

Wednesday, February 7, 2024
At Oaks Pioneer Church, S.E. Spokane at Grand in Sellwood

OFFICERS PRESENT: David Dugan, President; Pat Hainley, Treasurer;
Eric Norberg, Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Bob Burkholder, Elaine O’Keefe, Tracy
Fisher, Grant Huling

SMILE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Ed Nunez, Katy Carmel, Jason
Diegnan, Robert and Barbara Baylor, Gwen Jacobs

President Dugan explained that tonight's SMILE General Meeting was taking place in the form of a report to the community on the weather-related catastrophes that took place near the end of the ten-day "Arctic Blast" ice storm at both SMILE Station and at the Sellwood Community House. In both cases, frozen water pipes broke, causing severe damage to both facilities. For that reason, this meeting – and all SMILE General Meetings and Board Meetings until further notice – would be taking place at the Oaks Pioneer Church on the west end of S.E. Spokane Street, at Grand Avenue. SMILE is responsible for the historic church being saved from demolition in Milwaukie around 1960, and gathering the money and facility to move it from its former location and barge it down the Willamette River, to haul it up to its present location and install in there. Over the years it has been upgraded as a public facility of much value to the Sellwood-Moreland neighborhood, and many weddings, concerts, and meetings have taken place in it. SMILE is the renting agent for the church, which sits on Portland Parks land. The church is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (as is the Sellwood Community House).

President Dugan proceeded to display many photos and a narrated video showing the damage done upstairs and especially downstairs at SMILE Station by the pipe which broke in the north wall of the building, near where the piano usually sits. The upstairs meeting room was in the midst of a renovation when this occurred; the ceiling was being raised and amenities were being improved. The torrent of water soaked the floor and some of the walls, upstairs – and then flowed down the internal stairway to the recently completely-renovated downstairs area. The downstairs area received catastrophic damage and the renovation will have to be redone; SMILE is in conversations with its insurance company about it. Dugan says it is hoped the upstairs of SMILE Station will be repaired and ready to reopen as early as sometime in March, but the lower level will take much longer.

When that report was completed, President Dugan invited the President of the Board of the Sellwood Community House to step forward for his report on that facility. Jason Diegnan also showed some photos and a video of the damage done when the main supply pipes for the building's fire suppression system broke on Friday afternoon, January 19th, and poured thousands of gallons of water into the building from the top floor. He said that fortunately this occurred when a key executive was nearby, and so the water was promptly shut off, but thousands of gallons of water had already flowed into the structure, and the damage has been estimated at \$2 million. He commented that they had been told that if the water had continued to run much longer, as would have been the case if the break had occurred when the building was unoccupied, the total demolition of the historic building would have been required. At least, the damage done is fixable, but it will take months and much money. They are also having conversations with their insurance company; since their lease of the city-owned facility gave no responsibility whatever to the city for maintenance and repair of the building, they were carrying substantial insurance, and that should be a big help.

Meantime, Sellwood Community House needs to continue its programs as best it can, so that revenue will come in and the staff can be paid. Trackers Earth on Milwaukie Avenue, just south of Holgate in the Brooklyn neighborhood, is allowing some Community House programs to proceed there, and Moreland Presbyterian Church in Westmoreland is doing the same. A number of businesses are doing fund-raisers for Sellwood Community House, as well.

With these reports complete, President Dugan asked if there were any questions about either facility. None was offered, so he promoted the upcoming SMILE-sponsored combined midwinter classical and jazz concert on Sunday, February 18th, 2-5 p.m., featuring Catarina New, at Moreland Presbyterian Church. Also co-resenting are the church and the Sellwood Moreland Business Alliance. "Set 1" will be classical music with Ms. New's saxophone quartet. "Set 2" will feature her jazz quartet, with Catarina on vocals and sax. Tickets (suggested donation \$10) are available via the SMILE website; and the remaining tickets will be available at the door. Money raised will help support Transition Projects' Willamette Center on Milwaukie Avenue in Westmoreland, and its residents. The church is between 18th and 19th on S.E. Bybee Boulevard.

Dugan also urged those present to consider running for a SMILE Board Seat in our May election, at the May 1st General Meeting – and also to attend the meetings of any SMILE committees of personal interest, and even to consider joining one or more.

There being no further business on the agenda, or offered from the floor, Pat Hainley moved the meeting be adjourned; and Ed Nunez seconded the motion – which then passed with evident unanimity at 8:07 p.m.