

North Gresham Neighborhood Association General Meeting Minutes
October 7, 2019, 6:00 – 8:00 PM
Rockwood Public Safety Facility
675 NE 181st Avenue
Portland, OR 97230

- Call to order by President, Mike Elston, at 6:05 PM
- Around the table introductions. Present were North Gresham residents Alesya Berkovich, Mike Elston, Pam Fowler, Bob Fowler, Rebecca Hergert, William June, Kim Kovacs, Louise Masog, Jim Masog, Isabella Padilla, Linda Parashos, Tim Polly, Keith Presley, Jennifer Truxton, Linda VanDeusen Price, Darcey Vincent, John Weigant. Guests present were officers Chris Watkins and Steve Taylor from the Neighborhood Enforcement Team (NET).

Pam Fowler mentioned she and Bob drive for Meals-on-Wheels, and that they're desperate for drivers. They described their experiences and urged others to sign on.

- Quorum established.
- Minutes from the June 3, 2019 General Meeting. John Weigant moved approval; Mike Elston seconded. Passed unanimously.
- Treasurer's report – Linda VanDeusen-Price.
We have \$169.75 left in our account. We would have more, but we had a huge response to the National Night Out picnic, and had to go back out for food. Between that and the port-a-potty we rented, we spend \$327.66 more than last year. We may need to change the menu for next year to something less expensive, possibly Mexican. Linda asked those present to make suggestions if they had any ideas.
- Land Use report – Linda Parashos
There are applications for construction in North Gresham that are in the final review stage. She didn't want to run through them all – at one point she was receiving two per week. Most are in the industrial area. She went on to discuss the berm that the developer, Mackenzie, is putting in along the North Gresham/Fairview border to hide the warehouses. They are eliminating a gap in the berm and planting trees on the top of it. Trammel-Crow is also relocating an existing wetlands to another part of the property. There should be nothing further on this issue

Mike Elson went on to add that 2/3 of our neighborhood is industrial. One of the problems this causes is a steady increase in truck traffic, particularly along Marine Drive. The whole area is storage only – goods in and goods out – so a 140,000 square foot building might employ just five workers. Linda mentioned that she'd seen applications to partition properties so more warehouses can be built on the land. Mike stated that all you can see is "for lease" signs – no occupancy – but the city collects a lot of money from these and so wants to encourage them.

Resident Bob Fowler asked what we want to see: Empty warehouses, or high-density apartments that also increase traffic but require additional fire and police. Mr. Fowler expressed concern that some of the residents of the high-density apartments were running businesses out of their homes, in particular truck repair. Office Chris Watkins said that residents should report this type of activity, that code enforcement is usually complaint-driven. Mike Elston concurred; he mentioned reporting 17 vehicles after one walk in the neighborhood; a couple of days later, they'd all been tagged by police. So complaining does work.

Mr. Fowler mentioned that at the Coalition Meetings the City Planner seems to think everyone should take public transportation, but that doesn't happen. He specifically mentioned the traffic pattern changes on Glisan. A woman at the city told him that if you can't ride a bicycle you're out of luck; he felt she should have been fired. Keith Presley added that all they did was increase congestion.

Mr. Elston said he agreed, but as far as code violations go, please report them. Linda Parashos had information about how to do that, suggesting people download and use the My Gresham app for the best response. Officer Steve Taylor mentioned that the tip line is currently down, although it should be back up soon; he recommended using the My Gresham app in the meantime.

- Guest Speakers
Neighborhood Enforcement Team (NET) Update

Officers Chris Watkins and Steve Taylor discussed the current projects they're working on.

Officer Watkins presented two "buddy bears" – a stuffed bear with a warm soft blanket – that they give out to kids in stressful situations.

He mentioned that he and Officer Taylor have been on the NET team for 3.5 years and are in their last six months before returning to regular patrol duties. They have focused much of their time in recent years on vacant properties that had attracted squatters. There were over 300 when they started, and are now down to less than 100 vacant homes, none of which contain squatters as far as they know.

They're currently working with the new manager of the Shenandoah Gardens apartment complex to clean the area up. It's older and no money has been put into it so it attracts a certain type of person. No matter what, everyone deserves to feel safe moving around the neighborhood, and that's their chief focus.

They're also working with hotels in the area that are considered chronic nuisance properties. Dopers are renting rooms for weeks at a time and using them for illegal activity. There's no oversight; when the rooms are raided the team finds drugs, guns, stolen property, etc. Gresham isn't a destination, it's a stop on the way to another location. Families may stop for just the night and then wake up to find their car has been broken into. They're letting the management know that this isn't acceptable.

Office Taylor mentioned that he grew up here; he used to ride his bike to the store, but it's not safe to do that anymore.

Mr. Fowler asked about the amount of low-income housing in Rockwood being higher than the amount in all of North Portland. Officer Watkins said that yes, as North Portland got revamped, low-income people moved to Gresham, increasing crime and gang activity. Office Taylor added that when East Portland went through gentrification, the low-income folks were pushed out. Rockwood is the most densely populated section of Gresham because of all the apartment complexes along the Max line. The complexes are older and not well-maintained.

Pam Fowler mentioned she's uncomfortable delivering Meals-on-Wheels to some of these locations.

Office Watkins stated that Rockwood has a high share of crime, and it boils down to drugs – *always*. If you see something or come across someone who seems vulnerable, let someone know.

Office Taylor added that you deserve to be safe where you live. 95% of people here are good people, but many people feel they're captives in their own homes because of these bad folks. People don't know what to do to reach out.

Mike Elston talked about holding a "spring cleaning" event with NET along 183rd that was very successful. The NGNA worked with NET to bring in dumpsters and had a lot of volunteers. There was food & face painting. Officer Watkins stresses that the NGNA made that happen, and that's the strength of the neighborhood associations. People see negativity and crime, and they feel overwhelmed. Neighborhood associations help turn that around.

Officer Watkins went on to discuss the situation with Albertson's. They were able to eliminate the outside bottle machines, which was a big positive, but the bushes on the west side of the store are now attracting drug users and shoppers don't feel safe. Officer Taylor added that it's up to the property owners to take a stand, that this isn't acceptable; then it's up to NET to enforce it. There was one recent incident where an obvious drug user was just loitering outside one of the businesses in

that area so she could use their Wi-Fi. Officer Watkins said the Dollar Store on 181st is also an issue. It attracts a lot of bad people, as do the several stores that have lotto in them. Lotto machines in higher poverty, depressed areas just suck the soul out of people and attracts drug users. They crave constant stimulation, and lotto feeds into that. Mr. Elson mentioned that he was in Joy Teriyaki recently when he saw five obviously high individuals walk by and go directly into the lotto establishment.

Officer Watkins said that the thing to remember is you have to have hope and faith. You have to learn how to keep a positive perspective and look for the best in people, because it's really easy to be negative.

Officer Taylor went on to say that there are some great neighborhoods on this side of town, but that establishments like a bad hotel act like a magnet for crime.

Officer Watkins suggested trading information with your neighbors; information is power. If you come across a Nuisance, let NET know. The goal is to raise the quality of life in your neighborhood so you're not a captive in your own home.

Officer Taylor returned to the subject of the hotel. They've been actively working with the management, and it had gotten better, but it's bad again. Officer Watkins mentioned that in particular, they try to get the hotel to limit cash sales, since that contributes to the problem. He stated it's not his job to tell businesses how to operate, but it *is* his job to keep businesses from encouraging crime. They have a responsibility to be good neighbors. Unfortunately, the hotel's owners are only interested in money. Office Taylor said about all they can do is enact civil penalties.

Mr. Elston asked about the properties next to 7-11; when they were first putting in the new buildings he saw officers riding through on bicycles. Officer Watkins asked what the group thought about the artwork on the side of the building? It was done to reduce graffiti. Ms. Berkovich asked who paid for it, and Officer Watkins said it didn't cost anything, that the donations for materials came from the stores and the artist wasn't paid (but did get other work out of it). Mr. Fowler asked how they should report graffiti, and Officer Taylor responded that it's the responsibility of the homeowner to cover it up.

Linda VanDeusen-Price asked about Rockwood Rising – did the officers think it'll be a help, or that it'll cause more problems? Office Taylor said it all depended on the tenants they got in. Metro is the mastermind behind the new buildings, but they have a shelf-life of a couple of years, where they're pretty good, but once they newness wears off they deteriorate if they're not maintained properly. Getting people in there who take pride in the area is what's needed. Fred Meyer used to be there & was the anchor store in Rockwood, but they had \$1 million a day in theft – the highest amount of any of the Fred Meyer stores. Albertson's is now also experiencing high theft and they're working with the store to reduce it, but their hands are tied by the corporate office. They're so concerned about bad press/social media that they don't want to be hands-on; they allow the theft. Mr. Elson said that we all pay for that. Officer Taylor said that it's up to us to tell Albertson's it's not right.

Officer Watkins closed with saying it's important to have hope and a positive attitude to fight the moral decline. Groups like this one are good; they provide hope.

Anthony Bradley, Play Grow Learn – Didn't show.

- Kirk Park update

We plan to put the park in in November. We got all the money that we need to put in the equipment, including the toddler swings and the ADA equipment (at one point we thought those would have to wait until next year). Wells-Fargo is giving us \$80,000, not \$60,000 as originally thought, plus \$20,000 from Nike and our anchor grant from Pella Windows. Ross equipment will do the ground preparation, then we'll have a day when the neighborhood and concerned businesses will come together to build the playground equipment. This is all because of Ms. Berkovich coming to a meeting and asking why Kirk Park didn't have a playground. She really got the ball rolling. Mr. Elston also asked the city why they were putting in new parks for areas that were well off, while not finishing what they started in existing parks in less wealthy areas. He also wanted to thank Tina Osterink, who got us the Nike grant and helped us make a video. Mr. Elston mentioned that we could have had the construction company install the equipment, but he felt the neighborhood needed to have a sense of ownership. He's always been struck by how beautiful the park is but that no one ever goes there; now they'll have a reason

to go there.

- NGNA Officer Elections

The Land Use position is open. Ms. Parashos described what the position entails, mentioning the applications seem to go in waves; sometimes there aren't many, sometimes there are several. She's taken the online training twice, and has made a point of getting familiar with the city codes. She also puts in time going to the Early Neighborhood Notification (ENN) meetings. She had to learn enough to understand the process. Her main concerns when reviewing the plans are traffic and safety. The online training is a good starting point, although she's been the Land Use Chair for six years and she's still learning. Mr. Elston added that the position is most important when new development starts; we need to stay on top of that. He found out that the new development gave the city \$830,000 for traffic mitigation; we've been trying to get some sort of speed control along Marine Drive but has been told there's no money for it. He wants to know where that money's going and plans to approach the city about it. Ms. Parashos said she enjoyed the position, but she's feeling burned out, plus she's having surgery next spring. She'll continue to be around to help, however.

- President

- Mike Elston (incumbent) – No additional nominees. John Weigant motioned we retain Mr. Elston as president; Linda Parashos seconded; unanimously approved.

- Vice President:

- Alesya Berkovich (incumbent) - No additional nominees. John Weigant motioned we retain Ms. Berkovich as vice president; Mike Elson seconded; unanimously approved.

- Treasurer:

- Linda VanDeusen-Price (incumbent) - No additional nominees. John Weigant motioned we retain Ms. VanDeusen-Price as treasurer; Mike Elson seconded; unanimously approved.

- Secretary:

- Kim Kovacs (incumbent) - No additional nominees. John Weigant motioned we retain Ms. Kovacs as secretary; Mike Elson seconded; unanimously approved.

- Land Use:

- Resident William (Willie) June said he would fill this role. No additional nominees. Kim Kovacs motioned NGNA elect Willie June as Land Use chair; John Weigant seconded; unanimously approved.

- Member-at-Large (two positions):

- John Weigant (incumbent)
- Linda Parashos (former Land Use officer)
- No additional nominees. Kim Kovacs motioned we elect John Weigant and Linda Parashos as members at large; Linda VanDeusen-Price seconded; unanimously approved.

- Other announcements or public comments

Saturday, October 19th, 9:00-Noon there will be a shredding and prescription disposal event at the Gresham City Hall. They will accept up to two grocery bags per person of documents to be shredded. Regarding prescriptions, they will not accept needles, epi-pens or liquids; pills only.

Saturday, October 26, 10:00-12:30 there will be another Repair Café held at the Gresham Public Library on Miller Street. Neighbors are welcome to bring broken items to be repaired by skilled technicians. They'll work on bicycles, small appliances, electronics, mending and sewing.

- Linda VanDeusen-Price motioned that we adjourn; seconded by Willie June; meeting adjourned at 7:48 PM.

Next general meeting: Monday, March 2, 2020, 6:00 – 8:00 PM, Location TBD

NGNA Board Meetings are held the third Monday of each month at 6:00 PM at the Rockwood Village Condos clubhouse, 18550 NE Wasco St. Portland Oregon, 97230.

Respectfully submitted by Kim Kovacs, Secretary, North Gresham Neighborhood Association