



Minutes of the Meeting
Of
Thursday, February 16th, 2023 via Zoom only

Executive Board Members Present: Bayard Mentrum, Chair; Phyllis Abbott-Cavota, Vice Chair; Jess Cruz, Community Liaison Chair; Shirley Robertson, Treasurer; Kaethe Mentrum, Secretary/Park Chair).

General Board Members present: Joanne Barnhart; Bill Berry.

Absent with excuse: Don Jensen Land Use Chair (out of town); Pedro Mayoral, Michael Hoselton, Becca Strieper. Sgt. Jacob Pratt and Sgt. Matt Gill of Salem Police

Absent without excuse: Pedro Mayoral

Member: Tom Madison

Guest Speakers: Amanda Sitter, City Volunteer Coordinator; Gretchen Bennett; John Marshall, Church @The Park.

Absent; Jose Gonzalez, City Councilor for Northgate.

City Liaison: Irma Coleman

The meeting started about 6:15 p.m. when Zoom suddenly showed more people waiting to get in.

Bayard asked each to introduce themselves.

The police were unable to attend. But about halfway through, we received an email from Sgt. Pratt. His email will be attached as an addendum to this. See below. Sgt. Gill has been requested to send us an email too, however, as of March 2, 2023, he has not written back. (Please realize police officers are extremely busy as there are not enough of them).

Bayard asked first guest speaker, Amanda Sitter, to start. She said she will support park tree planting activities, and loan equipment for cleaning graffiti, if anyone wishes to volunteer. If there are any kind of volunteer work that needs to be done, she is willing to help. Basically, she made herself and her team of volunteers available for us if we need them. She also asked if any of us wish to volunteer. Kaethe mentioned Fisher Road Park might need some volunteers in the spring for tree planting.

Gretchen Bennett was our next guest speaker. She said the Navigation Center is almost open. She said she has finished the "point in time" or counting of the homeless people. She said the population is increasing. Bayard explained about the Roof where state land could be used as Kate Brown suggested them to be used for the homeless. However, Gretchen said she could not find appropriate spaces for them and there was no money. Then Bayard asked about the Portland Road old DMV building where RVs are welcome to come during the day and in late afternoon they must go back. Bayard said where do these people go at night? Do they have to drive around until they find somewhere to park? Gretchen passed that question to John Marshall, representative from Church @ The Park. John explained they leave Portland Road building and go back to the reserved parking lot at several churches in Salem. Bayard mentioned not enough treatment centers to which John responded the fact they have a pod or a shelter make them feel better about themselves and they have a sense of security which is better than a treatment center. Bayard said before they can be placed in some kind of house, they need to be treated for their addiction or for their mental issues. Kaethe said the pods

are better than housing in apartments or hotels because with the pods, they tend to come out since they are small and mingle with the others. However, with apartments or hotels, they stay by themselves, and they can easily overdose and die or destroy the places due to mental problems. Then Gretchen came back and talked about pods. That's when Kimberly Castro, the third guest speaker came into the discussion. She said she worked dealing with abused children at Liberty House. She understands some children are likely being sexually abused in the pods managed by staff of Church @The Park and we have a problem. Then John said there are some such cases and Gretchen agreed after Bayard asked how often does this happen? Gretchen said it happens a lot, and listed statistics on how many. (At that point, we were not sure if she was talking about the statistics of the specific shelter or nationwide.) Kaethe then asked John how much percentage of the staff are from the homeless? To that John said only about 20%. There was an exchange of conversation that happened between Gretchen, John and Kimberly. At one point, Jess Cruz asked if this is an open discussion, and he is confused who was leading this conversation. To that Bayard said it is an open informal discussion. Kimberly talked about what she did. She assists State Representative Kevin Mannix and she was glad to be part of this discussion. She said the Kevin Mannix wants to develop Hillcrest to be converted for the homeless and it is for sale right now. Bayard said two years ago, it was for sale real cheap, and the developer wanted to turn it into a homeless place and the city council shot it down. Gretchen countered saying it was in terrible shape. Then Gretchen admitted she was "out of the loop."

John had said to Kimberly he wanted to discuss privately after Kimberly suggested there should be an investigation done regarding abuse of children. John and Kimberly wanted contact information to each other and Kaethe said she will connect them.

Bayard called for the meeting to adjourn. Kaethe made a motion to start the vote. Both Bill and Joanne seconded it and all said aye. The meeting adjourned around 7:12 p.m.

Note, on-line voting:

- On 2/01/2023- The vote for the Jan, 2023 minutes. Voted and seconded by: Shirley, then voted by Phyllis, Jess, Michael, Bill and Kaethe.
- On 2/13/23 We got a vote from Shirley who also seconded it, Michael, Jess, Bill, Randy, Phyllis and Kaethe. This was for letter to be sent to the Mayor, City Manager, City Councilors asking them to do something like creating a Roof for the homeless at a designated place, close to a shelter like The Navigation Center so they may be able to utilize the amenities and transition into civilized life.
- On 2/24/23 – We got votes from Shirley who also seconded it, Michael, Bill, Phyllis, Becca, Jess, Joanne and Kaethe. This was overwhelmingly approved by the board members of NGNA to write a letter to DJ Vincent of Church @ The Park asking to correct a bad situation regarding sexual abuse of children in the pods for homeless people managed by this church. Although we realize DJ Vincent and his staff are doing a great job mostly but to help correct this particular situation due to its graveness, the City Council members were informed so that more can be done to help DJ Vincent and we have copied this letter to them.
- The letter to DJ Vincent re the above has been revised and voted on 2/28/23. Seconded and voted by Shirley, Randy, Bill, Joanne, Michael and Kaethe.

Addendum – Message by email from Sgt. Jacob Pratt:

"I apologize, somehow I entered the meeting into my calendar for 6:30 and when I logged in it looks like it was over. I know Sgt. Gill was attending to discuss the recent shooting and I wanted to provide some follow up in some other areas:

I understand there were some questions regarding an assault involving a homeless individual on Fisher Rd near the extended stay hotel. I was part of the response to this incident and it was determined that the assault actually took place on the stretch of Stortz Ave that runs off of Lancaster Dr by the Goodwill and the victim ran along the walkway to Fisher Rd. The incident location is in Marion County Sheriff's jurisdiction and I have reached out to them for an update on the case.

Regarding the camps growing in along Fisher Rd just north of the extended stay hotel, the field is private property and we are working with the property owner to provide resources and options in cleaning up/securing this location.

As far as updates from the PD...we are currently authorized 199 sworn officers and have a vacancy rate over 10%. In the last 2 years 44 officers have left for other careers, different agencies, or retirement. This is double the annual average from the three years prior. There are multiple ongoing efforts to boost recruitment and retention, with a goal of a maintaining a police department that represents the community it serves. One component of this effort is an increased presence with local colleges as well as the Salem Keizer school district's Career Technical Education Center.

Lastly, with the national 988 telephone number going live for those seeking mental health assistance, the department is continuing to partner with other local agencies to staff teams of officers and mental health professionals paired together and deployed on the road. These teams are an excellent asset in providing focused, informed responses to those in crisis. As the teams work county wide, it is common for Marion County or Woodburn PD to respond to a Salem PD call with their mental health partner to assist our officers.

Please share this with your members and reach out to me if you have any follow up questions or if there's anything I can help with.

Thank you,
Jake”

Sgt. Jake Pratt
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