

SMILE General Public Meeting minutes

January 4, 2017

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OFFICERS PRESENT: Corinne Stefanick, President; Eric Norberg, Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Joel Lieb; Elaine O’Keefe; Nancy Walsh, Bob Burkholder; Timothy DuBois

President Corinne Stefanick called the meeting to order at 7:28 p.m., and asked those present to introduce themselves, around the room. With a quorum present, she asked that the minutes of the December 7 General Meeting be reviewed for approval. She requested that a change be made to the next-to-last paragraph, and the Secretary assented; Bob Burkholder then moved that the minutes be approved as amended, and Ed Nunez seconded the motion. The motion carried without objection.

David Schoellhamer, Chair of the SMILE Land Use Committee, arose to make introductory remarks about the current zoning applying to the block formerly occupied by the Boys and Girls Club, which is to be the site of a four-story mixed-use apartment building. It is zoned CS, and he referred to Section 33.130 of the Portland Zoning Code. The maximum allowable height of the proposed building is 45 feet; windows must be ample enough to meet code. 232 units are planned; the minimum on-site parking (per code) thus becomes 77 spaces; however, an underground parking garage with 104 spaces available for rental is the owners’ current plan. Schoellhamer summarized that 1,259 new apartment units are currently in the pipeline for Sellwood and Westmoreland; there were 5,927 here in 2014, so that is a 21% increase since 2014. And with that, he welcomed back project architect Aaron Jones, whose appearances here are voluntary, and this was his third in front of a SMILE meeting.

Jones reported that the application for a permit has just been submitted on the property. The neighbors had been hoping the underground garage entrance could be moved from S.E. 15th, as planned, to one of the two side streets, which are wider; however, Jones said it turned out that it had to stay where it was planned – not only based on a traffic study conducted on December 7, but also because it had been determined that any other configuration would reduce the parking spaces in the garage and the number of living units. Also in examining the possibility of moving the entrance, he said, a large CenturyLink fiber optic vault on the block also turned out to be too costly to relocate.

Jones then invited questions, and the rest of his presentation consisted of answering questions from those present. To summarize his various answers: Of the apartment units, 12% are to be two-bedroom, 55% are to be one-bedroom, and the remainder are to be studio apartments. The owners are open to installing traffic-calming measures around the building – speed bumps or roundabouts. Cars exiting the garage will not come shooting out onto a narrow street; gates at the entrance will calm traffic, as well as keep out intruders.

There will be two loading docks for tenants, but both will be inside the basement garage. Asked about details of the anticipated construction schedule, Jones responded that the permit application was submitted in the last week of December, it should take about six months to get City approval; demolition will take 30 to 45 days, 4 to 5 months will be needed excavate the basement area – “a 24 month schedule, if all goes perfectly”. He added that the existing basketball court and play structure on the property will be saved and will go elsewhere; and he went on to give details of the construction.

Jones also gave some details about the retail space along S.E. Milwaukie Avenue that will be part of this mixed-use building: It will consist of the first two floors facing Milwaukie, will feature lots of glass and a 15-foot sidewalk; some parking in the garage might possibly be reserved for one or more of the businesses moving in. The whole property will be well-landscaped. A person in the audience asked about the anticipated return on investment for the building’s owners, guessing 20%; Jones was startled, and said 6% would be more like it. He said he had never seen or heard of a local apartment development with a return of much more than 6%. As for street obstruction from construction equipment, he said he anticipates that once the parking basement is finished, construction equipment will move from the street into that space, and off the street. With Jones’ presentation concluded, President Stefanick thanked him for his voluntary appearance before SMILE and he said he remains willing to return again and keep the neighborhood informed about the project.

Next to appear, in place of the scheduled Laura Hanson, was Amy Ruiz, also from Portland Public Schools. She discussed, as Hanson had requested an opportunity to do, the plans for an upcoming school bond measure. She recounted recent school upgrade projects, including the extensive work still underway at Franklin High School. Llewellyn Elementary School and Sellwood Middle School are scheduled for seismic upgrades. She commented that PPS’ need to address lead issues last year had postponed the bond measure, originally contemplated for the recent November election, and it is now tentatively planned for the May 16 election this year. Public input is being sought, and she passed out a timeline and information sheet about it, which is incorporated into these minutes by reference. Her presentation ended with responding to questions from those present.

The final agenda item was a report on the recently-opened Willamette Center Shelter, owned by Multnomah County and sited at S.E. Milwaukie Avenue and Mitchell Street in Westmoreland; appearing, to make the report, was a shift supervisor at the 24-hour facility, Avery Browning. He said the “women and couples, reservation-only” shelter has been at capacity (125 people) every night since it opened on November 16. 87% of those sheltered are from Portland. Donations from the community come in every day. They are still seeking more winter clothing donations and voluntary meal providers from the community. Some Q-and-A followed; several positive remarks were offered by community members present, and some had brought donations to present to the shelter after the meeting. He expressed thanks and collected the donations to drop by the shelter on his way home.

With there being nothing more on the agenda or offered from the floor, Ed Nunez moved the meeting be adjourned, and Bob Burkholder seconded the motion, which carried with what appeared to be complete unanimity at 8:56 p.m.