

SMILE BOARD MEETING

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

SMILE Station

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OFFICERS PRESENT: Gail Hoffnagle, President; Pat Hainley, Treasurer; Eric Norberg, Secretary
BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ellen Burr; Nanci Champlin; Brian Posewitz; Miriam Erb; Corinne Stafanek, Bob Burkholder

SMILE President Gail Hoffnagle called the meeting to order at 7:29 pm, and began by asking for introductions around the room. She then asked the Board members present to review the minutes of the August Board meeting. Bob Burkholder moved the minutes be accepted as presented, and Miriam Erb seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Diana Richardson was present with Peter Finley Fry, a planner, to try again at her own request to induce the SMILE Board to withdraw its request for a delay at the city level in approving the vacating to her of a small weedy dirt strip beside S.E. Grand between Tacoma and Spokane Streets. Fry explained the nature of the strip Diana seeks to vacate, and observed that all public agencies have already approved Diana's request. Since Portland considers the land out to the middle of a street as being owned by the adjacent property owner, with the street and sidewalk simply being a public easement, he pointed out that the property she seeks to vacate was originally part of her property, and the city can release the easement back to the property owner. The city charges, and Diana is paying for it.

Fry described the process by which city agencies declare property as surplus, and he pointed out that not only does the city want to have Diana take back the unused section of the right-of-way in question, but the city is now asking Diana to include a retaining wall that the city no longer wants to maintain at that location, and to expand her vacation request in order to include that. He said he respects SMILE, and although our input would not block the city from granting the request, he would like the neighborhood association to be aboard on it.

After this presentation, the Board chatted informally, but it appeared that none on the Board, either against or for this street vacation request, had changed their opinion, so the previous non-unanimous vote to request a delay by the city in granting Diana's request would stand at this time.

President Hoffnagle then told the Board that she and Nancy Walsh had gone to the Portland Parks Department to discuss the future of Sellwood Community Center. The city now says it does NOT

expect to discontinue this historic center, but it needs to be a line item in the Parks budget, and currently it is not.

Gail said that Parks now has come around to the view that small community centers are good, and it wants SMILE to advocate for our community center in the city budget hearings.

Gail revealed that Kevin Downing has requested to step down as Chair of the SMILE Community Center Committee, but he would like to remain involved with the associated Permanent Endowment Fund -- a SMILE fund dedicated only to the Sellwood Community Center, per its bylaws. Gail said she would distribute the fund's bylaws to the SMILE Board.

Continuing with her recounting of her meeting with Portland Parks, Gail said she had asked about the Columbia Sportswear sponsorship at Sellwood Park; she spoke specifically with City Counselor Amanda Fritz. She also acquainted Fritz with Parks' misappropriation of the Oaks Pioneer Church capital improvement fund, and was told it was not the only such story she had heard.

Meantime, SMILE has been asked by Parks to resolve a billing issue involving the graphic designer who made the poster to promote the Sellwood Waterfront Concerts in July. That designer turned out not to be on the city's "approved" list, Parks has belatedly discovered -- but SMILE is, so SMILE can pay the designer and be reimbursed for that amount by Parks. Pat Hainley described this work-around as "routine". Bob Burkholder moved SMILE solve the problem in the described manner; Miriam Erb seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

In his Transportation Committee report, Chair Brian Posewitz said that the long-planned intersection restriping at S.E. 17th and Tacoma has been done, and the intersection should be safer. [There was applause.] Brian recapped the letters he had prepared, and SMILE had sent, concerning regular weekly commercial street closures, and TriMet's planned bus service reductions with the opening of light rail next year. We have received acknowledgements of receipt of each of the letters, but as yet nothing more. A requested stop sign on S.E. 19th south of Tacoma has been installed.

Nanci Champlin reported for the S.N.A.C. committee that she Chairs: The Sellwood Gap process is slow, but there is a meeting on Monday with a designer, and the committee will bring a chosen design to the SMILE Board. At Oaks Bottom Overlook Park, there is progress -- the Boy Scouts' work on the picnic tables is expected in October. And, the Westmoreland Park reopening celebration has been moved by Portland Parks to late October, and plans are proceeding.

President Hoffnagle reported that she has learned that other

neighborhood associations are aligned with us on the issue of demolitions, and replacement with large construction, and she has an interest in banding together these neighborhoods to bring these positions to the city. She said she would be willing to be "point person" for this, but is also seeking an alternate.

President Hoffnagle then followed up recent discussions in Board meetings by making a motion that we establish an ad-hoc committee to devise and conduct a public opinion survey of neighborhood attitudes on these issues. Nanci Champlin seconded the motion. In the following discussion, Pat Hainley cautioned that "we cannot keep people from the use of their own property"; and he also suggested more topics on the survey than just these specific issues. Eric Norberg warned that a survey will have to be short if people are voluntarily to complete it. Brian Posewitz said that it is important to ask neutral and cross-check questions to obtain unbiased results, and there was some discussion of retaining a professional survey firm to make sure the designated samples were obtained, and that the results were accurate and credible.

The question was called, and the vote was: 8 yes, 0 no, 1 abstain. The motion carried.

Ellen Burr began her presentation on the new Portland Comprehensive Plan process, and its impact on our neighborhood. The main issue is "mixed-use" zoning, which is subdivided into segments with specific attributes. "The city is figuring it out as it goes," remarked Ellen -- but three or four zones will be available to us -- one with a three-story height limit and another with a four-story limit, for example. "We need a mix of zones -- where shall each go? Four stories at major intersections?" She said she can provide a chart of the different development options for us to study. She showed a map of the current zoning patterns in the neighborhood. Future zoning is expected to be comparable to current zoning, she said, but with variations and subtleties. The "mixed use" component would be responsible for these subtleties.

Considerable subsequent discussion was initiated by former SMILE Vice President and Board member Teresa Pucik, who had been present for this meeting. She expressed some scorn for the Comprehensive Plan process, and skepticism that any plan we advocate would actually be accepted and implemented by the city. She also said that the West Side of Portland should be upzoned before we act on new Comprehensive Plan suggestions.

There were more general comments and observations by others present on current zoning specifics. President Hoffnagle suggested that we study the neighborhood for potential and future use, and discuss this further at the next Board meeting. The last date for public testimony on this will be November 4.

Teresa Pucik had the last word, saying SMILE should not cooperate with the Comprehensive Plan process -- it appears to be her opinion that if we don't cooperate, it is less likely that there would be any changes in the neighborhood.

Ellen Burr finished the discussion by saying she would make a list for the Board on issues we can comment on, and circulate the list to the Board.

Pat Hainley then moved, and Corinne Stefanek seconded, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed unanimously at 9:29 pm.