

Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association Meeting – September 22, 2015

Convened: 7:15 p.m. Adjourned: 8:15 p.m. 31 attendees

Meeting chaired by TGHNA President Kelly Stout

- No first-time attendees were identified.

Featured Speaker

- **Mary Pat Carl, Assistant Circuit Attorney, Lead Homicide Prosecutor, City of St. Louis:** (Circuit Attorney, Jennifer Joyce was unable to attend.) Carl reported that St. Louis has a gun violence problem and to help find remedies, Circuit Attorney Jennifer Joyce recently went on a “best practices” tour to several U.S. cities and brought back ideas to try in St. Louis. Carl stated, “Prison is a finishing school for criminals” and that many crimes are a result of “self-esteem issues” on the part of the offender. One result of Joyce’s tour is a three-pronged approach that includes:
 - Resolve of community to do something about the problem. One thing the public can do is secure their guns. She stated St. Louis city had 400+ stolen guns reported last year but that there were probably many more that went unreported. She cautioned the public to avoid hiding their guns in their vehicle’s glove compartment or trunk because these are the first places that criminals look. She suggested buying a gun safe to bolt down in the trunk to secure one’s guns. She also suggested year-end charitable contributions be made to organizations actively involved in helping to curb gun violence, including programs for youth. More information is available at: <http://www.stlouisguncrime.com/>.
 - Redirection of low-level offenders away from criminal behavior. This includes deference of prosecution of an individual who “made a mistake,” not violent offenders. In these cases, individuals, after pleading guilty, are provided with social service resources to help them turn their lives around. If they do so, they will not have a conviction on their record.
 - Remove violent criminals by prosecuting them. A new approach is information gathering – often these individuals will post photos of themselves posing with guns, cash and even messages to judges on social media. This information may be used to help distinguish between criminals who need to be off the street and those who can be helped with redirection. Researching this information also helps law enforcement draw relationships between individuals to build conspiracy cases. Carl stated, “Many teens don’t believe they’ll have a life after 25 years of age” because they believe they will either be dead or in prison. She said we have to show them a better model.
 - The Circuit Attorney’s Office is making contact with witnesses earlier than ever before. They are now being called to the scene of homicides so that they can talk to witnesses right away which helps build trust. Carl stated that this will lead to issuing and presenting better cases to juries.
 - In response to a resident’s question about communication between county and city, Carl stated that there has been more communication between area entities.
 - In response to another resident’s question about what qualifies a case for federal involvement, she stated that this is at the sole discretion of the U.S. Attorney’s Office to determine whether they have jurisdiction but if so, then many more resources are available, such as F.B.I. involvement.
 - Another resident asked about hearing gunshots in the area. Carl stated that calling these incidences in to 911 always helps police decide where to put resources.

Neighborhood business/announcements

- **Autumn Fest 2015:** TGHNA’s popular annual event is scheduled for Saturday, October 10, 5-8 p.m. and will feature food, beverages and new, this year, pedicabs (bike taxis) to transport attendees between houses. The cost is \$15 in advance for paper registration; \$16 through PayPal on www.towergroveheights.com; and \$20 at the door. Details can be found in the last issue of the *Gazette* or on the website.
- **Tower Grove South Neighborhood Association:** New meeting venue is Oak Hill Presbyterian Church, 4111 Connecticut (at Oak Hill - 3rd Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m. Next meeting: October 21, will be a kickoff for TGSNA at 3227 Morgan Ford Road at Humphrey (home of Great American Human Foosball)
- **Block Captains' meetings** - 2nd Mondays, 6:30 p.m., also at Oak Hill Presbyterian Church (Theleos Room). Next meeting: October 12.

- **St. Louis Association of Community Organizations (SLACO)** Regional Neighborhood Conference: Saturday, November 14 at Harris Stowe State University, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. More information and tickets are available at <http://www.slaco-mo.org/slaco-home.html>.

- **Crime Report:** Officer Ed Slade, SLMPD 2nd District liaison, stated he wanted to respond to a resident's earlier question about shots fired. He said that when residents hear what sounds like shots fired, they are usually about 89-90% correct. He encouraged residents to call these incidences in and to leave their name with the operator so that they can be contacted if more information is needed. He said residents can request that officers not come to their doors. He said officers look for evidence of a crime including blood and if any is found, they check out area hospitals (SLU & BJC). If no physical evidence is found, a report is not filed but all info is stored on the officer's laptop. If there is evidence found, then a report is made.
 - There will be Neighborhood Ownership Model (N.O.M.) Court Advocacy training on Thursday, October 1 at Buder Branch Library, 6:30 p.m. lasting about an hour. Attendees will learn how cases are handled, how to write effective Neighborhood Impact Statements (N.I.S.) that may be read at hearings of defendants charged with area crime. He said that many times it's the presence of neighbors and N.I.S. that make the difference between a defendant being given probation or jail time.
 - Robberies are generally down, except in Shaw, however, alley robberies are up.
 - A resident asked about the recent robbery of two individuals near Wyoming and Grand in which one of the victims was shot in the leg even after they had both handed over their backpacks and laptops. The resident, who has been trained in Victim Advocacy, had been asked to speak to the non-injured victim. Slade reported that the victims were walking west on Wyoming after leaving CBGB on Grand and saw two individuals in a doorway. They reported feeling "something wasn't right" but ignored their feelings. Slade said that the victims "mistook their emotion of not wanting to stereotype for reasonable fear." There were also two individuals in a getaway car. Slade encouraged residents to "listen to their gut, and turn around and walk the other way, if possible" when confronted with such a situation. The case is still under investigation.
 - Another resident asked if we could get crime statistic reports for the past 2-3 years in order to be able to better compare longer trends. Slade said he would make these available.
 - A resident asked if we could get the side-by-side crime number comparisons for city neighborhoods which had been made available at the Tower Grove South Neighborhood Association meeting on Wednesday, in order to put numbers for Tower Grove into context. Slade said he would also make these available.
 - Another resident asked about a federal grant for 15 extra officers. These officers will be divided between five districts and Slade warned that this will not be immediate since it will take time to fully train them.

- **15th Ward Aldermanic Report:** Megan-Ellyia Green reported a public engagement session for the 15th Ward traffic study will be held on October 5 at the Carpenter Branch Library, 6-7:30 p.m. Stations will be set up outlining traffic calming solutions and representatives from MODOT as well as the study organizers will be on hand to get resident input and to answer questions. Door hangers announcing the meeting and an input survey are being prepared for distribution by the Block Captains. For those unable to attend, the survey will be posted online.
 - Green stated she's received many communications against the building of a stadium. She also stated that about 40% will be tax-payer funded. Stadium Task Force Chief, Dave Peacock has announced that he will meet with individual alderpersons and Green has received a call from him.

- **South Grand Community Improvement District:** Executive Director, Rachel Witt, was not able to attend. In her place, Kelly Stout announced last weekend's South Grand Fest had about 4,000 visitors. The TGHNA booth, organized by residents Lily Claire Dodenhoff and Jonathan Fox and staffed by several volunteers, was unofficially named "most creative booth." Numbers for retail sales are not yet available. Ritz Park performances went well and will be posted online.

Respectfully submitted,
 Debra Knox Deiermann
 Secretary, TGHNA