

Committee hopes to attract grocery store to replace Strohecker's

SWHRL NOTEBOOK

By Jack Rubinger
The Southwest Portland Post

Despite the "snowpocalypse" which seemed to bring activity in Southwest Portland to a grinding halt, the Southwest Hills Residential League finally conducted its quarterly membership meeting in early February.

Among issues addressed were concerns about snow and safety in Southwest Portland. Ice is definitely the danger up in the hills and it traps people where they can't leave their homes by car, and there are no nearby walkable services.

SWHRL president Nancy Seton opened the meeting with a plea for new board and committee members.

Seton explained that the SWHRL board, committees and other volunteers perform a vital role monitoring issues that could impact livability, communicating these issues to residents, advocating with government agencies and developers for the neighborhood's interests, and building community throughout various educational forums, events and projects.

"With new volunteers, we can continue this important work to protect and enhance our community," said Seton.

The current board offers a wide variety of skills, knowledge, life experiences, resources and contacts which can be drawn on to deal with transportation, land use, schools, emergency preparedness, public safety, parks, and other issues.

Board members include Nancy Seton (president/land use chair), Sean Baioni (vice president), Margaret Gossage (treasurer), Kara Stone (secretary), Kady Al-Saeed, Mark Christensen, Bill Failing (Strohecker's committee chair), and Ryan Fedie (transportation chair). Volunteer Rob Wilcox has worked hard on other transportation projects.

Meeting discussions focused on:

- The Southwest in Motion Active Transportation Initiative (set priorities for trails, steps, and bike lanes).
- Wildwood Trail Pedestrian Bridge over Burnside (ready for funding).
- Land use and transportation updates, including the subdivision proposed for Southwest Broadway.
- Strohecker's update (property up for sale).
- Playground equipment in Southwest Hills parks.
- Vista-Spring Restoration Project (informal pocket park with native plants and a seating area).

"One of the top challenges facing the board this year is filling vacant board and officer positions," said Seton.

"Also critically important is

outreach – getting neighbors involved and getting feedback on issues that concern them so we can create relevant goals, and accurately represent their concerns in dealings with the city of Portland and developers with proposals to build in the neighborhood."

Staying on top of the Strohecker's replacement issue, being prepared

to respond to any proposals for redevelopment on the site, and reaching out for support from the city are also important.

Until January 2016, Strohecker's was the only grocery in the SWHRL neighborhood, not to mention post office, pharmacy, liquor store, espresso bar, and dry-cleaning service.

The Strohecker's committee plans to continue as a neighborhood watchdog to see that future plans for the property are grocery-specific, and that any future plans must be beneficial to the character of the neighborhood.

Public transportation and walkability are also major neighborhood issues.

The SWHRL neighborhood is



Strohecker's grocery store closed in January 2016. (Photo by Mike Benner, KGW)

lobbying for restored and enhanced bus service. Currently, area buses with service to downtown only run during commuting hours, and not on evenings or weekends.

Group members strongly support TriMet's proposal to join lines #39 and #51 to link service from Lewis & Clark College, through Hillsdale, up Dosch Road, through Portland Heights to downtown.

Residents are frustrated that bus routes in other parts of the city get more enhancements, when they have no service mid-day, evenings or weekends and have long steep hikes to the nearest grocery, and other services. This has been especially painful during the recent snow and ice, when the area bus doesn't run at all.

Portland school district may reopen George Smith School in 2019

ASHCREEK NOTEBOOK

By Jack Rubinger
The Southwest Portland Post

Ashcreek is a quiet neighborhood with only a few businesses and a population of about 6,000.

Its heritage is rolling farm and pasture land, and only in the last 10-15 years has there been any significant housing infill.

Most of that has been harmonious with neighborhood character, but is an important area to watch to make sure that the city's housing infill policies are respectful of neighborhood character and livability.

In addition, Ashcreek is one of the many Southwest Portland neighborhoods that are park deficient, have few sidewalks and safe pedestrian and bike routes to schools and services.

As the population grows, especially among school-aged kids, the city's willingness to invest in infrastructure to serve the neighborhood will be very telling.

"The school district is considering re-opening George Smith School at Southwest 52nd (Avenue) and Marigold (Street) as early as 2019," said Dean Smith of the Ashcreek Neighborhood Association.

"In the works are changes in neighborhood boundaries to make Southwest Taylors Ferry Road the boundary between Ashcreek and Crestwood neighborhoods."

According to Smith, this would reduce Ashcreek's population by

about 1,000 residents and make the neighborhood boundaries more rational and understandable.

Proposed boundary changes will be voted on by Ashcreek Neighborhood Association residents on Monday, March 13, at 7 p.m. at the Multnomah Arts Center (Room 30), 7688 SW Capitol Highway.

Smith said that Ashcreek heroes include Marianne Fitzgerald, who has been a longtime advocate for transportation infrastructure improvements all over Southwest Portland, and Dave Manville, who has worked diligently in the neighborhood and in Woods Memorial Park Natural Area.

Manville, Jack Klinker and Michael Kisor are resurrecting the Neighborhood Emergency Team preparedness program for the Ashcreek and Crestwood neighborhoods.



Smith Elementary School closed in 2005 due to declining enrollment and a shrinking district budget. (Photo by Bryan M. Vance, OPB)

"The work of these four people has been a major factor in recent successes at getting funding for capital improvements at the Garden Home Road and Multnomah

Boulevard intersection, as well as bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects on Capitol Highway between Multnomah Boulevard and Barbur Boulevard," said Smith.

OPEN FORUM

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active transportation network in our community.

Once the list is approved, SWTrails or other non-profit organizations can easily work with the adjacent land owners, the community, neighbors and others to build and/or maintain the connections as time and resources permit.

SWTrails is in the process of requesting funds be included in the Portland Bureau of

Transportation budget to maintain our 40+ miles of Southwest urban trails, the routes marked with the brown sign with a number, an arrow and a white walker symbol.

Will adjacent owners still have liability for actions on these public lands next to their lots? They should secure direct legal advice on that issue.

As we work to build and maintain an active transportation trail network with you the community, we will be asking for city resources for materials, a very nominal sum.

SWTrails volunteers get no

compensation. Join us at our next work party. Visit www.SWTrails.org to sign up for monthly updates.

Glenn Bridger, now retired, spent a long career with the Federal Highway Administration and HDR, a national engineer consulting company. Bridger is past president of Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. Don Baack is a retired timber executive who after retiring organized SWTrails to help improve the pedestrian and bicycle environment in Southwest Portland. Both Baack and Bridger currently serve on the board of SWTrails PDX.