

SMILE General Meeting minutes

Wednesday, January 4, 2023
At SMILE Station, S.E. 13th at Tenino

Main Website		Procedural
<u>www.SellwoodMoreland.org</u>	<>>	<u>www.SMILerecords.org</u>

OFFICERS PRESENT: Elaine O’Keefe, President; Elizabeth Milner, Vice President; Pat Hainley, Treasurer; Eric Norberg, Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Emily Pitts, Jim Friscia, Dave Weber

SMILE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Ed Nunez, Brett and Barbara Baylor, David Gray, Stephanie Wilde, Sharon Erickson, Jane Jarrett and David McCarthy, Rachel Weber, Rush and “St3e3ve Kasser, Martha Mathus, Felice Mueller, Bob Wilson, Laura Guderyann, Troy Gubrid, Alex Armatz, Alison Murphy, Tom Hickey, Zack Surmooz, Cindy Von, Kari Kohlmann, Adrian Ware, Gaylen Beatty, Lindsey Johnson

VIA ZOOM: Anne Fischer, Melissa, Bernie Murphy, iPad 7, Jackie, Shiela S, Kevin

VISITORS: Jonathan Cruz, Multnomah County; Cole Merkel, “Here Together”; Matt McCarl, “Cultivate Initiatives”

The meeting was called to order by SMILE President Elaine O'Keefe at 7:30 p.m., who greeted the large crowd, and asked for a review of the December 7th SMILE General Meeting Minutes, which had been distributed to those attending this meeting as they entered and signed in. Ed Nunez moved the minutes be accepted as presented, Rachel Weber seconded the motion, and the subsequent vote was unanimously in favor.

Jonathan Cruz was first on the agenda – a representative from Multnomah County, which recently passed new restrictions on the use of wood fuel for heat, cooking, and recreational use. Air pollution is a real problem here, he said – particularly when wood smoke blends with air that is low on the “air quality index”. Basically, when the air is bad on this index, wood fuel burning is prohibited. However, he went on, the County is more interested in raising awareness of the need to restrict wood fuel use than it is in penalizing people for burning wood in low “air quality index” days. Although we might think wood use is higher elsewhere in the state, that is not correct, he said – Multnomah County is actually the larger user of fire wood in Oregon, although much of it is recreational (fireplaces, for example). The bottom line: Please avoid burning wood when smoke is already in the air – and since that can often be in the summertime, this new ordinance applies every month of the year.

Next on the agenda was Tom Hickey, Chair of the new ad-hoc “SMILE Housing Solutions Committee”, introducing the committee and its goals. (Tom is also on the Board of the local nonprofit, “Housing Now”.) He said the new SMILE committee does not pretend to have solutions, but is currently learning more about the problem. And, in connection with that, the committee arranged two guest speakers for tonight’s meeting.

He introduced the first – Cole Merkel, of a large area-wide nonprofit, “Here Together Oregon”. This organization is a coalition of 250 organizations focused on homeless problems. “We are not the government,” he said, “And we are not a direct-service advocate – we focus on policy. We need all hands on deck.” The most recent census count of homeless in Portland was 6,633; and he added that since many avoid being

counted, the actual number is higher. He cited statistics showing the extent of the problem, and then went on to discuss potential solutions in process. “Multnomah County and Portland are already spending half of their ‘homeless budgets’ on housing solutions,” he said.

The next arranged speaker was Matt McCarl of “Cultivate Initiatives” – a nonprofit that started in Outer East Portland – the original focus of which was just on severe weather shelters. Now, it operates a Safe Rest Village at East 122nd and Burnside. It has further branched out to offer a “workforce development initiative”, which offers both paid and unpaid internships to those providing community service. It also has a “community health initiative” which mainly offers hygiene services, and has the use of a “mobile shower truck”. In addition, it has developed a “master lease partnership”, which co-signs leases for those needing housing but who lack a credit history. His advice to SMILE was, “Just keep showing up and keep talking.”

Following these two presentations a lengthy question-and-answer period followed, in which – with a single exception – the attendees were generally supportive of these efforts to address homelessness.

At 9:11 p.m. the meeting was adjourned by SMILE President Elaine O’Keefe.