

HHIA Meeting Minutes May 21, 2012

Roll call: Tara Jenney, Stacy Ross, Beth Murphy, Brenda Smarko, Kendal Dauphin, Ted Disabato

Board elections – all board members reelected to current positions. Jan Hill added as new member at large.

Old Business: Please pay your dues – we need it to cover our costs. Please sign up for electronic delivery of newsletter. Tiles, flags available for purchase. Prototype of new garden tile available. Movie – June 9, Megamind at the Bandstand

Officer Christopher Rumpsa – Not present

11th Ward Alderman Tom Villa

Police raided 6100 block of Tennessee – bad actor. We are using every resource available to not let him back in. Burglary in my alley right in the middle of the afternoon. We have to collectively keep our eyes and ears open.

Altenheim – spending \$2 million on renovations

Sr. Marie Charles and Bellerive Park – we're going to open that space up and actually join those two parks. In the not too distance future you'll see the work start.

Southern Funeral Home was sold for \$130,000 to a company in St. Charles. I don't know what they're going to do with it.

Blow School Sam Bradford gym equipment

Electric box at the new bandstand has been moved.

Federal Grant not quite finalized to improve S. Broadway, all the way to the city limits over next four years. Local match is \$50,000 this year.

New family dollar South Broadway

Pretzel vendors in the 11th ward – that's a no vending zone. It's illegal. It's kind of hard coming down on a man selling pretzels, but people have different opinions.

St. Mary & Joseph school – didn't get demolition permit – that building is pretty much ravaged.

Q: What are the guidelines for Bellerive Park rest rooms being open

Villa: Unfortunately I don't have a good answer for you. We keep them pretty much locked because of the vandalism. We will be making sure all the drinking fountains and bathrooms are in working order.

Q: Thank you for sending the forestry department to Haven – they did a beautiful job.

108th Dist. State Rep. Jake Hummel:

Legislature adjourned getting very little done. Sometimes that's a good thing – less damage.

Rush Limbaugh inducted into hall of famous Missourians. Governor is prohibited from putting it in Rotunda.

Bill to allow state to take over KC school district like here. It's done nothing but have very positive results here in St. Louis – held hostage in senate, didn't pass. Teacher tenure didn't pass. A lot of things did not get passed.

A couple things are going to be on the ballot:

Change nonpartisan court plan – the way judges are selected. I do not agree with this change. It's up to the governor to decide when it will go on the ballot – August or November. Across the country, states look at the way Missouri selects judges to keep it nonpartisan.

The state has a \$450 million shortfall in funding K-12 schools. It's something that is going to have to be addressed in the next couple of years. There seems to be no serious discussion in the legislature on how to fund this. Everything we come up with is no. It may be something we have to take to a statewide ballot.

Payday loans interest – would cap at 35% - will be on the November ballot. MO has 2300 payday loans – we are completely unregulated.

Hummel will be on the ballot for reelection – no opposition. District changing – getting rid of most of Boulevard Heights, go down into the city to Anheuser Busch.

Q: We could make up the funding shortfall – sales tax for online retailers – fairness

Hummel: I have sponsored it for the last 3 years. MO can't compete. It would raise about \$50 million in revenue a year.

Q: Heard that city schools close to getting accreditation back – is that true?

Hummel: Close to being provisionally accredited. Mayor can tell you more. They have made huge strides in their test scores. They're not there yet. But leaps and bounds.

Question: China cargo hub?

Hummel: Not happening. Tax credit that we went into special session for - \$60m for freight forwarding – designed to make it cheaper to ship goods. Other portion for construction of new warehouses around St. Louis. Attempt to put the \$60m portion back this session was killed as well.

11th Ward NSO Brian Kolde

Fliers for National Night Out – Tuesday, Aug. 7. If you register your block gets a free street closing permit.

Guest Speaker: Mayor Francis Slay

Over the past 11 years I've been in office we've had a lot of tough budget years, but we've always balanced the budget – we're required to by law.

Our number one priority is and always has been public safety. Police and fire. They put their lives on the line. I can't thank them enough. We are at a point now where we have to make some very tough decisions.

We've eliminated 600 positions. We've diverted money – housing, after school programs. City employees have pitched in. They've taken furloughs. Tax payers have pitched ins. Approved ½ cent sales tax to fund pension costs and to give city employees a pay raise – 4 years ago – last one they had. All city residents are paying for trash, so everyone has pitched in.

The police budget has gone up \$53 million, firefighters \$27 million increase. We've been shoveling money into these departments, but guess what? We have fewer police and firefighters. We're closing fire houses this year because we don't have enough money to support them. Police chief testified the pension system is negatively impacting the department.

You're paying \$80 million more for police and fire departments but you're not getting more. I'm not blaming anyone. The state actually controls those two systems so that we can't modify any benefits. We knew this day was coming. I've been warning about this for 2 years. We have to do something to address this problem. We've had mediation and we've got nowhere. Firefighters have absolutely refused to negotiate with us.

We are now in negotiations with police union and the police board. We are making decent progress.

Two bills introduced in Board of Aldermen. Opt out of state plan on the condition that we put in place a city plan. New plan does several things – biggest changes for new hires – people who haven't been hired yet. The other thing it would do is modify the disability benefits.

48% of retired firefighters have left department on disability. We want to distinguish between those who can do another job and those who can't. You can't carry a ladder any more – you jump to the highest level of pay for your rank and you get 75% of that for the rest of your life. You can go out and get another job and you can get Social Security (from the new job outside the department).

Active firefighters – I don't blame them. Retire after 20 years – get 40% of their pay for the rest of their lives. They can get another job. That's fine, that's what we agreed to.

Going forward, they can still be vested after 20 years but they can't take it until they're 55 – if they take it before 55 they get an actuarially reduced pension.

They have a tough job, they deserve everything we can afford to pay them. 40 % of their budget is going into pensions. We do have to address this, we've got to be responsible about this.

Our plan, going forward: The average firefighter can still retire at age 55 with \$50,000 for the rest of their lives. Right now they put 8% of their pay into the system and they get it all back – without any interest, and their pension. Our proposal is they would put 9 % in and it would stay there. A true participatory system.

Save \$9 million – we could restore a lot of things that are getting cut – building demolitions, afterschool programs for kids. There's a lot of things we can do.

We've gotta give the police and fire chiefs what they need to run their departments.

They always talk about well mayor you promised. We did. That was a different time under different circumstances. It would have been easier if we had fixed this years ago. We don't have much of a choice. We're on sound legal ground. If they're going to sue us and make you pay for the lawsuit, we're going to have to defend it.

Q: How did we not know this was coming?

Mayor: We knew about it – I complained about this 10 years. Sick leave buy back. I'm against it. Police and fire dept. systems they lost a lot of money in the market and people are living longer. It's something I talked about a long time. I put the task force together 6 years ago.

Q: If we keep losing firefighters how are we going to get new ones to come into the city?

Mayor: Right now we're not having a problem attracting them. Firefighters have not gotten a raise in 4 years. I'd like for them to get a raise. Fighting fewer fires, but doing more first-responders. We need to look at the whole dept. They saved my mom's life before.

Q: Mike Fitzgerald city firefighter for the last 18 years – have been involved in negotiations and the mayor has never been in those negotiations. The one sticking point, the mayor wants to take complete control – he says its state controlled but it's really not – there's an 8-person commission. The governor doesn't appoint any of those members.

As he said he has approved some of these things. The city has declared an impasse with us. We did not go into these meetings declaring an impasse, the city did this.

We came up with an actuarial plan that would save \$60 million and the city said no to it.

In 2003 the mayor quit funding all three systems - we sued them – they lost every step of the way. His plan what he wants to do will end up in court. In 5 years he may not even be mayor anymore and we'll still be in the same boat.

I'm a tax-payer, I've lived in the city all my life.

Mayor: If they had a plan that got us where we need to be, we would agree to it. Why wouldn't we? 5 members of that board are retired firefighters.

Q: Couldn't you make each department balance its own budget and let them figure out how to cover it?

Mayor: Essentially that's what we do – but by law we have to pay pensions first, then other stuff gets cut.

We didn't neglect to pay the pension costs.

Q: Ken Mitchell – VP of Firefighters local 73. Believes TIFs are causing the budget problems.

Firefighters don't get social security. I got my lump sum and the city kept the interest – the interest was more than my lump sum.

Q: Both sides need to get together and lock them in until you get it finished. We pay our taxes. We're living on Social Security. Both sides have to sit down. I don't care what kind of ill feelings there are.

Mayor: If I thought my presence would be productive there I would be there. They've been going on for 6 years. We've got 20 aldermen who are for this thing. There's a reason.

Q: How do we look at education, this accreditation. All this money that went toward finding this board or that one.

Mayor: We should be focusing on excellence. Accreditation is the minimum.

We've got a board that's stable. They're making progress. They're not there yet. Metro, best high school in the state. I have no direct control over the city of St. Louis School Board.

RFP for quality charter school operators – connect them with sponsors. Imagine schools, I called for their closure. We should demand quality charter schools. There are models to serve inner city kids and give them a quality education.

Q: Studies – what is success for our populations?

Mayor: I'm sure there are studies. What we have is not acceptable. KIP schools – one of the most successful in the country. I think competition is good.

Q: is National geospatial intelligence agency moving to the county?

Mayor: It's an important employer for the city. We let them know we want to keep them here in the city. I've been out to visit with them. They're not at a point yet where they're looking at specific sites.

Q: I just want to say something positive. I like our park.

Mayor: I have a beautiful picture of blue heron in the park about 6 a.m.

Meeting adjourned.