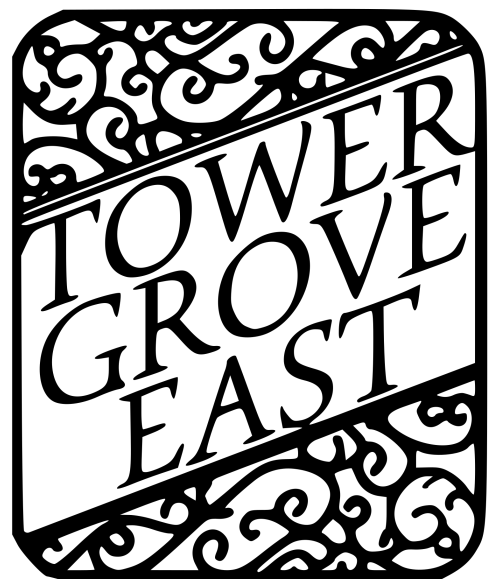


JANUARY 23, 2024

TOWER GROVE EAST NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

JANUARY MEETING RECAP



Tower Grove East Neighborhood Association

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ALDERWOMAN SONNIER TALKS LEGISLATION, INCLUDING DRONE CONTROL

Seventh Ward Alderwoman Alisha Sonnier reported on her activities last year and discussed bills she supports at Tuesday evening's general membership meeting of the Tower Grove East Neighborhood Association at Stray Dog Theatre.

Among the legislation is [Board Bill 199](#) to regulate the commercial use of private drones in the city.

"I am 100 percent opposed to private for profit surveillance," she said. Referring to reports of a drone company operator planning to surveil areas for crime activity, she said she didn't know "how serious that person is."

TGENA President Chris Naffziger said, however, that "drones are already flying over Gravois Park south of us," and he guesses the drones have probably flown over TGE to get there.

"Do you want us to make a statement?" about drones, he asked TGE residents. Contact him at TGE.president@gmail.com

Sonnier said she wants to make sure drones cannot record people in homes or children at school. The bill says, in part:

"No person, entity, or state agency shall use a drone to conduct surveillance or observation of any individual or privately owned property held by an individual without the express written consent of that individual or property owner." Sonnier said it will be a while before the proposed legislation moves to a hearing because the city first must consult with the Federal Aviation Agency.

She also introduced [Board Bill 198](#), which requires developers to be caught up in paying taxes before they apply for tax breaks for another development. "Good partners pay their taxes," Sonnier said.

The bill description says, in part, that it requires “applicants for development tax incentives to be current in the payment of all City property taxes, and requires that the applicants be current in the payment of bills for water and refuse services provided by the City at the time of application for tax incentives from the City.”

She also is working on a bill to reform the petition process to set up a shelter for the unhoused. Among other things, the bill would change the notification process, she said. She said she plans to file it in the next month or so. The bill is still being created and is not online yet.

REPORTING ON HER ACTIVITIES

In 2023, Sonnier said she attended 45 neighborhood meetings, held three community town halls and wrote 39 letters of support and two in opposition, in addition to attending Board of Aldermen meetings and serving on seven committees. She co-sponsored 17 pieces of legislation and sponsored nine.

She holds open office hours every month at various locations, during which Seventh Ward residents can talk to her about issues. On Jan. 30, she will be at Crafted Restaurant from 6 to 7:30 p.m., she said.

OTHER SPEAKERS

Lisa Otke, neighborhood manager for the [St. Louis Development Corporation](#), which connects the community to economic development in the city.

Otke said SLDC hopes to open an empowerment center in the southside similar to the one it opened in the annex of Sumner High School on the northside. Among other things, the center offers classes for first-time business owners, works with contractors and minority entities, offers home buyer assistance and provides contacts for financial assistance, she said. It is working on a grant program of up to \$37 million that will go to northside small businesses and nonprofits, she said.

Karen Clifford, Neighborhood Improvement Specialist (NIS) supervisor. She said Tower Grove East’s current Neighborhood Improvement Specialist, Henry Brown, will be moving to Otke’s department, so the position is vacant at present.

Clifford said the NIS is first contact for residents who have an issue about city services, problem properties and neighbor problems. These include refuse collection, dogs

barking, nuisance properties, suspicious people, drug activity, shootings, burglaries, people who harass others, false 911 calls and noise at short-term rental such as Airbnbs.

Residents should call the [Citizens Service Bureau](#) at 314 622-4800 to submit a service request, she said. If the issue is not addressed in seven to 10 days, the bureau will tag your NIS to do a follow-up, which will involve going to the site to document the issue.

Clifford added that if you see an issue or activity that is problematic, call 911 and give the address of the problem property—not your own address.

She said her department will ask about calls for service from police and will open a file on the property. Next comes a crackdown meeting and monitoring of the property. With enough evidence, the city will send a cease and desist order to the property owner. Eventually, the city can get an administrative order to have a property shut down.

Asked how such reports relate to the new short-term rental law in the city, she said, “Normally the rule of thumb is two calls on the property.....If it does continue, you will more than likely get a cease and desist.”

TGENA COMMITTEE, LIAISON AND CRIME REPORTS

Beautification, Anne Moore, said a group out of Benton Park, Urban Foresters, is taking care of some low-hanging branches on tree lawns and trying to improve the longevity of trees being planted. She plans to attend its meeting and has been talking to them about starting an offshoot of the group, which also works with the city’s forestry department.

Safety, Lane Forman said 17 volunteers passed out 2,645 Don’t Shoot on New Year’s Eve door flyers to every residence and most businesses in TGE, including some on Grand. The volunteer effort was featured on Channels 4 and 5 newscasts. TGE is in the Police Department’s Third District where, a year ago there were 82 calls about New Year’s gunshots and five from TGE; this year, there were 68 gunshot calls in the Third District and two in TGE.

“Some people called it the quietest New Year’s Eve they’ve ever had,” Forman said.

Crime statistics for TGE, from Acting Captain Donna C. Garrett of District Three:

TGENA JANUARY 2024 MEETING

“For the 28 day period of 12/25/23-1/21/24, there were 2 burglaries, 1 felony theft and 4 auto thefts. During the same time last year there were 2 aggravated assaults, 9 felony thefts and 13 auto thefts. Crime for the 28-day period is down 67% in TGE.

“Year to date, there has been 1 burglary, 1 felony theft and 3 auto thefts in TGE. Last year, year to date stats were 2 aggravated assaults, 6 felony thefts and 11 auto thefts. Crime year to date is down in TGE 68%.

“Our Burglary Crew has conducted several search warrants relative to a group of suspects that have been fencing stolen items. Hopefully, the arrests will have a significant impact on thefts and burglaries in South St. Louis.”

Becky Reinhart Executive Director of DeSales Community Development, thanked TGE for supporting DeSales’ application for tax credits to fund renovations at 71 affordable apartments DeSales owns, but reported that the application was denied. They plan to try again next year, she said.

ALSO AT THE MEETING

TGENA President Naffziger urged residents to call the city’s Civil Rights Enforcement Agency at 314 622-3301 if they feel neighborhood boarders’ rights are being abused in housing. Naffziger was referring to recent reports in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and Riverfront Times about the city’s allegations against Dara Daugherty and her associates, who, according to the the city charges, were collecting rent from vulnerable tenants in substandard property they own. There are two Daugherty properties in the 2300 block of Virginia, including an Italian country house surrounded by scaffolding.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, February 27th, 2023 | Stray Dog Theater

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