

SMILE General Public Meeting minutes

April 5, 2017
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: Joel Leib; Elaine O’Keefe; Nancy Walsh; Bob Burkholder; Timothy DuBois; Elizabeth Milner; Miriam Erb

President Corinne Stefanick called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m., and asked those present to introduce themselves, around the room. With a quorum being present, she asked that the minutes of the March 1 General Meeting be reviewed for approval. After the review, Ed Nunez moved the minutes be approved as presented, and Gail Hoffnagle seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Stefanick called upon Tim DuBois, Chair of this year’s SMILE Election Nominations Committee, to remind those present about the upcoming annual SMILE Board Election at the May 3 SMILE General Meeting. Southeast Uplift will be present to oversee the election and the tabulation of the votes. Four at-large two-year Board seats are open (and no more than three incumbents will be running again for them), and all four SMILE one-year Officer seats are also open. President Stefanick has reached her two-consecutive-year term limit specified in our bylaws, and her seat will be open; if there are no candidates for President, Vice President Gail Hoffnagle will then step up and run, but that would leave her Vice Presidential seat vacant. Tim encouraged those present to consider entering the nominations for the election, and it appeared that up to three people present were considering doing so.

Stefanick introduced Lili Boicourt and Jamie Miller, accompanied by a colleague – from ODOT – who were on hand to give details on the rebuilding and resurfacing of S.E. McLoughlin Boulevard (State Highway 99-E) this year, from S.E. Harold Street south to Harrison Street in the City of Milwaukie. The work will start soon – probably before the end of April – with the major activity expected initially to focus on the section between Tacoma and Ochoco Streets.

There will be four weekend closures of northbound McLoughlin Boulevard in July and August to permit removal and replacement of the failing bridge under the highway over the Crystal Springs Creek crossing opposite Westmoreland Union Manor. Both lanes of travel will be affected, but when the southbound side is involved, southbound traffic will be rerouted onto and back off of the northbound lanes at that point. Leaving southbound open at all times should reduce cut-through traffic in Sellwood and Westmoreland, since the northbound high-capacity detour is Highway 224 (or Johnson Creek Boulevard) east to I-205, there really is no high capacity southbound detour feasible at Harold Street, or even at Holgate Boulevard.

Most of the highway construction work will be at night, after 7 pm. Many questions from the floor followed, about the northbound detour and its procedures during the four weekend closures. Despite the official detour, ODOT concedes that many northbound drivers are likely to simply take S.E. 17th north from Harrison Street instead.

Next to appear was Andrew Riley, a spokesman for “Portland Tenants United”, invited by and introduced by David Schoellhamer, Chair of the SMILE Land Use Committee. 39% of our neighborhood is renters; and with the completion of current and planned construction, the population percentage of renters will rise to 48%. It is a challenge for SMILE to get renters to feel sufficiently invested in our neighborhood to become involved in the neighborhood association, but we are open to ways of addressing them.

Riley said his organization is two years old, and all-volunteer. It seeks to organize localized renters unions to resolve renter conflicts and problems with landlords. The organization wants a local rent freeze, and a halt to no-cause evictions, until the state legislature passes an appropriate measure to address these issues. “We are not seeking New-York-style rent controls; rather, ‘rent stabilization’,” which intends to take landlord rights into consideration also. The hoped-for legislation at the state level would also remove the Oregon prohibition on rent control. Riley responded to a number of questions on how these proposals would work, would be enforced, would affect those homeowners who simply rent a room, etc.

Tim DuBois asked Riley if there is anything in these plans to incentivize the building of more rental units. “The real problem is a supply and demand problem,” he observed. Riley conceded that the current vacancy rate in Portland is around 1%, and said that Tim makes a very good point. The planned legislation in Salem would apply most of the planned reforms to properties of more than four or five units, to avoid discouraging small-scale landlords.

As the meeting neared its end, Nancy Walsh reported that the SMILE Sundae in the Park Committee would hold this year’s planning meetings on the second Wednesday of each month from now through July, at 7:30 p.m. in SMILE Station, and any interested people are warmly welcome to attend.

In addition, Nancy reminded those present of the upcoming annual SMILE-sponsored Easter Egg Hunt at the south end of Westmoreland Park – it’s on Saturday, April 15, this year. It’s free and open to all kids and families, but – she cautioned – everyone should arrive a bit early for the 10:00 a.m. start. “By 10:01, it’s all over!”

There being no other business on the agenda or offered from the floor, Ed Nunez moved the meeting be adjourned, and Tim DuBois seconded the motion, which appeared to have already passed with evident unanimity before they had finished making the motion, at 9:01 p.m.