

Northwest Neighborhood Association Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 7, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m. and held via Zoom. We began with introductions of the Nwana board. Twenty-one Zoom households were in attendance, including Nwana president Kat Todd, VP Chris Fast, Treasurer Naomi Butler, Secretary Barbara Adams, and Land-Use Chair John Bildsoe.

Kat welcomed everyone in attendance. She introduced Nina Vetter, Gresham City Manager, who also lives in the neighborhood.

Nina Vetter, City Manager: Talked about City of Gresham updates

- Imagine Gresham—gathering dreams and big ideas from Gresham residents. The city is currently in phase one, gathering information. There is a website dedicated to “Imagine Gresham.” There are also in-person events and school-wide events. The goal is to build a strategic plan—where we will go in the future and how we will get there. Encouraged all to participate, dropped the link into the chat.
- Safety—Safe Gresham is a community violence initiative to address gaps in the services provided to the community. The initiative focuses on collaboration, intervention, and prevention. Vetter encouraged neighbors to visit the website, <https://greshamoregon.gov/Safe-Gresham/>
- Urban renewal—The urban renewal district, established in 2003, expired in 2023, leaving \$37 million unused. The city will take this to voters to extend the urban renewal district to 2029. The extra six years would allow the city to invest \$92 million in new projects to improve the 1,211-acre Rockwood-West Gresham Urban Renewal Area.
- Federal Dollars—The city has received \$12.7 in American Rescue Plan Act funds and anticipates participating in grant and other funding processes from the federal infrastructure bill.

John Bildsoe talked about problems of mail theft in the Gresham area. He said he took some found mail to the police station recently, but the doors are locked, and it is difficult to reach a person. He was told to call the non-emergency number, but that has not been effective in the past. He said there was too much mail for him to deliver in person.

Nina responded that the police department is underfunded, and that the city alone is not able to fix the problems. She suggested taking the mail to the Post Office.

Barb Adams asked when the police department doors will open (be unlocked). Nina said they are working on addressing some safety issues that have come up, and that their focused on keeping staff safe.

John brought up the problem of people building unsafe fires, and cases of arson this winter. Nina said the city now has a four-member team working on homeless issues, and that a representative will be addressing this later in this meeting.

Kevin Dahlgren Community Health Services Advisor, & Jessica Harper
Community Services Manager

Jessica introduced herself, said she will talk about changes to the team. She said in the past six months two positions were added (focusing on homeless service outreach). She said the team consists of four people now, which feels like a good, solid number. With the expanded staff, she said to report on MyGresham, where there is a “homeless issues” tab. She said that is the best place to report concerns. She said last week they made a presentation to City Council about the homeless program, and that there is a link to the meeting on the city’s website (on the city council’s webpage), and that it’s worth watching. Regarding the NET team being reassigned to other duties due to staffing shortages, the community services department has found other avenues for working through issues without police assistance. She said “it’s been working out okay so far.” Another issue: the concept of expanding their hours of service to the community, possibly some hours on the weekend. She said they are thinking about ways to implement those services.

Kevin Dahlgren, has been working for the city for the past four years. He said that sometimes the person they are reaching out to is not ready to be helped.

Two goals: Helping connect people to services, and maintaining livability of the community.

John Bildsoe: commented on how difficult the work is. Recognized the need to provide services after hours and on the weekend. He brought up the building that went up in flames at 2:00 a.m. on a weekend. He wondered why individuals experiencing homelessness might hang out in downtown Gresham.

Kevin said he and his team make a point of knowing managers of stores, and business owners to build up those personal working relationships. Together they try to address the current issue. He said he “strongly encourages people to reach out.” And that having that regular contact makes a positive difference.

Regarding a comment made in the chat about garbage around Jenny Road, Kevin said that is very close to the border of Gresham and Portland. He said there are currently no active camps on the Gresham side of that area, but not necessarily the case with the Portland side.

Jessica said Gresham has made it clear that camping within the city limits is not allowed.

A neighbor asked what neighbors can do that is helpful, and what is not helpful. Kevin said his number one goal is finding a permanent solution, including housing, healthcare, etc. He said the majority of people are open to working on finding permanent solutions. He said by working on the bigger picture the city has been able to have positive results. Jessica said the best thing neighbors can do is report to her team so they can work on helping the individual find permanent solutions.

Jessica said the county recently finished its homeless count, and that the numbers are down from two years ago. She said last year her team estimated about 40 people, which was a significant decrease since 2016. That said, people come into our community from other communities, and the team works on finding solutions for all they encounter.

John Bildsoe asked that people do not leave boxes of food/clothes/etc. because some of the items end up being left and becomes unsightly, gross trash. Jessica and Kevin recommended donating food and supplies to the Zarapath Kitchen or other agencies that serve those in need.

Chris Fast asked what are some examples of reasons why people might make a report. Kevin said the goal is not to be anti-homeless, but anti-behavior. He said if you see someone who you think might need assistance, simply ask them. If they need something, report to MyGresham and there will be a quick response.

Approval of the October 26, 2021 meeting minutes. Naomi Butler moved to approve the minutes; Trevor Todd seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

Michael Gonzales informed everyone that the city has “Imagine Gresham” signs available for whoever would like to put one in their yard. He also encouraged everyone to log into the Imagine Gresham website and answer the survey so they are able to gather a wide variety of voices. He said the signs are designed to inform the community about this outreach program. Chris Fast said he watched a short video that Michael posted, and that it was very interesting and that he appreciated it. Michael said another video will be posted soon.

Kat said she spoke with James Dunn with Gresham Parks, regarding the sandbags along the southeast walkway. She said Dunn is not aware of any flooding in residential properties. Regarding the rain garden, Kat is concerned about the sequoia tree and flooding, in time more hopefully will be done about the runoff.

John, land-use chair: Nothing too new to report.

He talked about the development along the south side of the park. He said the rainwater used to be taken care of in part by the acreage that is now being developed, which used to be covered with trees. He said they can not get occupancy permits until the pathways and streets are all complete.

Miln property on Birdsdale and Division: had been changed from industrial to mixed use/housing. The most recent proposal, five apartment style apartment buildings in a gated community including a clubhouse and pool, possibly up to 500 units.

Brinmar property west of Birdsdale near Powell. The developer who bought the Shaull property has a bid on that property, wants to put in up to 39 units.

The Shaull property, in the Centennial NA boundaries. He said we can keep up on the Parks Advisory Committee, and that this committee meets every month for about a year and will help allocate where funds will go. He said the meetings are recorded, and that they are worth paying attention to.

Regarding the two lots up for sale by the Gresham United Methodist Church—the two lots appear to be sold already, the signs have been taken down. John said they are each about 5,000 square feet, relatively big by today's standards.

Naomi: \$611.88 On-Point balance

Our next meeting will be in May.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.