlight of controversy and debate.

The past two years in Damascus have been a tug of war, with a new pronouncement of whether it was a city or not being made seemingly every month.

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Damascus disincorporated in 2016 after a bumpy stretch as a city that led to years of infighting and frustration, and with the Oregon Circuit Court backing up the dissolution as valid.

But then everything was thrown into disarray by an Oregon Court of Appeals ruling in May 2019 that declared the 2016 vote had violated state law.

That led to a rift in Damascus. Some claimed the city had been reborn, taking back its elected positions and holding meetings to map out a path forward. Others said the group was moving too quickly, as the Appellate Court only remanded an official decision back to the circuit court, which previously had ruled in favor of disincorporation. Actions in Salem seemed to back those claims.

The Oregon Supreme Court was the latest legal body to weigh in on the fluctuating municipality. Defenders of the city of Damascus filed a petition in 2019 against Senate Bill 226

— passed that same year — that effectively ignored the Appellate Court decision and ratified the 2016 vote as legal. Proponents of the city said that bill was unconstitutional and were confident the Supreme Court would agree.

But with the Supreme Court upholding the bill, it appears that the status of Damascus finally has been settled.

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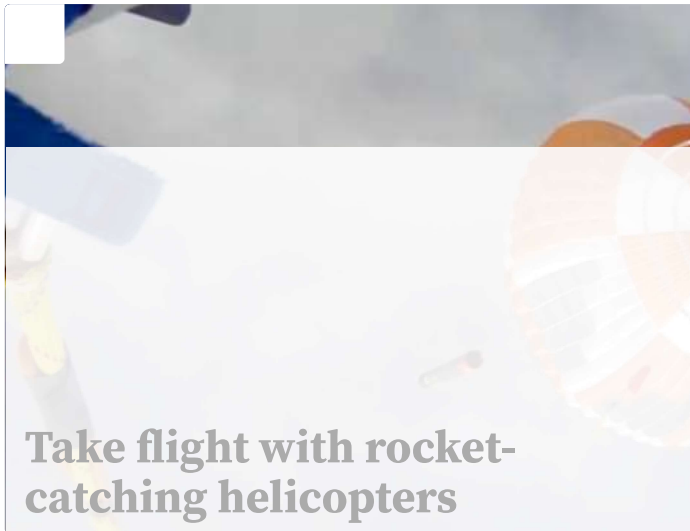
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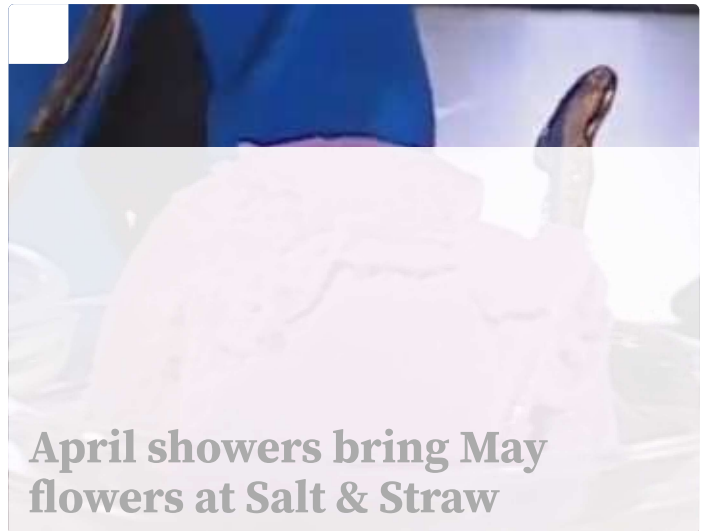
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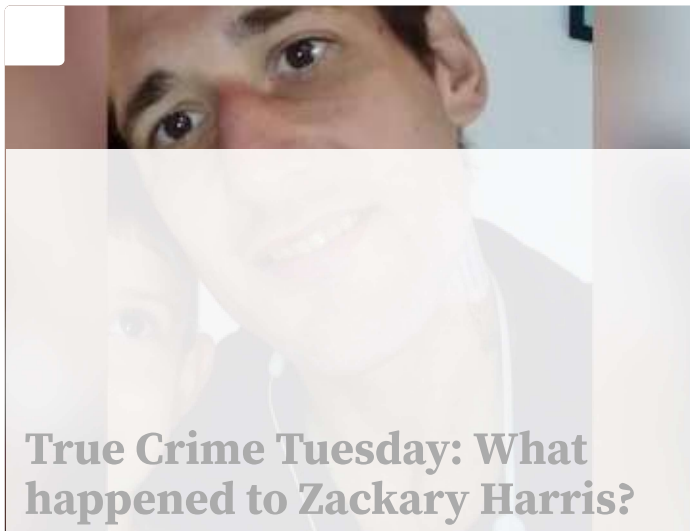
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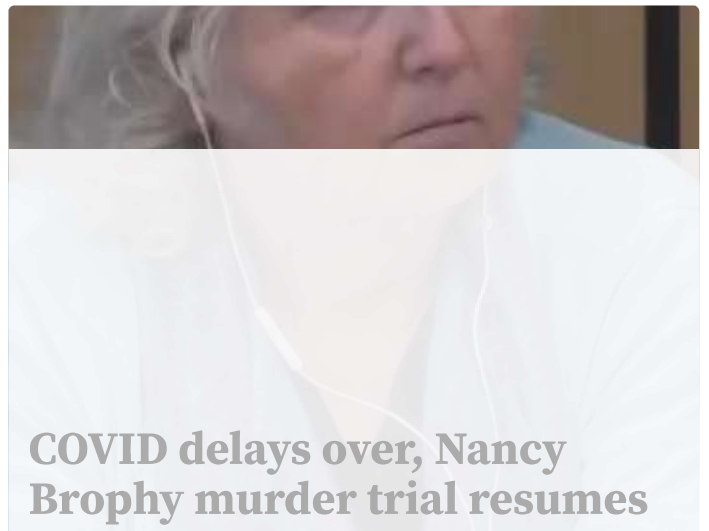
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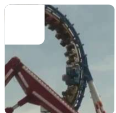
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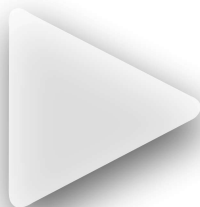
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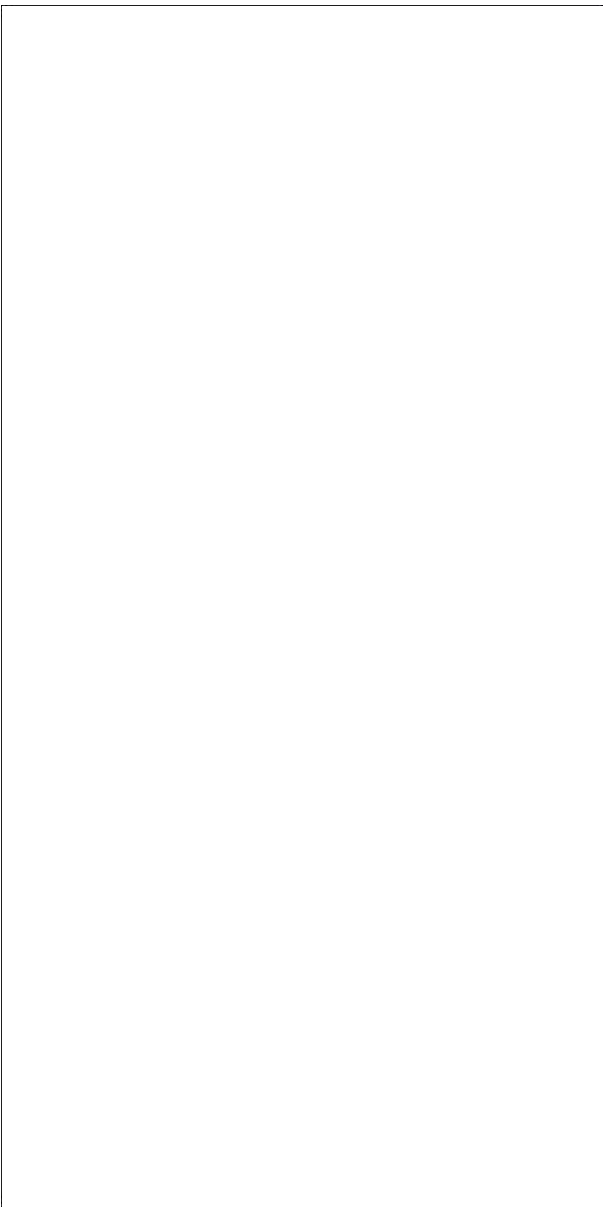
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