

SMILE General Meeting minutes
Wednesday, February 5, 2025
SMILE Station

Main Website Procedural
<http://www.SellwoodMoreland.org> <<>> <http://www.SMILErecords.org>

OFFICERS PRESENT: David Dugan, President; Elizabeth Milner, Vice President;
Pat Hainley, Treasurer; Eric Norberg, Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Elaine O’Keefe, Tracy Fisher; Grant Huling,
Jason Sturgill; Zack Duffly [*via ZOOM*]

SMILE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Brandon Roben, Joshua Govhue, Emily McKay, Amelia Hard, Lucas Rhyen, Babrara and Brett Baylor, Vikki DeGaa, Paul Gunderson, Don Bolton, Scott Kelly, Regan Sibert, Rita and Al Charlesworth, Kari Kohrmann, Sarah Sturgill, Charles Letherwood, John Means, Donna Kane; *and, via ZOOM:* Peter [*no last name given*], Stan and Brenda Scrutton, Andrew Holtz, Celeste Walker, Jonathan Beckhart, Syan [*no last name given*], Manon Velleux

GUESTS: David Donovan

Note: There was no SMILE General Meeting on January 1, 2025.

The February SMILE General Meeting was called to order by SMILE President David Dugan at 7:34 p.m. Dugan asked for all those present to introduce themselves around the room, and via ZOOM, and then asked attendees to review the minutes of the last SMILE General Meeting on December 4, 2024. After the review, Elaine O’Keefe moved that the minutes be approved as presented, and Pat Hainley seconded the motion. In the subsequent vote, the minutes were approved, with one abstention.

Dugan then introduced the two featured speakers for the evening: Emily McKay, Events Director for Oaks Amusement Park, and Brandon Roben, the Chief Operating Officer of the park, who then presented an illustrated talk on the history of the park, which dates back to 1905 – and which was reorganized as a 501c3 nonprofit organization in 1983 to guarantee its existence in perpetuity, operated for the benefit of the Portland community. Its first Master Plan followed soon after, in 1986. Another one (a 20-year plan) was begun in 2020; subsequently refined, and with permitting begun, in 2024.

The new plan features a new ride – a “drop tower”, with a 120-foot drop, and a total height of 136 feet. It will be set back in the trees at some distance from Oaks Bottom, and will be the second-highest structure in the park. Several views of the proposed ride were shown from several different angles, including from the Oaks Bottom Bluff. Although there will be lighting on the tower, it will have only 16 operating days a year operating past twilight – adding up to a total of only 52.5 hours a year beyond twilight.

Oaks Park today employs 305 people from March through October, and 99 people the rest of the year (the off season). The park hosted over two hundred nonprofit group events in 2024, and is dedicated to preserving the historic local amusement park, while

keeping its attractions up to date sufficiently to be sure of enough operating income to keep itself going.

A question and answer period followed. First to speak was Scott Kelly, who thanked Oaks Park for keeping its Willamette River beach clean; he wondered about the possibility of a shuttle of some sort to and from the park to reduce traffic congestion. Mr. Roben said there appears little likelihood of such a service from TriMet; but it is possible that the Oregon Rail Heritage Foundation, operator of the nonprofit rail museum opposite OMSI north of the Ross Island Bridge, might develop a rail shuttle to and from its location with its planned acquisition of the Oregon Pacific Railroad in Sellwood in a year or two. However, he added, changes in the way visitors are managed at Oaks Park have lengthened the time spent there each day by attendees, which has reduced some of the traffic congestion by spreading the auto traffic over a longer period of time.

Elaine O’Keefe asked about the anticipated costs of the phases in the new 20-year plan. Roben said the initial phase is estimated at \$20 million, with completion next year. There is no timeline for the rest of the plan; “this is the biggest update in our history”.

Paul Gunderson said he would like to see more detailed plans of the drop tower ride, but likes Oaks Park otherwise. Charles Letherwood, of nearby Dwyer Automotive Service, asked about construction traffic to and from Oaks Park; Roben gave his response with reference to the map of the park. John Means, who lives on Sellwood Boulevard, wants a “shorter ride” [apparently referring to the “drop tower” ride]. Amelia Hard said she agreed with him, and read the complete statement of objections to that ride from the Friends of Oaks Bottom to the attendees present – but said that she personally was fond of Oaks Park, and that she thought their plans for improvements looked wonderful. She said she was opposed only to the drop tower. Last to speak was Grant Huling, a Sellwood resident, who said that Oaks Park was one of the reasons his family chose to move to Sellwood, and said he personally was supportive of the park. As the Q-and-A session ended, President Dugan read a couple of comments in the ZOOM “chat”, one of which said that the writer had been concerned about the potential appearance of the “drop tower”, but having seen the displayed appearance of the tower from several angles in the slide presentation, he was no longer concerned.

The remainder of the meeting was focused on a SMILE bylaws update, which has been in the planning stage for over a year. President Dugan presented the proposed updates which had been accepted by the SMILE Board in December, and would be recommended to the SMILE membership for approval at the March General Meeting. These changes [incorporated into these minutes by reference] were displayed on a screen and explained – after which Dugan asked for any questions or comments on any of them from those attending this meeting. No comments or questions were offered.

A woman in attendance asked about SMILE’s Emergency Preparedness Committee; Dugan discussed it briefly, and suggested she talk in greater depth on this subject with its Chair, Bob Burkholder. There being no other business on the agenda, or offered from the floor, Pat Hainley moved that the meeting be adjourned; Elaine O’Keefe seconded the motion; and the motion carried with evident unanimity at 8:42 p.m.