

SMILE General Meeting minutes

October 2, 2019

SMILE Station

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Procedural

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OFFICERS PRESENT: Tyler Janzen, President; Simon Fulford, Vice President; Pat Hainley, Treasurer; Eric Norberg, Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Elaine O’Keefe; Julie Currin; Bob Burkholder; Joel Leib; Gail Hoffnagle, Elizabeth Milner

President Tyler Janzen called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m., and began by asking those present to introduce themselves, around the room. Then, with a quorum present, he asked that the minutes of the September 4 General Meeting be reviewed. After the review, Bob Burkholder moved the minutes be accepted as submitted; Simon Fulford seconded the motion; and the motion carried unanimously.

First on the agenda was R. Corless, SMILE Crime Prevention Committee Chair, who introduced Portland Assistant Police Chief Chris Davis, who had been accompanied by Captain Passadore. Davis arose, and pointed out that the Sellwood and Westmoreland areas are, if anything, slightly safer than the city as a whole. In June, he said, there were 3,300 calls for service here – which is “about average; a little lower.” The top calls for service were for “disturbances” and “welfare checks” in June. For all of last year, there were 73 stolen car reports for the neighborhood, which is lower than the proportional average for the city as a whole. In violent crime, there were 94 assault calls for service last year – no murders, and few sexual offenses. “The risks here are low” for such crimes. Property crime is lower than average here, too, he said.

Davis conceded that the Portland Police are somewhat handicapped by staffing problems. There are “too many vacant ‘authorized positions,’” both of officers and of non-sworn personnel. “It’s hard to recruit additional officers too.” For the vacant authorized positions, “we are getting a lot of applications – but only 6% make it.” The more difficult problem is recruiting new officers; “we need more than [our present] 1,001, and caseloads and response times are increasing.” He said that Portland has 1.3 officers for every 1,000 residents, which is about equal to the ratio in San Diego – but that ratio is near the bottom of the list among big cities. “Officers are getting swamped with calls for service; resources are stretched thin.”

A member of the audience asked Asst. Chief Davis about the possibility of training separate responders for mental health issues, since this is a factor in many police calls for service. Davis said that this would help, but officers still do wind up involved in mental health cases. He added that all officers get 40 hours of crisis intervention training; in addition, every officer assigned to ECIT and Crisis Intervention teams get even more training, and these Portland officers “are among the best in the country” in dealing with such situations.

Next on the agenda was Judge Shelly Russell of the Multnomah County Circuit Court, who

came with a local resident – Attorney Richard Vangelisti. She had been invited by President Janzen to come and discuss “courts, and the rule of law”. Judge Russell is on the civil and criminal bench in Multnomah County – where she is one of the newest judges. She is a former civil litigator. She explained that we have a dual system – federal and state. She told how judges are appointed, and when they are, instead, elected. She discussed and described the Federal Courthouse downtown, which she mentioned is not reinforced sufficiently to withstand a major earthquake. A new courthouse is under construction, and is slated to open next June. She told of security problems in the current courthouse, and how defendants reach the courtroom in which they are to be tried. An audience member asked her about judicial impartiality, and she responded “we all try to do that” – and, if you have had an adverse experience, you should speak with the Judicial Fitness Committee with your complaint; “a handful of judges have been removed.” Judge Russell described the process following an arrest, in response to a request from the audience. She answered a question concerning the Oregon Supreme Court, on which there are nine judges. She said that civil trials are to go to trial within one year, if possible, in Oregon; that interval is much longer in California and Washington.

Jeff Caudill, a Portland City Planner, followed, with an update on the Portland River Plan – specifically, the “South Reach”. The boundaries of this section extend from the Ross Island Bridge down both sides of the river – down to Dunthorpe on the west side of the river, and to the south end of the Garthwick district of Sellwood on the east side of the river. For the South Reach, there are a Natural Resource Plan and a Scenic Plan. An inventory of resources is included. The Draft Plan is nearing its public release and review. All development in the South Reach zone will have a sixty-foot setback from the Willamette River. The plan addresses docks and exterior lighting, with specific guidelines. It also addresses such concerns as bird migration and environmental zones. There will be tree removal restrictions, and new national floodplain rules will be incorporated too. Rules for development will include investigation of and protection for historical artifacts on the development site. Soon there will be open houses for public comment on the Draft Plan.

Last to appear was Read Stapleton, a Land Use Planning Consultant retained by the Foundation Partners, new owner of Wilhelm’s Portland Memorial, to advise on the disposal of property deemed superfluous. The large south parking lot was sold for development two years ago; under consideration is doing the same with the large north parking lot. Since they perceive that the parking needed to accommodate mourners for funerals is much less than these lots have provided, they now want to create 26 parking spaces on the south end of the wildland property they own just north of the mausoleum, known informally as “Moreland Woods”, for which five trees would be removed; but, contrary to the original thinking, they no longer plan to create a cemetery on the north portion of this property, and it will remain for sale, and this might still be acquired for a public park as local organizers have hoped.

As for concerns about accommodating much larger crowds for its annual Memorial Day observance, Wilhelm’s conducted a parking study during its 2019 Memorial Day event – and determined that there were 103 cars parked by attendees, at its peak at 1 p.m. Their plan to accommodate such a crowd in the future involves satellite parking agreements with the Westmoreland Bank of America branch and with Reed College – using a shuttle between Reed and Wilhelm’s, on that day. Some Q-and-A between Stapleton and some of those attending ended the meeting. President Janzen adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.