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City staff and neighbors take walking tour of Southwest Capitol Highway

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

In late July, nearly 40 invested citizens, four babies, two dogs, and this reporter, took a walking tour along the mile-long stretch of Southwest Capitol Highway between Taylors Ferry Road and Garden Home Road.

Chris Lyons, Multnomah transportation chair, organized the event after he and his ad hoc Capitol Highway Committee lobbied the city for improvements.

The Fixing Our Streets Fund, a temporary increase in the gas tax passed by voters in May, will partially finance the project. Although the total cost is over \$12 million, approximately \$9 million will be available.

Portland Bureau of Transportation project manager Steve Szigethy and Bureau of Environmental Services stormwater systems manager Dawn Uchiyama headed the tour with several other city staff.

Szigethy and Uchiyama are

coordinating transportation and stormwater improvements on this stretch of road.

“At this early stage of design,” said neighbor Marianne Fitzgerald, “the city is working with citizens to design the project and identify potential additional sources of funding.”

The tour began at the Barbur Transit Center then proceeded to Taylors Ferry Road across from Walgreens.

“In order for us to access the transit center, we need a safe way to cross Barbur,” said Betty, a longtime resident. “It would also be nice if the traffic signals were synchronized at this intersection [Barbur Boulevard



Some 40 neighbors and city staff gather at the corner of Alice Street during the Capitol Highway tour. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

and Capitol Highway].”

Lyons noted the Capitol Highway project needs to extend to Barbur

Boulevard (Highway 99W) in order to get state transportation funding from
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Controversy continues over planned ‘gathering space’ in Spring Garden Park

MULTNOMAH NOTEBOOK

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

At last month’s meeting of the Multnomah Neighborhood Association, the debate about the “gathering space” slated for Spring Garden Park lasted nearly an hour. Over 45 people attended the August 9 meeting.

Park community liaison Elizabeth

Kennedy-Wong and project manager Travis Ruybal were invited to go over the development process. Unresolved issues at the July neighborhood meeting sparked the request.

Staff reiterated that the entire process had been vetted over the past year. Staff canvassed the neighborhood with flyers, put signs up at the park, and posted social media.

But the controversy lies with a cement pad, or amphitheater, as the neighbors have called it. It does not sit well with nearby residents who feel the process was not transparent enough.

Neighbors are also not pleased with predicted noise due to a proposed electrical outlet most likely opening up revenue generating rentals from bands, parties, and other events on the pad.

Ruybal shared the latest rendition of the park depicting the approximate 400 square foot concrete pad, turf, and seating walls. According to the park website, he said, this area will better accommodate movies in the park and provide an additional gathering space for learning and interpretation of an adjacent stream

daylighting project.

“It has a two-foot retaining wall,” Ruybal pointed out. “We understood the intent of this area was mostly to appease to teens who requested an area for them.”

“It was in response from the PAC (project advisory committee),” Kennedy-Wong added. “I’m not sure where the words ‘amphitheater’ or ‘amplification’ came from. The electricity outlet is for plugging in the projector.”

An audience member said other parks that have amphitheaters and electricity have major setbacks away from homes.

It wasn’t until most recently that the minutes of a January 29 park advisory committee meeting suddenly appeared after questions about its whereabouts came from The Post.

Those notes state that the project manager had asked “if there are other design elements that need to be changed, this is the time to give your opinions.”

No other issues were raised by those present.

Residents most impacted by the decision were at the association meeting. Hannah Davidson, Ken Boltz, and Chris Powers all expressed various concerns about the city’s process.

“I never agreed to that,” responded Davidson, “and I was at the January meeting.”

One woman said if it wasn’t for the newspaper article in *The Post*, she would have never known about the controversial pad. She said no one at the city ever reached out to her.

“I was brought here to discuss the process only,” Kennedy-Wong repeated, “not other issues.” But it was Ruybal who had the final word.

“If this goes away,” he said pointing to the amphitheater pad, “you’d all be happy?”

A large cheer resounded in the room. Kennedy-Wong disagreed with her colleague that this would need to be decided upon by a committee process. And with that, the two left 55 minutes after they had begun.

Weeks later, Hun Taing, the community engagement coordinator,
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Travis Ruybal, Spring Garden Park project manager, reviews the master plan at the Multnomah Neighborhood Association meeting on August 9. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

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4207 SE Woodstock Blvd #509
Portland, OR 97206