

# SMILE General Meeting minutes

Wednesday, December 7, 2022  
At SMILE Station, S.E. 13<sup>th</sup> at Tenino

Main Website [www.SellwoodMoreland.org](http://www.SellwoodMoreland.org) <<>> Procedural [www.SMILErecords.org](http://www.SMILErecords.org)

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Elizabeth Milner, Vice President; Eric Norberg, Secretary;  
Pat Hainley, Treasurer  
**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Bob Burkholder, Dave Dugan, MacKenzie Torres  
**SMILE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Ed Nunez, Troy Gabriel, Eileen Fitzsimons,  
Lydia Mueller  
**VISITORS:** (none)

The meeting was called to order by SMILE Vice President Elizabeth Milner at 7:33 p.m. Attendees introduced themselves. Then Milner announced that, lacking a quorum, the minutes of the November 2 General Meeting could not be approved, but she asked those present to review those distributed minutes for errors, omissions, or discrepancies. None were reported; the minutes will be presented again for approval at the next SMILE General Meeting on January 4, 2023.

The announced featured speaker at the meeting was Eileen Fitzsimons, Co-Chair of the SMILE History Committee – to give a brief review of the history of SMILE, and how it evolved, including relevant facts from the history of both Sellwood and Westmoreland. She was present, and had brought some documents for those present to examine if they wished after the meeting was over: A photo of the Eastside Lumber Mill, long a fixture under the bluff at the end of the then-dead-end Tacoma Street, before the Sellwood Bridge was built; a map of the 33 named subdivisions in the SMILE neighborhoods; and the original government land survey of the SMILE neighborhoods.

After her introduction by Eric Norberg, Eileen Fitzsimons reported that she is a 43-year resident of Westmoreland, and a longtime participant in the SMILE History Committee. In introducing the subject of the history of Sellwood and Westmoreland, she commented that there is not much specific evidence of Native Americans specifically dwelling here, “although there probably was a presence”; they tended to gather to the south at Oregon City, due to the presence of the Willamette River falls there.

The 1840’s marked the first arrivals of people of European origin, mostly via the Oregon Trail. There were many familiar names among them, such as the Llewellyns, etc. The dirt “Milwaukie Road” (today’s Milwaukie Avenue) between Portland and the City of Milwaukie was established in the 1840s; the small community of Midway, near the north end of today’s Westmoreland, was populated before Sellwood was – named “Midway” because it was “midway between Portland and Milwaukie” on that road.

In 1869, railroad tracks were laid from the north, bound southward, through the small town of Willsburg, just about where McLoughlin and Tacoma Street intersect today. The Willsburg Post Office was established in 1883 and remained open there until 1905. Mr. Wills, who owned the land, built a successful sawmill there, and provided space for a furniture manufacturing company in the tiny town as well.

The Reverend Sellwood and his family migrated west from South Carolina, sailing the

long route to the West Coast. They had opposed slavery and became fearful for their safety in that southern state. Rev. Sellwood, on his ocean trip to the west coast, was injured in some imbroglia in Panama, and received money from the government on account of his having been victimized there in that way. He banked the money, and later used it to buy the land upon which Sellwood was later built. He sold the land to developers, who opened the land for subdivision in 1882, and they named the development after him.

In 1887 a cable ferry began operating between the west and east banks of the Willamette River at Spokane Street. Sellwood was a separate town for several years, before its residents realized if they were to get the city services they wanted they would be better off being part of Portland. In 1892, a streetcar began operating here – which was “huge in developing the neighborhood”. The streetcar at first did not travel much beyond the neighborhood itself, but later became part of a network of city trolley lines. Wood-based industry grew and prospered here, led by the Eastside Lumber Company on the Sellwood side of the Willamette River.

Oaks Park opened in 1905, owned by the trolley car system, and built to provide an attraction to draw the visitors to the Portland World Expo, in Northwest Portland in that year, over the river and down to Sellwood via the streetcar. In 1909, what Sellwood merchants considered “the threat to the north”, Westmoreland (which was generally north of Malden Street), opened for development. In Westmoreland, the streets were paved, while Sellwood’s were not – and there were better city utilities available there also. Llewellyn Elementary School opened there in 1908.

The turning point for Sellwood and the entire neighborhood occurred when a few prominent residents became aware of the pending demolition of what was then the oldest Episcopal Church in Oregon (and probably in the whole Northwest), in Milwaukie. Money was raised to move the old church building onto a barge and send it down the river to Sellwood, where it was transported a short distance up Spokane Street and placed, with permission from the Portland Parks Department, on an unused section of land at the corner of Spokane Street and Grand Avenue, where it sits today just north of the east end of the Sellwood Bridge – known as the Oaks Pioneer Church, and now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. SMILE arose from that effort, which finally drew together the communities of Sellwood and Westmoreland via the common cause of saving the old church building. At first SMILE was a business booster organization, and had three members – Sellwood, Westmoreland, and Eastmoreland – which led to the name “Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League”, incorporating both those “Morelands” with one word, but forever creating the idea that there is a “Moreland neighborhood”!

In 1970, the City of Portland divided the city into 95 “neighborhoods”, and Sellwood and Westmoreland were included as a single neighborhood, overseen by SMILE, which then became a Neighborhood Association – with Eastmoreland no longer a member. However, “SMILE” was a much more felicitous acronym than would have been “SWIL”, so “Moreland” remained in the name – now just a shorthand reference to Westmoreland.

A considerable Q-and-A period followed. Then Vice President Milner asked if there were any announcements or any further SMILE business; none were offered, so she declared the meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m. However, those present lingered a while to study the documents Eileen Fitzsimons had brought, and to continue chatting with her.