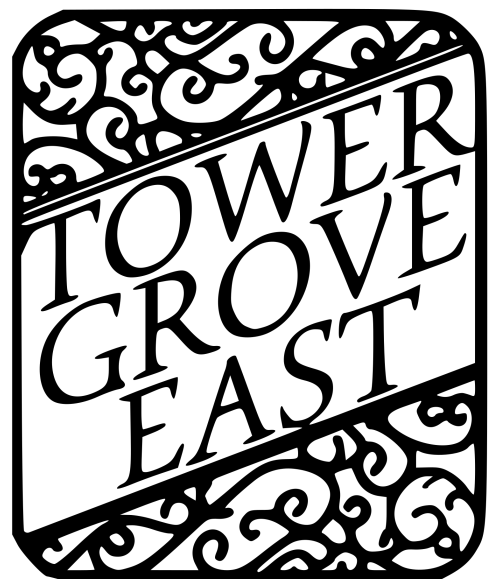


FEBRUARY 28, 2023

**TOWER GROVE EAST
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION**

**FEBRUARY
MEETING
& ALDERMANIC
FORUM RECAP**



Tower Grove East Neighborhood Association

FEBRUARY MEETING RECAP

Aldermanic candidates draw large crowd to TGE Neighborhood Association meeting

The new Seventh Ward's three aldermanic candidates drew more than 100 people to Tuesday night's meeting of the Tower Grove East Neighborhood Association at Stray Dog Theatre.

Usual general meeting updates and crime statistics can be found at this end of this write up.

The main event featured the three candidates:

- **J. P. Mitchom**, director of equity and inclusion at St. Louis Priory School;
- <https://www.facebook.com/people/JP-Mitchom/100087939767502/>
- **Cedric (C. Sharp) Redmon**, musician and community activist;
- <https://www.facebook.com/CSharp314>
- **Alisha Sonnier**, member of the St. Louis Public Schools Board of Education.
- <https://www.sonnierforstl.com/>

They will run in the March 7 primary, where the two top vote getters will move on to compete for a two-year term in the April 4 election. The TGE neighborhood, which had been divided among the 6th, 7th, 8th and 15th wards, will now be in one ward—the 7th—in the newly downsized Board of Aldermen.

Introductory remarks:

--**Mitchom** said he has traveled through the ward, knocked on doors and found that residents are tired and don't want to go back to the status quo. "What we need in our city is a more balanced approach to issues we face," he said, "People want a truly just and fair city that has a balanced approach that will be inclusive, collaborative, restorative and empowered," he declared. Mitchom, who is a licensed counseling therapist, said he has taught at every school level, has been a grand juror where he got a chance to see the tough side of life, was a coordinator for Rockwood School District, and was president of the Tiffany Neighborhood Association, where he was elected to serve collaboratively. He has helped to implement programs for youth, including basketball, and has worked on traffic calming projects, he said. He wants to focus on "empowering people who are indigenous to the community" to help them take ownership.

--**Redmon** said he is a 36-year-old single father to a teenage son and was voted Hip Hop Musician of the Year. He has been a youth ambassador from and to St. Louis, he said. He said he aims to comprehend, compete and compromise on legislation, and ask tough questions in committee. "My message is to maintain and improve specific things" like trash pickup, getting trees planted, installing speed bumps. He wants the neighborhood to be diverse and well kept. He wants "inclusive and meaningful dialogue," he said.

--**Sonnier** began by noting she stood earlier in the day with a rally of people who were denied a chance to talk to a judge. (Correction: The rally was about union solidarity, during which demonstrators sought to talk to a court official about issues involving Service Employees International Union –SEIU-- Local 1, she said.) "I just feel the violence in our community and the trauma in our community very heavily," Sonnier said. Unfortunately, just crossing the street in St. Louis—doing it safely—is a luxury, she said. Sonnier said she began her journey of community activism because of what happened to Michael Brown in Ferguson: "For the first time, I started thinking about who's making decisions. who decides when police show up, how they show up....whether it's okay to pepper spray a community." The city we live is black, white, Latino, Asian, she said. Sonnier said that she learned very early that when people come together and work collectively, change can happen. She said she got involved in the Bernie Sanders campaign and with friends running for office including U.S. Rep. Cori Bush, D-1st. She started a podcast, became a student activist and ran for the city school board after she saw some schools were being closed. She lost the election by 26 votes, she said, but later was appointed to a vacant school board seat by Mayor Tishaura Jones.

Questions taken from the audience:

Q--What did you make last year? Will you continue to work a second job? (In January, the board voted to double annual alderman pay to \$72,000 a year)

Mitchom promised he will be at every neighborhood meeting and will be "very collaborative."

Redmon said he will still perform from time to time and has been able to make residuals from his career. He was a loss prevention officer for businesses and made about \$28,000 to \$30,000 last year and said, "Yes, I will give it up."

Sonnier said, "This will be my fulltime job, my fulltime focus." She said she works to help others but had an official meeting to inform her supervisor that should she be elected, she will resign.

Q--Please talk about how you would pursue commitment and accountability in your job. How would you hold Board of Aldermen President Megan Green accountable?

Mitchom said the best way to be accountable is to be in communication constantly with your constituents. He said when he's counseling couples, he finds there's usually a breakdown in communications, intimacy or finances. To be accountable means you must be in constant communication, he said. He noted that the Board of Aldermen acts as a check and balance in its interaction with the mayor.

Redmon said he will be present and visible; answer questions; and be straightforward and a straight shooter. He will make sure questions are asked properly in committee and make sure things are done ethically.

Sonnier promised fulltime commitment, transparency and accessibility. She will hold monthly town halls to talk to constituents and will hold office hours. "The only income I'll be getting is what I get from the city. I won't take bribes," she said to laughter.

Q--What kind of job do you think Kim Gardner is doing?

Mitchom said he cannot judge Gardner and he's also thinking about solutions, that possibly the system needs tweaking.

Redmon said that as a future legislator, he will never come out against a colleague.

Sonnier said she has to consider what is most effective: What does Kim Gardner's office need to do things more efficiently? Does she need more money? Should she offload her casework? Sonnier said she is 100 percent against anything from outside controlling Gardner's office. She is against state control of the office.

Q--How will you support those seeking abortion here?

Mitchom said the city has already passed an ordinance for a reproductive equity fund to support women through every stage of pregnancy. We should think of creative solutions so women are not penalized for getting healthcare, he said. He mentioned looking at mobile buses to transport women (to access abortion), in addition to a comprehensive approach.

Redmon shared the city has already allocated provided money for traveler's checks for those seeking abortion, which he will support and defend if challenged.

Sonnier said she is on the board of Pro Choice Missouri and is a huge advocate for abortion access because it is not the government's business.

Q--What would you do to help the unhoused and those with few resources in the neighborhood—individuals, kids, families?

Mitchom said the city has to leverage its strengths and obviously affordable housing is one of those areas. He doesn't want people to be displaced in the process.

Redmon said there was a pilot program for people who need aid and we need to be able to see that it's helping people. He wants to make sure we have the data to support that, so the money goes to the right people.

Sonnier said she believes housing is a human right and will do everything she can to support that as an alderman. She would love to see a housing bill of rights. In the 7th Ward, she would like to see "24-7 resources" for people.

Q—Name five very specific things you feel need to be addressed in Tower Grove East.

Mitchom promised to be around to listen. He has heard concerns about traffic calming, abandoned and undermanaged properties, interest in engaging the community for various goals the neighborhood association has. "My agenda is the people's agenda, very collaborative," he said.

Redmon said residents want speed bumps, naming specific intersections in two parts of the neighborhood. He also shared that residents would like trees planted and are concerned about trees being cut down in the neighborhood. He mentioned a former school on Minnesota that could become affordable housing. He also listed potholes, frequent trash pickup, yard waste and recycling.

Sonnier answered city services, trash, recycling and trees. "I plan to be as responsive as I can." She wants to focus first on the pay of city workers. She also listed housing, concerns about gentrification: "How do you grow communications without gentrification?" She also mentioned crime, carjackings and the need to talk about how to address poverty.

Q—Question directed to Sonnier only: Your campaign material said you are the youngest elected official in the city but weren't you just appointed and not elected?

Sonnier said was appointed by Mayor Jones to the Board of Education: "I say I am the youngest public servant."

The questioner followed, "But your flyer says you are the youngest elected person in the city." Sonnier conceded that she was appointed and not elected.

Q--How will you support unions and union workers?

Mitchom said it boils down to making sure we are a just city, and that includes giving workers fair pay, fair benefits and fair working conditions. "I would support our unions by being present intentionally, making sure we're holding ourselves accountable."

Redmon said, "We must support union workers, make sure they're listened to." He wants to "beat the drum when it's time to support unions, city workers."

Sonnier said, "I'm huge supporter of unions." She said the Board of Education, on which she serves, has approved "the most historic raises."

Q--How will you engage with us as a neighborhood association? Our meetings take place once a month. Do you see yourself being able to manage to attend our meetings?

Mitchom replied: "314-565-7665....I expect to be at every neighborhood meeting."

Redmon said, "I will definitely be here for neighborhood meetings."

Sonnier said "I'll try to be at meetings. If I can't make it, I'll make sure you get a report from me."

NOTES FROM THE REMAINDER OF THE MEETING:

Ward Updates

At the beginning of the meeting, 6th Ward Alderwoman Ingrassia, her voice breaking, announced that she had resigned effective Sunday. She said being alderwoman was "the weirdest, most challenging job" she's ever had. "Thanks for holding me to the fire, and for your constructive criticism," she added. Her new position is director of operations for Board of Aldermen President Megan Green. "If you need anything, don't hesitate to reach out," Ingrassia said.

Eighth Ward Alderwoman Annie Rice said she will remain in her job for seven more weeks and will handle all 15th, 6th and 7th Ward concerns during that time.

SLMPD Update

After the candidates' presentation, Third Police District Officer Liaison Kevin Dilg was asked about what happened at a recent, "huge gunfire" incident near Victor and Shenandoah. It was "quite a battle," the questioner said.

Dilg answered that evidence was recovered and a business window was shot out. "If you see anybody shooting, hear shots, please call us," Dilg said. The next day, police go through all shots-fired calls, then go out to look for evidence that might help them link the incident to other cases, he said.

One questioner asked whether bullets could be banned in the city. Dilg responded that it is up to the legislature.

At the end of the meeting, a tearful woman who said she lives on Shenandoah recounted how her car has now been broken into for the fourth time. She later said she is a nurse and worked hard to pay off her car early.

"This is not fun for me, it's not fun...I'm just trying to live my life and go to work," she said, trying to control herself. She declined to identify herself. She must leave early to work at a hospital and she comes out in the morning only to find her car has been broken into, she said. Nothing has been taken, she added.

"It's distressing for me, distressing for everybody else. We don't see police cars, don't see policemen," the nurse said. She drives a Hyundai, which along with Kias, has been targeted by thieves as an easy car to break into. The nurse said she first got a steering wheel lock and when that did not prevent a theft attempt, she finally got a boot that she puts on the car.

Dilg responded, "I understand. It's an epidemic." He said he can put out a message so people on the night watch can pass by.

Officer Dilg shared that Tower Grove East is not a hot spot for police. They are now focusing on Dutchtown and Gravois Park, he said. Police hot spots are determined by a crime unit, he said, adding, "I am sorry you're not in a hotspot zone." He advised anyone who hears gunshots to call them in.

Another member of the audience countered, "You can be on hold for an hour, guns blazing and there's no accounting."

After the discussion, TGENA Communications Chair Severyn Jarman asked whether the group could have a safety forum and Dilg said, "I'm willing to do that."

New St. Louis Police Chief Robert Tracy is scheduled to speak at the next TGE neighborhood association meeting on Tuesday, March 28, at 7 p.m. at Stray Dog Theatre.

TGENA Committee Updates:

- **Treasurer:** Jana Schmersahl
 - Accounts Activity from last General Meeting, 2/24 through 2/28:
 - Betty Lewis account (for neighborhood donation deposits) *7393
 - Revenue totaling \$202
 - Received a two-year residential membership of \$18
 - Received a household two-year membership of \$34
 - Received five TGE Garden plot purchases of \$20 each
 - Received a one-year commercial membership of \$50
 - Account balance is \$5,228.10
 - Large account (for expenses, cash and check deposits) *6058
 - Expenses totaling \$19.99
 - one monthly Zoom subscription fee of \$14.99
 - bank statement fee of \$5
 - account balance is \$21,691.08
 - CD renewal date Sept 28, 2023
 - current balance \$21,141.07, earning 0.025% interest
 - CD renewal date Oct 12, 2025
 - Current balance \$8,639.67, earning 0.045% interest

- **Secretary:** Mary Anne Pikrone
 - Currently working with STL Programs publishing for TGENA information for the 2023 Tower Grove East/South Grand directory. Includes articles about the community garden, Orchard on Virginia and beautification committee; officer updates, and information on other committees.

- **Community Garden:** Cal Thomas (excused)

- **Orchard:** Susan Herzberg

- **Development:** Patrick Moore

- **Communications:** Severyn Jarman
 - Working to get support for Yard Sale planning - please reach out with interest.

- **Beautification:** Ralph Noyes (excused)
 - Next neighborhood cleanup likely in early April - TBD on exact date

- **Safety:** Lane Forman
 - New Police Chief will attend our March General Meeting

- **Engagement/Social:** Tony De Los Reyes

- **Ways and Means:** Bill Gilbert
- **Membership:** Bryan Brown
 - We have Square capability to take credit card payment for renewals, new signups or TGE swag purchase at meetings/events.
 - Check at the sign-in table if you have questions about renewal status or membership levels – Household, Individual or Senior, one or two years; Contributing or Supporting donations also an option.
 - Or contact tgenamembership@gmail.com. Thank you for supporting TGENA.
- **Community Outreach:** Zachary Ford
- **Newsletter:** Kristine Hildebrandt
 - Look out for a postcard that announces the new digital version of the newsletter - if you do not have an email listed under your membership, please reach out to our membership leaders, Bryan and Linda Brown, to make sure your email is included under your membership for future editions.

Liaisons:

- **Tower Grove Park:** Larry McCarthy
- **South Grand:** Jen Kubiszewski
- **DeSales:** Becky Reinhart
- **SLACO:** Abbie Leonard
- **Block Captain:** Denise Heinz (excused)

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, March 28th, 2023 @ 7PM - Stray Dog Theatre + Zoom

****this meeting will feature new SLMPD Police Chief, Robert J. Tracy****

CRIME STATS PROVIDED BY OFFICER DILG

Part I Crimes Year to Date

Current Year	53
Last Year	40
Percent Change	32.5%
Trend	Up

Part I Crimes 28 Days

Current 28 Days	21
Previous 28 Days	31
Percent Change	32.3%
Trend	Down

Current Part I Crimes (28 Days)

Murder	0
Rape	0
Robbery	0
Aggravated Assault	1
Burglary	0
Arson	0
Vehicle Theft	8
Larceny	12
Total	21

Aggravated Assault:

2/3-3500 block of Crittenden-Victim was shot while sitting in a vehicle.

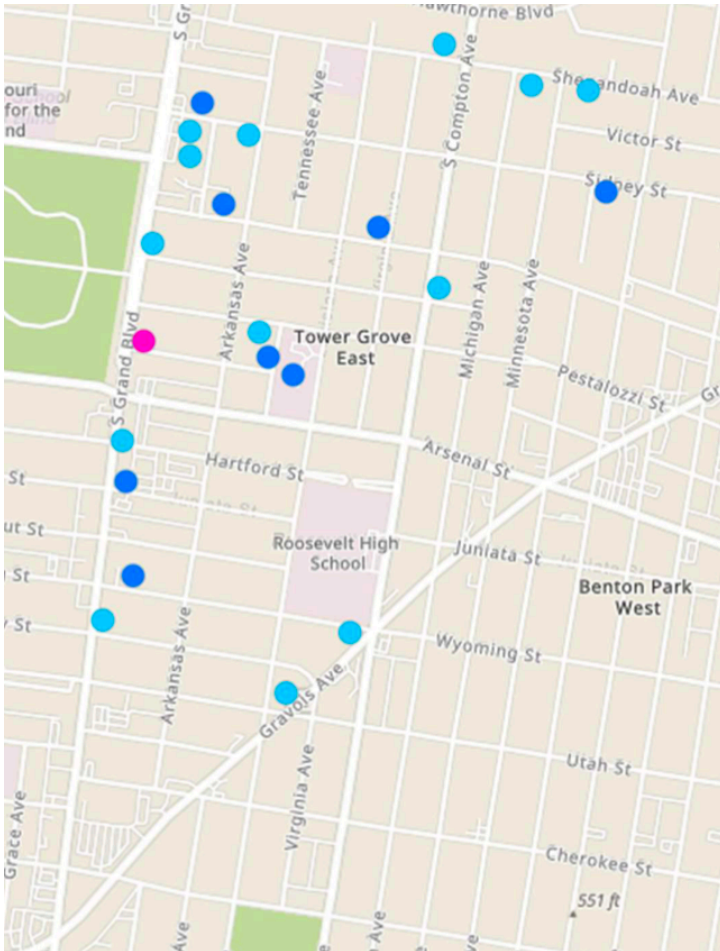
Vehicle Thefts:

(8) total. Down from (13). None were left running. (4) were Kia/Hyundai models (50%)

Larcenies:

(3) From a Motor Vehicle: Items taken were credit card and driver's license.

(2) Motor Vehicle Parts: (1) was license plate and (1) was catalytic converter.



Legend	
Yellow	Murder
Orange	Rape
Red	Robbery
Pink	Aggravated Assault
Green	Burglary
Gray	Arson
Dark Blue	Vehicle Theft
Light Blue	Larceny