

TGENA members hear from Ald. Sonnier and
Neighborhood Improvement Specialist Hernandez

Seventh Ward Alderwoman Alisha Sonnier and Neighborhood Improvement Specialist Andrew Hernandez spoke at Tuesday night's membership meeting of the Tower Grove East Neighborhood Association. The meeting was held at Stray Dog Theatre.

In ward news, Sonnier said ground has been broken for the Tower Grove Connector, a two-mile bike and pedestrian corridor that will stretch from Botanical Heights to Cortex. She asks you to e-mail her recommendations for bike lanes at sonniera@stlouis-mo.gov

Officials are trying to get the owners of the old St. Alexis Hospital to make commitments on dealing with the property, she said. It is the largest vacant property in the Seventh Ward, and people are going in the abandoned structure and overdosing, she said. She raised the possibility of pursuing eminent domain for the site which, she said, could possibly be used as an animal shelter.

Regarding housing needs for tornado victims, Sonnier said, "there's conversation about doing massive production of housing." The city also needs to think about public transit because the previously planned MetroLink expansion of light rail and rapid bus routes "is not happening," she said.

She talked about needs in the neighborhood, including traffic control and tree maintenance, noting that city departments are still catching up with post-tornado work.

Touching on immigration enforcement, she said, "I think we should focus on people committing crimes here, who are unsafe for the environment...The police chief agrees we should focus on folks actively committing crimes here. We are not a federal enforcement agency."

She added that conversations are taking place about the safety of local elected officials, given the shooting that left one Minnesota lawmaker dead and another wounded earlier this month.

Sonnier thanked those who came out for her town hall meeting last week, which drew 118 people. If you have requests for capital expenditures for the Seventh Ward, she asked that you contact her at and she will e-mail you a link.

TGE Neighborhood Improvement Specialist (NIS) Andrew Hernandez
hernandeza@stlouis-mo.gov

acknowledged the neighborhood has plenty of potholes, sinkholes and alley dips that need to be fixed: "I swear the whole city will sink two-three feet."

He said he took care of a troublesome "white car" in our neighborhood but added that cars are piling up on the streets because the city's towed car parking lot is full. "As cars pile up on the streets, I hope we will get this resolved soon," he said, adding that he knows about cars on Pennsylvania and Tennessee. "We're working to get those removed as soon as possible."

Hernandez also said the city is exploring whether to buy property next to the tow lot. Meanwhile, the city also is looking for people who can drive the big garbage and tow trucks.

Other speakers:

--TGE police liaison Officer Gregory McClendon said crime statistics were up 8 percent over the past 28 days. Asked about plans for the July 4 weekend, he said all officers will be on duty Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Asked about the level of staffing in the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, McClendon said superiors have ordered him not to talk about the issue.

--Safety Chair Lane Forman advised residents to check on their neighbors in this heat. He also warned dog owners it is painful for their pets to walk on super-hot pavement during a heat wave.

--Membership Chair Bryan Brown said he is getting ideas for database management for smoother procedures involving reminders to members and reaching out to folks who attend their first meeting.

--Social Chair Amy Kurz said the annual membership picnic will take place on Sept. 23, the fourth Tuesday of September, at Tower Grove Park. Members who would like to volunteer for grilling duty should contact her at social@towergroveeast.org

TGENA also will hold a joint back-to-school event with Fox Park neighbors Aug. 7 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., she said. The program will offer activities for children and grilled foods. Also, our Fox Park neighbors will provide free pet tag engraving on June 29 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and July 3 from 5 to 7 p.m. at Fox Park Pavilion.

--Beautification: The neighborhood association will hold a cleanup event July 12 from 8 to 11 a.m. Volunteers meet in the parking lot behind Commerce Bank.

--TGE Community Garden representative Cal Thomas said the garden's first summer solstice party last week drew a lot of excited neighborhood children. Planning is now starting for the garden's annual Halloween party. He added there's a waiting list

for garden beds.

--Tower Grove Park representative Larry McCarthy said free concerts will resume at the Music Stand on July 14. A food truck will be there. He also mentioned people are continuing to steal flowers from the park's flower beds. The Festival of Nations will take place Aug. 23-24, he added.

Former President Chris Naffziger chaired the meeting for absent President Tristan Mackenzie.