

Southwest Hills Residential League
Quarterly Membership Meeting
Ainsworth School, March 22, 2007

The meeting began at 7 PM with SWHRL President Jim Thayer presiding. He established that a quorum was present and explained that only members were eligible to vote during the meeting.

Board Members present: Jim Thayer, Norman Turrill, Alice Stolzberg, Nan Koerner, Tom Miller, Don Livingstone, Lena Lane, and Julia Harris.

Members present: Alan Bacharach, Willis Boicourt, Joyce Borgwardt, Sandy Bradley, Henry Brands, Mona J. Brett, Douglas B. Golden, Chuck Habernigg, Jill Habernigg, Rosalie Hammond, Andrew Holtz, Kelly Holtz, Dr. Richard Jones, Marilyn Jones, Jim Knoll, Morley Knoll, Luise Lane, Mary Mark, Pete Mark, Dr. Oliver Massengale, Paul Meyer, Nancy Owen, John Reece, Kelly Reece, Miriam Rosenthal, Jim Ruyle, Joanne Ruyle, Rick Schwartz, Nancy Seton, Richard Seton, Julie Sterling, Joan Sterrett, Lynn Takata, Jean Thorpe, Kendall Youngblood, Mark Youngblood, Frank Youngblood

Others present: Anne Clarke, Joan and Russell Kirsch, Walt Evans, Becki Berg, Bob Ball, Bob Ochs, Julie Falk, Ann-Marie Lamb, Mark Lovegren, Mark Gray, Chris Woo, Robert Lunifens, Matt Lampe

A motion was made to accept the minutes from the January 2007 Quarterly Meeting, voted on and passed unanimously.

SWHRL Vice President Norman Turrill reviewed 2 recent minor changes to the bylaws that had been approved at the last quarterly meeting in January, and explained that they needed to be voted on a second time, in accordance with the bylaws. A motion was made to accept the changes, and a vote taken. The motion passed unanimously.

Jim Thayer introduced Portland Mayor Tom Potter, who was present to speak about the proposed changes to the City Charter. Jim stated that he supports the changes, based on his work with 28 different city governments, and the difficulty of resolving technical issues that occur as a result of the current form of government.

Mayor Tom Potter

Mayor Potter began by stating his belief that the proposed changes were necessary to allow the city to use tax monies more efficiently and to increase communication between the government and citizens, and also within city bureaus. He said that the current system results in \$10-15 million in wasted tax dollars.

He gave some background on the current structure, which had historically been a popular form of city government. Now Portland is the only US city with a population greater than 100,000 that uses this form of government. He stated that having the city bureaus under the jurisdiction of the city commissioners resulted in the bureaus being run by elected officials who may or may not have any qualifications related to running the bureaus they oversee.

The proposed changes include having a periodic review of the City Charter; citizens would be able to recommend changes every ten years. The current charter has not been reviewed for 90 years.

Another proposed change would give the city budget authority over the Portland Development Commission.

Another proposed change would involve streamlining the civil service system to make it more efficient; this would include allowing managers to hire people outside of the civil service system. The changes would result in one person, elected because of their relevant qualifications, running the city bureaus. The City Council would retain the power to write ordinances and policies, and oversight responsibilities.

Mayor Potter cited the current issue with bio-swales as an example of current inefficiencies. Bureaus have been arguing about this issue for years; he stated that it should instead be a decision to be made by neighborhood associations.

The city has one large computer system for the whole city, but in reality it's one system with 300 systems that cannot communicate with each other. This has a negative impact on managing the city budget.

The Mayor explained that the proposed changes are well thought out, and the result of talking to citizens at over a hundred neighborhood meetings over the course of 14 months. People need to understand the consequences of the current structure both on the use of tax revenue and on the police. Currently the Commissioner of Public Safety is not in charge of the police – the mayor is.

He closed by urging people to vote Yes on all 4 issues on the May ballot.

A Question and Answer period followed.

Q: Who would pay the salary of the City Manager (a new position created by the proposed changes)?

A: The details of that have not been worked out. The community will help to decide.

Q: Who appoints the City Manager?

A: The Mayor selects the Chief Administrative Officer, but they have to be appointed by the City Council. Only the Mayor has firing authority. Some specifics are still undecided. This system would not kick in until January 2009, so that people running for office in 2008 would be aware of the new system.

Q: If the changes are passed, where will the resulting saved monies be used? Will citizens be able to see where those dollars go?

A: Once the new system is in place, and things are standardized, there will be large savings in the first year; the media will report on it.

Q: About the civil service changes, won't that result in political appointments?

A: Department heads will make appointments. Their immediate staff will serve at their pleasure. Abuse is possible but unlikely.

Q: Who opposes the changes?

A: One group who is represented at the meeting, Citizens for Accountable City Government. Jim Thayer told the group about the SWNI Forum on this issue.

Q: If the current system is not broke, why fix it?

A: It is broke. Millions of dollars are wasted, and there is a lack of communication. The Mayor should be accountable for the operation of the city, and should be required to solicit opinions from the citizens, which is required by the proposed changes.

Q: Why is the Neighborhood Emergency Training not more widely publicized?

A: Currently it's run by the Fire Bureau. The Mayor would like to see neighborhood associations involved in the training.

Jim Thayer said that SWHRL would like to have an Emergency Preparedness committee, but needs more citizen involvement in the organization in order to staff a committee.

Q: Portland Peak Oil Transport is urging people to get involved with alternative energy now, and to make neighborhoods more walk-able. 90% of school children are driven to school because there are not safe walking routes.

A: The Portland Transportation Plan has some mention of addressing this. The Mayor talked to the coordinator, and was told that there is no money available for this, that property owners own the sidewalks. Property owners can form local improvement districts. The city does not have enough money to provide all of the needed sidewalks – creative solutions need to be found.

Jim Thayer: The BES favors swales, as calling them trails creates a liability issue.

Norman Turrill: Trails are also related to recreation – perhaps the Parks Department could help out.

Presentation on the proposed rebuilding of the radio transmission tower at Council Crest Park: Matt Lampe, Director of Technical Services and Mark Gray, Manager of Communications

The current tower needs to be replaced. It's old and a structural analysis revealed that it no longer meets the standards for supporting essential public services, like emergency response.

Bob Ochs of the Portland Office of Technology is the project manager for this.

Over 90 government agencies use the radio system. The current tower was built in 1954-55 as an AM radio tower. The city acquired ownership in the 1960s. It is one of 5 main towers in a system that includes 10 smaller fill-in towers.

Repair is not economically feasible. The current foundation is not capable of supporting the tower. It would require \$2 million to demolish the tower, construct a new one, and migrate functionality. The design and height for the proposed new tower are the same as the current one. Other sites were considered, but a different site would entail a substantial decrease in service, and this is the critical determinant for rebuilding on the current site. Multiple systems are predicated on the current location.

The replacement project would last 58 weeks, and depends on the weather and availability of materials. The project will enter Land Use Review in about 3 weeks. During construction loop traffic will be closed and to a lesser extent, pedestrian traffic. The area by the base would be closed for the entire time.

There will be no commercial uses of the new tower, except for Metro-Fi; they are currently stationing new equipment at the site.

Questions were raised about back-up and about moving the current functionality to 3 other towers located about a mile from the current site, and about making the tower more attractive. Structural considerations prohibit deviation from the current design.

A motion was made to recommend that a design review be made by a Healy Heights committee that existed in the past; it is not known whether that committee still exists. Another motion was made to refer this matter to the SWHRL Board and passed unanimously.

There was a brief discussion about claims made in the latest issue of *Viewpoints*, which included statements that do not seem to be supported by the facts. There was evidently erroneous information presented at a SWHRL Board meeting that led to those statements.

The Land Use and Transportation committee heads presented a brief overview of their current projects.

Respectfully submitted,

Nanette Klimkow
Executive Assistant to SWHRL