

St. Johns Neighborhood Association
General Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 10th 7:00 p.m. St. Johns Community Center
Minutes by Denis C. Theriault, Secretary

Board members present: Shamus Lynsky, Jennifer Levy, Emilie Saks-Web, Justin Sundling, Denis Theriault, Josh Leslie, Rob Metnick, Ben Poe

Officers Gustafson and Schmerber and about 20 other community members were present.

The meeting was called to order about 7:03 pm by Shamus, presiding officer tonight.

Shamus leads an introduction of the 2014-15 board members and notes the board has 10 of 11 available spots filled. He says the board is hoping to fill that spot via appointment, perhaps someone in the room or perhaps someone in the room who knows someone else who'd be interested.

Shamus then asks if anyone has any clarification(s) to offer in the October minutes. There are no corrections. Josh motions we accept the minutes, seconded by Rob, and the motion passes.

There's a discussion about who can vote. Voting is open to people who work or live in St. Johns, and a woman asks whether parents of schoolchildren in the neighborhood are eligible. They are not, says Shamus, our parliamentarian, citing SJNA bylaws.

Adam Robins, board treasurer, is ill. So an abbreviated report is relayed on his behalf. SJNA is solvent. Adam plans a more thorough report at our next meeting, after he meets with Tom Griffin-Valade.

The police bureau:

OFFICER ROD GUSTAFSON says he recognizes a few faces. He was the neighborhood liaison in the late 1990s and early 2000s. He's assigned anew to North Precinct after doing work with the Traffic Division.

Jennifer asks for updates re: PBOT and the police bureau's Traffic Division plans over the two Wednesdays prior to hold public crosswalk enforcement missions. The day of one of the actions, she says, she saw three pedestrians almost get hit. But Gustafson, filling in for Officer Michael Schmerber tonight, doesn't know anything.

There's much conversation about pedestrian right of way laws. Gustafson suggests pedestrians who step into a crosswalk legally might be "right," but they might also be "dead right." "Self preservation is the thing," Gustafson says. He also says too many people are glued to their phones when walking and navigating traffic. "I can't believe how many people have almost taken themselves out of the gene pool," he says.

One man asks if Oregon has laws against distracted driving. Gustafson says yes, and that the rules predate cell phone laws, like if you drive while having a jumpy dog on your lap or while eating a distracting sandwich.

Shamus asks about petty theft reports popping up on the neighborhood's main Facebook page and says the police used to bring report of incidents in the neighborhood to the meeting—except it's been three or four months since that's happened. Shamus says he mentioned it to Sgt. Christensen and Angela Wagnon, our crime prevention coordinator in the Office of Neighborhood Involvement. Gustafson says he'll put that on his information sheet. He says those reports are generated downtown by a big computer program.

Gustafson offers some general guidance. He says many petty crimes and car break-ins are caused by those he describes as criminally transient, as opposed to those who are merely homeless on a "transitional," involuntary basis. "They're too completely different things," Gustafson says.

He says winter and late fall are when some people experiencing homelessness look to fortify their camps and obtain resources to make it through the colder months. He says not to leave things in cars that can be taken or sold. Thieves tend to take things that can be carried easily and/or sold quickly and cheaply. Blankets and clothing left out on clotheslines, he says, might also make for attractive targets.

Shamus mentions package season and asks if there are any good resources available, maybe online. Jennifer says she forwarded a bunch of "do's and don'ts" from Wagnon to Shamus and to Ben and Babs Adamski, who run SJNA's livability committee.

Jennifer says she'd post that information on Facebook and also post it on the SJNA website. She reminds everyone that Wagnon is the lay person who works crime prevention in St. Johns as well as other parts of North Portland. She asks about thefts in neighborhood stores, calling that "a constant problem."

Gustafson says several retail rings are known to work in Portland, but "not out here so much." OFFICER MICHAEL SCHMERBER, our traditional police liaison has arrived. The officers mention Lloyd Center and Jantzen Beach as higher-profile theft targets, sometimes by thieves running gift card scams.

Shamus asks about new gift card buyback location in downtown St. Johns. "Are you keeping your eyes on that?"

The police say that kind of outfit, providing that kind of service, isn't part of the scam used at big stores. It's well-coordinated rings working across jurisdictions. The thieves make fraudulent returns, with lax/accommodating stores failing to check receipts before giving the thief a gift card valued the same as the item fraudulently returned.

Schmerber laments that store security policies, which include “no touch” policies when it comes to suspects and reticence to report and prosecute shoplifting, create what amounts to a “free for all.”

One woman says stores do track shoplifters and says if they come in 20 times a month, they’re put on a list. The police say retail theft in St. Johns is most likely caused by the “criminally transient population.” Gustafson gives the example of a guy who steals food worth \$3 or \$5 a day. Prosecutors won’t even bother charging over something so small. “We wind up trespassing” someone like that, he says.

Schmerber takes over and says he’s brought expanded crime statistics and calls St. Johns neighbors “guinea pigs” for that kind of report. “If you like it, we’ll keep doing it.”

The stats, this time, are broken down monthly. He says there weren’t many Priority 1 calls in August and September, five, but that the numbers went up in October to nine. Disturbances made up many of the Priority 2 calls, and about a third of the overall calls for service. A disturbance can be someone who’s walking outside screaming, a husband and wife fighting, or a bartender who reports two transients fighting.

“The problem we’re having is there’s the perception vs. the reality of what’s going on out there,” says Schmerber, saying the stats suggest a neighborhood that’s safer than the chatter would indicate.

Jennifer asks how we compare to other, more problematic areas. Schmerber says he’s meeting the next day with Cathedral Park’s association.

Shamus asks for a PDF and says he’d love to help Schmerber more easily transmit the stats, to arm people who’d otherwise complain about safety with real and meaningful information.

Schmerber says the police addressed a problem with squatters in a house at Richmond and Ivanhoe, calling it the “most successful house we had.” A week after the house was reported by the owner, dealing with a foreclosure, the house was boarded up and cleaned (with the help of neighbors). Schmerber urges others to call police when they see lights on or other signs of activity in abandoned houses.

A man asks about houses with potential meth issues. He mentions a green house on Trumbull. Schmerber encourages him to call in those situations and says that house has been difficult.

He says that house was owned by an elderly gentleman who’d taken up with a troublesome girlfriend. The man died, but forgot to sign his will, which left the house to the son. That left the girlfriend as the default owner. The son has walked away and the daughter hasn’t returned police calls.

“The city won’t take the house from her,” Schmerber says. “She says it’s her house.”

The man reiterates that the house is seen as a major meth house. Schmerber says even his informants don't want to go in there. Babs offers to connect the son with the number of a builder who razes homes.

Schmerber says he doesn't have the son's contact information. He says code fines have been stacking up—and winding up with the daughter, who asked why she was responsible for them. Schmerber says people kicked out of a similarly fraught house on Bristol, featured in the *Oregonian*, have moved to that house. "It was like an ant trail."

Safety and Livability Team:

Benn announces the next SALT meeting, November 17 at 6:45 at the library, every third Monday.

Shamus explains that last month's SALT meeting served as his well-attended forum on gentrification in St. Johns. He says he's waiting to revamp the SJNA website so he can post the panelists' presentations. He hopes to continue the forums on a quarterly basis.

Ben mentions plans to subdivide the Open Meadows property, up for discussion in Cathedral Park. Shamus plugs the SJNA land use committee, which is planning to resume regular meetings, as a vessel for the new energy generated at the gentrification forum.

Friends of Baltimore Woods:

Mark Hill touts the group's big holiday book sale. FBW.. Mark Hill: it's the holiday season abgain. FBW and Cathredral Park place.. lhaving a big annual book sale. Buck a book or cheaper. Come with a 1o dllar mbill and get 2015's reading list taken care of. CPPlace has an open house at the same time. Christmas things for sale down there, too. DEbember 6..

Winterfest:

Laura Woodruff wasn't in attendance. Shamus says she wants to help SJNA set up a proper Winterfest event, as opposed to the "renegade" indoor market that's been cropping up since the fall. "I guess we'll take that up at our board meeting."

Other follow-ups:

Shamus reminds everyone that SJNA asked attendees in October to list their three priorities for the coming year. Emilie is synthesizing them, he says, saying the hope was to have some kind of report before the next general meeting. The board also will discuss those priorities, he says.

Shamus mentions plans to pool resources and create a money-saving “equipment bank” for the neighborhood’s many nonprofits. The plan is to get the bank up and running in 2015, possibly at Main Street’s expansions space or in a storage facility.

Dre Davey, founder of St. Johns Swapnplay confirms Swap’s announcement about the dissolution of Trash 2 Treasure and its spinoff of its Preserve & Serve program. Swap decided it needed to focus more on its core mission: running its playspace. T2T was seen as a victim of its own sprawling, madcap success.

Kelly Guess of St. Johns Living Well is taking over the Preserve & Serve library. Kelly can be contacted to explain which items will remain free to neighbors and nonprofits and which will now be provided through rentals.

As for T2T, SJNA will step in and provide a new and different neighborhood cleanup event. SJNA receives city funds every year for a cleanup and had been giving that money over to T2T. That money will now be spent on organizing “some smaller version” of the event, Jennifer says. She hopes it has “many of the same aspects” and says SJNA would love to have some volunteers. Interested neighbors should see her or Emilie.

Babs and others talked about November’s ad-hoc downtown cleanup event planned for November 22. Thai Cottage was planning on donating lunch again. Roosevelt High’s Key Club earned praise for its willingness to help.

Relatedly, the Key Club was recognized for providing child care during the general meeting. That child care will continue, says Shamus, who helped craft that arrangement.

Pembina update:

Jason Fydirchuk, an outreach official for Canada-based Pembina Pipeline, presented some talking points on a proposed liquid propane terminal planned for a patch of land near the Port of Portland’s Terminal 6 on the Columbia River.

He put up a Power Point with few hard numbers, explaining that Pembina is working to obtain permits and that much of the information available about the terminal is still conceptual. Fydirchuk says he wants to hear concerns and address them as the project unfolds and promises to come back again to address the NA.

He starts with a history of Pembina, talking up their emphasis on safety. Pembina doesn’t produce or extract fossil fuels. It just stores or transports or blends fossil fuel pulled out fo the ground by someone else.

The company has boomed in recent years, he says—growing from a family-owned pipeline company founded in 1954 to a corporation that’s been snapping up other companies since 2010 and getting a listing on the NYSE. It’s now worth \$18 billion.

The terminal would be operated by subsidiary Pembina Marine Terminals. He stresses that there won't be an underground pipeline at the planned terminal. Propane would be shipped to the terminal via rail, stored in refrigerated tanks and then sent to ships on the river via a short above-ground pipe. There might be two or three ships a month, but that the number could change.

The site will meet seismic standards, he says. He addresses concerns about rail safety, saying Pembina uses trains six years old or younger. It would create maybe 30 to 40 ongoing jobs.

He says the company doesn't have site schematics yet. He acknowledges that current zoning codes in Portland don't allow for even an above-ground pipeline in the strip of land lining the Columbia. He says the company isn't interested in crude oil or liquefied natural gas.

The goal's to open in the first quarter of 2018.

Then he goes into a pleasant sales pitch on propane, calling it cleaner than other fossil fuels when burned, like coal and diesel and LNG, and safer to transport as a liquid.

The ongoing jobs will come after 600 to 800 construction jobs, he says. The tax benefits could be \$12 million a year, split between the city, Multnomah County, and Portland Public Schools. Annual operating expenses could be \$25 million to \$30 million a year.

Mark Hill asks why Portland was chosen. Fydirchuk explains that the Port of Portland's already a favored terminus for Canadian firms shipping bulk material. Emilie asks how often trains would come down the Gorge, and Fydirchuk says once every two days, but that could change pending talks with Pembina's rail carrier.

Ben asks how long the trains will be, saying some coal trains are a mile long. Fydirchuk says the standard is 100 cars but that could be shorter or longer. Ben also asks whether Pembina owns its rail cars. It does not. It leases them. But it swaps 10 to 20 percent out every year.

Plans for 2015:

Emilie says taking on the neighborhood cleanup will affect the rest of SJNA's workload over the year. The conversation centers on the cleanup and changes to the Winter Social.

Jennifer says the social was similar to T2T in that it grew rather large and required more and more volunteer time. So the board has decided to step back and rethink the social's role and value, based on the amount of work required to pull it off and what the community might like to see in its place.

Shamus asks if the social's goal of connecting volunteers was still being met—or if it's become a chance to get a free meal “that one night.” He says a big social, in light of the cleanup coming on board, is “really stretching our volunteer resources thin.”

He says he's observed that there's a relatively small universe of people—despite the size of our neighborhood—who seem to be the most involved. “We have talent here,” he says. “How do we tap them as volunteers? I see the same people. How do we deepen that pool to serve the whole neighborhood better and pool our resources.”

That's one reason Main Street and the St. Johns Farmers Market merged their boards, he says. Shamus also says he'd heard people asking what Main Street even does. Perhaps having an opportunity for people to actually learn about what's available would help encourage more neighbors to seek out more volunteer opportunities. He envisions an event with music and a cash bar, maybe at the Colony, where nonprofits can set up and help people “find out where they want to plug in.” Shamus is talking with other nonprofit leaders about this.

It'd be “fun,” he says. “But not as much of a giveaway as our winter social.”

One mom of a Roosevelt student worried about not having the event at the school, and about not having the school's jazz band performing. Dre commended SJNA for “coming to this place on the social,” mindful of Swap's news re: Trash 2 Treasure.

Jennifer suggested changing the way the social looks but keeping it in the early part of 2015. The social used to be a potluck before it got too large—and now that Cakeluck has emerged there are other social outlets. She suggested a community prom neighborhood fundraiser might be a good way to continue ties with Roosevelt and its jazz band.

Amy Frey cautions that whatever replaces the social can't just be for volunteers. “If we do something just for volunteer groups, we'll be standing in a room looking at each other.”

Jennifer then announces that four restaurants are planned for the 2/3 development on Lombard. 24th and Meatballs is confirmed, maybe also vegan and Lebanese restaurants. An eyecare clinic's in the mix. So is a massage/chiropractic office. One restaurant has yet to be selected. Indian food isn't looking so likely.

The meeting adjourns at 8:31 pm.