

SMILE GENERAL PUBLIC MEETING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2014

SMILE Station

blog

procedural

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OFFICERS PRESENT: President Gail Hoffnagle; Vice President
Mat Millenbach; Secretary Eric Norberg

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

SMILE President Gail Hoffnagle called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm, and with a large crowd estimated at 60 in attendance, it was clear that a quorum was present. She began by asking all those present to introduce themselves, in turn, around the room. One man present, Scott McDonald, announced he was starting a new business, "Local Farmers Delivery", for home delivery of milk.

Gail then asked for a review of the December General Meeting minutes (there was no General Meeting in January), and Cameron McCredie moved the minutes be accepted as presented. Mat Millenbach seconded, and the motion carried without objection.

First on the agenda was Jennifer Koozer, TriMet spokesperson and a Sellwood resident, who was present by request to address the future of the potential Harold Street MAX station. The 2008 Environmental Impact Study did include the Harold Street location, she said; but the 2010 Environmental Impact Study focused just on the line and stations being built at this time. TriMet's models suggested that there would not be enough ridership to justify building such a costly station.

As for the "costly" observation, Jennifer said that the federal government had been expected to fund 60% of the Inner Southeast light rail project, but in 2010 this was cut to 50%, requiring reductions to the project and the raising of more local funds. Then Union Pacific required that the MAX crossing at Harold Street be elevated, to permit the anticipated heavy container truck traffic there to pass into the intersection unimpeded by a light rail crossing.

There are no funds to build a Harold Street Station at this time (which would have to be mated to the south end of that overcrossing), and TriMet is still worried about a one minute transit delay occasioned by stopping at such a station, which could discourage riders to the south from using the light rail line, in the view of TriMet.

Also, in order to provide access to Reed College and the Reed neighborhood, which would be required if such a station were ever built, there are no funds at this time to build a

footbridge over the U.P. tracks to connect to the Reedway right of way east of the railyard.

An attendee asked Jennifer what ridership would be needed for TriMet to justify building the station; but she responded that no studies to determine that have been done. Projected ridership is based on models and interviews; those have not been updated since 2010.

As for bus service in north Westmoreland -- buses 70 and 19 will continue, but buses 31-32-33 (which stop at Harold at McLoughlin and also at 17th at McLoughlin) may not. There is to be more conversation about that at the March 5th SMILE General Public Meeting and in planned Open Houses.

Next to appear was Deborah Stein, of the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, who had brought to SMILE the possible option of revising downward the dense residential zoning in north Westmoreland, as part of the current Comprehensive Plan process -- since the current zoning (adopted in 1998) reflected expectations of a MAX rail station near Harold Street, and apparently there now will not be one there. She introduced a colleague, Ms. Marty Stockton, to describe the proposal with the assistance of a PowerPoint presentation.

Former SMILE Board member Teresa Pucik commented from the back of the room that in her opinion "north Westmoreland is way overzoned." Ms. Stockton responded, "That's why we're here."

Stein said, "We have a fair amount of flexibility here." She said the Comprehensive Plan will want to recognize the existing higher-density housing already in place, to avoid creating more nonconforming uses and more hardships for property owners -- but there's a significant opportunity nonetheless to do some downzoning.

In addition to the downzoning suggested, Stein and Stockton observed that they had found that some properties on the bluff west of Milwaukie Avenue, with 25% or greater slope, are now zoned RH and R2, but are not developed -- perhaps they should be rezoned to R5?

There were considerable further question-and-answer exchanges on the fine points of zoning, and the potential changes in zoning in north Westmoreland. Marty Stockton then remarked that she had "gotten the message" that the neighbors are interested in the downzoning proposal, and she and Deborah Stein are looking for further comments.

With the agenda completed, the meeting was declared adjourned by President Gail Hoffnagle at 9:06 pm, but many present remained for a while to look at the maps brought by Stein and Stockton, and to engage in conversation about the matters discussed.