

**St. Johns Neighborhood Association**  
**General Meeting Minutes**  
**7 pm, Monday, Oct 12, 2015 | St. Johns Community Center**  
**Minutes by Denis C. Theriault, secretary**

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

About 45 other community members were present.

The meeting was called to order at 7 pm by Shamus, the night's presiding officer.

Emilie motions to approve the minutes from **September** as written, seconded by Gloria. The minutes are approved.

Election results are presented:

### **THE TREASURY**

Adam, the treasurer, was absent. Jen says the numbers are similar to last month's report. SJNA should have about \$5,000 in its main account, \$1,200 in the art fund. In the past two months, SJNA has spent \$30 in printing costs, Emilie says. Most of SJNA's budget is spent on communications — i.e. its online newsletter. Money is also spent on equipment for volunteer events, sponsorships or help seeding fundraisers. An attendee asks about the art budget. Shamus says anyone interested in helping SJNA spend money on public art should feel free to come forward and help come up with ideas.

### **SAFETY AND LIVABILITY**

*The team, also known as the SALT team, meets at 7 pm the first Tuesday of the month at the St. Johns Main Street office, 8250 N Lombard, right across Charleston from Signal Station Pizza. Agendas are posted on NextDoor and Facebook.*

*It's an open forum for sharing concerns on any issues that affect safety and livability — including public safety, traffic, property crime, environmental issues, and gentrification.*

Ben, the board's SALT liaison, says the same discussion on traffic and safety concerns remain in place. People also want Trimet to offer a forum on planned route changes in North and Northeast Portland. Shamus says Trimet has offered to present some options. But one question for the room: Would folks want that mashed into a SALT meeting? Or would they want that featured during a general SJNA meeting. Most people raise their hands and say they'd prefer a forum at the general meeting.

Joe Adamski, a former board member, asks how many people use Trimet. Many hands go up. Shamus asks how many people might use it more often if it were more convenient. Many more hands go up.

Ben says SALT's issues with the forum involved accessibility — in that, would it be easily attended by people living across Fessenden. One venue: George Middle School. And why not have Trimet host, too?

Shamus notes that general meetings are one of the larger regular neighborhood gatherings. Combining a forum at a place such as George with a general meeting, could dovetail with the SJNA board's notion of one day having a meeting across Fessenden. Almost a third of the neighborhood lives beyond Fessenden/St. Louis.

Scott asks about the decision process and timeline. A man says Trimet has closed comments on their proposals while preparing a second draft of changes. Shamus brings up a recent meeting, two months ago, of neighborhood group chairs and says Trimet told the chairs they heard St. Johns loud and clear that we "hate" many of the changes proposed.

The logistics around any forum will be a board decision.

Other SALT discussions at its most recent meeting: planning and sustainability, how to shape the city's perception of St. Johns as an industrial enclave, and the mystery on why Willamette Cove cleanup hasn't started as promised.

## **OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD INVOLVEMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS**

On Sunday, Oct. 18, 1 pm, Main Street is hosting a cleanup of the plaza. Supplies will be provided! It's followed by a Cakeluck at 3 pm. What's that? A cake potluck. You can even show up without a cake!

Camping, housing and homelessness will come up at the October edition of the monthly North Portland public safety meeting at the Kenton Firehouse, with representatives from the mayor's office and police bureau expected to attend.

A mental health awareness meeting — tackling questions like "what do you do when you witness someone in a mental health crisis, resources?" — is planned for Thursday, Oct. 29. Brad Taylor, mental health specialist for the city, will present.

The St. Johns Bar Collective, a meeting of local bar proprietors talking about their common issues, is set for Nov. 3 at the Main Street office.

## **LAND USE**

*The land use committee meets every second Thursday of the month at the Main Street office. The committee works like this: When new development is proposed in St. Johns, SJNA is notified. We have a chance to respond to those notices if we think a proposal is against the interests of the neighborhood. But our response is limited: SJNA has little recourse if an undesirable or dubious project is allowed by zoning rules and city code. Our leverage comes once a developer seeks a concession or exception, also known as a "variance."*

There are just a few updates this month. The Bank of America building at Lombard and Chicago is for sale. No plans are pending.

The former Dad's building, last holding the Central Hotel, is for sale. No plans are pending.

The Steelhammer site south of Cathedral Park has been purchased. No plans have been announced.

Demolition will start next month on the Union at Charleston site (church, Huk Lab building, hookah joint). They will fence the area off. The hearing with the Planning and Sustainability Commission on the street vacation (the Lombard slip lane toward Charleston, etc.) is set for November 17. Shamus says construction won't start until after the holidays, meaning no disruption for businesses during that tender and lucrative season.

John asks about the Bank of America site as a grandfathered drive-thru (new drive-thrus aren't permitted in the neighborhood). Do the grandfather rights transfer on if it's scrapped and cleared?

Shamus doesn't believe so. A business on St. Louis, a former junkyard and former chop shop, lost its grandfathered drive-thru rights after it burned down. Not enough of the building remained.

The mayor's proposed tax on demolitions tax was set for a 2 pm hearing at city hall.

Jen says the development planned for the Baowry site (Ivanhoe and Syracuse, across from McMenamins) is changing. But those changes remain unknown. And there's other confusion: The Baowry's owner says the restaurant's lease is intact for another year. The property owner, meanwhile, says the business doesn't actually have a lease.

## **PORTLAND HARBOR PROJECT UPDATE**

Matt McClincy of the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality offers a presentation on the state's role in the Willamette River/Portland Harbor superfund cleanup, which will be led by the federal Environmental Protection Agency. That proposal is a year away. Agencies are beginning to seek community input (albeit

through a byzantine process, full of dense and technical information, all moving on a fairly short timeline).

The superfund site, full of polluted silt and water after years of industrial concentration, stretches roughly from the Fremont Bridge to Kelley Point Park. Pollution cleanup and prevention is a politically sensitive subject. Businesses, such as fuel terminals, truck factories and steel fabricators, still use the river and worry that new protections and cleanup work will cost them money.

He's showing a video to better explain DEQ's part in the thing, on a subject called "source control." DEQ has basically spent decades tracking and trying to cap land-based pollution sources before they make it to the river in the first place. Some of those projects, dating to the 1980s and 1990s, predate the superfund designation.

DEQ signed a deal with feds and tribal governments to divide the superfund work. DEQ is in charge of tagging currently fonts of pollution sites, and controlling them, so that when EPA eventually gets to cleaning the river sediment, those leaking sits up the river banks won't re-pollute the freshly cleaned river.

Those pollutants leak from sites long closed: the river once hosted pesticide factories and ship maintenance yards. They include DDT, PCBs, heavy metals such as cadmium, and chemicals associated with creosote. They have two main paths to the river:

1. The chemicals seep into groundwater that eventually drains to the river.
2. Stormwater — rain! — rinses the contaminants into the sewer system, or down the river banks, and into the water. (Sewer outflows are much improved now that the city has it's Big Pipe up and running.) Forest Park is a very effective natural filter for stormwater.
3. Both can be made worse by erosion, which exposes contaminated soil.

DEQ has evaluated some 170 sites and 119 sites have control measures.

One site up the river, vacant since 2001, used to process pesticides in the middle of the last century. DEQ removes soil and capped the site. That helped all but cut off DDT concentrations in stormwater leaving the site.

The public comment for the superfund plan will open once a proposal emerges in spring 2016. DEQ hopes to get its work done before the EPA, in turn, starts its work. DEQ's website has a searchable map of sites with details and contact info.

After the video, Ben asks Mike if he knows the status of the nearby Willamette Cove cleanup. "I'm embarrassed that I don't have that information tonight." He says he'll get the info tomorrow and tell SJNA's co-chairs. The cleanup was supposed to have started before the night's meeting. Last Mike heard, there was a lingering discussion about truck routing.

## THE OCTOBER ELECTIONS

Shamus explains SJNA's bylaws. Only eligible members can serve on the SJNA board: You must live and work in St. Johns, which spreads from the railroad "cut" to Kelley Point Park and, crucially, includes Cathedral Park. (Cathedral Park has its own neighborhood association — and doesn't offer the same courtesy when it comes to membership.) Terms last one year. Who can vote? Anyone who has attended one or both of the previous two general meetings.

Prepared ballots listing a slate of candidates 12 candidates, for 11 available spots, are presented. But the bylaws insist nominations come from the floor. So Shae motions to nominate the slate. No one else nominates themselves or anyone else.

Candidates then give statements describing who they are and what they would like to do. Babs and Joe, past board members, volunteer to count ballots. Babs takes time to list the 2014-15 board's accomplishments:

1. A Gentrification forum
2. An independent neighborhood cleanup event, which shifted back to board control after years of management by local nonprofit Swapnplay
3. Outreach work at neighborhood events such as the Riverfest and St. Johns Bizarre.
4. Offering babysitters (usually Roosevelt High's Key Club members) at SJNA meetings so people with kids can attend
5. Improving the working relationship between SJNA and St. Johns Main Street and other neighborhood groups and schools
6. Activating SJNA's land use committee, focused on affordable housing, at a time of high concern over housing prices, gentrification and the character of St. Johns.
7. Keeping up the SALT team and its forum for neighborhood concerns.
8. Creating a volunteer soiree to help link volunteers with, and offer exposure to, the neighborhood's many nonprofits.

Who won?

- Emilie Saks-Webb, Jennifer Levy, Shamus Lynsky, Josh Leslie, Denis Theriault and Justin won re-election.
- Melissa Bartoszewski, Scott Bricker, Rachel Hill, Travis Parker and Crystal Warner joined the board.
- David Green was not re-elected. Rob Metnick, Ben Poe and Adam Robins all decided not to seek re-election.

The new board was set to decide executive positions — chair, vice chair, land use chair, parliamentarian, secretary, etc. — at its next regularly scheduled board meeting. The board meets on the fourth Monday of the month.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Mark Hill from Friends of Baltimore Woods, the group devoted to amassing and tending a natural grove spreading from Cathedral Park to Kelley Point Park, offers a plea for volunteers. They're halfway done with land acquisition and development. Their next meeting is set for 6:30 pm on Tuesday, Oct. 20, at the BES building, 6543 N Burlington.
- Brook from the Port or Portland talks up the Oct. 24 open house at the Hillsboro Airport. Helicopter rides!
- Jen shares an announcement from the St. Johns Farmers Market. They're seeking a part-time manager. See their web site for more information:  
[www.stjohnsmainstreet.org/farmers\\_market](http://www.stjohnsmainstreet.org/farmers_market)
- Barbara Quinn announces a superfund citizen committee press conference on Oct. 19. A waste dump for contaminated material remains on the table, much to neighbors' consternation. "We're not going on the cheap," Barbara says.
- Amy from from the SJ Volunteers Facebook page says neighbors are invited to visit the Community of Hope shelter for women and families near the Red Sea Church to learn what they're doing to help women and children facing homelessness and also to help them do landscaping and other jobs.
- John Teply reminds the room he's circulating a petition asking SJNA to write a letter to the city opposing plans to vacate the Lombard slip lane and add a plaza to the Union at Charleston proposal. He wants to save Ivy Island, a large and nicely planted traffic separator, that will give way to a reconfigured Charleston/Lombard intersection. He's got 200 signatures so far and "it will be growing."

He asks for an update on efforts, mentioned in a letter SJNA sent the city conditionally blessing the project, to add affordable housing and find a new and prominent home for the St. Johns marquee on Lombard.

Shamus says we'll address issues as they come up and that we'll continue to discuss affordable housing with the developer. The marquee will live on a plaza planned just south of where the Colony sign sits now.

There's more discussion about whether the new plaza built on the slip lane will be public or private. The plaza will be owned by the development, but C.J. Doxsee says a

permanent easement can be put in place during the city's development review process. The development's architect has already said he's incorporated that easement into his plans. The easement is one of SJNA's conditions for supporting the project.

Shamus said its understood the plaza will offer benches, trees and public art. Plants from Ivy Island being given to local entities such as Sitton Elementary, Leavitt Station and the plaza with clock tower.

Shamus also mentions that SJNA has had three meetings on the subject, that we have as much information as we need and that we've already weighed in with conditional support. If neighbors want to provide further input, they should offer it to the city.

- Shamus says planning is starting for the Bizarre next May. Anyone interested in serving on the event's Supreme Council should let him know.
- Shamus also makes a pitch for NP Greenway, where he works as coordinator. (NP Greenway is devoted to helping realize the dream of a working, connected off-road bike path between the Steel Bridge and Kelley Point Park.) They're recruiting volunteers for help running events, doing advocacy, raising money, etc.

The meeting adjourns at 8:39 p.m.