

SMILE GENERAL PUBLIC MEETING

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2013

SMILE Station

blog

procedural

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OFFICERS PRESENT: President Gail Hoffnagle; Mat Millenbach,
Vice President; Pat Hainley, Treasurer; Eric Norberg,
Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ellen Burr, Nancy Walsh, Gerri Sue
Lent, Michael Hayes, Brian Posewitz, Bob Burkholder

SMILE President Gail Hoffnagle called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm, noting the presence of a quorum, and began by asking all those present to introduce themselves, in turn, around the room. She then asked for a review of the October General Meeting minutes, and Michael Hayes moved they be accepted as presented. Brian Posewitz seconded, and the motion carried without objection.

First on the agenda was an appearance by Mike Diamond and Matt Fulop, who wished to notify the neighborhood that they are seeking an appropriate location in the neighborhood for a "high end medical marijuana clinic resource center". Fulop related that he owns and runs a business supplying equipment for those who wish to grow medical marijuana indoors, in Happy Valley. Diamond identified himself as a 1997 graduate of Cleveland High School, who has pursued a banking and finance career, most recently with OnPoint Credit Union. Neither one is a current resident of the Sellwood-Westmoreland neighborhood, according to their statements on the SMILE meeting sign-in sheet.

Diamond defined the term "dispensary": Providing marijuana to those with medical marijuana licenses, as permitted by recently enacted Oregon legislation ("House Bill 3460, August, 2013"). Such dispensaries must be at least 1,000 feet away from any school (but no such restriction relates to the Boys and Girls Club), and it must be in a commercially-zoned area at least 1,000 feet from any other such dispensary, according to the law.

The dispensary the two propose would be in the Sellwood area, with 3 to 5 employees, if they can find a suitable location. ("We are now looking for a property locally to lease, but, with the state guidelines, there are not many locations feasible here".) They said there are over 100 dispensaries already in Multnomah County, and they allege that there are a quarter million medical marijuana card holders in Oregon, of which all but 20,000 are in the Portland metropolitan area. Fulop disclosed that he has such a card, but did not say for what medical condition he obtained it. He conceded that smoking marijuana is harmful to the lungs, and advocates ingesting it in other forms, such as by pill or as a food ingredient.

There followed some Q-and-A. One woman felt the presentation the two had made seemed threatening, with its repeated mentions of lawyers, the law, and plans by others for chain dispensaries. One man suggested such a facility could attract burglars and robbers, and would require such security features as bars on the windows, which would be out of character with our neighborhood. He was told there would indeed be "strong security".

Diamond responded to a question by saying there is no plan for 24-hour-a-day operation. One man said he was skeptical of the pair's business plan, given the evolving status of the drug. Fulop said his "garden supply company", of which 80% of the patrons are marijuana users, "has been very profitable", with revenue in the millions -- so he has high hopes for the business plan. He conceded that marijuana use remains a federal crime, regardless of state law. A man asked about pricing and subsidies for the poor; the pair has a "price point in mind", but price could go up and down depending upon taxes and competition; they are considering a sliding scale for the needy.

In response to a question, the pair said they expect 5 to 20 "patients" a day, and they are looking for a property of from 1,000 to 4,500 square feet. They would want a large lobby; a security room; a bouncer. No on-site ingestion is planned; depends on the law. They would prefer their planned facility to be more of a "clinic". That concluded their presentation.

Mike Pullen from Multnomah County and Mike McGee from the Portland Department of Transportation were present for the next two agenda items.

The first item they were addressing concerned management of traffic on the Sellwood Bridge and at the west end, during construction of the new Sellwood Bridge and of the Highway 43 exchange. They conceded that commute traffic is often difficult; cut-through traffic increases when the traffic on the bridge is jammed. 40% of the project is completed, but "there are two more years of this!" The project is not behind schedule, they assured.

Some Q-and-A with attendees followed: The bridge will open (September 2015) before the new west-side Highway 43 exchange opens -- but everything should be done by June of 2016. Heather Koch suggested "local access only" barricades on some Sellwood neighborhood streets to mitigate cut-through traffic.

Then the subject changed, and the two Mikes turned to discussing the planned traffic signal at S.E. 6th and Tacoma, joined by a city traffic engineer who identified herself as Jamie. Brian Posewitz, who chairs the SMILE Transportation Committee, introduced the topic with a recap of the issue. McGee commented, "No matter what we do, there will be tradeoffs." He

added that "if issues arise [with the traffic signal], the Mayor has committed that the city will come back and address them." The signal is not to be installed until after the Sellwood Bridge replacement project is completed.

The planned traffic signal began as a proposal for a pedestrian-bike signal, but federal government guidelines now prohibit such a signal at that corner (it could be allowed mid-block). Consequently, the environmental impact study was redone for a full traffic signal at 6th and Tacoma; no change in impact was determined, and the full signal is now approved.

There followed a PowerPoint presentation with the major points enumerated, and a diagram of what the proposed intersection would look like -- which drew positive comments even from those opposed to the signal. Northbound traffic on S.E. 6th would only be able to turn right on Tacoma, which would discourage Tenino and other streets south of Tacoma as cut-through routes; and "no turn on red" would be posted for southbound motorists on 6th at Tacoma, who also would encounter lengthy cycles before a green light during commute hours -- having a retarding effect on cut-through traffic from north of Tacoma on 6th.

There was some discussion of putting a "hawk" pedestrian and bike signal between 6th and 7th on Tacoma, but there would be no good access for bikes to get to that signal, so it would not work very well on Tacoma. Some of those present suggested the signal might work better at S.E. 7th instead, and there was a suggestion that a pedestrian signal be put on Grand Street (at Spokane?). Also suggested was better signage to direct bicyclists crossing the new Sellwood Bridge. City traffic engineer Jamie discussed some of the options for the timing of the 6th Avenue and 13th Avenue signals on Tacoma Street.

As the final agenda item of the evening, Ellen Burr, Chair of the Land Use Committee, recounted briefly various local construction issues. There was some brief Q-and-A on procedural matters.

President Hoffnagle briefly announced a planned Oaks Bottom Cleanup for which volunteers are being solicited, on November 23.

There being no other business on the agenda, or offered by anyone present, Mat Millenbach moved the meeting be adjourned. Sandy Hubbard seconded the motion, which carried with evident unanimity at 9:25 pm.