

## **Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association**

Zoom Meeting Minutes, April 19, 2023

Facilitator: Dave Petrozzi

Secretary: Nadine Fiedler

**Board members present:** Nadine Fiedler, John Laursen, Paul Leistner, Brian Mitchell, Dave Petrozzi, Jim Pierce, Bing Wong

**Other attendees:** Leah Blackburn, Nancy Chapin, Richard Dreasher, Rob Galanakis, Michele Gila, Eric Hagstette, Janice Hogue, Jennifer Lee, Theodore Liscinski, Nikki Mandel, Scott McClellan, Nancy Norby, Laura Orr, Paige Richardson, Katelyn Weakley, Mark Wheeler

After introductions, the March minutes were approved unanimously. Bing Wong presented the treasurer's report. MTNA's bank balance is now \$5948.81. Ongoing expenses include Zoom monthly fees. MTNA's fiscal sponsorship from SEUL has been approved.

### **Neighbor Announcements, Concerns, and Questions**

Scott McClellan asked what was going on with the YMCA building at 60th & Stark. Paul Leistner responded that the city was going to redevelop it for housing but nothing has moved forward so far.

Paul Leistner reported that the city's office of community and civic life has been working with PSU's Oregon's Kitchen Table to plan for a three-day Portland Engagement Summit on April 27–29. The summit will include speakers from outside Portland and panelists of local Portlanders who will share their ideas on how to strengthen community engagement.

### **Presentation on County Measure 26-238**

Michele Gila and Paige Richardson of the Building Our Future Together Coalition presented their concerns about Measure 26-238 and hoped that MTNA members would oppose the measure. Their points included:

- They are not against the principle of renter support or housing, or supportive services, but this measure is flawed and will do harm.
- This is the wrong tax at the wrong time. The challenge is the way it's structured: it is a new local tax on all citizens, with no limit to how high the tax might go. It taxes all capital gains, including retirement investments and home sales. The administrative costs are uncertain and could be high.
- It creates a new county office to provide attorneys for tenants facing eviction, and an eviction prevention program. There are no income eligibility requirements for tenants, and it includes people with no legal right to occupy a property.
- It is unnecessary and redundant: other services already address the problem, including the well-funded Supportive Housing Services Funds.
- We don't need another tax on local residents and small businesses.
- Who would pay? All Multnomah County residents regardless of income, the amount of capital gain, or ability to pay. It does not protect lower- and middle-income people from capital gains. It targets local small businesses, not larger ones. Seniors would get less protection from taxes on the sale of their home.
- Perkins & Company analyzed this measure and said it is "volatile, cumbersome, and

costly.”

- No county commissioners support this. Jessica Vega Pederson says it is not the right solution.

Bing Wong asked how it affects seniors' home sales. Michele said that it's retroactive to home sales starting in January 2023.

Katelyn Weakley and husband Ben asked: if you rent out a house before you sell it, does that make you exempt? Paige said no.

### **Neighborhood Cleanup**

Paul Leistner updated us on the cleanup, set for Saturday, April 22, in the parking lot of the Unity Church at Stark and 47th, in partnership with the N. Tabor NA. SEUL has received a \$5,000 grant from Metro for this joint NTNA–MTNA cleanup. Paul is looking for people to volunteer for the event.

### **Proposed Amendment to MTNA Bylaws**

Paul Leistner spoke about a bylaws change that would shift board officer selection to board members. General membership would still elect the MTNA board. He says it will be better for MTNA and how it functions collegially, and that the board is in charge, not the officers. Bing Wong noted that it will be good for the bylaws to reflect our practices.

### **Communication Policy**

Dave Petrozzi would like MTNA to form a communications committee. His key points:

- We need people to chart our points of contact, and make sure all info is accurate, responses are timely, and that we generate thoughtful content.
- Laura Orr has been generating content, and we'd like to empower her.
- We need accountability and clarity of roles, and need to make sure no one is doing too much.
- Do we need an ad hoc response for lesser-tiered emails? Do we have to engage one on one for emails or do we need a standard response with a link to the meetings?
- Let's formalize the process for speakers with many requests pending. Midge Pierce wants clarification.
- Are we doing it the right way? Are our bases covered?
- We should continue community outreach.
- Do we need a mission statement? Dave would like a tone of cooperation and acknowledgement of the beautiful aspects of the neighborhood and its successes.

Bing Wong said that emails forwarded to the board should have a deadline for responses. Communications are external but we need to focus on internal communications, too. He struggles with Google Docs and the like and thinks we need better instruction.

Rob Galanakis volunteered to help.

Katelyn Weakley asked if MTNA members could reach out to other stakeholders in the community, such as businesses, and let them know how to reach MTNA.

Dave said that Laura Orr does the blog, and how can we help her? Laura responded that she was hoping for a committee to form today, a task force that will prepare a plan that will generate awareness of and participation in neighborhood committees. Stephanie Stewart had said that

we need to narrowly define this communications task force. Laura wants a group of 3-4 people to meet and accomplish more and come back to the board with plans. She's hoping it will include Laura Orr, Paul Leistner, Rob Galanakis, Midge Pierce, and Nadine Fiedler. She wants to have others see what MTNA is doing, and that we need space on the website to talk about this, including posting Dave's priorities list.

### **Mt. Tabor Park Lamppost Removal and Reservoirs Update**

John Laursen reported that there was not very positive news about reservoir 6. He reached out to Jody Inman, the chief engineer, about reservoirs 5 and 6. Reservoir 5 has been repaired and refilled. A consultant is doing test coring now to verify the results of the completed ground-penetrating radar study, with results due in June. Commissioner Mapps says that it will cost \$5 million to repair reservoir 6, with no clear source of funding.

The water bureau says that funding must come from city general funds because the reservoirs are no longer part of the water system. However, the water bureau owns the land and the reservoirs as part of their portfolio. In 2015 then-director David Schaff said it was important for the water bureau to own the reservoirs and that water storage is important.

It is murky now as to whether the 2012 ratepayer lawsuit controls what the water bureau can do about reservoir 6. The city says costs have to come from the general fund, but there are many competing requests. John has asked Jody Inman to come and address MTNA once they have the results, to talk about the costs and how the bureau plans to handle it.

John and Midge Pierce went to a city council hearing and testified about the lampposts. They pointed out to commissioner Ryan that the lamppost removal without public involvement was in violation of City policy, but he ignored that. Ryan is now in charge of the office of civic engagement, and is dismissive of our concerns about lack of public involvement. It would be so easy for the parks bureau to have a citizens advisory committee.

John said that the city's reaction to the hammock incident was knee-jerk and ill founded. There was no evidence presented at the hearing about alternatives or costs of lamppost removal or replacement, and an utter lack of transparency.

On the positive side, two parks employees were at the hearing, and Ryan told John and Midge to talk to them. One of the employees is an asset manager who works in the maintenance yard, and he talked about how the footings of some of the lamppost footings are faulty, and why they are at risk of falling over. John wished they had made that info public. The inadequate ones do not have all their bolts, but not all posts need replacement. They removed all the lampposts in Sellwood Park. They said that they will try to replicate the historic posts in Mt. Tabor Park with new ones in the same style, but with dark sky shields and LED lamps, which are warmer in color and more efficient. They might be doing the right thing, but the public is not being brought into the conversation. Whether the public voice will carry any weight is up to the Historic Landmark Commission; so far they are not pleased with the city's response.

John said that years ago, after MTNA ended up in mediation with the parks bureau over the selling of parks land, they had identified contemporary lampposts that looked like the historic ones. The park assets manager said they were taking a look at that manufacturer.

Bing Wong said that he was at the meeting where the city said that no lampposts would be removed until the replacements were available, due to public outcry.

Richard Dreasher asked about when the city budget gets set, in relation to reservoir 6 repairs. He's concerned that by delaying, the window will pass and the repairs won't get budgeted. John

said that he is right, and that we don't yet know the extent of the damage. The mayor has said that no bureau can ask for money for anything right now. We don't know where the money will come from. He suggests bringing up the topic at one of commissioner Mapps's town halls, mentioning that the city made a binding promise to maintain water in the Mt. Tabor reservoirs. Nikki Mandel asked if city council said they could pay for the lampposts. John replied that they don't yet know how much it will cost, and that there should be a citizens advisory committee. Nikki has made a public info request about lamppost replacement.

## **S2C2**

Nancy Chapin invited an MTNA representative to attend the S2C2 peace pole dedication; Dave Petrozzi said he will attend. She also invited people to the S2C2 meeting on May 17 at 9 a.m.

## **Friends of Mt. Tabor Park**

Bing Wong reported that the annual membership meeting (hybrid) on March 27 successfully elected its full board with a very good turnout including past board members. PP&R staff gave them good news about the proposed lampposts removal in the park, removal to happen when replacements are available. Guest speaker Geof Donovan (treasurer Rachel White's husband) and U.S. Forest Service research economist discussed the benefits of trees. Friend of the Year awarded to Hap Pritchard. The next Weed Warrior work party on Saturday, April 22. April's last Saturday will be an event with the Nature Conservancy. The next FMTP board meeting will be on April 26.

## **Concerns About Office of Civic Life**

Jim Pierce reported that we need to connect with the office of civic life to pass on our concerns. The Laurelhurst NA had a meeting about coalitions: do we want to be proactive and follow their suit? Midge Pierce exchanged emails with TJ McHugh and his staff; they indicated that they would set up a regional meeting through SEUL. She'd like a chance for commissioner Ryan and his staff to meet with John Laursen and Paul Leistner, given their experience with city organizations.

Paul said that neighborhood leaders and other community organization leaders have met with Ryan and TJ McHugh, and that there are some good things happening: they are making some good changes and listening a little bit. He doesn't know if an MTNA meeting with them would be helpful. If they want to meet, it should include other NAs. He said that the city used to have a good relationship with NAs and other community organizations, but we have seen an effort in the past few years to set NAs apart. He and others have been trying to rebuild the relationships, and it's better to work together with others and build unity.

Bing Wong said that the press is asking questions about the civic life office and the removal of neighborhood watch and other programs. There are fewer funds going to NAs now from the coalitions, and the paperwork to get renewed is costly and difficult.

Paul said that the system has degraded over the past six years; Portland was once an exemplar but is no longer. He thinks that commissioner Ryan and TJ McHugh want to get back on track, and we can help them understand how to do that.