

SMILE GENERAL PUBLIC MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2012  
SMILE Station

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Officers and Directors present: President Mat Millenbach, Vice President Paul Notti, Secretary Eric Norberg; and Directors Gerri Sue Lent, Ellen Burr, Tom Ramsey, Michael Hayes, and Bradley Heintz.

President Mat Millenbach called the meeting to order at 7:30, and began by requesting that all those present introduce themselves in turn. Noting the presence of a quorum, he asked that the minutes of the September 5th General Meeting be reviewed; Gerri Sue Lent moved they be approved as submitted, and Ellen Burr and Tom Ramsey simultaneously offered a second, after which the motion passed unanimously.

First, on the agenda at his request, was Rhys Scholes, who said he has a son at Cleveland High School and that he is a member of the citizen group "Our Portland, Our Schools". He was present to advocate on behalf of the school capital bond measure to fix and upgrade school buildings, which he said addressed the needs of space for modern learning, seismic upgrades, and roof repairs. He briefly answered questions.

Kevin Downing was present to wrap up the half-century lawsuit now ended with an amicable settlement, between the Union Pacific Railroad, successor to Southern Pacific, and the Eastmoreland Neighborhood Association, SMILE, and the City of Portland. He pointed out that it was the longest-running case in federal court in Oregon history -- resulting in an injunction since the 1950's limiting train assembly south of Reedway Street. Today, the former traditional railyard has become an intermodal shipping yard, changing the way it operates. Union Pacific sought to remove the injunction; the settlement gave the neighborhood air quality improvements starting next year, which should improve neighborhood health by reducing diesel particulate emissions. Union Pacific will upgrade their equipment to accomplish this. The settlement was entirely amicable; any disparagement of the settlement or any of the parties would be unjustified and discouraged by SMILE. There was a round of applause for Kevin, as he concluded -- for his years of hard work as SMILE's representative in the lawsuit.

Kyle Chisek of PDOT was next to speak, involving the "Springwater Trail Gap" project in Sellwood. Off-street trail extension design by Portland Parks and Recreation is in progress. Improvements planned: A west access point to the trail at the west end of the "Three Bridges", north of Ochoco

Street; at Linn and 17th, involving a pedestrian refuge island and a crosswalk; and at Tacoma and 19th, where a "Hop Signal" with curb extensions is planned for pedestrians and bicyclists -- which would only activate when a pedestrian or bicyclist pushes a button. In response to comments from Ron Swaren, Marychris Mass, and Paul Notti, Kyle said that existing nonconforming pedestrian signals, such as those at Umatilla and at Tolman on S.E. 17th, would be upgraded at some point -- replacing them with this new type of signal to improve compliance and safety.

Kyle was also quizzed about safety concerns on Tenino Street; he said he would be monitoring traffic flows on it, and considering what steps might be needed to improve safety there. He added that there are also concerns about the junction of Milwaukie Avenue and 17th just north of Tacoma Street, and traffic engineers are examining that now.

Tom Ramsey inquired about Tenino Street having been excluded from the announced Sellwood speed bump program -- Kyle said PDOT would examine Tenino to consider measures. The narrowness of Tenino is a problem, neighbors pointed out; parking removal on one side of the street is an option, Kyle said, but probably would not be popular. The problem will be studied. Brenda Ray Scott asked about traffic problems at S.E. Milwaukie Avenue at Bybee Boulevard -- Kyle said he was very familiar with that intersection, and the intersection is being studied right now. He suggested making telephone calls to PDOT with complaints and suggestions -- they make a difference.

A resident commented that temporary photo radar at 15th and Tacoma last year "really made a difference" while it was there; he would like to see a radar speed display made permanent there, and wondered if there is some way the neighborhood could "buy" such an installation. Kyle said a mobile radar display may eventually become available to the city, which would permit placing the display in a variety of trouble spots in rotation.

Ellen Burr, SMILE Land Use Chair, was introduced by President Millenbach to moderate the last item on the agenda -- a presentation by an architectural firm of a planned four-story "Sellwood Apartments" building, with no on-site parking, on an empty lot just east of the new 7-Eleven store on the northeast corner of S.E. Tacoma and 17th. She presented new SMILE "decorum rules" intended to facilitate the discussion.

Present to show and comment upon the development was Don Sowieja of Myhre Group Architects. He said the building would provide 46 apartments, most quite small, and the building would use most of the 100 foot by 100 foot lot; the CS zoning does not require on-site parking. The building is regulated by volume, and would have a zero setback from the 7-Eleven property on the west and

from Tacoma Street on the south, but would have an eleven-foot setback from the residential property lines on the east and north. The building would use the entire 45-foot height allowed. Although there would be no on-site vehicle parking, there would be 54 bicycle parking stalls, to meet city code. No landscaping is required by the city; 18% provided. (He showed slides of the proposed building and its immediate environment.) It would be a 26,000 square foot building in four levels.

An audience member posed the question, "Where will the residents of the building park?" Sowieja responded that a parking study commissioned by the developer identified 70 parking places on the street within 1-1/2 blocks of the building which seemed to be commonly unused at night and on weekends, and only 40-50 cars are expected to be associated with the apartment building's tenants -- maybe less.

Brenda Ray Scott questioned the methodology used in this study, based upon her own off-hours observations, and encouraged taking a second look. An engineer present pointed out that parking places are not marked as such here, and so the spacing of the parked vehicles is often wider than in standard parking stall design; but he went on to compliment Myhre Group Architects for designing "a pleasant building that looks better than a vacant lot". He added, however, that the building doesn't seem to fit the character of the neighborhood, and may be too far from downtown to suit bike commuters renting apartments, which is apparently the primary contemplated market for the units.

A woman present pointed out the nature of the frequent bus service cited by the developer in defending the lack of parking does not actually exist. There is no bus service on Tacoma Street at all at the present time, and Bus 70 does not run north and south as frequently, or at all in some off-hours, as had been suggested by the developer. This information seemed to come as a surprise to Sowieja. She added that the streets cited in the parking study are not easily accessible. Sowieja said the firm would "definitely" have to take another look at those issues.

A man present at the meeting wondered if thought had been given to working with 7-Eleven to develop some parking on their property adjacent to the apartment building; those moving in and out will not be able to park even temporarily in front of the building, because Tacoma Street has no space for that there, and no loading zone in front of the building is offered by the developer, since none is required by city code. Sowieja said that they'd not yet spoken to the 7-Eleven property owner, but they planned to, and thought such an arrangement would "work out well for both parties".

Two persons present suggested to Sowieja that the project could

"give back" to the neighborhood by reducing the building's size, number of apartments, etc., below the maximum permitted. Sowieja responded that the city planning department seeks the "highest and best use" for such properties, and failing to utilize the entire space permitted is not considered by the city to be a "highest and best use".

Ellen Burr at this point told residents what local and SMILE resources there are to facilitate comments about such projects. There is a citywide nongovernmental land use group assembled to consider the issue of apartment houses on commercially-zoned property with no on-site parking, and SMILE is represented on this group; additional hearings and input options are available at the city levels.

Mat Millenbach suggested, to those present who are concerned with this and similar issues, that they get involved with SMILE -- on the Land Use Committee, or through the many other options by which SMILE serves the neighborhood.

Another question from the audience was offered to Sowieja about this apartment house project: "What are you doing, to promote sustainability?" He responded, "Primarily, reducing vehicle use. The construction is typical, and not specifically 'green'." The rent is projected at \$2 per square foot, he revealed, so it would not qualify as low income housing, either.

Another audience question sought clarification on whether this project was by the same developer planning a similar but larger apartment house, with no on-site parking, on S.E. 16th between Clayborne and Glenwood in Westmoreland. Sowieja first attempted to determine exactly what other project was being referenced, and then when it was clear, responded, **"The project behind 'The Woods' has been abandoned."** This surprise announcement drew considerable applause. He attributed the abandonment to parking issues.

There were additional questions and responses on the subject of the planned Sellwood development, which Sowieja assured was a definite project and would be built. One of the concerns mentioned was the lack of an elevator. Sowieja then thanked the audience for having met with him, and received applause for having made the effort to come.

There being no other business, President Mat Millenbach declared the meeting adjourned at 9:14 pm.