

St. Luke's plans construction of new and larger church

By Mark Ellis
The Southwest Portland Post

St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Southwest Portland has plans for change on the drawing board. At December's meeting of the Maplewood Neighborhood Association, Jon Erickson offered up details of St. Luke's building expansion and street-vacating plan for the corner of Southwest Vermont Street and 45th Avenue.

The church has purchased the house formerly owned by the Lehr family, and plans ultimately to tear it down to provide room for expansion. Currently the church is having trouble getting its congregation parked and then to Sunday morning services.

The new plan would create parking by either partially or wholly vacating two ancillary Portland streets, Southwest 46th Avenue and Southwest Florida Street.

The demolition of the Lehr house would presage the construction of a new and larger church. Erickson shared photos of the cramped conditions in the present building, with essential storage items clogging up usable floor space. "We are looking to develop a contiguous campus," he said.

Several questions from neighborhood association members highlighted neighborhood concerns about the plan. Land use chair Chris Mays wanted to insure continued pedestrian access

through church grounds. Co-chair Jill Gaddis had concerns about a tributary creek, which runs through the property.

Association co-chairperson Anne-Marie Fischer directed that a letter be drafted by the association to the effect that the provision for a trail or some other pedestrian access element had been put forth by St. Luke's.

Erickson noted that the church "was open to public access, quite open." Revealing St. Luke's plan to christen the low ravine around the creek a peace park, he assured the association that "we are committed to protecting the habitat and environment of the creek."

Next on the run-down Gaddis gave a brief SWNI report. Notable was her mention of how certain courtyard style housing developments could create insular "villages."

According to Gaddis, "These little courtyards could become neighborhoods unto themselves." "How do we reach these groups," Gaddis asked, "and bring them into the neighborhood as a whole?"

Gaddis also spoke about the association's citizen-initiated plan to revitalize and protect April Hill Park. Apparently city coffers will not be opening up for this endeavor any time soon.

Work party generated ivy pulls, plans for the construction of boardwalks, and requests for a full-time portable toilet are all part of the strategy to protect creek, habitat and trails.

Parks chairperson Bill Rector

MAPLEWOOD NOTEBOOK

brought discussion of a new development fee proposal to the agenda. Currently developers pay 25 percent of expected impact costs of anything they build.

The new proposal calls for this amount to be increased to 75 percent, and stipulates that monies collected by the fee would be dedicated as to the neighborhood where the impact was felt. "Developers don't like it," Rector summated.

When the inevitable subject of outreach came up, transportation chair Vern Krist suggested a door-to-door poll to ascertain community concerns with regard to the proposed halo local improvement district.

Krist said that once tax issues make it onto public radar he'll "have no trouble getting folks interested."

Maplewood School liaison Alexander Ben-Israel reported on two ongoing fundraising efforts, Portland Roast coffee drive and SCRIP. "Our goal is to raise forty-five thousand dollars," said Ben-Israel, "for music, libraries and computers."

Fischer convened the meeting with a thought about getting more folks from Maplewood to come to the meetings and get involved, "People need to understand that we do have the power to make change." Contact: www.maplewoodna.com

S.W. community divided over park fee increase

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the process question. "There has been a significant amount of outreach on this issue," she said. "It's time for better equity" in the placement of parks.

Clearly businesses benefit from parks. I ask that we not choose between affordable housing and parks. I don't want us to increase the deficit we already have. We need a healthy park system for all Portlanders."

Linda Laviolette, chair of the Portland Parks Foundation, called the increase

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