

**St. Johns Neighborhood Association  
General Meeting Minutes  
7 pm, Monday, March 14, 2016 | Brekken's  
Minutes by Denis C. Theriault, secretary**

**Board members present:** Shamus Lynsky, Emilie Saks-Webb, Jennifer Levy, Denis Theriault, Scott Bricker, Rachel Hill, Travis Parker, Josh Leslie, Crystal Warner and Melissa Bartoszewski

About 40 other community members are present.

The meeting is called to order at 7:12 pm by Scott, the night's presiding officer.

## **THE MINUTES**

Because the January general meeting minutes weren't brought forward in February's meeting (the board minutes from January were printed instead), minutes from the general meetings in both January and February are both up for approval tonight.

John Teply, upon reviewing the minutes for both months, wanted to restate the reasons behind the grievance he mentioned filing during January's meeting. He says he didn't like that the board decided its stance on the Charleston/Lombard street vacation outside a public meeting and without minutes.

(The board discussed, and voted, whether to send a letter in support of the street vacation to the Planning and Sustainability Commission over email. The board should have held that vote in a meeting, where the public could have observed it. In January, the board met in public after the general meeting and unanimously restated its support ahead of a Portland City Council hearing; the city council unanimously agreed with the board and dozens of other neighbors, endorsing the street vacation.)

Travis then motioned approval of the January minutes. Crystal seconded. The motion passed.

Christina Hersey motions to approve the February minutes, with Crystal seconding.

John Teply, in discussing the February minutes, said he was interrupted by Shamus "when I was trying to say something. I don't see that listed there."

Scott says it's reflected the last paragraph.

John says he wasn't allowed to respond. The meeting was adjourned after the back-and-forth. A man in the crowd interjects that John is "wasting everybody's time." Another man says "cheers."

John says Shamus rudely came up to him "in a very strong way" despite John having the floor.

Scott said John had received more time to talk than others at the meeting. He noted that the minutes reflect Shamus' interruption of John, and that the minutes reflect that Scott, indeed, did choose to adjourn.

John says again that he never got to finish his comments.

Scott said he apologized for that. "I honor the fact you don't feel like you were able to finish what you were saying."

Shamus says John can move to amend the minutes; Emilie can add a verbatim transcript of the end of February's meeting.

That motion, however, needed Christina's approval as a "friendly amendment" to her motion to approve the minutes. The motion to approve, with the friendly amendment, is unanimously approved.

## **THE RELOCATION**

Jennifer explains why the meeting was hastily relocated to Brekken's: The community center failed to notify clients including SJNA that it was closed for work. She thanked Brekken's, and many people ordered drinks during the meeting.

## **THE TREASURY REPORT**

Crystal, the board treasurer, provides an update on SJNA's finances.

*Current SJNA General Fund Balance: \$4538.02*

*Current Art Fund Balance: \$928.04*

Since the last general meeting on Feb. 8, 2016, the following has been paid out from the SJNA General Fund:

\$105.36: Past due invoice due to City of Portland for Printing and Distribution for April and May 2015.

\$500: The Board voted in the previous Board Meeting on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016, to donate \$500, which is the same as previous years, and SJNA also gets a free booth at the event (a \$55 value). This is the largest community event in St Johns, and does a lot of good for the community.

\$40: This has been paid to Constant Contact, which is our vendor that sends out communication of the newsletter (over 2,000+ people are contacted). This is a monthly service charge.

\$44.40: This has been paid to Copy Pilot for Printing.

*Deposits to the General Fund:*

\$107.26: From Community Rewards Program of Fred Meyer. You can add SJNA to your Rewards account at: <http://www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards> This will not take away from your personal points.

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.

## **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." We can also help neighbors with appeals of city land-use decisions. Normally, neighbors have to pay dearly in fees to file an appeal. If SJNA supports the appeal, those fees are waived.*

**Central Hotel/Dad's/Brad's update:** The building has been sold to Farid Bolouri, who also owns Signal Station Pizza's building, the building with the Parlour, and the land soon to be home to the Union at St. Johns.

Josh, land use chair, has heard that the plan is still to construct a hotel at the Central Hotel site. But there haven't been any permits or applications for that.

**Fessenden updates:** Changes to Lombard/St. Louis/Fessenden/Columbia Way included in the St. Johns Truck Strategy are set to break ground in 2017, assuming no problems with design work and project bidding prior to work starting.

The work will include narrower traffic lanes, a pedestrian-activated red light at Charleston and marked pedestrian crossings on Fessenden, including street tree medians at intersections with Trimet stops. The speed limit on the St. Louis/Fessenden curve will drop to 25 (some versions of the plan have also called for dropping Fessenden's speed limit to 30 mph, down from 35).

The S-curve on Lombard near Reno will be rebuilt into a four-way intersection, with improved crossings for Sitton students and a multiuse path connecting Pier Park with Lombard.

The stretch of Columbia Way from the six-point intersection at Fessenden to the Columbia Boulevard overpass will also be overhauled, with a new median and street trees.

(Read more about the plan here: <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION1/STIP/E32%20-%20St%20Johns%20Truck%20Strategy.pdf>)

**“Zombie” houses:** An informational meeting has been scheduled for 7 pm, Wednesday, April 20, on so-called “zombie” homes — vacant or dubiously possessed houses that have turned into havens for drug criminals and/or problematic squatters. The police bureau and Office of Neighborhood Involvement will help people identify those homes and figure how to deal with problems, including whom to contact and how.

## **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.*

**Occupy St. Johns:** Ben Poe, a former board member and current SALT co-leader, spoke in his role as a member of Occupy St. Johns. He announced the group is changing its meeting times to the first Friday of the month and the third Wednesday of the month. The meetings will remain at Anna Banana’s, at 7 pm.

**Superfund news:** The Lower Willamette River Superfund Cleanup project is about to enter a public comment period, once the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announces its draft of a cleanup plan. (Since this meeting, the EPA said that release may not happen until early May.)

A 60-day comment window could open once that happens.

Ben said many advocates for the river believe the potentially responsible industrial polluters, who’ve formed a coalition called the Lower Willamette Group, are engaging in a stalling process, going behind the EPA and “generally making a nuisance of themselves.”

Neighbors and advocates also would like a longer comment period. But the challenge is the feds are hoping to have the project in final form by the end of the calendar year, to avoid complications that may come with a new presidential administration next year.

The city has begun sharing survey, seeking public comments. But several environmental groups and tribes, including Willamette Riverkeeper the Audubon Society of Portland, are deeply unhappy with the survey. They believe the city, which is among the list of potentially responsible parties who would have to pay for cleanup, isn’t giving respondents a clear and unbiased opportunity for respondents to share concerns.

Those groups have written letter to City Commissioner Nick Fish, the city council's Superfund liaison, raising their concerns with the survey. They're asking neighborhood associations to respond to and join in signing their letter.

Shamus motions to have SJNA co-sign the letter, which urges the city not to use a survey advocates believe is misleading. Jennifer seconds.

Barbara Quinn says the city could be seen as trying to turn people against the notion of deep environmental cleanup, asking about lights, noise and odor from remediation work and dredging, though advocates don't believe we'll see much of those kinds of consequences. And, even if so, then neighbors would have the right to complain.

Jennifer points out that dredging already happens in the river.

Denis and John Teply both abstain. The motion passes unanimously.

**Pedestrian safety update:** Scott says this remains a major goal, and reminds the room that the board, at a public meeting, approved efforts to try to lower Lombard's speed limit to 20 mph from Richmond to St. Louis, and add marked crosswalks at every intersection. Next is to get St. Johns Boosters and St. Johns Main Street to endorse, too.

## **NEW SEASONS VISIT**

Officials from New Seasons brought food samples, coupons and updates on new store which opened March 23 just across the Cut from St. Johns. The neighborhood's two iconic Willamette River bridges are represented on the store's inside walls. There's also reclaimed bleacher seats.

Jennifer notes that the store's big garage door bays could be fine candidates for murals.

Erin Leiker, the new store's manager and a 12-year neighbor, gets that excitement over the store will also be paired with concerns about development and gentrification. "That's OK, too," she said.

She said half the store's staff are new hires, often from the area: "You're going to see some familiar faces."

Scott offered thanks for the bicycle lanes and pedestrian crossing the store's arrival meant for Lombard. Erin said she'd make the extension of those bike lanes part of her personal agenda.

## **GYPSY MOTH SPRAYING**

Mark Hitchcox of the U.S. Department of Agriculture presents on planned spraying against what he calls the "Darth Vader" of defoliating invasive species, the Asian Gypsy Moth.

The moths likely hitch on container ships coming through the Port of Portland. They were detected in special traps last year but haven't yet established themselves. The moths found last year, in Forest Park, St. Johns and Vancouver, were the first to show up since 2001.

The idea is to keep a new population from finding a foothold through an aerial eradication treatment. Hopefully that's not already happened.

Why do it? They eat voraciously. Their incessant chewing is so loud the wind carries it. And the caterpillars that grow up into moths are worse than the moths themselves.

The treatment will come from the sky, via helicopters. A biological insecticide, used for 30 years, will waft down onto the trees where moths typically feed. The targeted area will include Rivergate, St. Johns, West Hayden Island, Forest Park and Germantown Road.

The idea is to avoid dispersal of the moths. Asian gypsy moths spread more quickly than their European counterparts. Females can fly up to 12 miles, spreading infestations quickly over a large area.

"This is our chance to get this under control this spring," he said.

The first spraying of three is tentatively planned for mid- to late April. Exact days will be shared when they're decided.

It'd be early in the morning, on a weekend, to avoid hitting masses of schoolchildren or commuters. It starts usually around 5:30 and finishes by 10 or 11 am. The sprayings are usually seven to 10 days apart.

The Oregon Invasive Species Council's website has information on the moths and a place to sign up for updates on sprayings.

<http://www.oregoninvasivespeciescouncil.org/agm/>

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

*Neighborhood cleanup:* Emilie, an organizer, reminds the room that the annual neighborhood cleanup for St. Johns and Cathedral Park is coming up Saturday, April 23. It's 10-3.

It's in the big parking lot at Richmond and Central. It'll also be a plant swap and offer a chance to recycle electronics, dump tires and offload paint. Maybe, like last year, there might be haul-away compost.

Fliers will be going out with information on precisely what you can bring, what you can't, and suggested donations. General rule? No regular garbage, construction debris, appliances or hazmat waste.

THEY NEED VOLUNTEERS. THEY WILL FEED VOLUNTEERS. SO YOU SHOULD VOLUNTEER.

*Charleston/Lombard traffic median demolition:* Rachel said folks are looking for volunteers, particularly with trucks, to transplant plants from the large traffic median to new homes at Sitton Elementary School and the public city plaza outside Central Hotel. City Farm and other organizations have pledged materials and other donations. It's weekend afternoon work.

*St. Johns Play Collective:* The new community play studio space at Cathedral Park Place is having an event March 25. Neighbors can join as members and have access to the space, or take classes.

*St. Johns Bizarre:* The street-and-art-and-music festival that wraps around our neighborhood's storied annual parade is set, like the parade, for May 14.

Lombard, from Leavitt to Baltimore, will close from 8 am to 8 pm. During that span, streets around Lombard, including Leavitt, Alta, Philadelphia and Burlington, will also be closed.

The Bizarre also needs volunteers! Learn more about how to volunteer at [www.stjohnsbizarre.com](http://www.stjohnsbizarre.com). Or find the Bizarre's Facebook page.

*Blues festival:* The Inner-City Blues Festival, a fundraiser for efforts to promote single-payer healthcare, is set for 6 to midnight April 16 at the North Portland Eagles Lodge.

*Tree history:* St. Johns' "tree team" is hosting its second event of the year on April 9. It's a chance to hear about the neighborhood's tree heritage history from a tree historian. St. Johns has just four heritage trees, and the hope is to find five more.

Death café: Shae Uisnae says neighbors who have lost their mothers can take part in Motherless Mother's Day on Mother's Day. She'll update on scheduling details, but says interested neighbors should keep an eye out.

## **OPEN FORUM**

*Scott gives all speakers two minutes to raise any subject of general concern.*

- Shamus says leaders or representatives from most of the neighborhood's nonprofits and associations meet monthly to share ideas and connect. He says anyone in a group that's not represented should feel free to attend, and see him for details. Those meetings happen the first Wednesday morning of the month, at the Main Street offices.

He notes the recent debate on the Lombard street vacation, among others, before saying "there have been a lot of divisive things in the neighborhood. I hope we have more in common than we have in difference."

He says there's been talk of bringing the community together on a topic of shared interest and concern: Emergency preparedness.

- Susan Tennant speaks "on behalf of Ivy Island," the Main Street-maintained traffic median soon to be demolished for an improved and safer crossing on Lombard, between Richmond and Charleston. She notes the more than 1,000 people whose names appear on a petition urging against the city's vacation of the median.

She urges SJNA and Main Street board members should help personally remove and transplant plants and trees, adding a plea that the neighborhood volunteers "reach down to Mother Earth" and thank the plants for "what they've given us." She calls out their "great sacred value."

"great sacred value"

- Sitton Elementary principal Dana Nerenberg mentioned efforts afoot to work with the city and community on building a disability-accessible playground. Five students, sometimes more, use wheelchairs and can't fully access the playground. She reminds the room that the playground is open to the public on weekends and during summers and that her students have some of their art up at the new New Seasons.

- Tia Ossenkop mentioned a service, like one offered by a small mill in Brooks, that does specialty contracts, taking wood from felled or removed trees (like on the traffic island) and fashioning planks for benches playgrounds (like Sitton's) or other community features. "That way the trees aren't leaving us after all." Jennifer says Main Street might be able to make that happen.

Shamus notes that a tree controversially removed to make way for a path to Chimney Park was turned into part of a nature park in Sellwood. He said these aren't as native or large as that tree, but that there's some precedent.

- Jennifer announces her emergency tip for the month: In an emergency, like an earthquake, be sure to have already given two of your neighbors out of state contact information for your loved ones, written down and on a cell phone.

The meeting adjourns at 8:31 pm.