

Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association Meeting
March 22, 2011 7:20 p.m. 35 Attendees

The meeting was chaired by President Marilyn Browning. After new attendees were introduced, Marilyn mentioned Operation Brightside/Project Blitz. Operation Brightside involves the cleaning and greening of St. Louis, restoring, maintaining and growing the community public green spaces. April 16-17 is the date for our region (3) Cleanup Blitz. Brochures on the event were distributed.

Mayor Francis Slay addressed the meeting about Proposition E and passed out a brochure about the election. The vote will be on the ballot as "Shall the City retain the earnings tax for the next 5 years." Of the people paying the earnings tax, over 60% of the revenue comes from people who live outside the city, like Cardinals athletes. It generates \$140 million which represents over 30% of the city's operating budget and funds fire protection, Neighborhood Stabilization Office, Comptroller's Office, the aldermen, etc. It would represent a huge blow to the city if it was not collected and the City couldn't provide the current public services if not passed. A low voter turnout is possible since this is the only thing on the ballot. If people don't vote, it may lose. The issue was put on ballot due to the vote on Proposition A in November. November had a big turnout since it was a full ballot. 68% of the City voted against Prop A. There will be no commercials about this issue since that includes too broad an audience; the campaign is focusing on likely voters with phone calls, signs and attendance at neighborhood meetings. The mayor has gone to over 60 neighborhood meetings already and is talking to people individually as well. This year, the city struggled to fill a budget gap, especially due to the rising cost of pensions. Employees are taking unpaid furloughs for a second year. This year, the City will still have a large shortfall even if the earnings tax is in place and after adding new fees like that for trash pickup. The Mayor asked us to please go to the polls on April 5 and vote Yes for the earnings tax. The Website www.citizensforastrongerstlouis.com has more info. Absentee votes are available—contact the City Election Board.

When discussing why Rex Sinquefield is pushing to abolish the earnings tax, Mayor Slay responded that Rex believes the earnings tax is job killer for the City and noted that he is also trying to abolish the State income tax. Although the Mayor said that it does give us kind of a disadvantage in competing with other cities that don't have this tax, he doesn't believe it's that major of an issue and doesn't want to get rid of it until it can be replaced. Mr. Sinquefield believes that if he creates a crisis, the City will come through in some way. When discussing the census finding of population loss, the Mayor noted that our job base had been going up prior to the latest crash; however population as reflected by the census has gone down. We lost families with children—we have 22,000 fewer children which was the majority of the population loss. The school system is very problematic here. We do have quality charter schools opening and we have the highest nationally ranked public high school in the state—Metro High School. We also have some of the worst high schools in terms of performance. Since lack of accreditation is a problem, in addition to trying to attract charter schools, the Mayor is working with the school district on other improvements. The Mayor also commended Jennifer Florida, Judy Lane and Joe Thele (Program Manager, Neighborhood Stabilization Team) as neighborhood advocates.

Jennifer Florida, 15th Ward Alderman, announced that the Board of Alderman was currently on

break until the next legislative session. They will be working on budget balancing and redistricting based on the census counts. Ribbon cutting will be held this Thursday for the new parking lot on S. Grand at Hartford. The Grand Streets project is proceeding; they have started pouring the pervious concrete and they plan to finish the entire project by Sept. She reported that the speed limit on Arsenal and on Magnolia has been changed to 25 mph. This is due partly to the fact that a pedestrian was killed walking across Magnolia to the park. The speed limit has also been made to match residential speed limits. The traffic barrels that had been placed on Grand have been moved to other areas for traffic calming. The pervious alley behind North Utah will start between April and September when it has been approved by the Board of Public Service. Economic stimulus money is being used for this. The other alley behind South Utah will be funded from the Dept of Natural Resources grant so we are not sure of the timeline. Jennifer reminded residents to vote in April.

Judy Lane, 15th Ward NSO (Neighborhood Stabilization Officer), discussed Operation Brightside. We're in Region 3 and this region is scheduled for cleanup on April 16-17. If bulk refuse is not collected by Wed, call 622-4800. We're trying to get volunteers to be captains for each block so please call 772-4646 to volunteer. Free plants are available for planting in public spaces. Brightside started clearing graffiti in March, once the weather warmed up. Call 622-4800 to get graffiti cleaned. One of the residents mentioned that Citrasol is very effective to remove graffiti from garage doors. In response to a question on where to get anti-theft cages to prevent theft of air conditioning units, Judy responded that Signature Ironworks makes them. She reminded residents to be aware of surroundings, remove valuables from car, lock doors at all times, don't leave cardboard boxes from new appliances in the alley and be careful that open windows don't show where large screen TVs are hung. Call 657-1365 to contact the NSO.

Marilyn reported that the Grand South Grand House Tour will be April 16-17. The tour will include houses from five different neighborhoods. The tour includes St. Mary's of Scotland and the Magic Chef house and TGH will have two houses on the tour. Tour hours are 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. There will be buses to all the houses on the tour, starting at the entrance to Tower Grove Park on Grand. The tickets are good all weekend and include a brochure with information on all the houses. We need volunteer docents who get free tickets so please contact Marilyn or other members of the Board if you're interested.

Rich Seifert, President Elect, reported that our past President Robert Ashton is directing a new play called Acts of Love from April 1-10 and had a flyer for interested residents. He also reported on Neighborhood Orders of Protection which are tools to let neighborhoods get involved with crime prevention. If a crime is committed in your neighborhood and the criminal is from outside the neighborhood, residents can ask to keep them out in the future if they are paroled or meet bond. TGH is filing these Orders of Protection and we are tracking six such criminals so far. The crimes involve burglary, theft, car theft and one was armed robbery (fast food restaurant). Three have pled guilty; others are going through the court system. Two were given suspended sentences (paroled); one has reoffended. If they come back in our neighborhood, that will cancel their parole and they will go to jail. The St Louis Circuit Clerk website (<http://www.stlcircuitcourt.com/search.php>) has links to pictures of these offenders. Click on Neighborhood 15 and then click the Search button to see current Orders of Protection in Tower Grove South.

Next month, Local Harvest representatives will talk to us about eating locally and the Tower Grove Park Farmer's Market.

The meeting concluded at 8:15 p.m. The next meeting will be April 26, 2011.

Claudia Seifert, Secretary