

TGENA MEMBERSHIP MEETING OCTOBER 22, 2019

Tuesday night's membership meeting of the Tower Grove East Neighborhood Association at Tower Gove Abbey featured officer elections and talk of traffic, Roosevelt High School's football coach, decreasing crime statistics and other topics.

Bill Gilbert moved, and Isaac Meier seconded, this slate of officers:

President-elect, Denise Heinz (new);

Secretary, Mary Anne Pikrone (re-elected);

and Treasurer, Brian Kratz (new).

All three were elected by acclamation of those present at the meeting.

President-elect Katy Meier took over from outgoing President Jen Kubiszewski at the end of the meeting.

At the meeting:

INGRASSIA, TRAFFIC, ROOSEVELT HIGH

--**Sixth Ward Alderwoman Christine Ingrassia** said she and Alderwomen Annie Rice and Megan Green have allocated more capital funding for a neighborhood traffic study. Traffic consultants will speak about traffic-calming options under consideration at a meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 29, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at Tower Grove Abbey.

A second meeting will be held Saturday, Nov. 2, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. at the Five Star Senior Center. Engineers will be seeking feedback from residents. Please see the online traffic survey posted on Facebook. During discussion, Ingrassia said a police traffic unit can be moved, temporarily, to patrol TGE to deal with numerous violations in the neighborhood.

Ingrassia also said she has done a lot of work on social media regarding the termination of Trey Porter, Roosevelt's football coach, which prompted a protest by students there. She said she listened to the students, some of whose stories were heart-wrenching about how the coach has helped them. She believes the Board of Education should reconsider the termination.

She also said the board should consider redoing its social media policy.

Ingrassia said she and Rice spent the better part of a morning with the 200 students from Cleveland and Roosevelt, who walked downtown in protest. She and Rice are drafting a letter to school board asking it to reconsider its action.

Asked what the problem was in particular, Ingrassia said the coach was using social media to communicate with students, including about homework. He needed to talk to them every night, she said, and since many of the students don't have phones, social media was the way to go. She noted that coaches also are required to help students get into college.

"I can tell you with 100 percent confidence that there was nothing nefarious he did," she said. She said some students told her that they had nothing and "he gave us everything."

RICE, BOARD OF FREEHOLDERS

--**Alderwoman Annie Rice** said she was happy to see Sidney has been paved.

Rice was asked why she abstained from a vote on the Board of Freeholders, which will include eight representatives from the St. Louis County Council, eight from the city and one appointed by the governor. The board is supposed to provide residents of the area a forum to discuss the future governmental structure of the region.

The board was proposed in response to the Better Together proposal, and she expects

the process will go to litigation. She said she abstained from voting because she didn't have enough information about it, nor was she clear about what developer Paul McKee envisions with his planned three-bed hospital facility off Jefferson.

Rice urged residents to come talk to her about other issues, including surveillance policies in the city.

POLICE, CRIME

--**Third District Public Affairs Officer Gagik Khoudian** urged residents who suspect drug dealing is going on in the area to call 241-COPS. "Giving as much information as you can will help shut down" these places, he said.

Despite an overall drop in crime, he said, there has been an increase in theft of vehicles—all of which incidents involved juvenile suspects, one as young as 12. When confronted with force in such a situation, he said, "I'll hand over all my stuff because it's insured. Your safety is important, not stuff. Hand it over and walk away safe." But if you decide to fight, "you must fully commit to it," he said. He also advised against leaving a vehicle running to warm it up. Likewise, don't leave your keys in the car. The car might be stolen—and you'll get a ticket from police for leaving your keys in it, he said.

He also advised that if you buy big-ticket items, you should break down the boxes and put them into the Dumpster, so you don't advertise something a thief might be interested in.

Khoudian said gun and drug incidents have slowed down in the area. He cited two brothers, one of whom has been arrested and is expected to get 10 to 15 years in a federal prison. Warrants have been issued for the man's brother.

Asked about problems of cars blocking as Eagle School students are picked up, Khoudian promised he would go to the school and talk about the situation.

City police will hold a trivia night Friday, Nov. 15, at 6 p.m. at Casa Loma Ballroom, 3354 Iowa, he said. Proceeds go to the St. Louis City Police Department Central Patrol Business Association, a 501c3 charity. The group also is accepting donations for a silent auction.

--**TGE neighborhood police liaison Officer Carl Whittaker** reported overall crime is down 36 percent in the area, compared with the same time last year. The drop is double digits in every major category.

CITY TREASURER'S OFFICE

--**City Treasurer Tishaura O. Jones** gave a quick review of what her office is doing: A change in investment strategy in 2013 has resulted in earnings and savings of more than \$25 million, which means that the city won't have to borrow as much money and the airport has been able to decrease its fees.

Cash, card and app payments are now being accepted at city-owned meters, garages and lots. The city Office of Financial Empowerment held 85 classes enrolling 600 people in fiscal 2019, she said. The classes advised how to improve credit ratings, among other things.

Last July, the city increased its minimum wage to \$15 an hour for full- and part-time employees. And more than 13,500 youngsters are saving for college through the College Kids program, she said. Studies show that children who have savings started have better chance of finishing college.

Jones also pointed out that she has nothing to do with the Loop Trolley, on which, she said, the federal government unfortunately wasted \$51 million. She hopes Metro will pick it up and offer the service for free.

--**A representative from the Circuit Attorney's Office** was supposed to speak, but no one showed up.

—**Also, outgoing treasurer Gil Newberry** was not present to deliver a report on TGENA funds.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

--**Beautification chairman David Rodgers** said he will hold a meeting to develop a sustainable plan in 2020 to maintain the Grand Boulevard medians. He will post an agenda and date on the neighborhood page soon.

He also wants to make sure spring cleaning will coincide with the plant and yard sales next spring. And, he wants to start promoting the MSD grant program that offers up to \$3,000 to property owners for rainscaping

--**Severyn Jarman** introduced herself as the new **Communication Committee chairman**. She aims to draw more residents to the neighborhood page and has tasked herself with restarting Tower Grove East Adventures social night at local venues.

--**Community Outreach Chairman Marilyn Lancaster** introduced **Eric Ericson**, tour director at the Magic Chef Mansion. He talked about the mansion's history and upcoming holiday events: Halloween tours on Friday and Saturday, Oct. 25-26, from 5 to 8 p.m.; and Christmas tours on Friday and Saturday, Dec. 13-14 from 5 to 8 p.m. The mansion will partner with the historic Campbell House this year for its Christmas events both days. From April November, the mansion offers tours from 2 to 5 p.m. on the first Saturday of the month. The mansion hosts the first responders lunch every year.

Lancaster added that Trinity Christian Fellowship Church will be handing out hot chocolate at Magnolia and Nebraska on Halloween.

--**Kubiszewski** said the newsletter editor's position remains unfilled.

--**DeSales Community Development representative Becky Reinhart** said Messiah Community Center, 2801 Magnolia, is marking its second anniversary. Activities there include martial arts and exercise classes and a Pokemon club. A block party will be held there Saturday, Nov. 2, from noon to 2 p.m.

--**Tower Grove Park representative Larry McCarthy** said Schlafly Beer has agreed to match income from new TGP Friends members from now to Dec. 1. The park's ultimate goal is to reach 4,000 Friends. The recent Terror in the Park drew 5,000 people, he added. The 5K Trot, the only race in the park that benefits restoration there, will be held Nov. 3. Martinis in the Mansion netted \$25,000 for Café Madeleine, which will wrap up in December, he said.

Meanwhile, park volunteers are planting about 22,000 bulbs for bloom next year.

--The Orchard on Virginia drew about 50 attendees to its evening with Celia on Oct. 5, it was reported.

--**Community Garden Leader Mary Anne Pikrone** said she's still working on getting railings for the stairs at the garden. She said she plans to step down as garden leader in February to spend more time on political activities in 2020.

--**Neighbors** announced a fundraiser on Tuesday, Oct. 29, from 6 to 9 p.m. at Riley's to benefit Rachel Zoeller, who was injured in a rock-climbing accident. The event is hosted by Alyson Hendry.