

SMILE GENERAL PUBLIC MEETING

January 6, 2016

SMILE Station

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Procedural

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OFFICERS PRESENT: Corinne Stefanick, President; Gail Hoffnagle, Vice President;
Eric Norberg, Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Miriam Erb; Bob Burkholder; Nancy Walsh;
Joel Leib; Elaine O'Keefe

President Stefanick called the meeting to order at 7:29 pm, and asked those present to introduce themselves in turn, around the room. A quorum was present, so she requested a review of the December 2 General Meeting minutes. Elaine O'Keefe moved the minutes be approved as submitted; Rodney Pfleiger seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

First on the agenda was Erin Hubert, C.E.O. of the local Boys and Girls Club organization, whose office is located at, and will remain, near the Sellwood Bridge, just south of Tacoma Street in Sellwood. She was present at SMILE's request to explain the decision to close and move the Meyer club, and sell the club building which it owns on Milwaukie Avenue – and to explore the possibility of PP&R acquiring the building for a new Community Center.

Hubert remarked that the Boys and Girls Club had been in the Sellwood-Westmoreland neighborhood for 49 years, opening first in a former Sellwood fire station [in which she was then standing – it's now known as SMILE Station], and for the last three decades in a building a block south of Bybee Boulevard on S.E. Milwaukie Avenue in Westmoreland.

Hubert said that the Boys and Girls Club is primarily directed these days to serving disadvantaged youth, and this neighborhood no longer has very many disadvantaged youth. Today, disadvantaged youth come to this club from the Oak Grove area, and from south of there, in Clackamas County, and it requires considerable time and resources to bring them here and take them back home. The local Board of the Boys and Girls Club “recently made the difficult decision” to close and sell the Meyer facility, and use some of the proceeds of the sale for a new branch somewhere in the Oak Grove region of Clackamas County. However, the club does plan to continue a limited local program here, as part of the Sellwood Middle School “SUN School” program.

Hubert reported that the club's Board hopes to start the sale process for the Westmoreland facility in the next week, but the existing facility will remain open at least until the end of school in June, even if the sale is completed earlier – as a condition of the sale.

As to the question of a possible sale of the facility to Portland Parks and Recreation, Hubert said that Parks has already inspected the facility and seems interested, but the club's Board will have the final say, and it's hoping to maximize the value of the property. Some question-and-answer discussion with those in the room concluded Hubert's discussion.

Mike Pullen of Multnomah County was next to speak. His purpose in appearing was to update SMILE on the plans for an “on-the-bridge” party to celebrate the switchover of traffic from the old Sellwood Bridge to the new one, although months of work will still be needed to fully complete the project. Pullen said that the current plan is to close the old bridge after the afternoon commute period on Thursday, February 25, and possibly hold a “goodbye walk” on the old bridge right after that the same evening, after which its demolition at the east end would begin. The bridges would be completely closed to traffic until around 5 am Tuesday morning, March 1, when the new bridge would open.

Friday, February 26, work would be underway to prepare the new bridge for the lane switchover, and to make preparations for the “on-the-bridge” party on Saturday, February 27. The celebration on the bridge would take place Saturday from noon till 4 pm, and is intended primarily for local residents, in recognition of the inconveniences of the past few years because of the bridge replacement project. Because there is a great deal more room on the west end of the bridge, especially since part of the new bridge still remains to be constructed at the east end, much of the party would center towards the west side of the new bridge – but it will be fully accessible to those on the east side, and there may be a parade across the bridge as part of the celebration. Merchants and organizations will be invited to set up booths on the bridge deck, and consideration will be given to providing some cover for attendees if it rains. East side entry to the event would be via S.E. 6th and Tacoma Street.

Pullen said ideas for the party suggested by the SMILE Board and local residents and businesses will be incorporated into the party plans as feasible, and he ran down the list. The County is looking for teams of local volunteers to help stage this celebration, since the available budget for it is limited. These plans would require a setup team working 8:30-11:30 am, another on duty 11 am to 2 pm to greet and assist, and the third team greeting 2-4 pm, and then staying long enough after that to assist with the party breakdown on the bridge. Those with further questions, or seeking to volunteer, can reach Pullen at 503/209-4111.

As for the completion of the bridge project going forward, according to Pullen: The project’s public art pieces will be installed by May, and the complex highway exchange at the west end of the new bridge will be completed sometime between August and October. The remains of the old Sellwood Bridge should be completely gone by September. The new traffic signal at S.E. 6th and Tacoma will be activated near Thanksgiving. Pullen concluded his presentation with an extensive question-and-answer period with those present.

To complete the SMILE General Public Meeting, President Corinne Stefanick reminded those present of plans for the SMILE Open House this Sunday afternoon, 1-4 pm, at SMILE Station; “Everyone is invited to come and see what SMILE does!” Since, in our recent community survey, many residents of the neighborhood expressed interest in volunteering on one or more of our committees, “This is your opportunity to see what you might want to be involved with.” There will be drawings for prizes contributed by Sellwood and Westmoreland merchants, as well as refreshments, and information tables. Kids’ activities will be provided, too.

There being no other business, Stefanick declared the meeting adjourned at 8:34 pm.