

SMILE General Meeting minutes

Wednesday, August 6, 2025
Oaks Pioneer Church

Main Website

Procedural

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

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

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Elaine O’Keefe, Eli Fabens, Scott Kelly, Grant
Huling, and Jason Sturgill

SMILE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Bob Burkholder, Ed Nunez, Eileen
Fitzsimons, Ben Trimm, Susan True, Max Schwarz, Danya Shneyer,
Susan Ruddell, Kelly Luzann, Keith Walker; *and, via ZOOM*, Liz W.,
Nick G., “Brent”, Diane LaMear Tucker, and Stan and Brenda Scrutton

GUESTS: Alex Cousins, Community Engagement Manager for PGE; and Jacob
Neal, also of PGE

There was no July SMILE General Meeting due to the July 4 holiday. The August SMILE General Meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m. by SMILE President David Dugan in Oaks Pioneer Church – the historic venue for which SMILE is the renting agent. Its use for this meeting was dictated by a booking conflict at SMILE Station.

President Dugan began by asking all those present to introduce themselves, around the room; and those participating remotely on ZOOM to do the same. Then followed a review of the minutes of the May 7 General Meeting, as well as the minutes of the June 4 General Meeting. With a quorum present, a motion was made by Pat Hainley that the May minutes be approved as submitted; Elaine O’Keefe seconded the motion; and the motion carried unanimously. Then Pat Hainley moved that the June minutes be approved as submitted, and Bob Burkholder seconded the motion, which also carried unanimously.

President Dugan reported that the first part of the proposed public plaza contemplated in Westmoreland for S.E. Claybourne just west of Milwaukie Avenue – the street painting of the winning design from a local designer, with many volunteers – has just been completed. If the painting and associated activity poses no problem for the residents and businesses around that site, it is planned to proceed to close permanently that half block of Claybourne and create a permanent plaza for members of the community to gather in, similarly to the plaza in Sellwood in the half block of Spokane Street west of S.E. 13th.

David remarked on how well Sundae in the Park went last Sunday – and then reminded those present that the annual SMILE Community Cleanup was postponed, last May, until mid-August. It will now take place on Saturday, August 16th, at the usual location: At the south end of the Westmoreland Park parking lot in Sellwood, from 9 a.m. until 2

p.m. Volunteer help from members of the community would be warmly welcomed!

Dugan then turned to the main item on the evening's agenda – a presentation by two representatives of Portland General Electric, who are beginning a community outreach, prompted by the desire of PGE to demolish the Oregon Water, Power and Railway Building on the corner of their Sellwood Substation at S.E. 13th and Linn Street.

Alex Cousins, Community Engagement Manager for PGE, and Jacob Neal, also of PGE, were present to explain why the power company seeks to remove the historic building, and to engage the community on the subject. PGE is willing to consider alternative plans for the building (it was built in 1905 at the very beginning of long distance power transmission) – but the least costly option for them, they believe, is demolition of the concrete building (demolition is estimated to cost \$1 million). It has been used only for storage of equipment in the last thirty years, and it is now increasingly being vandalized. It also poses a potential weak spot by which intruders could potentially break into the adjacent hazardous high-power-substation site. There is also concern by PGE that there could be PCB contamination in and under the old building.

This public outreach will take place for some time, since the building is on the City of Portland list of historic resources, and a full opportunity for public comments and suggestions is indicated. “Demolition can't start until 2026, or later.”

There were many comments from those present – at first citing aesthetic concerns about what might be left at that site for residents to look at and live with. Since it is beside the Springwater Corridor Trail, one person suggested it could be repurposed as a waypoint café on the trail. PGE is concerned about the proximity of such a use to their high-voltage equipment, the men said. But several of those present agreed that the building provides an historic linkage to the neighborhood, and that it would be good to find a way to repurpose it.

Another suggestion was simply to refurbish it and leave it where it is, as an historic building – a suggestion made by a man who identified himself as a local resident, and also a staffmember at the Portland Water Bureau. More than one attendee observed that the building is surely as important to the history of PGE as it is to the history of the neighborhood – it supplied the power for the early Portland Street Car system, using electricity generated at Oregon City Falls and carried by wire north to Sellwood – a landmark long-distance power transmission feat at the time.

The PGE representatives agreed that “it's a cool building”, yet it still poses a problem for the power company. A months-long public comment period is now underway, and public comments are welcome and all will be studied.

There being no other business on the agenda, or offered from the floor, Pat Hainley moved that the meeting be adjourned, and Bob Burkholder seconded the motion. The motion then carried with evident unanimity at 8:35 p.m.