

SMILE General Meeting minutes

June 3, 2020

Via ZOOM, online

Main Website

www.SellwoodMoreland.org

Procedural

www.SMILErecords.org

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

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Gail Hoffnagle; Eriks Berzins; Julie Currin; Elaine O’Keefe; Priyesh Krishnan; Rhea Smith; Elizabeth Milner; Bob Burkholder

SMILE MEMBERS ATTENDING: R. Corless, Jeff Gamer, Elizabeth Mattern, Frank Hood, Erin Fryer, Jennifer [last name not disclosed], Kim Borcharding, Ann [last name not given], Rachel Lidskog-Lim, Nicolette C., Emily Goldendale, Louise Currin, Mark Wilson, Alex A., Ashland & Curt Asbjornsen, Jason Diegnan, Alan Pryor, Nancy Walsh, Robinette Fitzsimmons, Kim Wohlsein, Miles de Bastian
[names gathered off the screen when speaking; may not be complete]

Vice President Simon Fulford, as presiding officer, called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. He began the meeting by asking for self-introductions by those present (not all of whom were visible on the Secretary’s computer screen, but 33 were present as the meeting started, and the final attendance was 38, not all of whom may be identified here). He announced the meeting protocols: Please stay muted unless you want to speak, and then hold a thumb up in front of the camera on your computer (or otherwise signal) to show you have raised your hand to speak, and I will unmute you when it is your turn to do so.

With a quorum present, and with the May 6 General Meeting minutes having been distributed in the e-mail sent to those requesting a hotlink to participate in this ZOOM-enabled meeting, he asked for a review of the minutes. Elaine O’Keefe moved acceptance of the minutes as submitted, and Bob Burkholder seconded the motion, which went on to carry unanimously.

Simon Fulford next brought up recent neighbor concerns about campers on the premises of SMILE Station – which is now posted against camping – but the problem is not solved, he conceded. The campers have gotten more adept in avoiding the place when they believe someone will be there, but still camp there at other times. R. Corless said she and Neighborhood Watch are keeping an eye on the Springwater Trail near Ochoco Street.

Simon then announced that the annual SMILE Board Election will take place as soon as practicable, under the guidance of Southeast Uplift, but probably not until the August General Meeting. Our Election Committee has been appointed, and is seeking diverse candidates. Eric Norberg discussed the open positions, the freedom of incumbents to run for re-election; that the only seat limited to two consecutive terms is President – which is a

Board Officer position that is currently open, but for which Simon is expected to run. A member of the committee, Priyesh Krishnan, said we are expecting to offer online voting, open for a 24 hour period – and, for those without Internet access, a paper ballot option with the same 24-hour voting period. There was a brief general discussion of recruiting candidates and inviting participation.

Simon reminded those present of SMILE’s ongoing attention to supporting the community during the COVID-19 pandemic, and asked if anyone present had current concerns we should address. None offered at that point. R. Corless announced that Home Forward is seeking volunteers to deliver meals to tenants inside the Sellwood Center at S.E. 17th and Tenino.

Simon Fulford then turned to what he expected to be a major part of the meeting: “Neighborhood concerns and community feedback”. It quickly developed that the subject of the concerns was to be perceived shortcomings at Sellwood Community House; SMILE can provide a forum, but the community house is an entirely separate nonprofit corporation.

The following represents, to the best of the Secretary’s ability, the sequence and substance of the comments, and by whom each was made.

Melissa Mattern: She has concerns about Sellwood Community House fiscal matters, including a new billing system which has led to uncollected childcare payments (she said she is an expert in this area, and is open to help solve this problem). She is concerned about the current Manager of the facility, and she believes the SCH Board is not large enough to be representative, and should meet more openly. She feels some volunteers have been mistreated.

Kim Borcharding: Former SMILE Board Member said she feels she was mistreated by the SCH Board and she resigned last November. She wants to see an Interim Director turn around the Sellwood Community House.

Erin Fryer: She is a former employee at SCH. Employees are paid on different scales. The Manager of the facility has proved to be an obstacle, and has made many missteps.

Alex A.: She has a background in assisting nonprofits of many sizes. Those at SCH are generally people of goodwill, and have done much work. But she is concerned about leadership lapses, the risk of lawsuits, and ethical problems. SCH’s survival is at stake, but there is a wonderful opportunity to turn it around. She feels the SMILE Board has responsibility to take the initiative to lead it in a better direction – and she is available to help turn it around.

Jason Deignan: He is a SCH Board Member, and “actually agrees with much of this”. He said the SCH Board received an alarming letter about all this some two weeks ago – similar to what has been said tonight. He is unsure to what extent this is either true, or interpretation. “We need to sit back and continue to investigate. Any mistreatment of a child should be reported to the Board and the authorities.” The concerns apparently date back to October, but the Board heard about it only two weeks ago. “We could use a deeper Board, with more skills and resources.”

Robinette Fitzsimons: She has been a volunteer since October; she is appearing in support of Erin and Liz. She has been impressed with what SCH offers, and hopes it can continue. “I have been concerned about management since Day One.”

Elaine O’Keefe: Exactly what are you looking for from SMILE, for this legally separate entity?

Gail Hoffnagle: “I want to reiterate what Jason said.” We have had an outside person interview those who are concerned, and are initiating a reorganization of the SCH Board. We are now very close to closing on the purchase of the Sellwood Community House. [It was opened under a lease with the city last September, with an option to buy.] We cannot discuss personnel matters in an open meeting. We are moving forward.

Elizabeth Milner: There is probably a better place to discuss all this than in a SMILE General Meeting, but I stand behind what has been discussed. I appreciate the Board of SCH getting it up and running so fast last fall, but issues must be addressed. I would like SMILE to assist SCH in best using its money.

Simon Fulford: Two challenges have been posed – concerns of leadership and management, and impassioned offers from the community to address getting the Sellwood Community House thriving.

Pat Hainley: The SCH Board Members are volunteers, and had to battle the city to get it open; the Board tried to use the structure [of management] the city had been using to start it up. No one on the SCH Board is a person of ill will – the Board had just devoted all attention to “putting out fires” at the city level, and proceeding.

Julie Currin: I have posted the next SCH Board Meeting – these are open meetings. They are on the fourth Tuesday evening each month, at 7 p.m. Open to everyone.

At this point, the SMILE General Meeting had run a few minutes past its scheduled close. With a stopping point in the conversation having been reached, Simon Fulford asked if anyone wanted to move adjournment. Bob Burkholder did so; Elaine O’Keefe seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously at 9:15 p.m.; Simon thanked those attending for participating, and bringing concerns forward. “I appreciate this difficult conversation.”