

TOWER GROVE EAST NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION MEETING
JANUARY 28, 2020

The meeting earlier this week featured reports from Alderwoman Annie Rice, Officer Carl Whittaker and Missouri Botanical Gardens representatives Liz Fathman and Catherine Martin.

Rice, Eighth Ward representative, said the Board of Aldermen is back in session and wrapping up bills. She said she and Sixth Ward Alderwoman Christine Ingrassia are working hard on redistricting legislation set to reduce the number of wards in St. Louis from 28 to 14. “We are trying to represent people instead of protecting ourselves,” she said. Other issues they are working on:

--Ingrassia, on Airbnb legislation.

--Rice, on simplifying the temporary food permit for farmer’s market booths and festivals such as Cinco de Mayo.

--Green legislation requiring all new construction in the city to be solar-ready. Electric charging is next.

Rice said the board passed a bill to mandate that workers be paid at least the prevailing wage on sites that are tax exempt in the city. Also, protections were strengthened for laborers who remove asbestos. The board will work on electric charging legislation next.

The city is using a Bloomberg grant to study how much water is being used in major buildings—not residential-- so the usage can be benchmarked, she said. Energy use will be studied next.

In answer to questions, Rice said crosswalks on Arsenal will be painted as soon as it’s warm enough. There are no results yet on traffic counts in the area, she added.

And thanks to the Fight for 15, every city employee is now being paid at least \$15 an hour, she said.

Officer Whittaker, neighborhood liaison with the city police department, said 2020 has not been too bad for crime so far. The main problem has been along the South Grand corridor, especially with juveniles shoplifting. Also, there was a purse-snatching at Starbucks.

Panhandling isn’t as bad as it’s been in past years, he added. If you want Whittaker to send you weekly updates on crime in the area, he will collect your e-mail addresses at the next TGENA meeting, he said. The goal is to communicate better with residents.

MOBOT

Fathman, director of communications at MOBOT, and Martin, public information officer, discussed plans to replace and improve the visitor center—the building you first walk through to get to the garden. Both live in our area, they said.

Yes, the current visitor center will be open while construction work is taking place. Phase One will take place in the upper east lot, where the east wing will be built first. This work will go through October. The east wing then will become a temporary visitor center while the current center is demolished during Phase Two. In Phase Three, work will return to the east side so it can be finished.

You will be able to have lunch—sit down and eat somewhere-- at the garden throughout the entire construction process, they assured residents.

Entry to the garden will be different once work is completed. Now, you enter the visitor's center and then must go downstairs to walk into the garden. Construction will change the current elevation under which visitors look down on everything.

The new building will provide a straight shot into the garden, they said. New sightlines will be featured. The Chihuly chandelier will be placed in a new, appropriate setting.

Gently sloping pathways will be added, more wheelchair access will be provided, the drop-off area for cars will be expanded and benches will be added.

Also planned for the new front is a garden that will reflect the research that takes place at MOBOT.

In answer to questions, the garden representatives said they are working with subcontractors to minimize waste. The garden aims to be sustainable. For instance, it still uses an old cistern by its greenhouses.

MOBOT is part of the Green Dining Alliance and uses compostable items – not single use plastic—to serve food. They said they would look into a suggestion that they have a regular demonstration to teach organic gardening.

Check the garden's website to view plans and follow construction progress, they advised.

Reports from TGENA committees:

--**Treasurer: Brian Kratz** said the 2020 budget is 99 percent completed and he hopes to have final figures at next month's meeting.

Asked to give ballpark figures, he said they're budgeting about \$14,000 income and expenditure for this year and have about \$25,000 in the bank.

--Beautification: David Rodgers said the committee will hold its first meeting on Feb. 11. It is working on a strategic plan that involves spring cleaning before the community garden plant sale and neighborhood yard sale. A date for the yard sale will be determined at the garden's annual meeting on Feb. 4.

Rodgers said he also wants the committee to help residents apply for MSD rainscaping small grant program.

Last, he said the Dine Out event to raise funds for music, art and physical education activities at Shenandoah Elementary School will take place Thursday, Feb. 6, from 4 to 9 p.m. at these local restaurants: Little Fox, Kitchen House, Knockout Barbecue, Tick Tock, Lona's Little Eats, Shaved Duck, Riley's, Crafted and Gelateria del Leone.

These restaurants will give 20 percent of their proceeds from their Feb. 6 evening service to Shenandoah. All donations will come from evening receipts, but Kitchen House will donate from its entire day's income from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

--Social Media: Severyn Jarman said she is planning future TGE Adventures at local venues where neighbors can socialize. Last month's took place at Knockout Barbecue, where a raffle offered tickets to Bailey's restaurants.

Jarman said she also is working on fixing the TGENA website.

--Newsletter: Alex Thomson said he wants to get advertising for the newsletter. Please contact him and send ideas to TGE.stl.newsletter@gmakil.com.

--Social: Zachary Ford said 10 people attended the most recent get together. He is planning another social event for April.

--Orchard: Susan Herzberg said the Orchard on Virginia will have another East Egg Hunt for children this spring and also plans to have popular musician Celia return to perform.

--Community Garden: Mary Anne Pikrone said the garden at Virginia and Sidney has had some turnover of members, and while it has a waiting list, there still may be some vacancies for beds. If you are interested in joining the garden, you can attend the garden's annual meeting Tuesday, Feb. 4, at 7 p.m. in the basement of Messiah Lutheran Church, corner of Grand and Pestalozzi. Dues for one bed are \$20 a year.