

**St. Johns Neighborhood Association
Board Meeting Minutes
7 pm, Monday, January 11, 2015 | St. Johns Community Center
Minutes by Denis C. Theriault, secretary**

Board members present: Shamus Lynsky, Jennifer Levy, Denis Theriault, Scott Bricker, Rachel Hill, Travis Parker, Josh Leslie, Crystal Warner, Melissa Bartoszewski

Shamus calls the meeting to order at 8:04 pm. Jennifer is the presiding officer.

1. Ivy Island vacation: Shamus motions that the board write a letter asking the Portland City Council to support the vacation of Ivy Island, up for a scheduled council hearing Feb. 10. Rachel seconds. The vote is unanimous.

Shamus says the St. Johns/Lombard Plan, which lists the vacation as a preferred option for realigning Lombard between Richmond and Charleston, concluded more than 10 years ago with multiple community forums and outreach opportunities. A lot of people participated in drafting the plan, some sitting on a citizens advisory committee.

The plan was a grass-roots push by neighbors who wanted to move away from a downtown centered on and catering to auto and truck traffic. Shamus says vacating the island has always been an issue. It's only looked like an attractive "gateway" recently, when Main Street voluntarily decided to spend time and money keeping it clean and tended. (Part of that meant pulling the ivy that gives the island its name.) Before Main Street's stewardship, several groups had adopted the traffic island only to let it grow fallow after the work became too much.

Shamus also mentions the three public meetings where the issue was discussed. One saw the development team presenting. Another saw John Teply of Save Ivy Island present and featured a lively discussion. "600 signatures [on a petition by Teply and others opposing the vacation] is a lot of work," Shamus said. "But this isn't a direct democracy. We make decisions based on policy and good information."

Josh says he's not convinced some people thought were actually signing a petition to stop the whole development, not just the street vacation.

Shamus said there's no procedure for receiving and vetting the validity of petitions within SJNA.

Scott said it would be helpful to have someone with history testify on the vacation and how it fits in with St. Johns/Lombard plan. He notes the outstanding school and library issues (they've appealed the building permit as a way to reach a "good neighbor agreement" on parking and the entrance to an underground parking garage on Charleston), which he says are bigger and more relevant.

Shamus agrees to draft SJNA's letter. Jennifer suggests the letter include the many opportunities offered for public debate.

Shamus said he'll mention that the request to vacate the street — which originated from a very proactive Portland Bureau of Transportation, and not the developer of The Union at St. Johns, Farid Bolouri — came because the cash-strapped city understood it had a chance to achieve a major goal in the St. Johns/Lombard Plan.

2. Printing costs for the STEM forum: Shamus motions that SJNA allot up to \$50 to help pay for fliers advertising a STEM forum aimed at girls and people of color. The money was requested by community organizer Donna Cohen. Crystal seconds. It's unanimous with no discussion.

3. Volunteer soiree update: Main Street officials and Melissa are helping to organize the event. Cost estimates aren't known yet. But there's a grant in the works, so this may end up serving as a fundraiser or something that breaks even. Shamus says total costs at last year's event, at The Colony, hit \$1,300. SJNA spent net \$100 from its account.

4. Safety and Livability Team action plan. Scott wants the board to endorse the plan formally. He notes overall support for the plan during December general meeting. It will focus on pedestrian safety, trucks and air pollution, the Portland Harbor Superfund, and maintaining diversity in St. Johns. ***(See the end of this document for the full, detailed list of priorities.)***

There's some talk about getting new numbers and studies on truck traffic, especially after the departure of the Port's two main container shipping outfits. That's anecdotally contributed to an increase in traffic.

Jen, Josh and Shamus praise the plan. Shamus motions that the board adopt the plan. Melissa seconds. The vote is unanimous.

5. Superfund forum: Jen says we should attend the forum because this issue will come before the board soon.

6. Homelessness issues and using Wapato Jail as a shelter: Scott says the Overlook NA has asked us and other NAs to support a letter questioning the city's handling and support for the Hazelnut Grove organized tent refuge on N Greeley. Overlook doesn't want camping, but argues that if it's to be allowed there, then the city should guarantee that it's temporary.

We talk about how this should be discussed in a more public venue: "Do we as a community believe St. Johns or other neighborhoods should accept some kind of homeless camp or temporary housing that might not actually be temporary?"

On a related note, the Portland Business Alliance and others are pushing city and county leaders to explore using the jail for homelessness services and as a shelter. So are some advocates who have signed a petition. Multnomah County opposes the idea.

Shamus says homelessness should be on our radar. The issue intersects with the work of our land use committee and also SALT. It's been discussed on the Facebook page. Some people want a camp nearby for local homeless neighbors. If so where does that go? "If we were not proactive, we'll have to be reactive."

Scott says it's premature to have this conversation with Wapato looming. Jennifer agrees to keep it on our radar.

Shamus says we should have someone from the city or from the advocacy community come speak to the neighborhood. Scott will work on organizing that.

7. The spring neighborhood cleanup: Do we have a date? We don't yet. It'll be in the spring, hopefully before the Bizarre in April or May. We're obligated to this. We get money from the city. We used to give Trash 2 Treasure that money to run. That changed last year, when SJNA took it over. It was small but a successful fundraiser. We want it to be a little bit bigger this year.

Shamus motions to extend the meeting 10 minutes. Scott seconds. The vote is unanimous.

8. A proposed demolition at 8015 N Oswego: A neighbor near the site contacted NA way back in March knowing this might be looming. Landlord, from Lake Oswego, has a reputation for having mismanaged the property. He's finally posted his intent to demolish the structure and build a four-plex.

Two neighbors have asked us to help them file an appeal with the city that would delay the demolition for 60 days. If they do it with our backing, it's free. If it's on them, they'd have to pay significant money.

One concern is it's a 105-year-old house. The owner has previously removed trees and bashed down a shed without obtaining permits. Neighbors worry about asbestos clouds if the house is demolished without proper permits or protocols.

Josh motions we support their request for delay, so they don't have to pay the appeal fee, but that we stay out any mediation that occurs over the next 60 days. Shamus seconds.

Shamus notes the board previously declined to make a motion helping neighbors in another dispute over new construction, on N Central, enjoy a free appeal. That case involved exemptions on parking requirements. What's the difference here?

Jennifer says this landlord has a seeming history of bad faith. And a delay gives neighbors more time to make sure the developer gets permits. Shamus allows, because of the fears over lead and asbestos, that this request involves safety concerns that weren't present in the other case.

The vote is unanimous.

9. Someone has sent in a required letter of intent to do Airbnb rooms: Josh mentions this. Jennifer says we should post it on SJNA's website. We discuss the implications of Airbnb for the rental market in Portland and St. Johns. Some worry people who would otherwise rent rooms or homes to long-term tenants are holding their units back for short-term rentals. That could be adding to pressure on existing housing stock at a time when supply isn't keeping pace with demand, driving up rents and home prices — and pricing out neighbors who may not otherwise want to move.

10. Money for the St. Johns Bizarre: Shamus is the Bizarre coordinator. In that capacity, he asks for \$500, the same that's been given in previous years. Shamus says there's a good reason the Bizarre asks for money: It's the largest community event in St. Johns and does a lot of good for the community. SJNA also gets a free booth, worth \$55.

Josh and Shamus abstain because they work on the Bizarre's central politburo.

Crystal motions in support of the request. Denis seconds. The vote among eligible board members is unanimous.

11. Support for the North Portland Greenway: Shamus also works as coordinator of NP Greenway. They're seeking a Metro grant to fund design work on stretch of the trail through Baltimore Woods. He wants SJNA to become an active partner in the grant. If we get the grant, SJNA will help advertise and solicit the public for ideas with the design process. We'd host outreach meetings. The letter of support for the grant is due Feb. 2.

Josh motions in support of the request. Jennifer seconds. The vote is unanimous.

13. Jazz fest uncertainty: Rachel asks about the jazz fest. Jennifer says Friends of Cathedral Park has taken over the annual summertime event.

The meeting adjourns at 8:54

ATTACHED BELOW: A DETAILED VERSION OF THE SAFETY AND LIVABILITY TEAM'S 2016 PRIORITIES.

SALT 2016 Focus Areas

Proposed Motion:

The SJNA Board strongly endorses the Safety and Livability Team's 2016 Focus Areas of:

1. Pedestrian safety:

Every person should have safe, comfortable and convenient access to the basic goods, services, and pleasures that the St. Johns neighborhood and business districts offers. Currently, our

community lacks this right. Walking in St. Johns can be dangerous and intimidating. Two reasonable solutions that we believe would make immediate impacts are:

- a. Installing crosswalks widely through the neighborhood
- b. Drastically reducing traffic speeds

2. Trucks and air pollution:

The St. Johns neighborhood is plagued with pass through dirty and dangerous semi-truck traffic. The Portland of Portland reports that 94% of semi-trucks going through our neighborhood simply pass through to I-5, not going to the Terminals, using our neighborhood as a short cut.

This must change. We believe that critical solutions include:

- a. Slowing speeds and improving roadways to ensure basic neighborhood safety
- b. Supporting improvements in emissions laws and improving government agency hiring practices to ensure trucks meet modern diesel emission standards
- c. Seriously evaluating the potential of rerouting pass-through trucks out of the neighborhood altogether

3. Portland Harbor Superfund:

Early 2016 is expected to be the critical window for a strong push to ensure an effective Superfund solution by the EPA. The St Johns Neighborhood Association has strong concerns about the contamination at these sites and will weigh in with strong support to clean these areas up.

4. Keeping diversity in St. Johns:

St. Johns is a diverse neighborhood, especially in terms of being a place in the urban core that still has a wide range of both housing and commercial spaces, many with affordable rents occupied by a diversity of residents and businesses. The St. Johns neighborhood is also growing and going through a wonderful renaissance and revitalization. The St. Johns Neighborhood Association strongly supports measures to ensure that it remains diverse and affordable for all.