

St. Johns Neighborhood Association
General 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

About 40 other community members are present.

The meeting is called to order at 7:04 pm by Shamus, the night's presiding officer.

Scott motions to approve the minutes from December as written, seconded by Jennifer. The minutes are approved with an addition from John Teply to his portion of the "announcements":

"The 500 people in the petition — they are your neighbors, and this is a neighborhood association. And just because they aren't here, they shouldn't be marginalized nor should their views be made unimportant."

THE TREASURY

Most of SJNA's budget is spent on communications — i.e. its online newsletter and printing costs. Money is also spent on equipment for volunteer events, sponsorships or help seeding fundraisers.

Crystal provides the financial report:

Art Fund Balance: \$828.04

General Fund Balance: \$5289.37

We'll know soon whether a grant we've applied for to cover the volunteer event's expenses will come through.

SAFETY AND LIVABILITY TEAM

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.

Scott, the SALT chair, says there hasn't been a new meeting since the last general meeting. This month's meeting will fall on the second Tuesday. It will include a foot patrol presentation from the city with a regular SALT discussion to follow.

Scott presents the four subjects "we're hoping to focus on":

1. Pedestrian safety
2. Trucks and air pollution
3. Superfund site cleanup
4. Keeping diversity in St. Johns

LAND USE REPORT

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."

Josh Leslie, the land use chair, says the next meeting will be a special event: a seminar with Proud Ground to talk about land banking, from 7 to 8:30 pm. Under land banking, an organization retains ownership of the land a home occupies and always makes certain the home is sold at an affordable price.

- The Union at St. Johns street vacation will go before city council on Feb. 10. If you want to speak, show up earlier so you can sign up.
- The library and James John Elementary have appealed the building permit for The Union at St. Johns. The appeal focuses on parking. They want what's called a "good neighbor agreement" to address parking and noise and the unloading that would happen on Charleston, where the complex hopes to locate the entrance to an underground garage with dozens of parking spaces.

That issue will come up Jan. 21 at 1:30 p.m., at 1900 SW 4th, Room 2500A.

- The community oversight committee dealing with a multimillion-dollar anti-gentrification and affordable-housing program in parts of North and Northeast Portland will meet Thursday Jan. 14 from 6 to 8 pm at the New Song Community Church, 251 NE MLK.
- An appeal of a demolition sought on N Oswego will be discussed during the SJNA board meeting following this event.

ELIZABETH VROOMAN WITH BOYS AND GIRLS AID

This is her second St. Johns meeting. She's here to talk about foster care and the need for foster families in St. Johns and Portland. She makes clear her group isn't the Club. It's a child welfare organization working on services including transitional housing for young adults up to age 23 and also infant adoptions. They've been around since 1885, founded by city leaders troubled after seeing children living on the streets or in unsafe environments.

In those days, foster care didn't exist. Services in Oregon came from institutions and orphanages. The change followed work by East Coast reformers, who decided it would be better to send children to homes instead of institutions.

Boys and Girls Aid needs "safe, stable adults who can open up their homes and open up their hearts to kids who need support." The program focuses on kids 10 to 18 years old. Some have had problems for years, some for months. Usually the Oregon Department of Human Services or the juvenile justice system refers children to Boys and Girls Aid.

Kids with juvenile justice referrals have had troubled pasts. The provider works to intervene and help keep those kids on a better path.

Right now, there's a big gap in available homes in St. Johns. Children from the neighborhood in the provider's care, who still attend Roosevelt, must live far away. One child lives in Tigard. That can work, if they're gang-affected or need to get away from something close to home. "But for the most part, most of the time, we should keep kids as connected with their communities as possible."

Elizabeth is doing an info session at George Middle School from 6 to 7 pm on Feb. 3. She can give more information on programs, support for families, reimbursements, and on the youth they serve. "If you know anybody who's been thinking about being a foster parent," she said, "send them my way." They'd consider any kind of family or adult so long as they offer safety, stability and support.

On any given night, about 8,000 children are in the foster care system.

"There are not 8,000 beds for these children. When the state cannot find a bed, they end up in places they shouldn't: hospitals, detentions, the streets, unsafe housing," Elizabeth said. "There are at least 8,000 reasons for us to lean into this problem."

PORTLAND POLICE BUREAU VISIT

Officer Bob Miller says the system that provides crime numbers is down right now.

Most questions he says police are getting involve a recent shooting in Pier Park. "I can't go into details. It's still an open case. It's heading toward a resolution. It wasn't random. The people involved knew each other."

He said the officer who attended in December passed on some concerns about a drug house. He pointed to the city's online complaint forms and drug house complaint line.

Using those "helps my command staff redirect resources to dealing with those things," Miller says, saying complainants should provide photographs and license plate data and as much other information as they can.

Shamus mentions complaints, on the St. Johns Facebook page, about the bureau's response to reports about an apparently in-crisis transient man checking car doors in an apartment parking lot and throwing trash. The poster accused an officer of not taking the call seriously or offering a prompt response.

Miller said he took the call. He said there was a shooting in inner North Portland diverting police attention, near Unthank Park. He said he eventually came back to St. Johns, but the caller didn't answer the door when he knocked in search of more information.

He says he knows the man accused of erratic behavior. But he couldn't talk to the man because he'd already left by the time he'd returned to the neighborhood.

He says response times are up. North Precinct stretches from Troutdale to Sauvie Island. The police bureau is short-staffed, Miller says. The bureau's drug house coordinator is working half time on patrol and taking radio calls, for example.

A man asks about a four-door Cadillac with no plates parked outside place where everyone was recently evicted. Miller thinks he knows part of the story with that care. It's been there for weeks.

OPEN FORUM UPDATES

- **The St. Johns Tree Tree Team has reformed.** The first big kickoff workshop is set for Jan. 16 from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm. Show up and drink free coffee and get all the supplies you need. The urban forestry office will send someone out to teach about effective pruning and planting. Folks will go around pruning street trees around the community center.

The group also said last month it needs help with its planting day, on Feb. 20. The deadline to get trees from Friends of Trees for that day is coming in January. Go to FriendsofTrees.org. It's just \$35 a tree.

- **The Volunteer Fair**, last year called the Volunteer Soiree, is set for Thursday, Feb. 4, from 6 to 8 pm at Los Prados, the event hall on N Lombard on the way to Rivergate. “It’s a way to learn about nonprofits in the neighborhood and what they can do for you” and also to find volunteerism opportunities.

- **Superfund cleanup**: There’s a forum on Tuesday, Jan. 26, at the community center aimed at teaching neighbors about the plan and helping those interested offer better comments during a 60-day citizen comment period that will open when the plan goes public in March or April.. “You’re all the stakeholders in this.” The EPA and others are looking at cleaning just 13 of the many hotspots, leaving the rest for natural recovery.

- **Resource Fair**: Sitton and James John elementary schools are hosting a resource fair Jan. 22

- **Roosevelt High STEM update**: Donna Cohen said folks are looking to set up a forum for the community on bringing women and people of color into technical fields. It’s planned for the end of February, hopefully at George Middle School, Donna says. (A lot of groups and volunteers are looking more to George to help connect it better to St. Johns.) She’s hoping SJNA can contribute money to print fliers.

- **John Teply, a leading proponent of the Save Ivy Island cause**, says the group’s petition — against vacating the island to construct a traditional intersection at N Lombard and Richmond — is up to 600 signatures. He’s asking SJNA to write a letter asking the city council to vote against the street vacation. Shamus says John should make a motion to be considered. Shae seconds that motion.

Gloria Luzader speaks against John’s motion. She said SJNA already wrote the city (the Planning and Sustainability Commission, technically) last year asking to have the vacation approved in part because the work would remove a slip lane leading to N Charleston. “That slip lane is absolutely dangerous,” she said. “That’s why the board wrote the letter saying we want the island gone.” (The Ivy Island discussion has also come up several times since last May, both before and after board elections where some board members made clear their personal support for the street vacation.)

Jennifer says this is the second or third time the issue has come up. It’s been discussed by the board and in general meetings. Shamus says the board voted to write a letter in support of the street vacation. (That board vote happened Sept. 15, via email.)

John notes several months of board minutes are not yet posted on SJNA’s new website.

Jennifer also points out, before the vote on John’s motion, that the board can choose to act independently of whatever vote emerges during a general meeting. The city permits that because of insurance liability reasons. The city’s insurance policy for associations in North

Portland Neighborhood Services indemnifies only board members, not the people who attend general meetings.

Shamus also points out the board is permitted to make motions on its own without a motion of the general membership.

John then announces he's filing a grievance against SJNA over the letter to the planning commission, accusing the board of deciding its position out of public view.

But before taking up the grievance, Shamus says, John's original motion on asking the board to oppose the vacation of Ivy Island must be resolved.

On the motion, a member of the group who put together the 2004 St. Johns/Lombard Plan, which lists the vacation as its "preferred" option for fixing that stretch of Lombard, said there was "consensus" on getting rid of Ivy Island once money became available to do so.

Scott also argues that vacation is a longstanding policy the neighborhood has supported with just reasons. He's a professional transportation planner and a recent leader of America Walks, a national safety group.

"That slip lane is incredibly dangerous," Scott says. "It's an old freeway-style design."

Robin Plance motions to call the question on John's motion and end discussion. It's seconded. Ten people support the motion to call the question, six people support it.

The room votes. John Teply's motion asking the board to ask the city council to oppose the vacation of Ivy Island fails 14-4.

Next is the grievance. Just two filed in the last 20 years, the last one also in St. Johns.

Shamus will talk to Tom Griffin-Valade, the city's coordinator for North Portland Neighborhood Services, about that. If the grievance proceeds as far as it can, a committee of board members from other NAs would consider it.

John says it hasn't been filed with Tom yet. John says he may not file it if the board agrees to oppose the street vacation. The board also needs to review the grievance.

Shamus motions to adjourn. Denis seconds.

The meeting adjourns at 8:01 p.m.