

Morningside Neighborhood Association
Board Meeting 11/8/2023
Morningside United Methodist Church

Minutes

Called to order at 6:35pm

Chair Pamela Schmidling presiding

Board members present: Pamela Schmidling, Kurtis Smith, Geoffrey James, Liz Backer, Al Tocchini, Mark Olson, Jenny Hiatt, Sue Reid, Janet Bubl, Alan Meyer, Muriel Meyer, Nathan Soltz; Bennie Yows is excused

Pamela shares we will no longer have a police officer report due to budget constraints

Geoff moves approval of minutes; seconded; approved unanimously

City Councilor report: Trevor Phillips

-City has moved up when it posts draft agendas, so the council tentative agenda is out – potential amendments to sign code and changes to design standards, in particular for mixed use; information report on PFAS “forever chemicals,” somewhat similar to Teflon/nonstick coatings, only certain threshold that is statistically significant, no federal rules right now, so regulations are happening at a local level; didn’t see any pending land use items or anything worth pulling on the council agenda, but please contact Trevor if you see something

-Since payroll tax vote failed, looking at short-term cuts, looking at other options to raise revenue that would be supported by voters, anticipating Revenue Task Force process, Trevor would like to see it be large; doesn’t know what short-term cuts are exactly, likely West Salem Library in particular; this is a process, if people are interested, there may be the opportunity to serve on the task force; even the opposition, OBI, has recognized the need to raise revenue, the trick is figuring out how; we will need to work with the Governor and legislature; deeply concerned about cuts to managed microshelter, believes state should step up for funding; Rep. Andersen is looking at introducing a bill for Contribution in lieu of Taxes (CILT) to Salem

-Traffic study on South Commercial between Hilfiker and Kuebler, ultimately something state/ODOT has control over, but numerous pedestrian deaths there and Trevor would like a lower speed limit, plan to introduce motion late this year or early next to accomplish that; Trevor would also like to look into banning sale or use of fireworks in city limits – increasing risk of fire on west coast, close calls south of Ward 4 and Ward 7, have had people be upset that this hasn’t already been done, but in the past, really just Trevor and one other councilor that have supported this; also keeping an eye on Meyer Family Farm and his concerns there

-Pam asks if Trevor has read the recent email from Scott Schaefer? Trevor says yes, Scott’s idea was to privatize library services, Trevor doesn’t know that that would work; we get \$1-2 million being part of library collective, total cost is \$5-6 million, we’d only save about 3 million; it is a source of revenue in addition to being a cost;

-Trevor adds that in the short term, getting one new park ranger is going to be imperative, especially if we have to cut housing services, we will need them to help manage that “chaos”; Trevor would rather reduce main library hours than cut housing services, but very unpopular among council and residents to cut the main library; these cuts are a “smorgasbord of awful”; Library Systems and Services is private company that manages libraries – skepticism at this idea was expressed by board members

-Pam suggests bicycle licensing and have it overseen by fire department; Trevor remembers her suggesting that before, definitely believes we need to look at sources of revenue from transportation as gas taxes keep decreasing; Sue suggests that freight corridors should have to pay more for road repair

-Alan Meyer says he understands during the campaign that threatening to cut important services is a tactic, but he hopes that when the council looks at cutting, they save the most important services like police and fire

-Trevor says in non-scientific poll of Salem residents, 50% were concerned about cutting police; we don't hear it here, but online and in phone calls, there is a loud group that doesn't want to fund the police; everybody thinks that they're in the majority, but he doesn't think that anybody really is; there are also people demanding various levy votes for specific services; Trevor says he is genuinely scared and he wasn't just saying that for the campaign; at real risk of closing Center for Hope and Safety, he doesn't think people see the real impact of the revenue shortfall; cutting the library will be awful and is deeply unpopular, but he thinks there are better uses of funding; this revenue task force will be separate from budget committee

-Alan Meyer asks if there are services that we provide to the state that we could not provide unless we get paid? Trevor says no, and we do get hundreds of service calls a year from state offices; that question has come up in conversations, but it is not legal to withhold services; he hopes that the governor will be there to help us for things like the navigation center, managed microshelters, especially since she came out publicly in opposition to the measure; the city did save 226 units of housing through Salem Housing Authority in north Salem

-Alan Meyer says that the way Trevor, the mayor and others have represented the property tax differential between old homes and new homes is inaccurate; Trevor disagrees

Committee reports

Traffic – Alan Meyer: Strong Road, section from the Grove to Fairview addition is not complete, but gravel has been laid down today, looks like it should be done in weeks, not months

Land Use – Geoff: Geoff defers to Liz, Liz says nothing new

Parks – Muriel: Fairview Park online survey was in Spanish, link was wrong, has been fixed now; a mailer was sent out with the survey; Trevor says that because of costs, only those closest to the park got the mailer; Muriel says some questions just didn't make sense since it's not a developed park, nature of generic survey questions just not applicable; Trevor asks if we'd like Rob and/or others from Parks to come speak to MNA – members express support; Muriel says she is frustrated that she's been working on this for 3 years and it's going to take 2 more years for the park to actually be constructed; Rachel Alexander, reporter with Salem Reporter, didn't publish the article that Muriel wrote, as Rachel solicited an article from MNA, so she doesn't want to bother doing another one; Jenny asks if we want survey link posted on social media, Pamela says yes please

-Muriel says she got a note from Pam that Clark Creek Park wants a cover for the playground, Pam spoke with a neighbor who says they have them in other parks; Jenny says she hasn't seen them in Salem, but has in Keizer; Muriel says there is a grant coming available in April and she will apply for a cover for Clark Creek Park then

-Muriel: Braden Lane Natural Area – signage has been put up near the park on the path; Muriel wanted the sign coming down Pringle past Hilfiker, but city person says there is no clearing and no path, but Muriel hopes to get a sign there too

-Kurtis asks if there's update on getting the trees in Hilfiker Park; Nathan says the issue we discussed is Public Works has a right of way there even though Parks approved the plan and just requested MNA approval, Janet agrees that the issue is with Public Works right of way

CERT – Pamela: there was a meeting, but emergency manager doesn't seem to have time for it; Trevor agrees with concerns that we need to take preparation more seriously – as a council member he doesn't even have a white paper on what to do in case of an emergency

Liquor License Applications – Pamela: none

Transit: none

Communications – Jenny: Trunk or Treat was very fun, good event; handed out 250 bookmarks; our Facebook got 40-50 more likes afterwards; would like to do it every year; went through 15 pounds of candy

-Trevor says it was an honor to give Jenny the award for volunteer recognition

-Jenny – Zoom is \$104.95 with a 40% discount that Irma can get, and Irma is working on getting it for us; Jenny says she was concerned that we had a neighbor last time who sat through the whole meeting waiting to present, she suggests having neighborhood concerns and special guests go first; Trevor says we can limit “scope, manner and time” of speech; Jenny says that while doing social media communication, inviting people to come into here, we want to be sure we’re mindful of guests; after discussion, Jenny suggests that during introductions, we ask guests to share what brings them to the meeting and if there’s something they want to speak about, and if they do, we’ll be sure to prioritize hearing from them and let them know when they’ll be able to speak – there is agreement from board members to this approach; Pamela says she is concerned that folks need to understand what we do, instead of just having them come here to complain; Kurtis suggests that we also be ready to tell folks when something is more appropriate just brought to city council

Liz moves that special invited guests be permitted to present at the beginning of the meeting – after the approval of minutes on the agenda – and that the agenda may vary by month depending on guests; seconded; approved unanimously

Further, general guests will be asked what brought them in and if there’s something they wanted to speak about – if there is, we will inform them when they will be able to speak: at the end of the meeting

-Jenny says she can post agendas on social media sites; Pamela says next agenda due for Irma on December 4, and that she posts it later in the week

-Jenny: Leslie and Morningside schools said there’s not much going on in terms of volunteering for the holidays; still thinks it would be good to do some kind of volunteering, goal of doing neighborhood cleanup of the woods when weather improves

-Jenny asks for content for December newsletter, Pamela says AKS Engineering wants an “open house” for the NA about a project they’re doing – “open house” is city planning term, they’d just come in and present for about 10 minutes on their project; some projects are required to have an open house, others come and present because they want our buy-in and feedback; we have changed some developer decisions because of NA objections

-Jenny fully supports lowering speed limit on Commercial, as suggested by Trevor, and will help with communications later; Trevor asks for a motion on a traffic study if there is consensus; Alan Meyer asks for time to think about it before making a motion or discussing one

Hours

Liz: 10; Jenny: 20; Janet: 3; Pam: 1; Geoff: 1; Muriel: 5; Nathan: 3

Meyer Farm Update

Trevor says goal is council does less call-ups, with limitations on staff time, doesn’t want to spend council resources on things that we have no control over; Trevor spoke with Lisa and Dan, his understanding is that during the property line adjustment process, the community pointed out that they didn’t do their homework on the history of the property line and legal nature of those plats, so they’re going to reapply with showing their homework, it’s not really an appeal; may be after Salem updates its process that that property line may be legal; they still have right to develop the first phase/plan that was approved by the city; Trevor doesn’t know what’s going on with family legal challenges; city staff is aware of goal of adding Meyer Farm homestead to Hilfiker park, get it on 309 list for SDC funds; Geoff clarifies the 5 acres adding to Hilfiker Park; Geoff says family’s preference is that they would like to buy the 5 acres from Kehoe (developers) and keep it as family ownership, they would fight for that; the MNA preference is that the family be able to save it as well, but if they can’t, then add it to the park which is a great idea; there is not much we can do with the 25 acres, but the 5 acres we want to save as many trees as possible; Jenny saw a post encouraging people to go to family hearing on December 6

Announcements

Alan Meyer says governor's task force on housing wants to eliminate regulations on saving any trees under 60 inches in diameter; strong opposition is expressed from board members; Nathan says that we might want to share our opposition with Senator Patterson and Representative Andersen and that it would be timely to do so before the end of the year

Alan Meyer moves that we oppose a change by the state that would preempt the city's policy on saving significant trees, and that we send a letter to that extent to Representative Andersen and Senator Patterson; seconded; approved unanimously

-Nathan says he will draft the letter for review

Adjourned at 8:19pm

Respectfully submitted,

Nathan Soltz

Board Secretary, Morningside Neighborhood Association

APPROVED