

**St. Johns Neighborhood Association**  
**General Meeting Minutes**  
**7 pm, Monday, Nov 9, 2015 | St. Johns Community Center**  
**Minutes by Denis C. Theriault, secretary**

Board members present: Shamus Lynsky, Emilie Saks-Webb, Jennifer Levy, Denis Theriault, Scott Bricker, Crystal Warner, Melissa Bartoszewski

About 30 other community members were present.

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

Scott motions to approve the minutes from October with a friendly amendment, seconded by Jennifer. The minutes are approved.

Last month's board elections are presented:

Shamus, Jennifer, Josh, and Emilie are sharing the chair job. Shamus remains vice chair. Crystal is treasurer. Denis remains secretary. Josh remains land use chair. Scott will take over from Ben Poe as the chair/board liaison for the Safety and Livability Team

### **THE TREASURY**

Crystal says the amount in SJNA' is unavailable owing to the transition. Monthly expenses include rent at the community center and printing costs.

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.

### **SAFETY AND LIVABILITY PART 1**

*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 says TriMet and Willamette Cove were the main subjects of discussion.

Jen also says the ODOT supervisor emailed and said the corner treatments are coming out on the curb-outs along Lombard at Mohawk, Burr and Polk. The yellow

guard rails confused people. ODOT said the city recommended them. But they will be coming out. ODOT liaison Shelli Romero said it was a “long story.”

Jen started working with ODOT on the crosswalk fixes three years ago. That work was supposed to have started two falls ago. Past designs presented to SJNA never included the bars. ODOT says adding marked crosswalks are counterintuitively unsafe, so that’s why we don’t have them.

ODOT will add yellow tape to the curbs instead of the rails.

Ben says SJNA was going to look into obtaining safety signage on Lombard. SJNA talked to Main Street and Friends of Cathedral Park, and all are on board. Cost estimates are needed, and maybe some statistics showing how effective signs might be.

Scott says that’s a great issue to work on in SALT. He wonders if there are improvements we can do in short term. He added guerrilla marked crosswalks elsewhere on Lombard before joining the board. He says he’ll do more updates.

Jennifer, Travis’ wife, says PBOT has been impatient about her calls for adding speed signs to Smith, “where people do 70mph.” Sharon White of PBOT says we can get five SJNA members to back a request for safety signs and the usual deposit will be waived.

## **PORTLAND POLICE BUREAU VISIT**

Officers Klundt and Streed visit the meeting. They’re from out of district. But Officer Streed will be working her and wants to know our concerns.

Crystal says cars and motorcycles are racing up and down Fessenden on weeknights around midnight, often on Thursday. It’s annoying and unsafe. They go down Fairhaven. Streed says Marine Drive has been a big concern but that they’ll monitor.

A man asks about the best way to alert PPB about this kind of concern. Streed says to call when you see something untoward, and that feedback informs patrol priorities. Shamus asks whether someone should call 911 or nonemergency. Klundt says it depends on the time of day or whether something is an immediate concern vs. an ongoing concern. The traffic division has a complaint line. North Precinct recently arrested six people for racing. He says to filter complaints to traffic for long-term issues and solutions.

Klundt says if you know who the speeders/reckless drivers are, there’s the possibility that a responding officer might talk to them. But the officer needs to see the violation to issue the citation. So it likely would be a talk vs. a punitive action.

A woman says a double-trailer truck speeds down St. Louis every day a little after 8 am, and she wants tickets. Scott asks if we can get a speed van on Smith/St. Louis/Fessenden. Klundt says that request will be filtered through the traffic division.

Rachel says her car has been broken into three times. She lives on Lombard and has stopped locking her doors. A woman came up to her when she was walking her dog and said people have been wandering parallel streets to find cars that might be unlocked. She says once they broke her window and her car isn't worth that much.

Streed says car prowls are one of the highest volume calls the bureau sees. Neighbors ask if we can have more of a police presence so those people feel more disinclined.

Klundt says a cop parking downtown stopped locking his doors — and he had his window broken anyway.

## **SALT UPDATE PART 2: TRIMET**

Scott says Trimet has a second version of service changes available now. TriMet wants to present those changes. But TriMet, SALT members worry, hasn't heard enough from neighbors. Next month's general meeting will be at George Middle School so people on that side of the neighborhood can have a better chance to hear the presentation and offer input.

Emilie proposes printing and distributing half-sheets of paper that list the changes and advertise the meeting.

Shamus says TriMet had initially tried to reflect St. Johns' angst over the 17's vanishing years ago, the trains that block the 16 under the Steel Bridge and the heavy volume of buses on Lombard.

They suggested running the 16 on the old 17 route. They took buses off Lombard and put them on Ivanhoe. But people said that was terrible when they saw the changes. The 16 is often the quickest route downtown. And buses, on Lombard, currently drop people right in front at shops.

Trimet did a lot of its outreach was on buses. But if you don't ride buses because they're inconvenient (which is ironically what this is trying to ameliorate), and you're not on the internet, then you didn't know this was looming and how to give your thoughts.

Jen reminds the room that a third of the neighborhood lives north of Fessenden and that we've been talking about doing this — having a meeting across Fessenden — for a while.

## 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, just returned from out of town but wasn't in attendance. He left notes.

- **The Union at St. Johns demolition** (the Ivy Island-connected project at Charleston and Lombard) is slated to start today through Nov. 25, with limited disruption to traffic expected. Scott says he'll hawk them on sidewalk and pedestrian access issues throughout the construction phase.

Shamus says those accessibility concerns started talk among businesses and Main Street to come up with signage for the St. Johns business district. The potential disruption from the Union is being used as leverage to get city and ODOT to put up signs on Highway 30, Bridge Avenue and Lombard "to let people know the St. Johns business district is open for businesses."

- **The Planning and Sustainability Commission** will take up the Ivy Island street vacation November 17. The issue would then head to the Portland City Council.

- The comprehensive plan — the overarching planning document for the city over the next 20 years — is in the midst of an update. And that work is nearing its end. Leslie Lum from the city's planning bureau will be attend the next land use committee. Rachel says there is still time to give input. The first hearing on zoning changes is Nov. 19.

Jen says a lot our zoning used to be geared toward automobiles. By changing proactively, more development will come — whether you like that or not.

- James, a neighbor of a vacant lot at St. Johns and Central, says the lot will soon go over to housing, a four-plex. The issue is that the owner — Andre Koshuba of Exceptional Homes by Andre — is asking the city's permission to forgo off-street parking. That concerns some neighbors because it's an extremely busy intersection near an S-curve and a busy crosswalk.

Where do these extra four cars park? Eighty or so neighbors have signed petition asking the owner to put up a single-family home or to find some other way to provide parking off the street.

An appeal backed SJNA, which would help by providing a waiver of the city's appellate fees, would start at the land use committee. James is interested in pursuing that process. The petition so far has been informal.

Jen asks whether James has talked to developer. Another neighbor says he emailed the owner to ask about a fence and the owner wasn't responsive. James says he'll send a copy of his materials to the board, which will review and vote.

One issue perhaps driving Exceptional Homes to seek permission to go without parking? A bioswale is limiting the placement of a driveway off Central.

### **BIKRAM YOGA VISIT**

Kay and her family are opening Bikram Yoga St. Johns in a building near Lombard and Alma. They're planning a mural for the building's east side. They show a display that may include a moonrise and the St. Johns Bridge. Other options are in the back of the room. She brought free yoga passes.

The mural would be 16 feet high to 26 feet in the air. If you're at Fred Meyer now, you can see the blank slate that needs filling, she and her partner say.

Jen asks if they're working with the Regional Arts and Culture Commission for money to fund the work. The artist is from St. Johns. They've already got a Portland Development Commission grant. They open December 5, with free yoga that weekend.

### **DWIGHT LEISLE FROM PORT OF PORTLAND ON WILLAMETTE COVE**

The Port of Portland, Metro and the Department of Environmental Quality are working to clean up Willamette Cove. It's on the Willamette. It's 24 acres over three parcels, and near the Superfund site.

There's LOTS of contaminated soil from the area's industrial past. That's what workers are digging up and carting away. Five areas are targeted. An arborist is advising so the work can preserve existing trees. The goal is to transform the 24 acres into a publicly accessible natural area.

Teams found dioxin in some rubble piles. That's usually associated with the burning of treated wood. They're trying to source bricks on the site, with help from archaeologists, to see where the pollutants came from. Metal hoops found in the rubble, the kind used to manufacture barrels, had archaeologists potentially

pointing to a cooperage plant on the site. The excavation of those areas was so deep, they'll need to bring in more dirt to backfill.

The workers have removed 2,500 cubic yards of dirt so far — enough to fill 115 double-trailer trucks.

Three of five sites have been confirmed cleaned. The workers saved 21 native trees. Twenty non-native trees will be replaced.

Neighbors immediately complained about the initial haul route down St. Louis/Fessenden. The Port immediately changed the route so it went east on Lombard to Rivergagte and then back to Columbia and Interstate 5. They said they didn't know it wasn't a truck route — but during their last visit, in September, they also said definitively they wouldn't haul the dirt along St. Louis/Fessenden.

The rest of the work on this phase of the Willamette Cove project should rap by mid-December. Of all the trucks that pulled dirt to Eastern Oregon, only one had an accident. The last one. And it wrecked five miles from the disposal site, no less.

The trailer flipped and dumped the dirty soil, which had to be cleaned up the next day. Again, far, far away from St. Johns.

The Cove site, when new dirt is added around the excavated remaining tree roots, will be reseeded with native grass.

Dwight shows pictures. Some surface soil has been removed. Most of the contamination was in the top six inches. Some areas needed deeper excavation. He also points out that trucks were plastic-lined and covered and that their wheels, upon leaving the site, were washed and inspected.

Because there's more work on other contaminated areas, he urged people not to trespass until all work on the site finishes over the next few years.

Questions? Scott asks again about the truck route. Scott also asks about the Port's policy on the emissions standards of its trucks: new trucks vs. old trucks, which often emit more diesel and other particulates? Dwight says the trucks had specific specifications and rules for this work, which put them on neighborhood streets: Low sulfur diesel and limits on idling, among them. The Port says it tried to determine the best truck route with least impact. Dwight says a truck's vintage depends on the truck company contracted for a job with the Port.

A man asks about dioxin. That was mostly at the creosote timber plant near the cove. That site had many fires, and the dioxin floated to other areas. They're hoping to find the source of that dioxin somewhere on the Cove land. There's a chance that a business could be held liable, but that's difficult since most of the businesses that operated on the site are gone, broke or defunct.

Residual contaminants may need to be capped to keep from seeping back into the newly cleaned soil. River bank soil must also be removed. The state Department of Environmental Quality will select a final remedy and they'll work it through with Metro. That's a couple of years away. The initial decontamination will help with the health risks associated with the site, but — once again — the no trespassing signs are up for good reason.

Shamus asks if camps on the site have scattered. Dwight says the Port worked with Metro to clear camps. One camp site was “pretty significant.”.

Maria says she was upset about the truck route and that Port didn't know that St. Louis/Fessenden wasn't a truck route. “We've been fighting for that road since I've been here. We presented not only to this group,” she said.

Metro bought the land with bond funds and didn't realize how extensively contaminated it was. It may be two years before it's a functioning natural area. It's also part of the North Portland greenway trail, which will someday connect Kelley Point Park with the Eastbank Esplanade..

Nearby, Steelhammer site has developers checking it out. That could help fill in the trail path. After the Cove and Steelhammer site, next is charting a path through the McCormick and Baxter Superfund site near the railroad bridge.

## UPDATES

- **The volunteer soiree won't return** with the same name next year. But it's coming back in some fashion.

That announcement came with a backstory. The event was born out of a “sad” neighborhood potluck 10 to 15 years ago that grew into a neighborhood social that eventually grew into a major affair way too big for a board of volunteers to manage sanely. What once drew 50 people pulled in 1,200 during its final year at Roosevelt High in January 2014.

The event was reconstituted in spring 2015 as a volunteer soiree that ditched the “free spaghetti feed aspect of it” in favor of letting groups and nonprofits table and reach out to would-be volunteers and participants.

The SJNA board, working with Main Street, asks anyone interested in tabling to let members know. The inaugural event was at The Colongy, but it will be somewhere else next year. So space ideas also are welcome.

- **The Office of Neighborhood Involvement's umbrella coalition** for neighborhood groups, North Portland Neighborhood Services, had offered \$20K in

grants for groups in their service area with ideas for engaging the community. SJNA and Main Street applied for grant to help with the soiree.

A few other organizations applied and asked SJNA for letters of support. SJNA backed North Portland Greenway and the St. Johns Bizarre (*full disclosure: both of those are affiliated with SJNA parliamentarian Shamus*), the Neighborhood Emergency Teams who work with the city on disaster preparedness, and Main Street, making a separate request from the soiree bid.

## **GLORIA TALKS ABOUT STREET TREES**

We used to have a street tree team tracking dead and unhealthy trees. It fell apart around 2011-12. This last Saturday, she went to a 2015 tree summit where they gave out “tree geek” T-shirts and now **Gloria Luzader** is hoping to restart that kind of work in the neighborhood.

If anyone’s interested, she’d like to get a group together, small or large, to talk. “I have a big dining room table. I don’t care,” she said.

The neighborhood hasn’t had a tree survey since 2011. There’s believed to be just one city-protected “heritage” tree left in St. Johns, in a private back yard.

The group may not start up until January. She wants to have a small get-together.

The group can even try nominated more heritage trees, except the city’s committee is really picky.

Everybody wants to get rid of the slime-dripping lindens in the neighborhood, though. Blame Germans and Scotch immigrants, who wanted something that reminded them of home.

## **OPEN FORUM**

- Friends of Baltimore Woods teased to its annual book sale.
- Rachel says many zoning changes in the comprehensive plan are great. Some are contentious. She says anyone who lives on Lombard, north of St. Louis, and doesn’t understand changes in store there should get in touch with her.
- Melissa announces she’s organizing the annual downtown leaf cleanup, set for Nov. 21. Shamus and the Adamski siblings, Babs and Joe, used to run it. Roosevelt’s Key Club helps, and shops donate coffee and food (ie. Thai Cottage and Brekken’s).

The meeting adjourns at 8:22.