

SMILE Board Meeting Minutes

June 15, 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: Elaine O’Keefe; Timothy DuBois; Nanci Champlin;
Nancy Walsh; Bob Burkholder; Steve Szigethy; Joel Leib

President Stefanick called the meeting to order at 7:32 pm, noting the presence of over 55 spectators at that point, with more still arriving – as well as a quorum of the Board.

Stefanick introduced the primary subject of the meeting – a discussion of the planned Multnomah County Homeless Resources Shelter and Center, in the former St. Vincent de Paul building on the corner of S.E. Milwaukie Avenue at Mitchell Street, at the north end of Westmoreland. Multnomah County bought the building, at 5210 S.E. Milwaukie Avenue, in April for the purpose, although St. Vincent de Paul will not be vacating the building until the end of August.

Present were Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury, Stacy Borke and “Marc” from the nonprofit organization “A Home for Everyone” which will be running the new facility for the county, and Multnomah County Commissioner Jules Bailey. (Kafoury and Borke had been present at the April SMILE Board Meeting to discuss the project.) The four of them were sitting at two tables at the front of the room in place of the usual horseshoe-shaped Board table. SMILE had arranged as many chairs as possible in the room, and all Board members were sitting amongst the crowd, rather than taking up space in front with extra tables.

Stefanick went on to call attention to the posted rules of order on an easel at the front of the room, and told those present that Multnomah County had provided a facilitator, D. M. Jordan, who said he had grown up in Sellwood and had attended Sellwood Middle School, to moderate this portion of the meeting. Stefanick also held up a poster she had removed from a telephone pole, saying that the anonymous poster concerning tonight’s meeting which included her telephone number and e-mail address, had NOT been posted or authorized by SMILE, and that SMILE had taken no position on the planned homeless center. She added wryly that at least the anonymous signs had at least been successful in drawing a crowd.

Kafoury had, at the April meeting, told SMILE that there are currently 1,800 people sleeping on the streets in Multnomah County, of which at least 500 are women. Through “A Home for Everyone”, the county is hoping to reduce the size of this problem; Multnomah County is budgeting \$10 million to address this problem, and will have several such shelters around the county, the City of Portland is budgeting \$20 million for the same problem within the

city limits. “We need 600 beds around town, and this location will participate”, she had said, providing shelter for women – as well as couples, since women will not sleep indoors if their man cannot, but no shelter will be provided at this location for single men.

Marc arose to start the discussion at this meeting, confirming that 1,800 number, but adding that the figure was the result of a one-day head-count in January of 2015, and “is no doubt higher now”. Sleeping outside like this is hazardous to health and welfare, he said, and is traumatizing. The goal is to get as many as possible into permanent housing. The county is adding 650 beds for temporary shelter in the meantime, with an emphasis on women and couples. “We are simultaneously moving 1,500 into housing; the shelters are temporary.”

Stacy Borke was next to speak, saying that “A Home for Everyone” dates back to 1959, and is providing shelters around Multnomah County, including the temporary emergency shelter in Multnomah Village. She described the various services provided at these facilities, and confirmed the goal of getting people out of shelters and into something more permanent as soon as possible. She mentioned her own credentials as she concluded her remarks.

Jules Bailey reminded those present that he is the County Commissioner for our part of town; he lives near the temporary emergency shelter in Multnomah Village, which he said was controversial at first, but is well-accepted now. The facility in Westmoreland will be a smaller shelter and will provide more services to the homeless. He promised to “keep good communication with SMILE and the neighborhood”.

D. M. Jordan, the facilitator, arose to moderate the questions. SMILE allocated a period of time for this discussion, per the agenda, he said, and needs to limit the discussion to allow time for other Board business. The goal was to be a limit of two minutes for each question and its response.

A woman present said she was worried about long lines on the sidewalk outside the building. Stacy responded by pointing out that the overnight accommodations will be based on prior reservations, so queuing up would not be an issue in “getting in for the night”. Deborah Kafoury added that the program will be run with county dollars, and such programs do not allow people to sleep on the sidewalk outside. If there is an issue, report it, she said.

Another woman asked if there would be: (1) police presence, (2) couples, and (3) job search. Stacy responded that “we call the police if we need them, which is usually not often”; although this is primarily a shelter for homeless women, couples will be allowed, since women in relationships will not stay there if their man has to sleep outside on the street; and yes, there will be job search resources available.

A man identifying himself as Richard Laughlin arose to make a lengthy critical comment to Commissioner Bailey, fearing overdoses. There will be a no-drug policy, he was told.

A woman asked why tax revenue should support such a shelter. Deborah Kafoury responded that the county has a requirement to respond to a county problem; but she assured the woman that she herself lives near here and will monitor the shelter’s operation.

A woman asked about the other shelters operated by “A Home for Everyone”. Stacey gave

details about them.

A man asked why the Multnomah Village shelter is closing. Jules Bailey responded that it was to be temporary from the beginning, since the property is owned by the federal government, and that was a requirement for its use.

A woman asked how the staff will regulate the no-drugs policy and other rules. Stacy said the facility will be staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and staffers will “walk rounds” inside the building – and will also supervise, check, and clean up, in the vicinity of the building. “There will be zero tolerance for drug use.”

A woman asked how the overnight stay reservations are to be made. Stacy said that it will be done over the phone and in person.

A woman asked what the county will be doing with the space this summer. Kafoury responded that the facility will still be operated by St. Vincent de Paul this summer.

A woman said she was worried the Sellwood Library would be messed up, and said that downtown she was followed by a homeless person. Stacy evidently inferred that her concern about the library concerned the homeless going there to use a computer, and said there will be computer access right in the new county facility in Westmoreland, so there should not be an increase in homeless presence in the library. As concerns the second remark, she said “if you encounter a problem, call 9-1-1, or us.”

A man asked if there is a plan to protect neighborhood safety, Oaks Bottom safety, and Llewellyn Elementary School safety. Marc responded that the purpose of the facility will be to remove people from the street, “to counteract the issues that concern you”. Adding, “We will ally with you in addressing such problems. The facility is to be part of the solution.”

A man asked about the size of the staff at the facility. Stacy said, “six.”

A man asked about a neighborhood agreement. Stacy responded that there would be a neighborhood agreement with SMILE and the community defining programs, services, and procedures, to be arranged through the Office of Neighborhood Involvement.

A woman said she was excited to learn that we are going to respond to the homeless problem with a shelter. “Thank you for the work you do, and I hope more of us will find ways to help with it.”

A woman said she suggests, to those concerned, setting up a “Neighborhood Watch”. She has been involved in one in Sellwood, and had succeeded in getting lawbreakers into jail. She asked, however, “Do we have a say in this shelter?” Kafoury explained the responsibility of the county to solve problems; “one of the things you elected me for is to help resolve problems like this.”

A woman asked a question, mostly inaudible to the Secretary, apparently about priorities. Stacy remarked that she welcomes input from members of the community who know individuals who are homeless, and wish to recommend them for services; “We’ll accept referrals.”

A man identifying himself as “Max”, from the “Watershed” building across Mitchell Street from the new county facility, said that although he was not without concerns, “Our approach will be ‘hi, welcome, hello.’” Adding, “We’re not exempt from community problems,” he said to those in the room; “Be open, and see how it goes.”

The question and answer period had been extended nearly 15 minutes beyond what had originally been announced, by SMILE President Corinne Stefanick, when the facilitator had attempted to end the session to meet the original schedule and had been met with loud verbal protests from those still hoping to ask a question. However, at 8:33 p.m., he called an final end to the session, to allow the SMILE Board Meeting to proceed.

The large crowd arose, and began talking amongst themselves, interrupting the meeting. During this period the tables were rearranged at the front of the room to allow normal Board seating. Most of the crowd and conversation had moved outside by 8:41 p.m., when the meeting resumed.

David Schoellhamer, Land Use Committee Chair, briefed the Board on the city’s Residential Infill Project – the city’s response to complaints about overly large houses being built, and the need to balance housing availability with neighborhood character. A stakeholder committee of some 25 people had been formed to address these issues; the stakeholders included both developers and those opposed to development, so the committee was split, and the result will be a compromise. The compromise includes changing the former limit of the number of units on a property to a square-foot limit on construction on a property; height limits on a property will now be measured from the lowest point near a house rather than the highest point, as now. There will be an increase in setbacks and side setback projections. More housing units will be allowed within structures near traffic corridors.

David provided a summary sheet on the compromise proposals, containing more details. “The issue of housing affordability may be something SMILE may want to address,” he said. The public comment period will be two months instead of the usual one, and the Land Use Committee will attend the upcoming Belmont Open House in order to bring recommendations to the Board in time for its July 20 meeting, since the city’s comment deadline is August 15, before the August Board Meeting.

Scott Kelly next appeared for the Transportation Committee, which he Chairs, to present a letter to PBOT for SMILE approval, requesting a safety study from the Portland Bureau of Transportation of the intersection of S.E. 14th and Bybee Boulevard. He read the letter to the Board, which was followed by considerable discussion, resulting in a few minor changes. Timothy DuBois made a motion that SMILE accept and send the letter as amended, and Nancy Walsh seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of nine yes, none opposed, and one abstention. The abstention was explained as being due to a potential conflict of interest.

The meeting concluded with a review of the minutes of the May 18 Board Meeting. Steve Szigethy moved the minutes be approved as submitted; Elaine O’Keefe seconded the motion; the motion carried unanimously. Steve Szigethy then moved the meeting be adjourned; Timothy DuBois seconded the motion, which carried unanimously at 9:28 p.m.