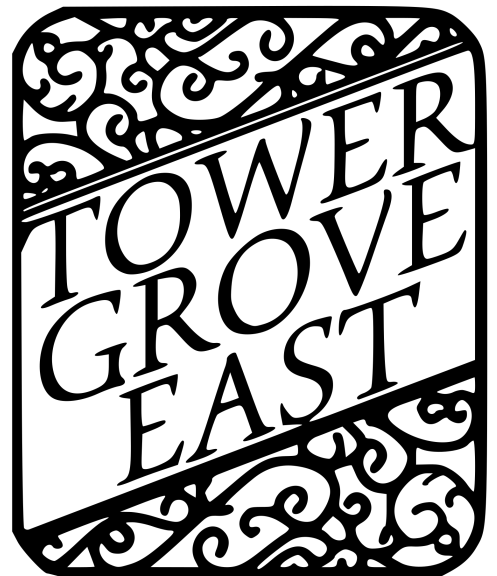


MAY 28, 2024

TOWER GROVE EAST NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

MAY MEETING RECAP



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VICIOUS DOGS, NEW GREEN LINE AND EMPTY BUILDING IN THE 7TH WARD ARE TOPICS AT TGENA MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Three topics dominated Tuesday's (5/28) membership meeting of the Tower Grove East Neighborhood Association: vicious dogs, vacant structures in the Seventh Ward and the planned Metrolink Green Line.

Meetings are held the fourth Tuesday of the month at Stray Dog Theatre, 2336 Tennessee Ave. The next meeting on June 25 will be a candidates' night for those running in the August primary.

DOGS

Several of this week's attendees, obviously exasperated and angry, spoke of out-of-control dogs that have menaced passersby in the vicinity of Pestalozzi and Arkansas.

One person said he documented four attacks on people over six weeks; also, one dog that was attacked by the vicious dogs had to be taken to an emergency veterinarian for treatment that cost \$700, one person said.

Another said he and a date were walking to Tick Tock Tavern when they were charged by biting and jumping dogs. "I had to physically fight them, punching them," he said. Police took an hour and a half to get there and told him to contact animal control, which "didn't seem that impressed," he said.

Many speakers complained about indifferent response from the city's animal control office. Police tell them they must contact animal control; animal control tells them their report isn't that serious or they need more documentation, the speakers said.

One resident, Kevin Rice, said, "If you have information about the attacks, I'd like to know about it." He is at kevinrice0809@sbc.global.net

Safety Committee Chair Lane Forman urged those who call in complaints about the dogs to give as much information as possible to officials so they can call you back and confirm

details. Give your name and contact phone, and most importantly, give the address of where the attack occurred—not where you live, he advised.

Those complaining in the audience also said they were very concerned about small children in the neighborhood, especially those attending Momentum Academy, 2900 S. Grand at Pestalozzi.

Neighborhood Association President Chris Naffziger said, “We’re not going to let this just disappear. We’re going to stay on it until it’s solved.” After the meeting, those who spoke about the dog attacks gathered around Seven Ward Alderwoman Alisha Sonnier, who took notes on their complaints.

METRO LINK GREEN LINE

Laurna Godwin and Tim Nittler of the STL Metrolink Green Line made a presentation about the rail line, now in planning stages, which will travel down the center of Jefferson Avenue from North city to South city.

The purpose of the rail line is to provide equitable access to people who need to get to jobs, health care and educational institutions, Godwin said. Some 26 percent of the population would like to see rail lines built, she said.

The line will attract more residents and businesses to St. Louis and will be especially attractive to young people who move into the city and don’t have a car, Godwin said.

Nittler said the plans are designed to have minimum impact on adjacent property. The line will start at Grand and Natural Bridge Road at Fairgrounds Park, then run down Jefferson to Chippewa. Currently, 10 stations are planned for the 5½ mile route.

It will operate in a dedicated lane on tracks that are the same height of the roadway so that riders can board from the street level, Nittler said.

Officials proceeded with project development in April and will conduct an environmental study, which is required for getting federal funding, he said. They hope to start construction in 2027 and finish by 2031, he added.

Godwin and Nittler asked for input from Tower Grove East residents and advised going to MetroLinkGreenLine.com for information; to ask questions and make comments, email info@MetroLinkGreenLine.com

During comments from the audience, several attendees expressed concern about security on the new rail line. One questioner who said she was familiar with Chicago's "L" said "security is a really big ticket right now." She asked what would be done about it.

Nittler said they will be adding security fencing to platforms, new gates and will require proof of payment to board.

"That is not sufficient. That type of security just makes it harder for people to get away. Having security on the train would probably be a little bit safer than making it difficult to get out," the speaker said.

Nittler responded that the station improvements may allow them to reduce the number of security officials by one on the platforms, which then might free up the one person to serve on a train, while using the same amount of staff.

From the audience, Alderwoman Sonnier asked why they cut the Arsenal stop. She said officials should reconsider cutting some of the stops. Nittler responded, "You're more than welcome to start a petition; I won't say it will help or hurt the cause."

Godwin said one of the reasons stops were cut was because they would involve property acquisition. The cut stops are still on the table, she added.

Safety Chair Forman comment, "I've ridden subways in New York City and Chicago, and I will not be your rider here. You guys just can't get the safety thing worked out...Personal safety is my concern." He added, however, that he hopes it works out.

Asked where such a line has been successful, the Green Line representatives cited Kansas City, Minneapolis and Charlotte, North Carolina.

VACANT BUILDINGS

Alderwoman Sonnier talked at length about efforts to deal with the former St. Alexis/South City Hospital South Broadway in Gravois Park, which she said involves 10,000 square feet of nineteen parcels over two city blocks. The hospital was founded in 1869 and closed in 2023.

Sonnier, who said she has been trying to be intentional about such vacant spaces in the Seventh Ward for some time, said the hospital site is a hot spot for illegal activity. People will pull up in a van and scavenge the building every night, she said. A 15-year-old girl was

killed near the place, and her death “possibly had something to do with activities” at the vacant building, the alderwoman said.

Sonnier said she has been creating a paper trail on the site but because it’s now private property, the situation is more nuanced for the city to intervene.

The property owner/s promised they would take security measures but this did not happen, she said. She told how she has written letters, involved the Gravois Park Neighborhood Improvement Specialist, and enlisted attorneys from St. Louis University in her efforts.

She said she has talked to the new police captain, EMS, firefighters and the city’s Department of Human Services. Then, she said, she was contacted by the city administration and told that what she was attempting to do was “not within your powers.”

Some activity is occurring there now, she said, but she questioned whether the owner/s will solve the problem. “I am ready to fully exercise options including but not limited to eminent domain,” she told the meeting.

Meanwhile, she has set a meeting for Wednesday, June 5 at 6 p.m., at the Southside Wellness Center, 3017 Park Ave., regarding the future and historic renovation of the vacant old Garavaglia Quality Foods building at Lafayette and Nebraska.

Sonnier said she would like to see it house a grocery store again. One possibility is having a store on the ground level and apartments above, she said.

She also said that, as an alderwoman, she wants to advocate for three departments: St. Louis TV, the Building Division, which has only one person actively reviewing permits, and the Police Department, about which “our ward has a lot of feelings.”

She mentioned the possibility of using money budgeted for vacant police positions to give raises to current police employees. “The police chief does not hate the idea,” she said.

IN OTHER BUSINESS AT THE MEETING:

Beautification Chair Anne Moore thanked Sonnier for paying for new trees planted in TGE. Moore said she will be going around the neighborhood to check on the health of the trees.

Block Captain Liaison and Community Garden representative Cal Thomas thanked everyone who went to the recent plant sale, which raised a record of more than \$3,500. He also added that anyone interested in being a block captain should [contact him](#).

Social Chair Laura Wolf said tickets for the South Grand Dine Around on June 20 are now on sale at the [South Grand website](#).

Ways and Means Chair Bill Gilbert said organizers of the new Fair St. Louis are still figuring out what they will be doing, but if there is a charity booth at the fair, it will be run by TGENA volunteers. He will be asking for help when the time comes, he said. In previous years, TGENA has made somewhere between \$4,000 and \$12,000 at the event, he said.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, June 25th, 2024 @ 7PM - Stray Dog Theatre + Zoom