

## Szigethy gives subcommittee history lesson on unimproved streets in Southwest

### CAPITOL HIGHWAY PROJECT

By Erik Vidstrand  
The Southwest Portland Post

The Capitol Highway Subcommittee met on June 22 to discuss various options available to improve local streets near the Capitol Highway improvement project (Garden Home Road south to Taylors Ferry Road).

The Portland Bureau of Transportation presented an overview to an overflow crowd of about 45 neighbors. Chair Chris Lyons introduced Steve Szigethy, capital project manager, and his bureau colleague, Millicent Williams.

"I believe this is the largest subcommittee meeting we have ever had," Lyons said. "We are happy to have the bureau here tonight to discuss available solutions to improve streets that feed into Capitol Highway."

The attendees introduced themselves describing their street situations. It was apparent that everyone in the room shared basically the same issues: unimproved streets including storm water facilities. Szigethy described why there are unimproved streets in the first place.

"For the most part," Szigethy said, "this had to do with city annexation dates from 1880 on. Most of Multnomah was annexed in the 1940s and 1950s."

"[Outside the city of Portland] in those days, frontage improvements were not required," Szigethy said. "That's why we have so many graveled and substandard roads and no sidewalks."

To improve these streets, the city has developed several programs to address these issues. The most recent invention is called the Local Transportation Improvement Charge, or LTIC.

These charges are imposed upon the developers unless the project is not physically feasible or overly expensive.

In such cases the city may grant a waiver of remonstrance to the original

developer of a property instead of requiring a street improvement.

The city may also grant a waiver if a property has a greater than 21 percent grade, streams, environmental hazards, or if the road cannot be accessed by vehicles.

A waiver of remonstrance means that a property is automatically counted in favor of a street improvement for a future Local Improvement District.

The city works closely with all property owners in an LID, whether their property has a waiver of remonstrance or not.

A minimum of two property owners are needed to form an LID. Various low-interest loans are available for homeowners, who pay a certain allocated fee based on the linear feet of the frontage. The current average price is \$600 per linear foot.

"This money goes into a city account to be used later for street improvement projects," Szigethy said. "The city has assessed over \$2 million worth of fees, but has only collected approximately \$640,000."

Another source of funding is through the Transportation System Plan. Szigethy explained that these projects are funded by federal and state taxes, state and regional grants, and the city's Fixing our Streets program, which is supported by a 10 cents a gallon city gasoline tax.

"These funds are only for major capital projects," Szigethy said, "like the Capitol Highway improvement project."

The participants, many who live on and adjacent to Capitol Highway, had a multitude of questions.

Many have been working on this project since the 1990s. They appeared very knowledgeable of the rules, codes, and processes that have been going on for the last three decades.

Szigethy explained that neighbors can make minor repairs to their streets on their own without permits. Neighbors must use similar materials, like gravel, to fill potholes and ruts. Concrete and asphalt are not allowed; trees cannot be cut down.

"If you plan to pave with asphalt, a city permit with Public Works must be acquired," Szigethy said as he



The Capitol Highway Subcommittee meets at the Multnomah Arts Center in December 2016. (Post file photo by Erik Vidstrand)

finished up his talk.

Szigethy announced that in October, at the request of Southwest Trails activist Don Baack, a "gravel event" will take place along Capitol Highway.

Gravel will be delivered to four different areas along Capitol to amend the "goat path" which parallels the busy highway.

"Residents should bring their shovels and wheelbarrows to help repair the path," Szigethy said. "In November, I will be conducting one-on-one outreach with residents

along Capitol [Highway] to assess some finer details of the proposed improvements that may affect their property."

The final design of the segment's improvements will be ready by December 2018 with construction to start in spring and continue through fall of 2019.

To reach Szigethy, email him at [steve.szigethy@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:steve.szigethy@portlandoregon.gov). To learn more about the Capitol Highway Subcommittee, email Chris Lyons at [chrislyons7@yahoo.com](mailto:chrislyons7@yahoo.com).



Some 40 neighbors and city staff gathered at the corner of Alice Street during a walking tour of Capitol Highway on July 30, 2016. (Post file photo by Erik Vidstrand)

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