

Dear Montavilla Businesses,

You may have been canvassed by concerned neighbors, Joint Office of Homeless Services (JOHS) representatives, or Montavilla East Tabor Business Association (METBA) or Montavilla Neighborhood Association (MNA) representatives in the past several days. The purpose of this email is to share an update on the process of METBA and MNA working to negotiate a Good Neighbor Agreement (GNA) with Multnomah County with input from impacted neighbors and business owners in our community.

The backstory is well documented, and for those who have followed developments since [Montavilla News broke the story](#) in late 2022, that Multnomah County was opening a Safe Rest Village at 333 SE 82nd Ave (a former RV lot), many of you are already aware of the details.

METBA has been working for the past year to advocate for our district businesses who have ongoing concerns about homeless camps, drugs, violence and crime that we deal with on a day to day basis. News of the County's plans to open a Safe Rest Village (SRV) in Montavilla only compounded concerns over the ongoing liveability crisis in our community.

Here is an overview of the timeline of events since:

METBA reached out to Multnomah County in April of 2023 to get answers to questions and hear feedback about concerns of our member businesses located near the proposed site. Our meeting was preliminary and included members of the METBA board of directors including Dan Gold, owner of Sebastiano's and David Gillaspie, co-owner of The Observatory. This meeting was an opportunity to hear from then District 3 County Commissioner Diane Rosenbaum and her staff about the SRV project and voice our concerns. METBA requested a follow up meeting to address specific questions regarding the site which led to the scheduling of a follow up meeting in June with Commissioner Rosenbaum and staff, JOHS director Dan Field and staff and several METBA board members.

Prior to the June 16th meeting, held over Zoom, METBA presented a list of twenty questions to the JOHS and County representatives. In the meeting JOHS addressed our questions and follow up questions. Our takeaway from that meeting was that there were still key questions that remained unanswered relating specifically to the County's tolerance for camping and drug use around the perimeter of the site. Here is a [link](#) to METBA's prepared questions and the responses provided by JOHS staff. A follow up meeting was scheduled for August 15th.

On June 30, 2023 Diane Rosenbaum's term as County Commissioner District 3 ended. Our new Commissioner Julia Brim-Edwards and staff requested a reschedule of the August meeting in order to take time to get up to speed in general and regarding the issues and concerns of METBA related to the County's SRV site proposal at 333 SE 82nd Ave.

On November 2, 2023, after several weeks of radio silence, I emailed Commissioner Brim-Edwards and Dan Field to request engagement and timeline regarding the site. I was

directed by Dan Field to set up an interview with a Community Engagement specialist working remotely out of New York, NY. I met with Dana Freedenfield in late November and shared my concerns about the site. It was my understanding that her role was to interview community leaders and other stakeholders, such as property owners and businesses owners who reside or do business near the proposed site.

In early December METBA received word via a Facebook post by Commissioner Brim-Edwards that public testimony was needed at the County Board Meeting on December 7th, 2023, and that she had concerns regarding the lack of community outreach done in Montavilla regarding the SRV site in Montavilla and that the JOHS was seeking board approval for a release of funds to start construction at 333 SE 82nd Ave.

On December 2nd, 2023 I emailed Commissioner Brim-Edwards letting her know that METBA had formed an ad-hoc committee to lead the Good Neighbor Agreement (GNA) process in collaboration with MNA, which had also formed a similar committee. These committees would work together to give voice to our community in the GNA process.

After hearing the concerns of Commissioner Brim-Edwards, the County Board decided to table the December 7th vote to approve funds for construction; this vote has now been rescheduled for April 11th, 2024.

On February 2nd, 2024 Dana Freedenfield emailed METBA to introduce Rory Cuddyer, JOHS's new Engagement Specialist for the Montavilla SRV project. In response, METBA requested that all communications to and from the JOHS be through the MNA-METBA Joint Committee leadership.

On February 20th, 2024 JOHS Engagement Specialist Rory Cuddyer shared his proposed engagement plan for the Montavilla SRV project to a group of MNA representatives who had volunteered to participate in the MNA-METBA Joint Committee. This plan can be viewed [here](#). At that time Joint Committee leadership expressed concern about the pace of the engagement and noted that the short community engagement timeline concluded with the planned County Board vote to approve funds for construction on April 11, 2024—of which we were previously unaware. After hearing our concerns for the fast pace of community engagement by JOHS and the proposed set of community meetings were pushed back by one week.

On February 27th the MNA-METBA Joint Committee met for the first time. The committee included MNA members who had responded to MNA's email outreach seeking volunteer committee members in late 2023. METBA committee members were selected by METBA's Executive Committee and included business owners who are in the immediate vicinity of the proposed site. In the initial Joint Committee meeting we established ground rules for communications with the County, and a process and timeline for our work to ensure the residential and business communities in Montavilla have a voice in the GNA. The agenda for that meeting is [here](#), minutes are being compiled and will be available soon on MNA's website.

The past month has been very active with community engagement and outreach. JOHS led a meeting of Key Stakeholders on Wednesday, March 13th at Flying Pie Pizzeria. That meeting included the MNA-METBA representatives, JOHS staff, Commissioner Brim Edward's staff, Pastor Minnieweather from Straightway Services (the site's contracted service provider), and community stakeholders including David Gillaspie, co-owner The Observatory; Jacob Loeb, 82nd Ave Business Association; and representatives from Rahab's Sisters, Montavilla United Methodist Church, and PDX Saints Love.

Additionally, on March 20th, JOHS held a Community Meeting at Montavilla United Methodist Church. On March 27th, JOHS held the second Key Stakeholder meeting at Rose City Nazarene Church on 255 NE 80th Ave.

The next JOHS Community Meeting will be on April 3rd, 2024 at 6PM at Montavilla United Methodist Church, at 232 SE 80th Ave..

In summary, METBA has spent considerable time working to make sure our business community has a voice with Multnomah County, that our concerns are heard, and that we have the ability to influence how our community grows. It needs to be clearly stated that METBA does not have the power to stop the County's plans for the SRV site at 333 SE 82nd Ave., but we do have a strong voice at the table and can and will work through the Good Neighborhood Agreement to ensure we get the outcomes that will make our community a better place to do business in the future.

METBA would like to hear your input, please reach out to goodneighbors@metba.org if you have questions, concerns, or insight that will be helpful to this process.

Thank you,

Neil Mattson
METBA President