

SMILE General Public Meeting minutes

October 4, 2017

SMILE Station

Main Website

www.SellwoodMoreland.org

Procedural

www.SMILErecords.org

OFFICERS PRESENT: Joel Leib, President; Gail Hoffnagle, Vice President; Pat Hainley, Treasurer; Eric Norberg, Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Brian Bawol; Timothy DuBois; Elizabeth Milner; Miriam Erb; Kevin Palmer; Tim DuBois

President Joel Leib called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m., and began by asking those present to introduce themselves, around the room. Leib observed that a quorum was present, although not everyone in the room had chosen to sign the attendance sheets, and with a quorum it was time to consider the approval of the minutes of the September 6 General Meeting. After the review, new resident Jon Van Bourg made a motion that the minutes be approved as submitted, and Bob Burkholder seconded the motion, which then passed, with one abstention.

President Leib and Crime Prevention Committee Chair R. Corless were planning to focus this meeting on crime prevention, and had invited Multnomah County Sheriff Mike Reese to attend. (Reese, making full disclosure, said that he was up for re-election soon.) Reese, a former Portland Police Officer and Portland Chief of Police, has been Multnomah County Sheriff since August of 2016, when he was appointed to the office, and has been re-elected to it once; he now must be re-elected to it again. He said he was born in Kalispell, Montana, and moved to Portland with his divorced mom at the age of 7. He has a Masters Degree in Public Administration from PSU, after which he worked for 5-1/2 years at the Lents Boys and Girls Club; he has been in law enforcement since 1989.

Reese said that the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office has some 800 employees; he is responsible for the county jails, which involve 65% of those employees and 65% of his budget. His office is also growing as a law enforcement agency, due to various localities in the county contracting for police services with the Sheriff's Office – such as Troutdale, Fairview, Maywood Park, and Suavie Island. It has a large River Patrol division, and also Search and Rescue. The Sheriff's Office helped to rescue 150 hikers trapped on trails by the fast starting and rapidly growing Eagle Creek Fire, and was also involved in the resident evacuations associated with that fire.

Reese commented that he knows that an increasing number of people in the county are beset by mental health crises; many of them are in jails – and when they are released they often re-offend, by committing low-level crimes such as causing a disturbance, or trespassing. He said these people should be placed in supportive treatment and care, but unfortunately that system is overloaded; “they shouldn't be in jail.” He said he is working right now to divert them out of the criminal justice system.

Reese observed that “neighborhood livability” comes up often in neighborhood meetings – affected by issues of homelessness and public safety. City policy in Portland has been not to enforce trespass laws against the homeless, but he is now trying to resolve the issue, while still not criminalizing homelessness. He is trying to keep homeless out of large camps for their own health and safety; they are safer in small encampments. “It is not as easy as you would hope,” he said, to promote and enforce livability issues.

On the subject of gun violence, Sheriff Reese acknowledged that that, and gang violence, are both still major problems. He is working with others on strategies to reduce these problems affecting the community. Gun violence has been declining here, but suicide is increasing dramatically, especially by firearm. Local law enforcement agencies have agreed to improve enforcement when those who are prohibited from buying a gun try to obtain one. (There are 20,000 gun transactions annually in Multnomah County, and there are 26,000 concealed weapon permits.) About “gun violence massacres”, he said that “there are no easy answers”, but he discussed the subject at some depth with attendees.

Reese then took questions and gave detailed responses to questions related to issues he had discussed. Tim DuBois suggested that “cops patrolling on foot” are a more effective community policing strategy than police in cars; Reese agreed, but observed that the Portland Police Department is understaffed, and officers often have to patrol huge areas, so taking them out of cars for patrol is not always practical. Gail Hoffnagle asked about how the homeless can obtain needed mental medications; the Sheriff pointed out that “Cascadia” at S.E. 42nd and Division provides emergency medications to those who walk in, and he added that Obamacare has been very helpful in providing ongoing health and mental care to everyone – if they will go through the steps to get it.

The conversation concluded with Reese saying that his department is trying to treat both victims **and** criminals with dignity and respect. When showing respect to criminals was questioned, he observed that criminals have proven less likely to offend again when they have been treated with “procedural justice”.

The remaining agenda item featured SMILE Board Member Brian Bawol, a member of the SMILE Crime Prevention Committee, who said he has been troubled by concerns raised by reports of crime in the neighborhood found on social media. Some neighborhoods in Seattle have hired private security firms to patrol, but he would not want specific people picked on, and cost is also a concern. These Seattle residents are paying \$250 per household, and it is hard to quantify if crime does decline. Still, he said, the use of supplementary patrols by private security firms locally could free police for more major crimes. Yet, he concluded, Neighborhood Watches could be the best first step.

There being no other business on the agenda or offered from the floor, Nancy Walsh moved that the meeting be adjourned, and Kevin Palmer seconded the motion, which then passed with unanimity at 9:00 p.m.