

Lents Neighborhood Association

Minutes for General Meeting, August 23, 2016

Lents Activity Center (Seventh-Day Adventist Church)

8835 SE Woodstock Blvd.

Chair Judy Low called the meeting to order at 7:10 and the board introduced themselves.

Low stated that the original meeting agenda had been changed to reflect current concerns about the clearing of the Springwater Corridor and the possibility of a sanctioned camp at 105th and Reedway, and speakers had been invited to discuss those issues. She introduced Commander Kelli Sheffer and Captain Robert King.

King began by talking about the situation of homelessness in Lents. He stated that the safe sleep policy was a pilot program that had since been concluded and found ineffective. Now, they are operating on a complaint-based system and responding to calls in partnership with other agencies.

Resident Mary Oxford stated that there was an illegal vehicle parked outside; Dan McElligot and Michael Collins expressed similar concerns about illegally parked vehicles.

King responded that he would report them to PBOT and stated that many vehicles move around neighborhoods to “game the system.” Captain King also stated that vehicles can be seized, but if fines are paid they must be returned.

Harry Sampson asked whether moving campers would accomplish anything, as they would just return somewhere else. King responded that the Springwater Corridor had reached critical mass, with 400-600 people on the trail, and that city has three possible solutions: long term shelter beds; managed camps; or continued camping as is.

Resident Autumn West asked why police had stopped enforcing the laws and allowed blatant criminal behavior.

King stated that they are responding to 911 calls and using their limited resources but want to improve.

An attendee that identified himself as homeless asked King why police did not respond to their calls, and stated that neighbors had a right to make complaints about crime in the neighborhood.

King said that the police do not want anyone to be mistreated and need to enforce the law.

William Powell stated that there was a problem with organized crime that could be solved with arrests.

Nicole Leaper thanked the officers for attending the meeting and asked that they have an officer at future meetings for updates; she also asked about plans for the trail after it has been cleared.

Another attendee expressed concerns that other, wealthier neighborhoods received more police attention and resources, such as the prompt enforcement in Laurelhurst; King responded that he received a number of emails on this issue and that if tents appeared in Lents park they would respond the same.

One self-identified homeless attendee stated that not all of the homeless were criminals or drug addicts, and that many simply can't afford rents or get on assistance lists; another stated that it was an economic problem, that people should talk, not argue, and that police were doing the best they can.

Residents Erik Benson, Rob Bentley, and Randy Schroeder expressed frustration and anger about unchecked criminal activity, lack of safety, lack of equity, and lack of respect from city agencies.

King stated that he appreciates that people are frustrated and upset and would like actionable information and constructive communication.

Tina Barnes stated that she currently lives in a motorhome in Lents, that campers are looking for a safe place and stability, and that the solution is managed camps, not the Springwater Trail.

Bob Archer asked Captain King if he was familiar with “the compound,” and stated that he lived in a home near Lambert Field; he described witnessing criminal activity and having his 911 calls dismissed. Archer asked for the exact range of the sweep along the Springwater Corridor.

King responded that they would be clearing the “total length and immediate vicinity” of the trail.

Chad Stover then introduced himself as a policy director for Mayor Hales who works on livability. He stated that the entire 14 miles of the trail that is in Portland would be cleared out, and that, working with the Parks department, they would clean out all of the contiguous land around the trail. He stated that city employees, including Lucas Hillier and Ben Mauro, had been working on outreach, which will continue until September 1. He also stated that there were an estimated 200-300 individuals living on the trail and cleaning up may take weeks.

Barbara Bader asked for clarification and cautioned that by using the language “cleaning up” people may infer he was talking about the trash, not people.

Ken Lucchini stated that the problem was caused by the city government, that community policing was needed, and that he was concerned for the people living near the toxic Reedway location.

Kelly Fitzpatrick expressed concern about convicted sex offenders living on the Springwater Trail and stated that compliance goes down when those individuals are unhoused.

Erik Benson asked when Lents would be treated equally with other neighborhoods.

Stover responded that the city had declared a state of emergency so that it could be flexible with the city zoning code because zoning problems had prohibited them from building new shelters. He stated that they had been working on building shelters for over a year and that it is not easy. He stated that it was a “full-blown emergency” and that the city was “pulling out all the stops” to fix the problem.

Barbara Bader repeated the question about Lents getting equal respect and asked why the proposed Reedway camp was a secret.

Joe Yan stated that he lived near the Springwater Corridor and that there had been crime, fire, and murder in his backyard. He asked Stover when the city would unbind law enforcement to allow warrant checks.

Land Use Chair Cora Potter asked why a camp should be placed at Reedway instead of elsewhere in the city; she stated that Lents needed a respite to stabilize its community and that the city should look at the other 142 square miles in Portland where they could site a camp.

Stover stated that, right now, the Bureau of Environmental Services had only tested, found contaminated, and were removing piles of soil from the site. He stated that yes, the city was interested in looking at Reedway and other locations for managed camping. He also stated that it would be a multi-step process, and would like to hear neighbors' thoughts on it. He stated that it was an option, but that there was no direct plan to put a camp there.

Public Safety Chair Robert Schultz stated that residents who lived near the Springwater Corridor, such as Joe Yan, Bob Archer, and Erik Benson, were never consulted about camps on the trail. He stated that neighbors don't want tent shelters in their community and that law enforcement needs our support.

Attendees asked Stover if the toxic dirt was being wetted and tested at Reedway. Stover stated that BES was taking all precautionary steps and following procedure.

Krista Dennis stated that, according to BES, no water testing had been scheduled; Stover stated that he would have BES follow up with her.

Amir Assasnik stated that Lents had a disproportionate number of campers, that Reedway was a poor choice and that it should not be an option at this time.

Michael Kennedy asked if there would be an environmental impact study and if the city would enforce housing rules; Stover stated that the city has experience doing this and, for any project, would work with city attorneys.

Dan McElligot reminded Stover that he had been asked about a possible Reedway camp in May and had answered that he did not know about, and McElligot asked why residents should trust Stover. Stover stated that things were “quite different” in May and apologized for the lack of trust.

Joanne Rees stated that housing is a human right and that tents should not be normalized; she also stated that the city promised to take care of zombie homes and that the city of Portland needs to be less privileged too.

Carolee Harrison asked for a definition of “managed camp,” and asked how one could be safely sited amidst single-family homes; Stover stated that any camp would be managed 24-hours a day for safety and hygiene. Harrison responded that it would be a mistake to site a camp in a low income area that's already having its land misused.

Rob Bentley asked where campers from the Springwater Trail would be moved after September 1; Stover responded that they are looking for space and have been moving people since July 18.

Kris Dennis stated that the Reedway location currently needs a fence and is an attractive nuisance, and that it was purchased in part with FEMA money, which restricts its usage; Stover stated that he would look into the FEMA issue and that the city wants more park rangers and police patrols.

Bayard Mentrum shared information about and plans for a proposed 10-unit apartment building project at 8852 SE Ellis Street.

Alan Linhares asked about the apartments' costs; Mentrum stated that they would be \$1200-1500 a month for two bedrooms, which is market rate.

Joyce Beedle reminded attendees that police officers had been coming to LNA meetings for years, shared a positive experience with a responding police officer, and thanked them for their efforts. She then asked how many people still currently remained on the trail, what locations were mostly likely to be chosen for a camp, and whether the area where the Springwater meets the floodplain would be included in the cleanup.

Stover responded that about 70% of the campers remained on the trail, and that yes, the aforementioned area was included in the cleanup.

Ben Mauro stated that the city was looking at approximately 120 possible locations, that they were open to suggestions, and that the issue was finding city-owned, vacant land. He also stated that Reedway is “not on the list.”

Alan Linhares asked Mentrum about parking at the proposed apartments on Ellis, and Mentrum stated that there would be no additional parking, but that they would be adding sidewalks and widening the street.

An attendee asked why the city was not putting Section 8 housing at that location.

Cora Potter stated that, while this apartment project was privately owned, there are plans to put in about 200 housing units in the Lents Town Center, with 140 of those classified as affordable.

Autumn West stated that inequity was the big issue and that Lents suffered from the unequal distribution of homeless people, and she asked why the city would not use Wapato as a shelter.

Stover responded that they are trying many different things and that equity is involved in every public policy conversation that they have.

An attendee asked about accountability and data tracking and about which non-profits were involved;

Stover responded that Marc Jolin has been the lead on that and that no non-profit was currently working on the Reedway property.

An attendee asked if sweeps were still planned for September 1; Stover responded yes, that the trail is currently unsafe and that camping will absolutely no longer be allowed on the trail.

Robert Culver asked who would be enforcing these camping laws and stated that he had called park rangers about camping in the floodplain but got no response.

Ken Luchini asked that the city share its list of criteria for any site so that the LNA can post it publicly for transparency.

An attendee who identified as homeless stated that she sometimes feels threatened and has both positive and negative experiences with the police.

Barbara Bader answered about the environmental destruction on the trail; Lucas Hillier stated that it is a regional problem shared by five jurisdictions along the trail and that they are working to repair the impact.

Bader stated that the city acted promptly after a threatened lawsuit from Cartlandia; Hillier stated that the city acted in response to a request from the East Precinct.

Robert Schultz stated that Oregon Consensus has not worked with or engaged the Lents community and Clackamas employees displayed horrible behavior. He stated that Lents needs more support from the city, that law enforcement should be empowered and funded, and Lents should have no tent camps. Stover thanked attendees and stated that they are committed to continuing this conversation.

Judy Low announced that the Lents Seventh-Day Adventist Church was hosting a free medical, dental, and vision clinic and shared flyers from that event. She also announced and shared flyers for a Johnson Creek cleanup on 8/26.

Robert Schultz made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Ken Luchini seconded, the motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 10:02 pm.

Attendees: Mary Oxford, Harry Sampson, Teresa R. Applegate, Jim Garrett Jr, Ken Luchini, Christopher Luchini, Joanne Rees, Lisa M. Lake, Bill Graves, Kelly Fitzpatrick, Steve Kines, Terry Dublinski-Milton, Evelyn O'Connor, Rich Applegate, Autumn West, Trisha Basler RN, Nicholas J. Manusos, Jah Roberson, Megan Leatherman, Chris Chaplin, Dianna Mayo, Jennifer Young, Lee Rimar, Kyle Kuhn, Victoria Oglesbee, Kelli Sheffer, Raymond Hites, Robert Culver, Ann Sanderson, Tina Barnes, Michael Kennedy, William Powell, Tiffany Hand, Debbie Foley, Matt Foley, Michael Cummings, Kimberly Berkey, Tina Prettyman-Silva, Gillian Austin, Carolee Harrison, Katie Penna, Courtney Roberts, Jesse Hooper, Katie Longanecker, Andres Longanecker, Robin Porter, Jacob Hunt, Jason Bland, Bryan Erickson, Neola Larsen, Carma Crimins, Rose Mary Colorafi, Laurel Richardson, Dan McElligot, Tim Scott, Joel Longanecker, Janet Honea, Jose Rodriguez Meza, Dominique Price, Randy Schroeder, Michael Collins, Melissa Collins, Krista Dennis, Amir Assasnick, Elspeth Tanguay-Koo, Rebecca Stavenjord, Charles Blackman, Chad Stover, Richard Christman, Tiffany Summers, Jeremy Camp, Eryn Goodman, Lara Storke, Thomas Legg, Rusty Bonham, Bob Archer, Brittany Taylor, Cory Branton, Cindy Hines, Jeff Manley, Panta Nesta, Kathleen Randall, Olivia McClellan, Alan Linhares, Bayard Mentrum, Jayne Peters, Celestina Canada, Monica Falcon, Erik, Jean McSherry, Nicole Leaper, Laurann Kealih. Joyce Beedle, Andy Hennes, Barbara Bennett, Yandow, Amy John, Lester Knepp

Submitted by Heather Chapin