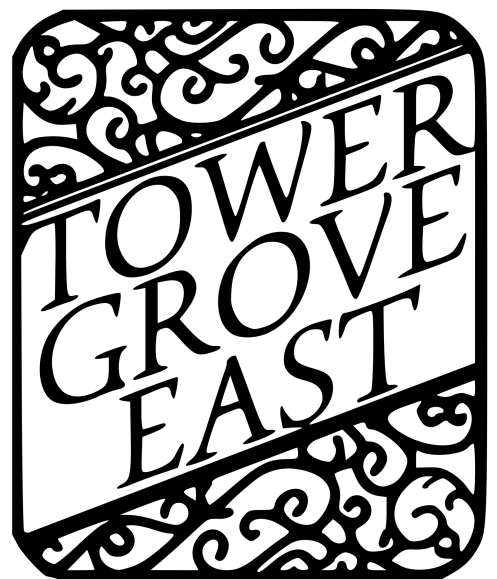


JUNE 25, 2024

# TOWER GROVE EAST NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

# JUNE MEETING RECAP



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### TGENA HOLDS CANDIDATES' FORUM

More than a dozen candidates and candidates' representatives spoke at last Tuesday's Tower Grove East Neighborhood Association meeting at Stray Dog Theatre. Each was given a three-minute limit with additional questions from the audience allowing for two-minute answers from each candidate. The meeting ran about two hours.

All are running in the primary election Aug. 6. Alderwoman Alisha Sonnier and the Seventh Ward Democrats also announced at the meeting that they would be hosting a candidates' forum July 14 at 3 p.m. at Rung for Women, 2717 Sidney St. Congressional candidates are expected to attend.

Here's a rundown of what candidates and representatives said at the TGENA meeting:

#### FIRST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

##### **Democratic candidate former State Sen. Maria Chappelle-Nadal**

Chappelle-Nadal said she's served in the Missouri legislature and as a school board member in University City. "You have to be able to help people with issues brought to you...We have radioactive waste, housing, education" issues in the district, she said.

"You shouldn't have anyone in office who doesn't know what it takes...We need to go in a different direction, to hit the ground running... I know how hard it is to pass legislation with a Republican majority," she said. But "in many instances, I was able to garner support." She said "it's all about numbers." You have to bring a coalition together, some of whom may not agree with you.

##### **Danielle Spradley, political director for current First District U.S. Rep Cori Bush, Democrat**

Spradley said that Bush could not be at the meeting because she had to be at a funeral. Spradley said Bush has worked on legislation to protect victims of domestic violence; to conduct a comprehensive study of the Manhattan project; and is working on environmental issues, including clean energy buildings. She is working with the Environmental Protection Agency to deal with toxic fumes problems, Spradley said. After

massive flooding in the St. Louis area, Bush was involved in procuring \$83 million in disaster aid and \$214 million in transit money to help transit service recover.

She started the ERA caucus, which is now one of the largest caucuses in Congress, to work on protecting reproductive freedom. She is fighting extremist Republicans, but she is also working with Mo. Republican Sen. Josh Hawley on issues, Spradley said.

No one showed to represent **Wesley Bell, Democrat.**

### **QUESTION: WHAT ARE YOUR TOP THREE PRIORITIES?**

Chappelle-Nadal said gun safety, reproductive health care and Social Security.

Spradley, for Bush, said reproductive rights, protecting democracy and assuring economic justice. Bush also wants to expand the U.S. Supreme Court and supports the John Lewis Voting Act, Spradley said.

QUESTION: How have you been reaching out to your constituents?

Chappelle-Nadal said she goes to neighborhood meetings and is in the community every day. She said she understands the needs of small businesses and addressing crime.

Spradley said Bush's office works hand in hand with the mayor's and county executive's offices. Bush is in Washington but sends representatives to local meetings Spradley said. She said Bush helped out with Heritage House residents, who had been kicked out of their facility.

### **QUESTION: WHAT WILL YOU DO IF TRUMP IS ELECTED AND REPUBLICANS TAKE OVER THE U.S. SENATE AND HOUSE?**

Spradley said Bush will make sure we have a Democratic president, House and Senate, and will make sure we get federal investments in the area.

Chappelle-Nadal said for the 16 years she served in the Missouri Senate, she always had to deal with a Republican majority. "I know what it's like to be in a room filled with people who don't look like me.... I've been successful at it. We may not agree on abortion and guns, but we can agree on education, environment, certain issues." Working in a GOP legislature "has not fazed me."

## ST. LOUIS SHERIFF

### **Vernon Betts, current sheriff and Democrat**

Betts said he is a St. Louis native, former city public school teacher and retired Ameren supervisor. He said he has been in the sheriff's position for eight years and believes he is the most qualified person to serve. "If you've followed my record, most of you are pretty well satisfied." He pointed out that he received 103,000 votes four years ago.

He said he wants to keep St. Louis safe: He said he puts a crew of sheriff's deputies downtown on Washington Avenue just about every weekend.

When we had riots at the jail a few years ago, the sheriff's deputies subdued the jail and St. Louis police came in after his deputies, he said.

### **Alfred Montgomery, Democrat**

Montgomery said he is a former deputy sheriff and private investigator who holds a bachelor's degree in sociology. He grew up watching broken and abandoned buildings, he said. He knew the city and state were tough on crime but "We've never been smart on crime."

You have to be effective and efficient in the job, he said. "I believe criminal justice reform is necessary to move our city forward. Our jail's out of control. It's time for the sheriff's office to step up to the plate and secure court buildings."

Montgomery said not only will he be the youngest candidate for sheriff, he will be the youngest African-American candidate for sheriff in the nation.

He asked residents to visit his office at 1009 Locust St. and to check out his website at <http://www.montgomery4sheriff.com/meet-alfred/>

### **Joy Denise Dabney, Libertarian**

Dabney said she did not have a speech. She said she wants to be very transparent and unorthodox. She said she is a concerned citizen. She has a customer service and management background, she said, and comes from a prominent but dysfunctional family. She has suffered from homelessness and domestic violence in the past, which caused a decline in her mental health and the mental health of her children. She said she has seen crime and homelessness and just wants to see a change.

**QUESTION; HOW WILL YOU MAKE SURE ATTORNEYS HAVE ACCESS TO CLIENTS AT THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE CENTER?**

Betts said the Justice Center is controlled by the mayor's office and the sheriff's department does not directly control what goes on in the jail. He said it's "not true" about lawyers not having access. "We cannot deny lawyers access. What you've seen recently is lawyers wanting to access clients whenever they want to see them."

He said the sheriff's department treats prisoners with dignity and respect: "Several of those guys were students of mine."

Montgomery said the sheriff's number one duty is to protect the Constitution. "Those detainees have the right to talk to attorneys, attorneys have the right to talk to clients." He said the city needs more transparency in criminal justice. He said he believes the jails are out of control and you have to ask why. "Maybe those detainees are crying out. Maybe it's something we don't see in the jail." He said the detainees have rights and should get due process.

Dabney said there need to be regular checks in the center, more meetings and additional training for staff. She said compassion and empathy are lacking.

**QUESTION: WHY SHOULD WE HAVE AN ELECTED SHERIFF?**

Betts said all 114 counties in Missouri have elected sheriffs. He said you need a separation between the sheriff, who is the protector of the law, and those who make the laws. "I don't answer to the mayor or governor, but to people who put me in that position," he said, adding he is at his desk every day at 5:30 a.m. He said he is endorsed by the by AFL-CIO.

Montgomery said no one oversees the sheriff, and although it is an elected position, we should have a citizens' oversight board to work with the sheriff's office to guarantee transparency. He thanked Alderwoman Alisha Sonnier for her endorsement.

Dabney said if you feel the sheriff's department continues to fail, then you remove it. She said she is all about change. Everything is segregated, she said, and we need to come together as one and work together.

## TREASURER

### **Adam Layne, Democrat, current city treasurer**

Layne said he was appointed to his position and has been city treasurer for the last three years. This is his first time running for office.

He said he is from Boston and moved to St. Louis 13 years ago through the Teach for America program on North Grand. He studied finance at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C., and fell in love with St. Louis and the potential it has after he moved here. He joined an education nonprofit and served on the city school board.

### **QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU SAY TO SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF CITY OFFICES, INCLUDING THAT OF TREASURER?**

Layne said you need an independent treasurer to overcome political pettiness in city government. For instance, if the mayor doesn't get along with an alderman, the streets department could be directed to hold up projects in that alderman's ward. This is why you need an independent treasurer, he said.

### **QUESTION (FROM ALD. ALISHA SONNIER): WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO STREAMLINE THE TREASURER'S OFFICE?**

The treasurer's department runs the parking division and abandoned vehicles have been a major issue, he said. Lane said they are trying to get those cars ticketed so they can be towed. Since the current tow lot is over capacity, his office has issued a request for another tow lot.

He said he also is a strong supporter of the city's new guaranteed basic income program that is giving \$500 a month to 540 qualified families for 18 months. At a recent round table, some of the recipients talked about how the grants had been transformative for them, he said. If the city loses a legal challenge over the program, it won't be taking back the payments it's already made, he said.

Treasurer candidates **Jerry Vanderwier (Republican)**, **Don de Vivo (Green Party)** and **Jimmie Matthews (Democrat)** did not attend.

## 78TH MISSOURI STATE HOUSE REPRESENTATIVE (NOW VACANT)

**Jami Cox Antwi, Democrat.** A St. Louis native, she is a Cardinal Ritter High School graduate and holds a bachelor's degree in public policy and a master's in global affairs. She said she is new to public service but not new to supporting the community. She worked for a Brooklyn congresswoman and in community development finance. She wants to help create jobs and support economic justice in her district, including affordable housing and support for historic neighborhoods. She noted she is the youngest candidate running for the office and said she wants to be part of a new generation of leadership in Jefferson City.

**Jim Povolish, Republican,** said he is tired of watching his neighborhood, central and downtown St. Louis decline. As one example of the decline, he pointed to the AT&T high rise downtown, which recently sold for only about \$3 million.

He wants to eliminate both the earnings tax in St. Louis, which he said is "not needed," and the state income tax. Eliminating these two taxes would "get everything going again," he said.

**Marty Murray, Democrat,** said he is a husband, father and educator who holds a master's in business from the University of Missouri at Columbia.

He supports a woman's rights over her own body. He also supports Right to Work and Medicaid and raising the minimum wage.

Her said he is a strong supporter of city public schools and wants to see trades education returned to high school again.

### QUESTION: HOW WILL YOU SUPPORT LGBTQIA ISSUES?

Murray said he has been a fighter for those issues and has received endorsements as a result.

Povolish said he treats LGBTQIA people like everyone else. He added he was a "flower girl at a lesbian wedding in Las Vegas" last September.

Antwi said what people do in their own privacy should not be the business of government. She supports gender care for youth. LGBTQIA issues are civil rights issues and should be treated that way, she said.

## QUESTION: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BILLS AIMING TO RESTRICT AND REWRITE SCHOOL CURRICULUM ABOUT BLACK HISTORY AND LGBTQIA HISTORY?

Antwi said when we challenge history, we are erasing the fundamentals of our nation. She said we need informed voters. She said she will support local control because she doesn't think the state should dictate curriculum.

Povolish said, "I am not a fan of any book that talks about sex to a child. When I was 5, I didn't know about genitalia." He said it's not the job of school boards or teachers to "tell kids how they're going to be; they should decide on their own."

Murray said "I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for programs like that.... Erasure of history is a problem. I'm not willing to compromise on that."

You'll need to send someone who has a background in organizing and to fight some of that legislation, he said.

**Candidate Jessica Pachak, Democrat,** did not attend.

## 80<sup>TH</sup> MISSOURI STATE HOUSE REPRESENTATIVE

**Elizabeth Fuchs, Democrat,** said when she works with Republicans, she calls herself a "lovable lesbian." She has been a community organizer with PROMO, the LGBTQ advocacy group, and the Metro Trans Umbrella Group. She teaches social work at Washington University.

She said she is a professor teaching the next generation to use strategy to leverage their privilege. She wants to defend equality and bring resources back.

**Ben Murray, Democrat,** worked for current Missouri Democratic Party Chairman Russ Carnahan when he was in the U.S. House. Murray now is a legislative assistant in the Missouri House, where he helps to craft legislation. As co-owner of Apotheosis Comics on South Grand, he has a small business background, he said.

He said he believes in constituent service, such as helping people with DMV problems. He said he's seen Republicans break the gears of government in Jefferson City because they don't believe in government. He said the party that believes in government can be part of the solution.



**Kirk Hilzinger, Republican.** He said his biggest concern is crime and public safety. While the numbers say St. Louis has 800 police officers, when you subtract homicide and administration, you are down to 600 on the street, which is too thin, he said. “We need more police. Defunding police has not worked,” he said.

### **QUESTION: WHAT WILL YOU DO TO ENSURE TRANSGENDER ADULTS HAVE ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE?**

Hilzinger said, once you’re an adult, it’s not his concern. But before then, no.

Murray said he has worked for Mo. Democratic Rep. Barbara Phifer, who has spoken eloquently about the issue on the Missouri floor, and who has a grandson who is trans. He said what’s happening to trans people is sad and demoralizing.

Fuchs said she wants to support people so they can get what they need for their bodies.

### **QUESTION: WHAT ARE YOUR TWO TOP PRIORITIES?**

Fuchs said allocating funding for St. Louis so families have the resources they need. Then moral issues, in particular reproductive rights.

Murray said, “we must do something about common sense gun reform.” He also wants to restore abortion rights.

Hilzinger said crime and holding government accountable for every tax dollar that is spent.

## **OTHER CANDIDATES**

**Joy Dabney, Libertarian,** also is running for Seventh Ward committeewoman. She said she has overcome affliction and hardship and wants to be an advocate for the community.

**Jim Povolish, Republican,** also is running for Eighth Ward committeeman. He said he is tired of watching McKinley Heights collapse and wants to do something about it.

**Vanessa Carroll, Democrat,** is running for Seventh Ward committeewoman. She said her main function is to increase voter turnout.

**Kirk Hilzinger, Republican**, also is running for Fifth Ward committeeman. He said he is concerned about increased crime and theft in the area.

**Mary Theresa McClean**, chair of the **Republican** Party of St. Louis, is running for Ward Two committeewoman. She said St. Louis has not had a Republican mayor since 1949 and “we are out of balance in the city.” She wants to give people a choice

## **NEXT MEETING**

**Tuesday, July 23rd, 2024 @ 7PM - Stray Dog Theatre + Zoom**