

**St. Johns Neighborhood Association
General Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 9th 7:00 p.m. St. Johns Community Center
Minutes by Denis C. Theriault, Secretary**

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

About 18 other community members were present.

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm by Shamus, the night's presiding officer.

The minutes from November 10 were presented. Adam moved to accept the minutes, seconded by Justin. The motion passed unanimously.

THE TREASURY

Adam provided a treasury update. SJNA had \$5,130.99 in its main account with \$150 pending to the state for corporation filing. The SJNA arts fund had \$156.46.

SALT/BALTIMORE WOODS/OCCUPY ST. JOHNS

Ben gave an update on the Safety and Livability Team, aka SALT, and it was mostly that there wasn't much of an update to be had, because there hadn't been many meetings around and since the holidays. He's hoping to find a new date and time besides the Mondays the group had been meeting.

Shamus asked what SALT tackles, and Ben said "we tackle whatever issues people bring, from property crime to traffic to pollution, the whole spectrum. It's an open forum for whatever people want to bring, so long as it has a tie in to safety and livability."

Shamus mentions graffiti and petty crime as subjects he's seen discussed much on the St. Johns Facebook page and urges anyone interested in those subjects and others to seek out Ben. Ben says he'll keep the group posted on logistics.

Ben is also the Friends of Baltimore Woods liaison and says the group's been having some growing pains. They're also having a fundraiser.

Occupy St. Johns, says Ben, is asking SJNA to hold a two-sided hearing on the Pembina propane terminal proposal.

LAND USE

Josh has taken over as land use chair, one of the few board positions specifically demanded by the SJNA bylaws. Starting in March, a revived land use committee will meet the second Wednesday of the month at the St. Johns Main Street office.

Of note, testimony on adjustments to the city of Portland's comprehensive plan are due March 14.

Shamus asks who knows what the comp plan is. He and Josh then proceed to help explain.

Josh says it's the master plan for how the city might develop. Shamus says the city crafts a comp plan only every 30 years, suggesting it's "a once in a generation opportunity to tell the city how you want them to focus on land use and traffic issues. Google it and see the cool application [on the city's planning bureau website] where you can see comments."

Moving on, Josh says he'll be able to review new development proposals in St. Johns as of March. He'll start putting them on the Facebook page.

Shamus asks what the land use committee will cover. Josh lists development issues, problem properties people are noticing, and affordable housing. And transportation, too, as Trimet gets feedback from neighbors about how they can do a better job serving St. Johns.

Three times a year, Shamus says, SJNA will have larger, continuing discussions akin to last fall's gentrification forum. Affordable housing is likely the choice for the next one, but maybe subsidized housing. People are planning what that will look like. Josh will post the details before it comes together in a couple of weeks.

SJNA EVENTS

The neighborhood cleanup! The neighborhood's Trash 2 Treasure successor event's going to be at the St. Johns Christian Church, which has a large enough parking lot to hold refuse and containers. Emilie says board members will meet with the church in two weeks to get a better idea of the layout.

Shamus reminds the room that SJNA and other NAs receive money from the city every year for cleanups. For the past six years, SJNA has passed its allotment over to Swapnplay to help fund Trash 2 Treasure. But it was such a successful event, that it grew and grew and crept in on Swap's mission. So they've stopped this year, and the NA is taking it back. "It's going to be much more pared down," meaning, basically, the Goodwill Bins-style swap meet aspect of the event's on hiatus. Bring garbage! Bring recycling! There might be free compost to pick up and maybe a plant sale. It's expected to happen in late April/early May.

The volunteer soiree! This once was lived as a big SJNA potluck. But it was pretty small and "just a lot of hummus." So then it became a bigger party, a winter social, with catering, and it was incredibly popular. The first year, we ran out of food. But then it doubled and tripled—until last year, when 1,200 people showed up for the social at Roosevelt High and it sprawled beyond SJNA's organizing capacity. People came and ate

for free and then left. There was a jazz band, but they were set up in another wing of Roosevelt and no one heard them.

The social, of course, was also meant to help connect neighbors with volunteer groups. So while the social's going away, the work connecting people with those groups will live on in the form of a volunteer soiree.

It's March 12 from 6 to 9. Area nonprofits and schools and service organizations ought to be receiving invites for a smaller event at the Colony where they can do some tabling. Expect a small jazz combo from Roosevelt, free snacks, and a cash bar. The idea came up after the farmers market was absorbed into St. Johns Main Street amid questions about what, precisely, Main Street does for the neighborhood. The soiree, for example, is a fine chance to ask that question and get a good answer.

A summer event? Emilie says SJNA is still planning some kind of summer event. Every two months, the heads of other St. Johns neighborhood organizations meet. Shamus, who leads the St. Johns Bizarre, had mentioned maybe doing something *at* the Bizarre, which is May 9.

THE NEW APARTMENTS AT RICHMOND/CHARLESTON/LOMBARD?

Emilie says some board members have the developer's contact info and that they're working on meeting him over dinner to ask what he's planning and share what the neighborhood might like to see.

Joe Adamski, a former board member, asks whether any permits have been sought. Emilie doesn't know. Emilie says the plan appears to be a mixed use building with retail below housing, making it more like the Marvel 29 apartments than the than 2/3 development on Lombard across from Baltimore.

Joe says the St. Johns Lombard Plan may affect the project.

Shamus explains what that plan is: Anyone building on Lombard must adhere to certain design standards. He mentions the fight over a Walgreens drive-thru at Lombard and Richmond—drive-thrus are forbidden by the plan—that kept the retailer from building on land now home to the storage facility bunker. Shamus sees discussions now as an opportunity to be more proactive than reactive and offer help on which businesses we want to see.

Ben asks about the developer? Emilie says he's a dentist in SE Portland and says he's not a professional developer. "Watch for nasty comments on the internet soon!" Shamus jokes.

SPECIAL GUESTS

Flynn Olivares, SUN school coordinator at George Middle School.

George this year has won some grants and started a community engagement team. It's held just a pair of meetings with the goal of connecting the school with the rest of the neighborhood. "I feel like there's a bridge yet to be walked over between George and the St. Johns community," Flynn said. "It's just tucked away and there's no reason for anyone to ever go down there. I'm just trying to bring George into the community."

She wants to invite more adults and families to the meetings and says one of the big focuses at George is attendance. If students are more connected to families and adults at the school, they might come more regularly. She says the kids at the school are bright and respectful. "But they know George and themselves have a reputation in the community. If they don't have positive role models, they might not get past that."

Flynn also wants to tell people about programs like Roosevelt's clothing closet, Cesar Chavez school's food pantry, Sitton's farmer's harvest. She'd love to see George kids out designing murals and building community gardens.

Adam asks when the next engagement meeting is planned. It's April 23. The most recent was in the evening and had food and child care. Because of those things, it felt more accessible and was better attended.

Portland Public Schools.

A district rep mentions an upcoming open house on the Roosevelt construction where a timeline for the project will be discussed.

Michelle Paul, from Rotary.

Michelle is a new Rotary member. In fact, she's the first Albina Rotary member from St. Johns in decades. She explains that Rotary is a service organization in which professionals and retirees go out and do projects in neighborhoods.

Recently, Rotary delivered dictionaries to third-graders at James John on a Friday. They also hand out scholarships for high-school seniors attending four-year colleges, \$2,000 a year for four years. It's part of a pitch to join Rotary.

But she also wants ideas for other projects. If anyone's interested, members younger than 40 pay discounted dues for the first three years.

ASPIRE PROJECT

Sue Darrow from the Aspire Project talks about the dance school's move to the old Army space on Lombard, with hopes of opening April 1. She narrates an in-depth slide show explaining the project and extolling the virtues of the well-loved program.

“It’s not your average dance studio,” she says, noting that it’s “designed to reach disadvantaged youth in North Portland” by teaching discipline and fundamentals, but also fun.

Right now, it’s all but outgrown it’s current space at the Interstate Firehouse. It’s already doing SUN school programs at Cesar Chavez, Sitton, and Peninsula. Next year, James John students will be able to go across the street to the studio. Three-quarters of Aspire’s students qualify for free lunch. In the current term alone, the program reached 1,000 students. Out of 130 regular students, 50 are from St. Johns.

Aspire can’t always keep students for long, given factors like displacement, divorce, instability, and sometimes homelessness. But enough students are advancing that it needs more space. They’ve been turning away kids for the past two quarters.

It’s working with Pacific University to study the effect of dance on students’ mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing. So far, they’ve seen statistically significant improvements.

The new space is being developed on a budget. Joe Purkey is the architect. Demolition had just gotten underway with construction to follow the day after the meeting. Sessions will start April 4.

There’s some fundraising that’s ongoing for the studio work. They’re hoping for large donations that someone’s employer might match. They’re also looking for volunteers. The grand opening is scheduled for 3 to 6 pm April 11.

MARVEL 29

Pat Kessi, developer of Marvel 29, the large mixed-use apartment complex at the foot of the St. Johns Bridge, makes himself available for questions and offers some general comments.

He explains how his company works: They do mixed use, either condos or apartments above street-level retail, with all that above underground parking. They also do certified environmentally friendly projects, including some in the Pearl.

He talks about his time as a University of Portland student and raising his own family in the area. As such, he says the project is “a bit like coming home for me.” He’s hoped to re-create the area’s “small town spirit” with touches like a courtyard and smaller gathering spots on the site.

Pat also introduces Caleb Long, whose company is doing the rental management for Marvel 29.

Joe A. asks if Pat’s got anything else planned for North Portland and says he’s “just expecting to see Lombard become an apartment canyon because of access to transit.”

Pat says “hopefully in the future” but that he’s currently in pre-development in NE Portland and in Lake Oswego.

Joe A. asks what he looks for. Pat says his company looks at “urban projects and amenities” with ‘great neighborhoods, grocery stores, and transit. And places with great communities like St. Johns and Lake Oswego.... Communities are places with libraries, fire stations, a city hall, a post office, etc. But we also focus on what a community needs as it evolves.’’

Shamus asks if Pat might partner with neighbors in pushing Trimet for an increase in bus service frequency. “Absolutely!!!” Pat says, insisting on all three exclamation points.

Shamus asks about occupancy. The building opened January 1, with people moving in soon after. Pre-leasing had begun in late 2014. It was 30 percent occupied, with 15 percentage points worth of applications waiting to be made final.

Pat says he’d projected to lease 15 units a month, so about a year. He says he didn’t expect to have nearly 50 percent, counting applications, within the first month or so. “This community needed something like this, and it’s showing,” he says.

Jen asks about the name, amenities, the range of rental costs, and the status of the retail space.

Pat says the name came from the St. Johns Bridge. It’s a marvel, he says, mentioning what he says are its “tall copper spires”—reflected in the green panels he’s put on the building, hoping they’ll oxidize to match the bridge’s color. Copper’s atomic number, he goes on, is 29. Which is why it’s Marvel 29. *[Editor’s note: The bridge is steel and, as such, is painted its peculiar shade of green.]*

He says the facility is filled with common spaces, including a private parklet, a rooftop terrace, and a demonstration kitchen.

Some six live-work spaces are available along Ivanhoe and Philadelphia. Someone’s leased half of the main floor retail space, 1700 square feet total. It’s someone looking to do a tap room for high-end beer, with eight to 10 rarities on tap and 300 specialty beers, in bottles, for sale.

Joe A. suggests improving pedestrian safety around the building, especially on Alta. Joe asks about parking costs and what would happen if people park in the neighborhood instead.

Partric says that’s a “great question” and makes clear that city code would have let him get away with providing “zero parking spaces.” But they built the underground level with 131 spaces, equal to 80 percent of the total units for rent.

“We’re very well parked,” Pat says. Parking’s not part of the rent. So tenants without cars don’t have to pay... which also means tenants with two cars, who need two spaces, can also pay extra to make that work, too.

And there’s a bike room with 150 spaces, a bike wash, a repair bay, and cameras. There’s also a pet grooming area in the garage, so someone who goes hiking with a dog can give the beast a bath before taking back home to their new digs.

Overall, Pat says, the building has 165 units for rent, including the six live-work spots. Plus the 1,700 square feet of retail.

OPEN FORUM

Patrick Owen is new Office of Neighborhood Involvement crime prevention coordinator for St. Johns. Angela Wagon, formerly in the job, has moved on to lead the crime prevention program citywide. Patrick says his desk phone goes to his cell phone, so call freely, just not at midnight. He’s on the job Mondays through Thursdays, and available Fridays as needed.

He’s previously worked in liquor and noise regulation, and also in graffiti abatement. He says Angela’s gotten him up to speed. He also says St. Johns is his favorite neighborhood and swears he doesn’t say that to every other NA he meets with.

One project ahead of ONI is Lombard’s many, many blocks of bars and how that affects livability. “Because of the unique character of St. Johns, we’re approaching this from a community angle, not an enforcement angle,” he says, meaning they’re getting bars to work with regulators on issues like smoking and public intoxication.

Joe A. speaks next, mentioning Friends of Pier Park’s push to add quality bathrooms to the park, now home rusty, nasty, 1940-era facilities. He ties the effort to the park’s prominence in the local disk golf scene and the developing plans for a North Portland Greenway meant to run along the Willamette, linking the Eastbank Esplanade with the Kelley Point Park. “We deserve and need decent restrooms,” Joe says. Portland Parks and Recreation “says, ‘we don’t have the money,’” Joe says. “But we have the need.”

The meeting is adjourned at 8:18 p.m.