

HHIA meeting minutes November 28, 2011

Board members in attendance: Tara Ohler, Ted Disabato, Anna Baldwin, Stacy Ross

New neighbors were introduced.

Tim Bolt and Stacy Ross discussed the revitalization of Friends of Carondelet Park, which will emphasize park clean-ups and plantings. Need volunteers.

Officer Christopher Rumpsa (filling in for Officer O'Brien)

Christmas – be especially watchful, don't have presents in the car. Don't leave anything of value in sight in your car. Don't leave giant flat screen TV boxes in the dumpster. Suggest cutting them up and put them in the recycling bin in the park.

Tara Ohler: Break-in – 4100 block of Federer, no fingerprints taken, why? Officer – It's hard to defend every decision each officer makes

Suggestion from audience – on email listserv, don't announce on the email list when you will be gone.
Officer: The new stuff with social media makes it real easy to communicate but you might communicate with someone you don't know.

Tara: be cautious about what you put on the email list – we don't have any control of who signs up.

Question: stolen cars? Officer: It's not the plague that it once was, it's going down.

11th Ward Alderman Tom Villa

There's now a new ordinance on the books dealing with copper theft. I doubt that's going to be the answer to the bad guys to quit stealing copper. It's a strong ordinance. It forces the scrap dealers to computerize whether they like it or not. The transactions are more traceable and transparent than in the past.

The stray dog problem – we've been kicking that can down the road for the last 6 months. Most of the emails that I've been getting are along the lines of why aren't you giving Stray Rescue the \$250,000. I think we've got it worked out that eventually, say 90 days, Stray Rescue will get the money.

We still use Gasconade facility for mean dogs, is my understanding. The city has purchased a vacant auto inspection station down off West Florissant. We are going to have a city animal shelter.

Pit bull problems – when the neighbors perceive it's a mean dog then they call the health department, but then the (dog owners) don't let them in. That's the way it goes.

Ward redistricting did not affect the 11th ward that much. Try to get 28 pieces of pie. Clearly south St. Louis did not lose as much (population) as north St. Louis.

Lyle house, landscape makeover is alive and well. The new trees are in. No action on the new music pavilion. Pre-fabricated bandstand. Once they get there and build the foundation, I see no reason that it shouldn't be done by Christmas, but maybe I said that last year.

New Firestone store going in Loughborough Commons.

Great Rivers Greenway going to extend bike trail. In February going to finish bike trail from 55 & Germania over to Alabama. Out for bid right now.

Villa contacted by Bandana's – They want to construct a barbecue restaurant down in the final outlot at Schnucks. They have the luxury of having lots of parking there. About 2-3 major restaurants have walked away from that. Not sure of the reasons.

Villa: I say that unless it's an inherently evil operation we welcome any business into the city. Bandana's has asked for a letter of recommendation. Reluctant to write one until he finds out more.

Sight-line problems on Holly Hills bridge – looking at row of fence posts on the bridge – it looks good, but prevents good sight lines. Met with streets director and the bridge designer to see what can be done. Will have to see. Be careful.

Contract pending for the purchase of Southern Funeral Home. For some reason (the buyers are) avoiding me and that's fine. Eventually when they come to city hall to get the proper permits and licensure, they're going to have to get a zoning change. The deal is not consummated. There's been a contract on it for greater than 6 months. The neighbors are telling me (the buyer wants to put in a) Dollar General. I don't know how much of a hurry they're in. I have left at least 4 phone messages for the people in Tennessee. There are some people who think that Southern Funeral home building is architecturally significant.

Apartment building/Shoppers Cleaners building looks terrible. I don't know how many people are in that building. Lots of meetings going on, but nothing happening. That's a neat building, but you need someone who could put a whole lot of money in it. Good location near park and highway, once the city gets working again.

Bulk trash is first Monday of the month. We are our own worst enemies when it comes to those Dumpsters. It's a problem. If everybody pays close attention to those Dumpster rules, it's a neat system.

Question: is county looking to pass similar copper ordinance? St. Louis County does not have that. It's the unscrupulous people who will continue to buy the stolen stuff.

13th Ward Alderman Fred Wessels

When Gasconade (animal facility) closes the plan is to move all the equipment and materials that are currently housed in the fenced area just south of the Lyle House to the Gasconade facility – that's our agreement with the Parks Department once the animal facility closes. Hopefully within the year.

Block bounded by Loughborough, Leona, Morgan Ford and Holly Hills was in the 12th ward and is now in the 13th ward. Got a letter from someone who was just incensed that he was moved out of the 12th Ward and into the 13th. Don't know if he's worried about bad luck.

Residents should get new voter cards in the mail.

Someone Twittered me. It sounds like something I should confess. The guy wanted to know what was going on on Bates west of Grand. The homes that are being built in the 11th ward on the south side of Bates, four 3-bedroom homes.

Bond issue to fund parks: Currently, Carondelet Park gets \$220,000 per year from ¼ cent sales tax passed in 1993. Money is based on acreage. Also receive small piece of the 1/8 cent sales tax. That's about \$275,000 per year for capital improvements, not maintenance, not grass cutting.

Have used the money for new sidewalks, tennis courts were redone, planted over 1,000 trees. Spent about half a million dollars on pathway that is very popular.

It's worked out great. The park is now in better condition than it's been since most of us can remember. My feeling is if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

The bond issue would provide \$30 million for Forest Park \$34 million for all the rest.

\$3.1 million for Carondelet Park, that's the good news. The bad news is that \$275,000 is going to pay off the bond issue for the next 30 years. \$1.2 million will be held back each year and if a park has a maintenance issue they don't have the money to deal with, they'll have access to that money. It sounds good, but there are 100 parks. This year we had 2 big expenses. The band stand burned down at a cost of \$154,000 and the lighting burned out in the softball fields, which cost \$100,000. We had the money for those. But what about in 15 years? What if we have a (large expense)? Will we get some of that \$1.2 million that 100 parks are going after? That's my concern. I'm not sure it's the best thing for Carondelet Park.

Aldermen are like most of us, if they can see a big pot of money, they think why not, let's take it. Well I worry about it and so does Tom (Villa). They've got 18 or 19 co-sponsors so it's going to pass. We're doing fine on an annual cash basis. By the time this bond issue passes and the money is available people are going to be coming up with a ton of ideas on how to spend it. I think wiser decisions are made on spending when you don't have more than you need.

Plan for spending that \$3 million – That's the question. Master plan – a lot of it is kind of vague.

\$8million project - a roadway to cut off traffic through the park. I'm sure it would be a good idea from a traffic engineer's standpoint, but \$8 million? In my opinion we have very little that's specific on how to spend that money.

Bond issues doesn't have to come before the voters because it's not a tax increase. They will use existing revenue to pay off the bonds.

Question from audience – Anything that can be done about the traffic trying to cross the street by the Rec Plex? Wessels: Traffic study said best solution would be a round about. I think that would make it worse. Wessels: Traffic study said there wasn't really a problem. Intersections rated A. Another potential solution make Grand one way going east – Dan Schulze from Y doesn't like that idea. Take driveway out of the Y straight to Holly Hills.

Officer Rumpsa – been in the 1st district 6 years and there's only been one accident there.

State Representative Jake Hummel

The bad news is the special session called by the governor ended in pretty near failure. Fixed the Facebook law. Had each school district create their own policy – if the legislature couldn't get it right, imagine 400-some school districts each trying to come up with their own policy. I don't think it's a good idea, but something had to be done.

Special session cost about \$300,000 in taxpayer dollars. They told the governor they had an agreement and apparently they did not.

Last summer (legislature came up with) package to save Claycomo auto plant near Kansas City – saved thousands of jobs and now the Wentzville plant. I don't know what the difference was. I think there were some personality issues.

State of MO is the last state in the country as far as what we pay our state workers. Below Mississippi, Alabama.

State revenues picking up. When the bill comes due for the Joplin tornado, the federal government pays 90% and the state pays 10%, but if it's a \$2 billion disaster...

Holly Hills Bridge – Regarding bad sight lines “I asked for fencing and lights because the pedestrian walkway was eliminated. I'm sure the bridge was designed without those. They were going to send that money elsewhere and I wanted to keep it here.”

11th Ward NSO Brian Kolde

13th Ward NSO TJ Minden not here because his wife has cancer. Can keep up with them through Caring Bridge. As far as these things go she's doing well.

Gene Schaller passed away at age 96, father of Mary Lopinot. Longtime local resident and business owner.

Handouts - Fraud alerts from Jennifer Joyce:

Have had some complaints about door-to-door security companies – don't ever let a stranger in your house. If you have concerns, call police.

Skimming devices on ATMs - Able to record your card number and pin. Pay attention to the machine you're using. If you are suspicious, don't use that ATM.

Can sign up online to get fraud alerts. Also posted on HHIA list.

Grandmother scam. Someone contacts you and says your grandson needs to be bailed out.

In St. Charles County have had instances where you get called by someone who says you missed jury duty and there's a warrant out for your arrest. Ask for your credit card number to pay fine.

This is the time of year with these scams.

Other Business

Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Comment from audience, met runner from Chicago who loved it and said the only neighborhood she remembered was Holly hills.

Mayor's office, considering an out and back route that wouldn't go through neighborhoods.

Staffing was a problem - not enough people hired, many didn't show up. Certain arteries were supposed to have cut-throughs but because there weren't enough staff, these weren't opened.

Communications – needed to let more people know about it – even people who don't live in neighborhoods affected try to drive into affected neighborhoods and didn't know what was going on.

The Oct. 22 movie in the park was cancelled because of Cardinal's game. Will be able to show it next year.

Pumpkin parade 75 people, great success.

2012 dues are due starting in January – pay early!

Let us know if you're willing to get your newsletters by email.

Christmas decorating contest – send us your nominations.

The meeting was adjourned.