

November 26, 2012

Roll Call: Present - Stacy Ross, Jan Hill, Beth Murphy, Tara Ohler-Jenney, Anna Baldwin

Guest Speaker - Comptroller Darlene Green

Seventeen years on the job. Comptroller works with mayor and the president of the Board of Aldermen to put together city budget.

This year \$465 million operating budget approved. Last year \$450 million. Slight increase - Some came from citizens because of new fee for trash collection and from Cards winning in 2011. With revenue from Airport and water dept. added budget is over \$900 million.

Nationwide financial crisis started in 2008—City got A+ credit rating—first time in 35 years. Maintained that over last four years. She is a conservative comptroller—responsibility as city officials to deliver city services to citizens. USA lost it's a+ credit rating, but St. Louis kept theirs.

Questions: Parks Bond issue—where does it stand, when going into effect?

Answer: First part is Forest Park bond issue - \$30million—deal is in motion but not completed yet. Forest Park Forever must buy all the bonds but still needs the money to buy the bonds. City is not going to stick its neck out without knowing Forest Park Forever has their part in place. The other piece is a question mark—Why? Because what is the city collateral going to be for bonds for St. Louis parks? From experience people generally love St. Louis bonds—across the country and on Wall Street—especially St. Louis airport bonds.

Does not support the second part of the bonds issue—parks maintenance is her high priority and she wants that but not capital bonds because they subordinate maintenance needs for 30 years. The new stuff will be paid for by capital bonds, but the capital bonds would not pay for a pothole in that street.

Will move forward with capital bonds only if they look like they make sense and right now they don't. City is flush with money for maintaining parks - way better than the County. Half-cent cent sales tax increase (since 1993 she thinks) and another increase. This money also lets the City balance the operating budget. Right now 100% of maintenance money goes to maintenance. If we do the bond issue, 75% will go for bonds and 25% will be left to pay for maintenance of parks citywide. People on her staff, who usually disagree, are in agreement on NOT wanting these bonds. They've been in her office for decades.

Guest speaker Mayor Slay

Responding to Green's comments: Lot of people with lots of private money want to do good things for Forest Park. Raised well over \$50million. They want to have a maintenance fund to make it last long into the future. Private people concerned that they're putting so much private money into park and city keeps taking park money to balance city budget. Park issue--\$30 million on Forest Park (first part) of park bond issue and \$34 million on second part (all other city parks) of bond issue.

Wants to make sure that money raised for parks stays in the parks. Stop taking park money to balance budget. To make sure parks maintain their funding, private people came up with the bond issue. Mayor disagrees with Green about what you can do with capital money—says you could fill a pothole. If we only complete Forest Park bond issue, then neighborhood parks would suffer. Forest Park bond (\$30million) issue is moving forward and second part (\$34million) of two tier idea is the neighborhood parks bond issue. Keep in mind this money is staying in the parks. Revenues we have for the parks will be used to back the bonds for the parks. Mayor says he and Green respectfully disagree on this one, but agree on more things.

Mayor's No. 1 budgetary priority is to keep neighborhoods safe. City spends more than \$300 million on public safety—police and fire, law enforcement, courts, prosecutors (out of the \$465Million) Starting July 1, 2013, City will have local control of police because Prop A passed. Now five-person board and Mayor is on it. More direct accountability to people is important and save several million dollars by now having local control of police—merge resources over time to share IT, lawyers, accountants, etc. Any reductions in staff will be by attrition only—NO layoffs. Crime going down, but still more work to do to make neighborhoods safer.

Problem properties team—seven lawyers and a prosecutor and a court that deals specifically with it. Over 9,000 properties have been brought up to code due to the team. Dozens of private attorneys now volunteering their time to crack down on problem properties with the City's team. Partnered with Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis and downtown firms and yes, they are volunteering.

Mayor supporting school district's improvements. Provisional accreditation, but thinks that's a minimum and educational excellence is what you really need. Supports good quality charter schools along with regular public schools.

Unemployment rate in St. Louis has dropped about 30% from 13.3% to 9.3% from high in July 2010. Still way too high he says, but making improvements. St. Louis is recognized as one of top 10 cities in US to start a business and he says we have lots of things in city to support such startups. St. Louis recognized as THE TOP city in America for college educated young people moving into the city—highest number of them in city.

Prop. R passed and board of aldermen will reduce by half in 10 years. Aldermen will represent about the same number of people they did in the 1970s. In '50s and '60s aldermen represented even more people than they will in 10 years, so it is totally doable and citizens will still get attention from aldermen. Will be more efficient. Won't take place until 2023 with an election because it's easier to do after the 2020 census, numbers released in 2021 and then election will be 2023. First aldermen will be for two years and next election for four and then the elections of wards will be staggered—won't elect all aldermen all in same election.

Question: Charter schools—Woman (a psychotherapist) asks about level of challenge—one of her child patients was being used as teacher's assistant because she was so much smarter.

Answer: Mayor has been involved with 18 charter schools, he has a team of people who work on this and there are some schools, such as some closed down, that he has not been involved with. When charter schools are bad they should close. "If these schools aren't better than the St. Louis Public School District then they should close." He called for the closure of Imagine Schools—they were performing worse than St. Louis Public Schools. Mayor attended Epiphany Catholic school, closed and now has Charter –Gateway—and there's a waiting list. The thing about charter schools is that the sponsor has to be involved (like Lindenwood U, etc.). St. Louis schools have been losing kids and money since long before charter schools. People have been moving out of St. Louis for decades because of schools. We lost 29,000 people in last census and says we lost 22,000 children in city and so every person moved because of lack of quality free public education options.

Officer James Cox

New community liaison - has 12 years on force, first was in north city Fifth District for five or six years, then Second District for a year, then First District for four years.

District 1: Rape is up 30%, for Holly Hills it's up, too—3 rapes this year—none last year. Vehicle thefts are up, especially in Holly Hills. Do not warm up cars and leave them running! Aggravated assaults—initiative in July 2012—chief's initiative in hot spots throughout city—force trying to address that issue. No hot spots in Holly Hills.

11th Ward Alderman Tom Villa

Ald. Wessels and Villa did not vote the same on the proposed second part of bond issue—Villa agrees with Darlene Green and does NOT agree with Mayor. He does not think a city should go into debt for a city park system that is perfectly fine. Carondelet Park does not get any more money if we sell the \$34 million bond, but we get it quicker and once you spend that money, it's gone. Thinks Green is using good fiscal prudence. Thinks it's a great city park system. If you spend the money that we get judiciously, it's a wonderful park system and it works without getting more money faster. In process of redoing a bunch of parks (Bellerive Park three-phase project—phase one is dug up now) (Fanetti Park).

David Newberger, atty working with disabled in city office, working on hooking up Bellerive and Sister Marie Charles park—ramp—connect all with handicap approvable path—if too steep then need a switchback—takes a long time to decide in meetings and to do the work.

St. Louis board of Aldermen—passed an ordinance about used cell phones.

War on street lights in Holly Hills—knocked one down on Holly Hills and one on Federer in last 4 or 5 days—people driving too fast. Bushes on Holly Hills that were terribly overgrown at Arendes and Holly Hills—street machine scorched them so they were removed in the last week and will be replaced with something nice.

Police substation at Southwest Crossing apartments has been set up—I-55 and Germania. New Planet Fitness—opening fairly soon. Family Dollar on South Broadway—they broke ground and Grand and Iron Family Dollar they're working on inside still.

He got a couple calls about Halloween on Holly Hills—it has evolved into a phenomenon. Someone said that someone's going to get hit by a car because so very many people. Stacy Ross brought up the possibility of having a neighborhood event similar to St. Louis Hills Candy Cane lane.

11th Ward NSO Brian Kolde

Works in Dept of Public Safety and with the police, dealing with lots of problem properties. Code problems but also behavioral nuisance activities—occupied buildings and the problem is the people in the bldgs. Former 13th Ward NSO TJ Minden is now working with city's Dept of Emergency Management. NSO for Ward 13 temporarily is Maria Cuciureanu - phone 657.1374. New one will be in Jan. or Feb.

Car thefts i an issue for Brian at every neighborhood meeting he attends. Get a club if you don't have one—keep an extra for when you have visitors. \$13 from NSO and collector of revenue. Larceny—theft out of cars—happens at Rec. Plex and wherever—do NOT leave stuff in your car!

Announcements

Please pay dues!! Pay in person or on website—Paypal on website or pay with credit card here tonight by using Square.

Question about out of state plates on a car living in a rental place for a year and more. Tom Villa doesn't have a clue about what to do about it but says if we're missing out on their city earnings tax, that's a problem.

Meeting adjourned.