

HHIA Meeting  
September 26, 2016

Roll call

Present: Tara Ohler-Jenney, Lisa Bertke, Anna Baldwin, Kendal Dauphin, Eileen Muir, Beth Murphy, Jim Sahaida, Stacy Ross

Absent: Mike Dauphin

Introduce New Neighbors:

Guest Speakers

Fred Wessels – Thank you all for your support in the August 2<sup>nd</sup> primary election, Missouri House seat 81<sup>st</sup> district. Running unopposed in the general election. Look forward to supporting each and every one of you. If you have any concerns at the state level, please email me at [fredwessels@hotmail.com](mailto:fredwessels@hotmail.com). Also in the phone book on Dover. Look forward to seeing all of you and hearing from you. I will be in Jefferson City every Monday from January to the middle of May. Won't be able to make local meetings during that period.

Brad Howard, Laclede Gas – New name Spire Energy. Operations part of company will switch name in 2017. Got a call from Anna and she wanted us to address a project on Wilmington and Marwinette. One of the concerns was that we didn't provide a lot of information prior to project. Some projects are different, they are mandated. We have gas mains that we need to get changed out before we do the upgrading process. That project was a mandated project. Sometimes we only get a week's notice. If we try to put envelopes and letters out for mandated projects, you will get them after the fact. Even on mandated projects, the foreman will come to the door and knock. Normally in our upgrade process, try to do an upgrade and letter program. 6 weeks advance notice to our customers. Send letter out with all the foreman's contact info. He will find out from our general foreman to a specific phase (could be anywhere from 4 to 10 streets). When we get that notification, we try to alert you. Send the letter out along with a pamphlet. Tells you we will be coming to your area to upgrade the mains and meters. Pamphlet has a lot of answers to questions. When we do that, this will hopefully be 6 weeks in advance. They will come to your door and knock. If you're not home they will leave a door tag. First one is yellow. Warning that they are coming. Expect to see our trucks and excavation. Second door tag is orange they will knock on your door and ask where they want you to put it. They are moving to higher pressure meters. If you want to put in a pool heater or a generator the higher pressure meter allows you to do that. Ability to put more gas appliances in. Label on the bottom of the tag with the technician and his contact info. Call him and talk through the process, including where you want the meter to go. If you do not contact them, they will have to shut the gas main off and switch over to the new main. If you haven't reached out, you will lose gas service. Especially with winter coming up, this is important. If they cannot get in contact with you there will be a disconnection service notice issued within 96 hours. We haven't had to issue many of these. The black door tag alerts you that your gas is turned off. Yellow, orange, red, and black tags. As of right now they do not have anything scheduled in Holly Hills currently. Header main is on the schedule and that does include Holly Hills. Header mains go on main thoroughfares, for example Loughborough. The header main does not affect an individual service at a house. Light blue tag would alert you that they will be in the area to upgrade header main and you will see a lot of excavation. No grid mains scheduled. No header main currently but there may be one in the future. That is the process, we are trying to upgrade the mains and give you more options for appliances.

Q: We can decide where on the house. Can it be anywhere?

A: They like to go to the front generally. 3-5 foot of the front of the house. If you have a location that you really don't like because it will stick out, they will work with you. This helps the fire dept to know where the meter is if there are issues. Certainly there are circumstances where they will not fit.

Q: All neighborhoods city wide?

A: If they have a cast iron main, yes. Some areas may be 5 years, 10 years. Maplewood, University City, the Hill, Soulard.

Q: What about behind a privacy fence?

A: They can put them behind privacy fences. Yes. Your meters have AMRs so it isn't as important for us to physically get to the meter. But again, we will work with you on that.

Q: What if there isn't a gate where I want you to put it. Sidewalk work coming...I don't want you to tear it up after the sidewalk is repaired.

A: We can place it on the other side.

Q: So even if it is at the other side now, it can be moved over?

A: Yes.

Q: I have a 4 family flat with four meters. One of them has a solid wall in the basement. I wouldn't want all four of them in the same place.

A: We would have to look at it to tell for sure. We have done four meters before.

Q: Is there much tearing up of the lawns?

A: Hole in the street is dug, as small as possible. We work with you to get it back to where it was.

Q: The reason we can't leave them in the basement?

A: It's an accessibility thing for the fire dept. It's a safety issue. Every 3 years we have to do an inspection. It's a hassle for you and for us. This way we can inspect without bothering you.

Q: Any issues with vandalism? Anyone tampering with it?

A: In the county we have had outside meters for years. You hear people vandalizing water hydrants, we don't have that very much at all to be honest with you.

Q: What if something like that would happen?

A: It is not the homeowner's responsibility. It is Laclede's responsibility. There would be no cost to you.

Q: Is it the same side meter on the outside?

A: We take the same meter that is inside and move it outside.

Q: Who is going to paint them and keep them looking decent?

A: You can paint them any color you like.

Greg Daly – my name is Greg Daly. I am the collector of Revenue for the city of STL for the last 9 years. Tonight if I could just discuss a few things in my office. We generates \$650 million a year. Comes thru earnings tax, 1% individuals who live in the city pay and individuals who work in the city pay. Also

includes personal property: cars and boats. Various equipment for business. Real estate. Homes, commercial, businesses. Water and Trash. Also we have the DMV, I am a state agent for the state of Missouri if you need plates, tags, identification. We have an office on the first floor of city hall. Very convenient operation if you have to go to the Assessor's office for a waiver or a birth certificate. Really has provided great service to the citizens of STL. Tax season is coming up. Bills are coming up Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>. Little bit different this year. Different programs to pay your bill. Audacity of you to send me a bill so close to Thanksgiving. Well, this is because it is a state mandate. It is a big number right at the time of year. 5 years ago we put a program into play so that Tim Murphy who is retired now who collects a large sum in June, we can accept payment then. Kind've a pay as you go for people on a budget, fixed income. It works out extremely well. Approx 12,000 that are utilizing the program. New things in November, program called "pay it". It's a mobile phone app, you can pay all your bills. 2.45 convenience fee. Our job is to make sure that when you want to pay your taxes, we are there. Make it as easy as possible for you. It's not easy to collect taxes. Our job is to make sure that we are treating our taxpayers professionally at the greatest convenience to them. Your bill this year will be a little higher than the past. Back in April of this year, Prop 1 St. Louis Board of Education and Prop for MSD storm sewers. So you will see approx. a 10% increase. The voters passed both props by 60%. This is the first year this comes to fruition. We will be at different banks throughout the city. The old Southwest Bank at Kingshighway and Southwest. We will be at Hampton Village, Bank of America. Bank of America in Baden Circle. Not going to be at PNC at Grand and Meramec. For some reason they didn't want to entertain having us. Water and trash comes on a quarterly basis. One of the programs that we've instituted is direct deposit. A lot of times it gets pushed to the side, sometimes we forget. The last thing we want to do is turn off anyone's water. Sign you up, comes out of your account every quarter. Paying online is also available. As you can see, when you're thinking about paying your taxes, we have a way to make sure that it is the most convenient way for you to do it. It's not easy to collect Taxes, NOBODY likes to do it. With all the different services we offer, we are extremely tough on individuals that don't pay their taxes. We will always work with individuals that let us know that they have a problem with cash flow. There are a lot of people that just let things go by. We will take your property, won't issue plates. When we need to be tough, we can be tough. When we can work situations out with you we will. Generating \$650 million a year. It's important that tax payers have faith in us and we offer it in a professional and courtesy manner.

Q: Why do we write our checks to you?

A: Is there something wrong with that? History 101. It's a state statute that has never been changed. As far as politics go...it is the best political ploy. Traditionally 114 counties in state of MO. If you were sending money to me that money would go to St. Louis City. Tom Villa in Franklin County went to FC.

Q: MSD tax will go on property tax bills? Why wouldn't that go on our MSD bill?

A: It's part of the issue that was on your ballot. It's 10 cents on every \$100 assessed property value. You're gonna pick up your tax bill and say "oh no, here we go again". This is the first billing cycle after these propositions.

If my office can ever assist, please don't hesitate. We make customer service our top priority. It's tough collecting taxes, easier if you are courteous and professional to the customers.

Q: Will the rise in taxes, further increase next year? One time, level out.

A: Won't keep going up, but it will remain on the bill in the future.

Board of Education is the largest recipient of tax dollars in the city. Bonds passed 62%.

Jared Boyd, City of St. Louis Treasurer's Office – Pleasure of serving as chief of staff in the treasurer's office. I can work out before I get here, just can't stop at Steak 'n Shake on the way home. Greetings on behalf of our office about what's going on. We do parking, recently switched out all of the old parking meters. Shrunk the footprint to 7700. Had 10,000. They all take credit cards, phone app, coins. I would like to spend more of my time talking about a new initiative. Office of Financial Empowerment. St. Louis is a fantastic city that has some fantastic financial institutions. A lot of our residents struggle with money issues. If people had \$400 emergency 40% couldn't meet the need without selling something. They hold regular classes on financial literacy. Today we had a class on estate planning. Regular classes on budgeting. Nonprofit at City Hall that will help you pull your credit report for free and improve your credit score. Sometimes you see things on tv about cleaning up your credit for a fee. This is a nonprofit that is free to help you. Thank you, you have a wonderful neighborhood. If you have questions see me after the meeting.

Stacy Ross, SLACO Rep – Neighborhood Stabilization – I am Stacy Ross and I'm wearing a different hat here tonight. SLACO is a resource for neighborhoods. Umbrella organization for neighborhoods. Neighborhoods are the members, including HH. The whole point is to provide resources to neighborhoods, help neighborhood assoc do what they need to do. Conference on Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>. One thing is an issue advocacy program. Decided that we wanted to pick something that would affect the entire city. Tackle the issue of vacant properties in the city of st. louis. More than 30,000 vacant properties. You and I own about 40% of them through the LRA. We are paying for fire calls, police calls, we pay to mow the lawns. The city is the owner of last resort. Buildings or lots that have been abandoned, they haven't sold at tax sales. The city does not want to own these properties. The inventory keeps growing each year. Hasn't been a way to affect the issue. I am chair of the vacancy committee. We have 30 people from around the city, very diverse group. Trying to address the issue through a variety of fronts. Looking at the LRA process, the legal process. For private properties, how can we address the issue of vacancy. Fines keep building up and no one does anything about them and they slip through the cracks. One of our subcommittees is working on legal tools. New state statute that will allow neighborhoods to take owners to court. As part of this, proposing a bond issue that will impact property taxes. Stabilizing city owned, residential city buildings. Stabilization means tuck pointing, repairing or replacing the roof, complete board up. Anything to keep them from deteriorating. This will allow us not to lose that architectural heritage of our city and make these buildings more marketable. Making them watertight and secure. Chef Jenkerson will tell you how many of his firefighters are injured. To me, this is such a fundamental issue. This affects crime, the fact that the city is depopulating. Psychological impact on these neighborhoods. People become hopeless, not a good environment. If we could reverse this problem it would really help with a lot of other stuff. Collecting signatures to get this on the ballot. Need 10,000 signatures. By signing a petition, all that you are doing is saying that you think it should go before the people for a vote. The real conversation doesn't start until it's on the ballot. You can certainly vote against it. We have to try something, we have to move forward. This could be that opportunity. I do have some petitions tonight and handouts with information. Any questions?

Q: The city owns 40%. Who owns the other 60%?

A: Private owners. They could very well be owned by a bank.  
The fund will just go to the 40%.

Q: How do you keep the previous owner from buying it after it has been stabilized.

A: Couple ways to do that. They have to come up with a plan and their financing. But if they show up and owe the city a lot of money they will have to settle up first.

Q: Big issue, so many years ago between the abandonment to when it is available to be purchased. It doesn't take 10 years for a building to go to put, it takes a few years. I would sooner see a petition to say more of an immediate action. If they don't pay the fines, make it double, triple, quadruple. So bad that the person gives the property up.

A: Let me address that. The bond issue is its own separate entity now. It grew out of the vacancy committee. So many different angles. The legal tools committee is addressing. 3 years of not paying taxes before it can get taken away. That is what they are addressing. They are having a legal summit on Oct. 12<sup>th</sup>. Did you know that KC has legal tools to address these kinds of things. St. Louis was carved out...where's Fred? They had to fight tooth and nail where St. Louis could make use of this statute where STL could sue homeowners. We are looking at it on all those fronts. On the private side we are trying to make it so that the homes can get to the LRA quicker. Then it wouldn't be so much work to rehab them. The whole idea of preventing these issues. If there is a way that you can get a hold of the property sooner so that it doesn't become an eyesore. What can we do to reverse this trend? When you call about a property...the response after the waiting time is it's in court.

Q: The problem with that is that it goes to municipal court and there is no teeth. The best thing for that owner to do is to ignore it. This other legislation allows them to sue court in circuit court.

A: In KC it is working very well. We are working on it.

The folks in Jeff City decided to leave St. Louis out of the legal tools. We have a woman who is heading up our legal tools committee. Lawyers for City Neighborhoods. They were the driving force behind getting the statute passed.

We're trying all these different things...one things is not going to solve it. Trying to reinvent the LRA process. One way isn't going to fix it. Dee Brown is hosting a panel discussion at the Oct. 17<sup>th</sup> Safety Meeting here at 7pm. If you're never been to one of Dee's meetings I have to give her a plug. She does a fantastic job of getting speakers. This shows that vacant properties impact our safety. Dealing with this whole issue can really help us address a lot of other issues in the city now. We are paying for them now, way more than we would with the bond issue. The NS bond would be \$13 a year for a \$100,000 home.

13<sup>th</sup> Ward NIS – Andrew Fernandez. If you don't me I am the neighborhood improvement specialist for the 13<sup>th</sup> ward. Been an NIS for 7 years. I was in 24<sup>th</sup> ward. Just took over your area in May. Came to your first meeting and then y'all went on break. Nice to meet you. I work with the alderwoman here. Very nice lady that I enjoy working with. Speaking of SLACO, they are doing a neighborhood event...Neighborhoods United for Change. About bringing different neighborhoods together. Holly Hills is paired up with Lewis Place. On Oct. 15<sup>th</sup> we will tour both neighborhoods and show off each neighborhood. We will meet at the SLACO office, take a bus tour both areas, we will be discussing what the neighborhoods have in common and what differences exist. Only 10 people. He will be part of the group. Opportunity to meet your neighbors up north. One other thing, it was a quiet summer. Didn't have too many issues other than people not cutting grass. I drive around and you all cut your grass. Did want to bring up that we do have some problem properties in the neighborhood. He put them on our nuisance agenda. Detriment to your neighborhood, disturbances, possible drug activity. These properties are located 5500 and 5200 block of Dewey. We have met with the owners and the calls have come down. It's a process where I meet with the police officers, lawyers and owners to discuss issues. And if we can get that property to comply. They have done so far. On list for a year, not coming off until March 2017 and July 2017. We keep an eye on those properties just in case anything happens. Bevo is having a Bevo Bark and Boo. Pet parade and fair. Oct. 29<sup>th</sup> at 10am. Bring your pets down, there will be

a parade. A lot of the city services will be there. Neighborhood Stabilization. If you know anyone that wants to have a booth get a hold of the Bevo neighborhood assoc. Any questions?

Q: What about nuisance renters?

A: That falls under the nuisance laws.

Q: Grass is a foot high.

A: Contact Citizens Service Bureau.

That is not what I call nuisance. Nuisance is drug activity, noise oriented, stuff that will disturb your peace. We go after them if they don't cut their grass. Citizens' Service Bureau will cut the grass. 4080 Wilmington, he has left a tag on their door several times. If you let him know again he has no problem going out there again.

Q: How many calls does it take to put them on the nuisance property?

A: Two in a year. They need to make sure that it is a legitimate call. They perform an investigation.

Q: What if the owner doesn't live in the state?

A: They still get a cease and desist letter and post it on the property.

Steve Wilson – I have contacted a few homeowners in Bevo, those tenants moved out on their own. I work with Ginger Cavanaugh who is the prob properties officer. Two cars in 3900 Dover and Coronado. Lady reported the car had been there for three months. You guys are dog walkers, exercisers, I was shocked that it hadn't been reported sooner. Another van at Coronado and Fillmore with Wisconsin plates. It was there three weeks to a month. Put a couple stickers on it and someone tore the stickers off. It finally got moved. That's what I'm here...look at your crime stats, lots of larcenies. Change being taken out of cars. When it comes to derelict vehicles, there should be zero tolerance. \$100 fine. They don't need to be parking in your neighborhood. Some of these cars leaking, hazardous. Big issue for a nice neighborhood like Holly Hills. Serve four neighborhoods so I'm kinda busy. They work me hard in Bevo. Peer program, pilot program, sat down with chief of police and Keith Novarra to tow something in Bevo and Dutchtown. Tired of the scrapper vans. Every day I take one away and another comes to replace it. They hide them in the back yards. If its' not stolen, we don't go on private property. There's not a lot I can do if the car is on private property. I work for you guys. In HH you guys contact me and I respond quickly. Towed two cars out of the Patch neighborhood today. When you guys see something that doesn't look right. Nuisance neighbor, he will respond fast. A lot of these people when they're bothering you, hit them where it hurts with their cars. They will then leave the area. Just keep an eye out. Cleans up the neighborhood.

Q: If you serve them it shows up on the NSO's nuisance list.

A: No. Nuisance properties are separate but he can investigate and let Ginger Cavanaugh the problem property officer aware.

Alderwoman Beth Murphy – I love to be last. Wilmington and Leona. I do get one complaint from a lady there. Problem with Wilmington and Leona is that this is a bus route. Snow route and a bus route. So you can't do speed humps or bump outs. School buses can't make the turn with traffic calming devices. What we need there is enforcement. Tell them to call Capt. Mueller. Need police officer there for when they go through a stop sign. Need a cop here and there at some frequency. We need that presence on an irregular basis. These street calming devices will not apply there.

Q: How do we get that presence.

A: Keep calling Capt Mueller, call non emergency number. The more calls, the more officers we will get. Officer count is down and that is coming back up. That will help too. They need to be trained with radar guns. Officers have to be trained and certified on a regular basis.

CID program on Gravois, 13<sup>th</sup> ward. Passed for the Gravois Business District. Goes from Christy to Taft. If anyone is familiar with the Grove, that is a CID. Those are the kinds of things. Businesses tax themselves. Extra sales tax in that area and property taxes go up for businesses to pay for the CID. That bill will be introduced by myself and Alderwoman Howard on Thurs morning. Usually they go favorably because of the excellent results. Central West End is all a CID and Grand and Arsenal. Utility boxes are done, working to get more. Call me about sidewalks, trees. Want a tree call me, need a tree taken down, call me.

Q: 4080 Wilmington sidewalk is raised. He called it in a year ago.

A: Did you get a paper on it? They aren't the owners. The owner might have received a paper on it and haven't responded. 50/50 program, they give you a paper. If a tree root is coming up it should be free. Takes a good 18 months at least from when it is put in because the money is paid out of next year's fund. Sometimes things are delayed because of weather. She will ask about it again.

Q: How long does it take to get a tree trimmed?

A: It depends, they trim them on a 7 year cycle.

You can call CSB and they tell you they will trim it by Sept, then Dec. That was 2015. It would go to forestry. They have their own schedule. Maybe they assessed and they decided it didn't need to be trimmed. If you give me the exact address I can check.

Alderman Tom Villa – Mayor's office has two new young men working on a Rockefeller grant. More police, body cameras, city infrastructure, new soccer stadium, light rail. All initiatives that the mayor's office would like to start doing something about. How do we pay for these? Light rail alone, the study cost \$2 mil for city and county \$3 mil to see which route is more feasible. No money to pay for phase 2. Carondelet Commons and Green Street, new industrial park is a \$75 million project. Traffic cameras for Grand and Bates and Bates and Virginia need money to pay for server to feed the cameras. Takes pictures of license plates. Good crime reduction tool we think. Sr. Marie Charles park and Bellerive Park it will be nice when it's done. Handicapped accessible route connecting the two parks. Actively working as we speak. Lots of tree activity in Carondelet Park dealing with ash bohr disease. An inventory of all trees has been performed. That disease is something serious proactively trying to deal with it. Corner of Grand and Holly Hills. Has been a neighborhood eyesore. Held up by Missouri Housing and Development commission. Once they sign off on their end. It is hopeful this will happen next month. \$10 mil building 50 new units of housing. 55 units. Reuse some existing, 28 will be brand new. Where South Funeral will be a taller building with the newer units. Comm Street Greenway at Louisiana and Holly Hills to Louisiana and Shenandoah going to experiment with a traffic calming and make the street more bicycle friendly and pedestrian friendly. Meramec to Cherokee on Louisiana, build outs, more signage, more street marking. Federal money that we have to match. Some people will really like it others won't. May lose that parking spot in front of your house. This Friday at the Board of Alderman debate legislate placing \$10,000 limit for election cycle for city wide offices. Municipal law. You can't take more than \$10,000 from any one individual. \$10,000 is not a lot of money anymore. On Nov ballot we all need to be somewhat vigilant there will be at least two cigarette tax increases, senior citizens .05 every \$100 assessed value. You see a theme here, if we begin to deal with more police and infrastructure we have to use our bonding capacity that means we are going to raise your taxes to

impact the bonds. MSD was pay me now or pay me later. We voted for incremental increase. There will be some sticker shock when you get your real estate and personal property tax statements on Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>. We will be wearing black armbands. We hadn't helped the schools in over 30 years. .75 per \$100 assessed value. A lot of us are going to be impacted rather substantially so call Beth and complain.

Q: Two things for your to-do list can they also look at Wilmington and Leona. CSB do something about the trees and weeds growing out of the building at Grand and Holly Hills.

A: The Vecino group doesn't own the building yet.

Q: Issue about traffic lights, city was using them and they were determined to be unconstitutional.

A: I should have been more clear. These are crime reduction cameras. Has nothing to do with you and I stopping or not stopping at the light.

Q: Holly Hills and Grand Ave the new structure is that market rent or HUD controlled.

A: Not HUD controlled. 55 units, 10 will be for 18-21 year olds that age out of foster care. 10 will be market rate, remaining are for senior citizens.

#### Holly Hills Grills

Anna Baldwin – Neighborhoods United for Change – looking for some volunteers in the neighborhood to participate. SLACO with Civil Rights Enforcement Agency, NS team, Community Builders Network all part of this program. Working together to make better neighborhoods. Will be pairing two neighborhoods together, touring both neighborhoods, lunch and conversation. Please contact Anna Baldwin if you would like to join us. Sat morning Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>.

HHIA Board Openings – Election in September – if anyone else is interested in becoming a board member of HHIA please contact Anna B.

Dee Brown – just to tag onto what Stacy was saying. Oct. 17th St. Louis Safety group meeting panel discussion for problem properties. Very timely and controversial topic at Carondelet RecPlex. Invite all of you to join on the Facebook page. April is going to be a big election brought some voter registration forms.

Next meeting Nov. 28<sup>th</sup>