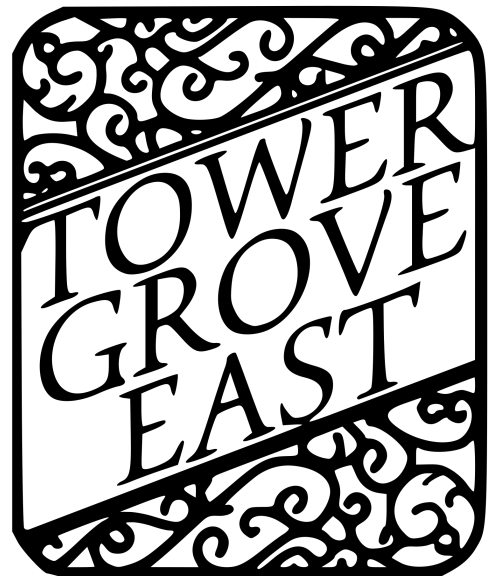


MARCH 28, 2023

# **TOWER GROVE EAST NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION**

## **MARCH MEETING FEATURING NEW SLMPD CHIEF**



# Tower Grove East Neighborhood Association

## MARCH MEETING RECAP

### **New Police Chief Robert Tracy speaks to TGE Neighborhood Association: “I’m an outside guy...I’m not beholden to the old culture”**

St. Louis isn’t alone in fighting problems of high crime, low morale and not enough police officers, says the city’s new Police Chief Robert Tracy.

Speaking to members of the Tower Grove East Neighborhood Association Tuesday night, he pointed out that “my last city,” Wilmington, Dela., had low morale, not enough police officers and was dubbed Murder City by Newsweek magazine.

Tracy said that by the time he left, Wilmington had a 60 percent reduction in murders and a 40 percent reduction in overall crime.

Tracy, a Bronx native, worked for the New York Police Department for 24 years, then in Chicago and Wilmington, for a total of 40 years in law enforcement.

In each city he’s worked, people feel they’re in a bit of a bubble, he said. But the same things that are happening here are happening in those cities too.

Nine weeks on the job, he declared: “I’m looking at the hope, anticipation of what we can do as a city.”

“I’m an outside guy, I can ask a lot of things, I’m not beholden to the old culture,” he said.

In St. Louis, he said, he is working on how to build morale, increase the number of police officers and retain them, use business management principles, best practices, smart policing and community engagement.

“I know there are a lot of issues going on,” he added, mentioning “circuit attorney, attorney general-- they told me none of this was going to happen. They said, ‘Chief, don’t worry about it...it’s not real.’ ” The audience laughed. (Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey has sued to remove St. Louis Circuit Attorney Kim Gardner over criticism of organizational dysfunction in her office.)

"I know we've gone through a hard time," he said, citing Ferguson, the pandemic and the police murder of George Floyd. When he was down at the World Trade Center on 9/11, Tracy said, everybody loved the heroes who went in.

Then the outrage over Minneapolis and George Floyd followed.

"Those incidents do not represent who we are," he declared. "I wouldn't still be doing this" if they did, he added. He has to let his officers and command staff know this, he said, adding he is very impressed with the quality of police officers in St. Louis.

Tracy, who earlier in the evening had been at a Ward 22 meeting, said he's going out to the community and meeting as many groups as possible. He's going to churches and meeting with protesters. He is asking officers working patrol to come to these meetings with him because they are the ones doing the work.

## QUESTIONS

--Q: What is your number one priority?

A: First, to evaluate what police are doing in St. Louis. People expect him to come in and make changes, but he said, "This department is working really well." He has brought just one assistant with him from Wilmington.

Tracy spoke several times about introducing ComStat methods to improve policing and fight crime in the city as he had in Wilmington. It is a "comprehensive strategy that works," he said. Here are two websites about it:

Wilmington:

<https://www.wilmingtonde.gov/government/public-safety/wilmington-police-department/compstat-reports>

Police Chief magazine:

<https://www.iadlest.org/Portals/0/Files/Documents/DDACTS/Docs/The%20CompStat%20Process.pdf>

He plans to put information about it on the SLMPD website and make it St. Louis centric.

As an aside, he noted how gangs differ in the cities where he has served. New York has retaliatory gangs that are loosely structured. Chicago's gangs are hierarchical and generational, so much so that grandchildren of gang members now belong. In Delaware, gangs are aligned with high schools. "Here, I see more interpersonal rivalries," he said, adding that "it's still impulsive and violent here."

**--Q: Our neighbors express frustrations over not seeing regular police patrols/presence in the neighborhood. They feel that more visible patrols increase a sense of safety as well as help deter both violent and nonviolent crime. Do you have any ideas on how to increase presence in neighborhoods with our current number of officers?**

**A:** Every city he's worked, he's heard there aren't enough officers, he said. It's not just about pay, he added, although he noted that the city just signed a police union contract that includes substantial raises making St. Louis competitive with other jurisdictions. Applause followed.

The raise will help us recruit and retain, he said. Since he's been in St. Louis, he's received letters from four officers who left and want to come back. "I think I'm going to see a lot coming back from the suburbs."

Regarding officer shortage, he noted that every business is challenged these days to find employees. The police department must be creative and leverage technology to solve the problem. It also must work with the community.

He said he was assigned to Washington Heights, which he called the worst precinct in New York City. The three-mile radius area had 120 murders a year. "We worked with the community...We went from 120 to less than five murders...Sometimes when you go to the worst place, things can happen."

He holds stand-up crime meetings every morning, he said. At meetings with officers, they talk about hot spots, violent issues and quality of life, he said.

If police go on direct patrols, it can affect both crime and quality of life. He quipped that he wants officers to stretch their legs and get their Fitbit out. He added he knows he is challenged by the number of police officers. If we don't have enough officers, we can't get the job done, he said.

**-- Q: "TGE residents have voiced frustration over the lack of traffic law enforcement and the high rate of accidents including hit and runs. Do you plan to have your officers dedicate time to enforce traffic laws such as speeding, running stop signs or red lights and car registrations and license plates that have not been renewed for years?"**

**A:** Other cities are going through the same problems with traffic, he said, but he added:

"Here, it's a little tad higher." He talked about getting passed on the road by someone driving 70-80 mph. "Is it only in St. Louis where they drive like this?"

Tracy acknowledged police did stop enforcing traffic regulations during the pandemic to protect officers from exposure to Covid. And people have been taking advantage of this.

He mentioned police have to take a look at where temporary tags are coming from: "Someone is making them." And perpetrators who steal Kias and Hyundais aren't joy-riding; they are using the cars to commit crimes, he added.

In January and February, St. Louis police "more than doubled our traffic violation summonses," he said. Driving behavior has "gotten way out of hand here in St. Louis."

"I promise you: We are looking at traffic enforcement. We weren't just talking about shootings. We are talking about those things."

**--Q: When people have a medical emergency during a crime and they can't get through to 911, what can they do?**

**A:** Tracy said he wants to see parity in pay among police, EMS and fire dispatchers. Meanwhile, he said, "I need you to document if you're calling and it's an emergency and no one's picking up. You've got to document the time for me. It might be a personnel issue rather than a whole system issue."

When they get this information, they will go back over tape recordings to figure out what the problem is, he said. "As I evaluate the police department, you help me evaluate it."

In Wilmington, he recalled, people would knock on his door to give feedback about police.

"I do care. My family uses the same system," he said, adding that "I'm looking at houses in this area....This is a beautiful area." His wife is selling their house in Wilmington and will move here with the two youngest of their five children.

**--Q: Is there a program in the department that deals with mental health issues?**

**A:** Tracy said the police department is beginning a "cops and clinicians" process. It's not as robust as it should be, but he added that they have 34 students in the police academy now that he hopes to add to the force.

"I'm going to leave more officers on patrol in uniform. That's the front end of the business. That's the backbone. He added that St. Louis officers are trained in crisis intervention.

"Cops and clinicians, we're already working on it," he said. "I always say this: We have violence in the city. We don't have violent neighborhoods." Tracy said the city has a small percentage of violent people in neighborhoods. The old way would be to flood a neighborhood with police, create zones and arrest everyone in a net just to get the very few.

What he wants to do is leverage information and when the department gets back up to strength, go after people with the highest propensity for violence—victim or offender—because sometimes they change roles.

When people cut police budgets, the first thing that often goes is training, Tracy said. But police need training to recognize drug and mental health problems. They need to be able to identify and defuse a situation.

"I'm going to continue to train officers in crisis intervention," he said.

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## **NOTES FROM THE REMAINDER OF THE MEETING:**

### **ALDERPERSONS**

TGENA President Danielle Langeneckert gave certificates of appreciate to former Sixth Ward Alderwoman Christine Ingrassia and Eighth Ward Alderwoman Annie Rice. Both said it's been an honor to serve.

Rice urged people to vote for Proposition C on the ballot next Tuesday. Early voting is taking place now at selected public libraries.

[stlpropc.com](http://stlpropc.com)

Referring to trees being cut down in the neighborhood, Rice said if the limbs are left on the street for more than a week, let her know and she can get it cleaned up. The city has money to replace all the trees taken down, she said. Planting season starts November.

## OTHER CANDIDATES ON THE BALLOT

Three education candidates spoke:

--**Pam Ross**, who is running for re-election to the St. Louis Community College Board of Trustees. Among her accomplishments, she cited getting childcare back on the Forest Park campus. It will provide 62 spaces for children 6 weeks and older, she said. A food bank, counseling and laundry room for parents also will be included. She is promoting short-term training programs of three to 14 weeks for people who need jobs right away. She wants to continue to reach out and let people know what is available and help people to improve their lives, she said.

<https://www.facebook.com/pamela.ross.1291/>

--**Sadie Weiss**, who is running for the St. Louis Board of Education. She said she lives on South Compton in Tower Grove East. Weiss said she is a licensed master social worker who has been working with families for 10 years. She is director of the UMSL Bridge Program and works with students across the St. Louis region; that is what got her interested in running for school board. She said she is a big advocate for expanding the community school model; all students should have access to rich learning opportunities. Weiss said she wants to engage the community and ensure educators have what they need to serve students.

<https://www.sadieforslps.com/>

--**Tracy Hykes**, a lifelong city resident who graduated from Sumner High School and is running for the St. Louis Board of Education. He said he is a retired sheet metal worker and was introduced to that field at Sumner. He wants to return vocational training to city schools, he said, listing sheet metal, woodwork, pipe fitting, electrical, plumbing work. Since he is retired, he can spend time helping to develop such a program, he said.

## **TGENA Committee Updates:**

- **Treasurer: Jana Schmersahl**

- Accounts Activity from last General Meeting, 2/28 through today, 3/28:
- Betty Lewis account (for neighborhood donation deposits) \*7393
  - Revenue totaling \$359.50
  - Sales of two TGENA branded t-shirts of \$18 each
  - Sale of one TGENA branded hat of \$22.50
  - Received a household one-year membership of \$18
  - Received five household two-year memberships of \$34 each
  - Received a senior household one-year membership of \$9
  - Received a senior household two-year membership of \$16
  - Received two individual one-year memberships of \$10 each
  - Received one individual two-year membership of \$18
  - Received a one-year commercial membership of \$50
  - Account balance is \$5,588.42
- Large account (for expenses, cash and check deposits) \*6058
  - Expenses totaling \$1,054.04
  - Self-reimbursement for replacement Square device \$33.42
  - Reimbursement to Membership chair for monthly expenses \$99.63 ●  
South Grand Cultural Alliance 2023 Sponsorship package \$500
  - one monthly Zoom subscription fee of \$15.99
  - West Bend annual insurance expense \$400
  - Bank statement fee of \$5
  - Account balance is \$20,632.04
- 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**

- I've finished editing and proofing our info in the 2023 Tower Grove East/South Grand Community Directory, and it should be out by the end of March. It will be distributed free to all TGE households by STL Programs, publisher. The directory



includes information about the TGE Neighborhood Association and South Grand Community Improvement District and articles about the Orchard on Virginia and TGE Community Garden, among other items.

- **Community Garden:** Cal Thomas
- **Orchard:** Susan Herzberg
  - Join us on Saturday April 8th from 10AM - noon to celebrate spring with a Blossom Festival at the Orchard on Virginia located at 3001 Virginia. There will be a kids egg hunt, springtime activities and treats, and an opportunity to learn about pollinators that help our flowers turn into fruit. All ages are welcome!
- **Development:** Patrick Moore
- **Communications:** Severyn Jarman
- **Beautification:** Ralph Noyes (excused)
  - Next neighborhood cleanup and social hour will be Saturday, April 29th, at the usual spot (S Grand Parking Lot at 3500 Hartford) from 9am-11am. All supplies will be provided as usual. Just bring some comfortable shoes and a friend!
- **Safety:** Lane Forman
- **Engagement/Social:** Tony De Los Reyes
- **Ways and Means:** Bill Gilbert
- **Membership:** Bryan Brown
  - Check at the sign-in table if you have questions about new member or renewal levels – Household, Individual, Senior. We take credit card, check or cash payment for signups.
  - Also purchase Tower Grove East merchandise (t-shirt, hat, koozie, window sticker).
  - Visit [TowerGroveEast.org](https://TowerGroveEast.org) or email [tgenamembership@gmail.com](mailto:tgenamembership@gmail.com) if questions.
- **Community Outreach:** Zachary Ford
- **Newsletter:** Kristine Hildebrandt

**Liaisons:**

- **Tower Grove Park:** Larry McCarthy
- **South Grand:** Jen Kubiszewski

## **TGENA MARCH 2023 MEETING**

- **DeSales:** Becky Reinhart
- **SLACO:** Abbie Leonard
- **Block Captain:** Denise Heinz (excused)

## **NEXT MEETING**

**Tuesday, April 25th, 2023 @ 7PM - Stray Dog Theatre + Zoom**

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**CRIME STATS PROVIDED BY OFFICER DILG**

## DISTRICT 3 - NEIGHBORHOOD MONTHLY CRIME AND ACTIVITY REPORT

<b>Neighborhood</b>	Tower Grove East
<b>Date of Report</b>	March 27, 2023
<b>Prepared By</b>	Officer Kevin Dilg

**Disclosure:** The data in this report is for informational purposes only. It does not reflect the official crimes that are reported by the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department and should not be considered as such. It is only to be used as a guide to inform citizens of the activity that is occurring in their neighborhood.

### Part I Crimes Year to Date

<b>Current Year</b>	71
<b>Last Year</b>	67
<b>Percent Change</b>	6%
<b>Trend</b>	<b>Up</b>

### Part I Crimes 28 Days

<b>Current 28 Days</b>	13
<b>Previous 28 Days</b>	26
<b>Percent Change</b>	50%
<b>Trend</b>	<b>Down</b>

### Current Part I Crimes (28 Days)

<b>Murder</b>	0
<b>Rape</b>	0
<b>Robbery</b>	0
<b>Aggravated Assault</b>	0
<b>Burglary</b>	3
<b>Arson</b>	0
<b>Vehicle Theft</b>	6
<b>Larceny</b>	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

**Current Part I Crime Additional Information**

**Burglaries:**

All residential. (1) will be reclassified to a property damage. (1) was an attempt. (1) involved the theft of appliances from a residence that was for sale.

**Vehicle Thefts:**

(6) total

(3) were attempts

(3) were Kia models (50%)

**Larcenies:**

(4) total

(1) from a Motor Vehicle-Taken was insurance card

(2) theft of Motor Vehicle Parts-both were catalytic converters

(1) package theft from front porch of residence

**Past 28 Day Analysis:**

Burglaries 3 vs 0 UP

Larcenies 4 vs 16 DOWN

Vehicle Theft 6 vs 8 DOWN

# DISTRICT 3 - NEIGHBORHOOD MONTHLY CRIME AND ACTIVITY REPORT

## Current Part I Crime Map

Neighborhood:

**Tower Grove East**



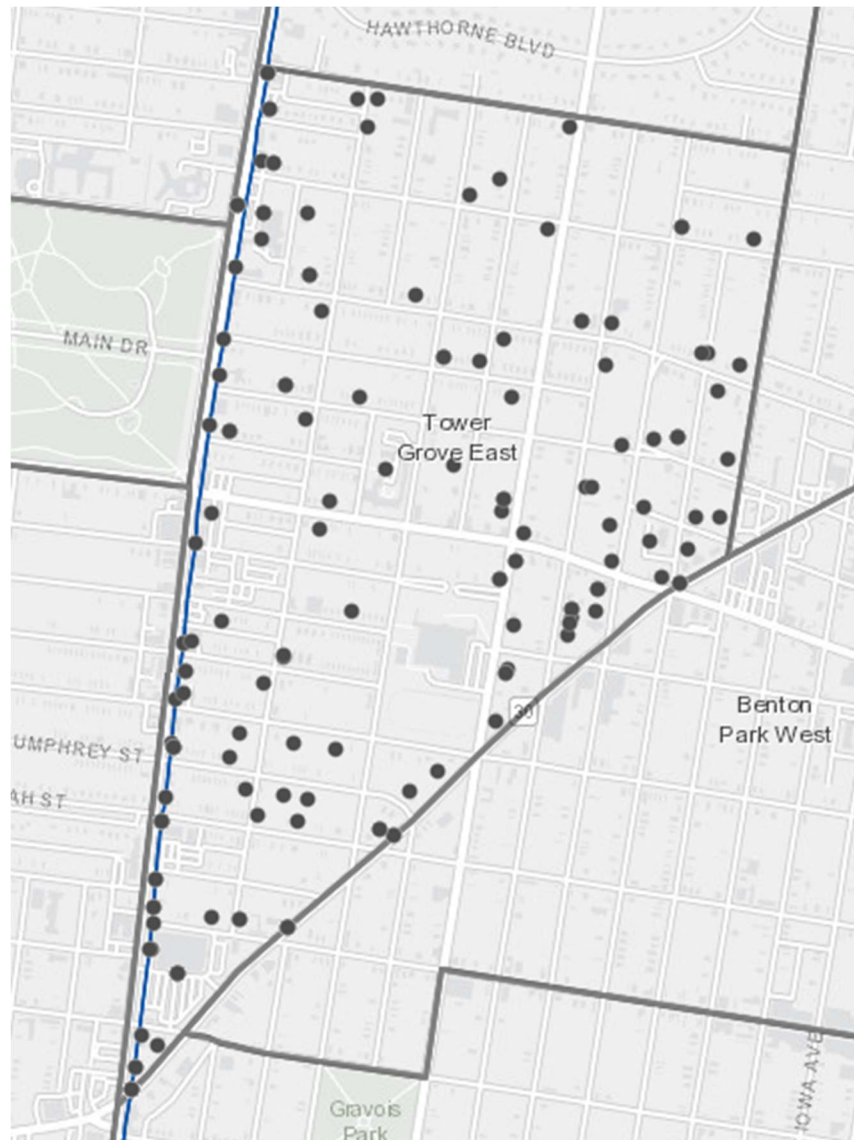
Legend	
Yellow	Murder
Orange	Rape
Red	Robbery
Pink	Aggravated Assault
Green	Burglary
Gray	Arson
Dark Blue	Vehicle Theft
Light Blue	Larceny

## DISTRICT 3 - NEIGHBORHOOD MONTHLY CRIME AND ACTIVITY REPORT

### Directed Incidents-Past 30 Days (AKA 911 Calls)

Total	180
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### Directed Incident Heat Map-Past 30 Days



## DISTRICT 3 - NEIGHBORHOOD MONTHLY CRIME AND ACTIVITY REPORT

### Self-Initiated Activity (SIA)-Past 30 Days

Total	191
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### SIA Heat Map-Past 30 Days

