

SUNNYSIDE

Neighborhood News

May 2024

SUNNYSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

SunnysidePortland.org

board@sunnysideportland.org

News from the President

By Chris Waldmann, SNA President

Hi Sunnyside! Hope you all are doing well and getting outside when you can to enjoy all the beautiful weather, spring flowers and neighborly cheer around in the springtime!

In April, the SNA Board voted to support efforts to fight the CEI Hub, which stores volatile chemicals and fuels along the Willamette River. This energy storage facility presents so many dangers to all of Portland. The trains that bring these chemicals here travel right through the Columbia River Gorge and through many Portland neighborhoods and present the risk of disaster in the event of a derailment, like the incident that occurred last year in tiny East Palestine, Ohio and is still causing hazards to residents' health. Second, by now you've heard about the coming Cascadia earthquake and the other potentially active faults that Portland sits on. Well, the CEI Hub sits on soil along the river that will basically turn to liquid in the event of a major earthquake – a process called liquefaction. Imagine all of those tanks coming crashing down and releasing their contents into our river and our air. Finally, one of the operators in the storage facility, Zenith Energy, has proved an unreliable partner, promising to improve their practices, but never following through to the spirit of the agreement. For all of these reasons, the SNA is proud to partner with the CEI Hub Task Force to fight against the unnecessary and unconscionable risks that the facility holds.

In other news, have you walked by the Sunnyside Piazza at 33rd and Yamhill? If so, you've probably thought to yourself that this beloved space could use a little attention. Good news. The SNA, in partnership with nearby residents and

area businesses, is planning to repaint the piazza, hopefully later this summer prior to the Belmont Street Fair. We are just gearing up for this project. If you are interested in helping with planning, please email sunnyside-piazza@googlegroups.com.

Interested in meeting the candidates for District 3 council seats? SE Uplift will be holding a candidate mixer on Thursday, May 23rd from 6-8 p.m. Find more info and RSVP at shorturl.at/kqA17.

Finally, Thursday, May 9th at 7 p.m. at SE Uplift, we will hold our annual Board elections. If you are interested in joining the Board and would like to learn more, please send an email to me at president@sunnysideportland.org. Everyone is invited to come out and help us vote for new Board members to serve two-year terms. It's always a fun meeting. It's pretty short and there are refreshments!

That's it, I'll be back next month with a "year" end review of what the SNA has been working on for Sunnyside and Portland!

Upcoming Meetings

Check sunnysideportland.org for location details and agenda.

May

May 9th: 7:00 p.m. Annual Meeting for Board Elections (No SNACC or LUTC meetings)

June

June 6th: 6:30 p.m. SNACC Meeting
June 13th: 7:00 p.m. SNA Board Meeting (No General Meeting)
June 27th: 7:00 p.m. LUTC Meeting

Critic's Corner: Review of *Geekerella* By Ashley Poston

Ramona O. Ewald (Sunnyside Environmental School 6th grader)

Elle Wittimer loves *Starfield*, a sci-fi show that she grew up watching with her father. Years after his passing, she hears of a *Starfield* convention called ExcelsiCon with a Cosplay contest. The prize is an invitation to the ExcelsiCon Ball and a chance to meet Darien Freeman, the actor who plays the Federation Prince Carmindor in the reboot of *Starfield*. With savings from her job working at a food cart called the Magic Pumpkin and her dad's old Carmindor costume, Elle is going to win, but her evil step-sisters are competing too. Can Elle win the Cosplay contest and survive her challenging life at home?

Darien Freeman loved going to ExcelsiCon. That was before he became famous, of course. Now it is just autographs, photos, and crazy fans. Playing the Federation Prince Carmindor is all he's ever wanted to do but now people see him as just another dumb heartthrob. As ExcelsiCon nears, Darien feels more and more like a fake, until he meets a girl who proves him otherwise.

The first in a series of three books, this fractured fairytale with a geeky twist is based on the popular children's book *Cinderella*.

I would give this book 4.6 stars out of 5 for the amazing plot, character development as well as the page-turning suspense that each chapter leaves you with.

Geekerella and the other books in the series can be found at the Sunnyside Environmental School library in the Young Adult section.



Jesse Cornett, Policy and Advocacy Director at Oregon Recovers and Portland City Council Candidate.

Getting to Know Your Neighbors

By Hannah Wallace, SNA Vice President

Q&A with Jesse Cornett

Jesse Cornett, the policy and advocacy director at Oregon Recovers, has lived in Portland for nearly 30 years. Much of that time he's been involved in politics or policy-making. He was a veterans caseworker for Congressman Earl Blumenauer, the senior policy director for former Oregon Secretary of State Bill Bradbury and he worked on both of Bernie Sanders' presidential campaigns. A former bar owner, he is now in recovery himself and is outspoken about the need for more detox and recovery beds in Portland. We spoke to Cornett about his campaign for City Council (District 3), his thoughts on the roll-back of Measure 110, and what changes he'd make to Sunnyside, if he could.

How long have you lived in Sunnyside?

I started dating my partner, Andrea, in early 2022, and I've largely been here since. I've lived in a lot of Portland neighborhoods.

How did you get involved in recovery?

I taught at Portland State between 2013 and 2019. One of the classes I taught was "The Legislative Process." In 2019 I had Oregon Recovers' then-program director in my class. In the 2021 legislative session, they were talking about a beer tax, and I went to this former student, Andrew, and asked if I could help. They said yes. Basically I went to them one day and said, "Hey, you gotta hire me as your lobbyist." They were like "OK!"

So I lobbied on the beer tax, unsuccessfully. At the end of session, Andrew left to go to law school and asked me to step in as the policy and advocacy director; I agreed and did that for the rest of 2021. I left in 2022, but I remained on the board. At the end of 2023 they asked me to step in when Tony Morse left so he could focus on his campaign for City Council (District 4).

You've run for City Council before, right?

I ran in 2010. I did not fare well, but I do like mentioning it. It was a last minute campaign. It was uninspired. I have been pretty open with my struggles with addiction and mental health. I think the

reality was that I was in the depth of that at the time and had no business running. But, I did care about the issues.

I also ran for State Senate in 2006, and I lost by 162 votes. You don't forget those things. And both the people who I ran against (Dan Saltzman and Rod Monroe) have endorsed me this time, which I think is neat.

Why are you running for City Council?

I've been in and around the political process for two decades. As a staffer to elected officials I've managed and worked on high-level campaigns. I never thought I'd run again after I ran and lost in 2010. But, I worked for Bernie Sanders' campaigns, and in the second campaign I did some really neat things—neat, hard things. I went to Canada with a bus full of diabetes patients to buy insulin at ten cents on the dollar. I went to a child detention center and stood at the gates with Bernie and saw where we as a country are literally caging kids. I know those aren't local issues—but they resonated for me. And when I got back to Portland, I walked everywhere and saw tents and the suffering on our streets.

Even worse is the open hostility to people living outside. And it's hard to not hurt.

So in June of last year I started thinking about this. I looked at who we had in positions of leadership—at the federal level it was Kevin McCarthy as Speaker of the House and in Portland Ted Wheeler was mayor. I just realized, "If these are the people leading our country and city, well, [expletive] it! I believe I can do remarkably better." I come at this from a much more compassionate place. I think I have something to say. For me, housing and homelessness, addiction, public safety, and climate change are the big issues. I think, especially with climate change, we're really not doing a good job of preparing for the realities of the damage that's already been done, especially in terms of climate refugees.

I know Measure 110 was passed statewide, but what do you make of the legislature's decision to roll it back?

I didn't support Measure 110—the support structures for those caught with drugs were not built out. Nor did I support recriminalization, because of the equity issue that I saw.

What Measure 110 did, as you know, is decriminalized the possession of small amounts of drugs. Simultaneously, it diverted funding to create a system to deal with the aftermath. The idea was that, we're not putting people in jail, so let's create other programs—a behavioral health resource network. Well, we stopped handing out citations prior to these programs being built up. We should have built programs first and then changed the penalties. The legislature didn't seem to learn anything from that, because what they did was they recriminalized possession. And they are going to build an entirely new system to deal with the aftermath.

What do you mean "an entirely new system?"

Deflection. This fancy new diversion system [meant to divert people from the criminal justice system by steering drug users toward treatment, recovery services, housing and other services]—but it doesn't exist. [Each county will design its own system.] The legislature gave Multnomah County \$25 million and it's expected to be in place by September.

Thirteen counties didn't opt in. You don't have to so in 13 counties you are not going to be offered deflection. You are just going to get a criminal charge, full stop. In

the 23 counties that signed on to this law, there isn't a requirement for consistent enforcement. So, if me and a 20 year old black man were high and smoking fentanyl in front of your house, a police officer can show up and can send me to treatment and the black man to jail. And I think it's simply unacceptable.

What do you love about Sunnyside?

The restaurants! I love Bluto's. The walkability! I go into Safeway at least six times a week. I've gotten to know the workers there. The coffee shops! I've been going to Common Grounds more and more. It lacks pretense, which I like.

What is one thing you would change about Sunnyside, if you could?

Make it more affordable. I'm aware of how lucky I am that Andrea bought her place in 1999. Keeping it affordable would be good.

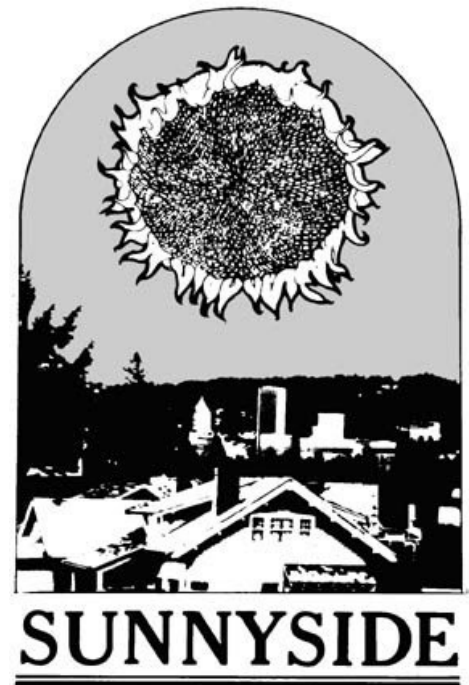
What do you think of the Inner Eastside for All campaign that Portland Neighbors Welcome is putting forth?

There's a delicate balance. I talked about climate refugees. That's gonna worsen in the next 20-30 years, and we have to keep up with the growing demand. Those are going to be immigrants in a lot of cases. I don't think that we should just focus on building more cheap housing on 122nd. I think there's a vibrancy to mixed neighborhoods. I don't like the concept of tearing down perfectly good buildings to put up new bigger ones. But there's also a balance of keeping up with demand. We have to simultaneously be mindful of the desire of the historical neighbors, the threats of climate change, but also manage the population.

I'm also in favor of a land value tax on empty lots. You've got this city block that's just sitting there vacant? It's out there vacant for 60 years. OK, cool, you can continue to do that, and the value of that lot would be, let's say, \$10 million. So we're going to assess your tax at the \$10 million level. And if you'd like to develop the lot to keep up with your taxes, great. If you just want to pay the taxes, OK. It would incentivize development. If I were to promote something like that—I would say there should be a 5-year period (or maybe even 10) where there's no tax assessed. So year 6, you start getting assessed. And maybe we ramp it up over those 5 years.

Cat or dog?

I think that's an unfair question! Andrea has a dog; I love that dog and I love dogs. But, my answer is nuanced. More nights than adults should admit I'm watching stupid cat videos.



The Sunnyside Neighborhood News is published monthly by the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association.

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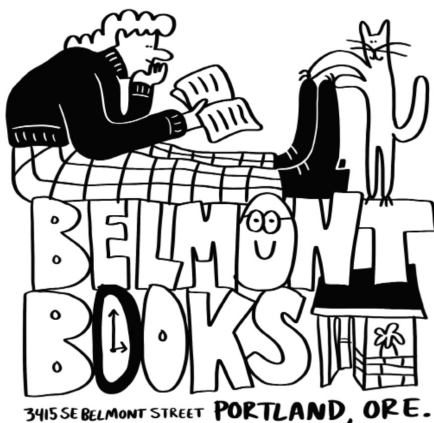
Any opinions expressed, unless specified, are not necessarily those of the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association or its board. **Sunnyside residents are welcome to submit articles for consideration that concern neighborhood issues, by emailing newsletter@sunnysideportland.org. Deadlines are the 15th of the month prior.** Many wonderful volunteer Sunnyside residents distribute the Neighborhood News.

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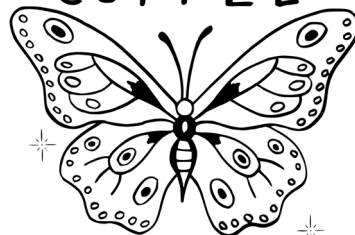
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