

SMILE GENERAL PUBLIC MEETING

March 2, 2016
SMILE Station

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Procedural

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

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: David Schoellhamer; Miriam Erb; Nancy Walsh; Joel Leib; Nanci Champlin; Elaine O’Keefe; Steve Szigethy

President Stefanick called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm, noting the presence of a quorum – although many present had not yet signed the attendance sheet in the back of the room, and were again asked to do so. She then she asked those present to introduce themselves in turn, around the room. After that, she requested a review of the February 3 General Meeting minutes. After the review, Elaine O’Keefe moved the minutes be approved as submitted, and Nancy Walsh seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Stefanick introduced Ms. Marty Stockton of the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, who had returned to update us on the latest progress towards completion of the eight-year-long city Comprehensive Plan process: It is now at a critical stage. A final vote by the City Council is expected in June, but the schedule is still subject to change. She defined the areas in our neighborhood proposed for “downzoning” – which are mainly in Westmoreland’s north end, although there is a section of S.E. 13th north of Nehalem in Sellwood involved as well. There followed discussion about specific locales, developers, and zoning, by those present. Stockton went on to discuss mixed-use zoning proposals, as they potentially apply to our neighborhood. We learned that near S.E. Lambert at 23rd is a section where there is a “zoning mismatch”. There was more discussion about the next steps in this process, and Marty received appreciative applause for her contributions as she stepped down.

Next on the agenda was SMILE Board Member and Land Use Committee Chair David Schoellhamer, who arose to continue the conversation that Marty had begun – discussing and showing slides of maps of specific properties under discussion for downzoning. In north Westmoreland, the city Comprehensive Plan Committee had itself initiated a proposal to downzone residential areas which had been upzoned two decades ago at the request of TriMet, in anticipation of high-density residential need associated with the MAX light rail station planned opposite this area. Since, in the end, TriMet reversed its plans for this station, the higher density residential zoning was no longer justifiable, and the city proposed to downzone it to the previous residential zoning. SMILE has testified in support of this.

However, a landowner in this section has requested the planned downzoning be cancelled – he is also reportedly a member of the city Planning Commission! – and he has obtained some support from the City Council for his request. The area he had requested remain zoned RH was bounded by Reedway, Milwaukie Avenue, McLoughlin Boulevard, and S.E.

17th Avenue. Shoellhamer was surprised to learn, at this point in the meeting from Ms. Stockton, who was still present, that the developer's request had just been expanded to include most of the rest of the current RH zoning in north Westmoreland. SMILE will need to update its testimony on this matter.

Brummell Enterprises seeks higher zoning on sections of S.E. 17th in Sellwood between Spokane and Nehalem Streets, and the Mayor supports this plan. Brummell also seeks higher zoning near 17th between Clatsop and Harney Streets, as well as an area near 17th and Tenino. The Mayor is apparently not including those properties in this support, but the situation seems fluid at this time. Meantime, City Commissioner Novick is proposing upzoning of residential property south of Westmoreland Park near Nehalem Street.

SMILE has proposed, and the Mayor supports, downzoning a section of residential property along the Springwater Trail in the Sellwood Gap area from R5 to "open space". The property is owned by Metro. Schoellhamer concluded his presentation by going over the latest revisions to the Comprehensive Plan timeline. It may be necessary to have another Special Board Meeting in early April to approve additional Comprehensive Plan testimony.

The last agenda item was a TriMet presentation on bus routes and the "Southeast Service Enhancement Plan", by Clay Thompson and Vanessa Vissar of TriMet. They began by saying that TriMet will test this Friday the accessibility of the new Sellwood Bridge in its current serpentine east-end configuration as relates to Bus 99. But since there will be three full closures of the Sellwood Bridge between now and the completion of the project around next Thanksgiving, TriMet cannot restore the normal configuration of the intersection at S.E. Tacoma at 13th until that time, since Bus 99 will still have to turn onto 13th to go north to McLoughlin when the bridge is closed, even if it now will be able to use the new Sellwood Bridge, as originally planned, most of the time for its trip to and from downtown.

The duo passed out a draft printed folder with listed upgrades in bus service to many areas (although still none to north Westmoreland). Two new buses may be introduced: Bus X and Bus Y. Some of Bus 70's route in Sellwood might be transferred to Bus Y.

The pair answered questions and engaged in considerable discussion with those present. Several in the room suggested that service to north Westmoreland remains deficient, despite the increasing population and density there. One attendee said that there are similar difficulties for off-hours commuters in Sellwood south of Tacoma Street – that service once provided over the Sellwood Bridge by the former Bus 40 is still now lacking. The duo said that TriMet is willing to consider some expansion of the service hours for Bus 99, an express bus running between Clackamas County and Downtown Portland, with stops on Tacoma Street enroute to the Sellwood Bridge – which now only runs during weekday drive-times.

President Stefanick ended the meeting with a reminder that our annual Board election will take place at the May General Public Meeting, with four one-year officer positions, and four of the eight two-year Board seats, up for election. Candidates are sought!

Stefanick declared the meeting adjourned at 9:03 pm.