

HHIA Meeting
September 28, 2015

Roll call

Present: Lisa Bertke, Anna Baldwin, Kendal Dauphin, Stacy Ross, Eileen Muir

Absent: Mike Dauphin, Ted Disabato, Tara Ohler-Jenney

Introduce New Neighbors:

Election of 2015-2016 HHIA Board

Eileen Muir: she decided to get involved with the association and make it a better place to live for everybody.

Anna Baldwin: just retired from the construction industry, past president for the National Association of Women in Construction. She is already starting out of the gate.

Guest Speakers

Mayor Slay:

Thanks to Anna. It's good to see a good crowd and people that are concerned about their neighborhood. Met his wife over at the soccer field. Strong place in his heart for Carondelet Park. He doesn't live too far...in Boulevard Heights. Here with JP Johnson, staff member. Here to talk about crime. Wants us to know that there is nothing that he thinks about more, weighs on him more than when he sees violent crime in the city. Too much violence in the city. Met Robin, victim of a recent carjacking in the neighborhood. Can't imagine what that feels like. When it hits home, it's gut-wrenching. Recent shooting on Saturday. The Mayor missed it by 5 minutes. Shooting happened shortly after he drove by. Two guys at the park, giving each other the eye. One guy leaves with his dog and goes to the compost area. He was followed by the other guy who put his shirt around his hand as if he had a gun. The other guy had a gun pulled it out and shot him. The victim and suspect lived within two blocks of each other. Bad blood or bad feelings. One person looked at the other. Prosecutor felt that wasn't enough evidence to charge him. As someone who lives two blocks from his park. Up there early morning every day along with his wife. When he learns about shootings with innocent victims, carjacking, the downtown incident coming out of a Cardinals game. Shot in the back after complying. We do have some video of the suspect, using the credit card of one of the victims. We believe we will get him in custody sooner rather than later. #1 priority is and always has been reducing crime. There is nothing more important. Over a 10 year period, crime has dropped dramatically, about half. About a year and a half ago crime started ticking up, especially violent crime. When it happens in this neighborhood (seeing more crime in Holly Hills than ever before). Chief Dotson and Mayor went to the Police Chiefs Assoc in D.C. Other cities are seeing similar spikes in crime. Milwaukee, New Orleans, etc. They are seeing more boldness. They have more guns, assault weapons with extended magazines. It's too easy for people to get a hold of guns. Using those guns to victimize innocent people in our city. Nothing disturbs him more. He gets asked "is it local control, is it the police chief?" We cannot blame the police officers. He is one of the best police chiefs in the country. The Mayor talks to Chief Dotson all the time. We need more cops. Our police dept is lower than we would like to see it. Would like 160-200 more police officers. A year ago he submitted a bill for increased parking lot fees, increase low level taxes to add another 90 cops. They have talked to the White House...asking the federal govt for more resources. They are going to do everything they can to get the resources they need. Public

safety is the largest section of the budget. Over half the operating budget. But we need more cops. Get 15 additional officers from the federal govt. Sam Dotson has unlimited authority for overtime to make sure that we are covering our neighborhoods and major events. The police budget has gone up dramatically. Costs have gone up in a significant way. The police pension costs have gone up to pay for 250 more cops. They have a pension issue that they have to deal with. The state is responsible for the pension budget. They are trying to get more resources...asking the Board of Alderman for more...bill introduced by Donna Baringer. Will involve modest fee increases. Red light camera ordinance was invalidated by the court due to the way the law was written. They need to redo the ordinance and get it approved by the board of alderman. Want to use those revenues to pay for more cops. Police are doing a great job...they need more help and support. No one is able to determine why violent crime is increasing...one common theme is that there are too many guns on the streets. They are not advocating taking guns away from law abiding citizens. But when you see the stuff that he and the chief sees, they are finding extended magazines and loading semiautomatic weapons. You can pull a trigger and spray bullets out. Illegal guns in the hands of criminals. He is proposing some different treatment by the state legislature. Allow St. Louis and Kansas City to have different policies for guns. If you pull someone over in a car and they have a gun on the seat, the cop's hands are tied. Even if the person is a felon. There is something wrong with that law. Law enforcement is the last resort. More programs, yet we are seeing uptick in crime. # of performing seats has doubled in the education system. Better quality housing, more after school programs, more summer jobs programs. Job training programs in prisons for low level criminals. You're not going to save everybody, but we have a 70% recidivism rate. Very successful reentry programs for offenders that are recently paroled. The majority want to be straight and live a productive life. Often they have limited education and a felony conviction. Working with UMSL criminology dept. Rick Rosenfeld. Rick is looking at other cities to see what is working there. Often victims know their assailant and they do not want to cooperate with the police. 2/3 of those arrested and charged get off on probation. Many times there is multiple probations. Concerned about lack of consequences for their actions. He has called for a gun court. Asked the state legislature and the circuit court judges. Illegal guns in our city will get special attention. Get the bond and sentence that you deserve. No one is more frustrated than he is. This stuff is not as simple as "the cops aren't doing their job" or "you need to fire the chief". We need more cops, gun docket, common sense laws that will keep guns off our street. He has lived in this city his entire life, he didn't feel the same concern in 1993-94 with 248 murders. He has a higher level of concern now. They need help from communities, help from judges, help from legislators. We should not tolerate violence in our city. He was a witness to the knock-out game. The guy that committed that crime was found dead after trying to break into a home. In many cases the victims have the same criminal background as the assailants do. One violent crime is too much.

Q: Why can't we do away with guns?

A: We have a legislature that is pre-empting the state law. But we shouldn't have the same laws as the rural areas. He's not advocating getting rid of guns.

Q: He's from Chicago and the concerns are the same. Increase in criminal activity. People get afraid and anxious. Free-floating anxiety that doesn't help. Who are the actors? Gangs? What kind of patrol tactics are being used. He has noticed an increase in patrols.

A: Chief has employed hot spot policing. NOVA program. Bring the worst offenders in the room with felons and former felons, prosecutors, victims, etc. Get them in a room and tell them

they are watching them. We need more cops. We need residents to keep their eyes and ears open. The Mayor himself has called the cops on suspicious activity. Provided specific info and turned it over to the cops and the suspects were arrested for drugs and guns.

Q: How many police do we have right now? How many police on the streets? Fireman serving as police officers?

A: 1250. Down 70 from that number, they have a class in place. 6 districts. Chief has eliminated some positions at the brass level. 93 beat cops. Maybe 20 per shift. Special units. They are paying a lot of overtime to police officers. Rick Rosenfeld was very misrepresented by the press. He did not say that firefighters should be walking the streets as officers. Cops were trained as cops and firefighters were trained as firefighters. Just ask them to keep their eyes open. Look for suspicious things. The Mayor saw a suspicious driver, sent the driver's license in and he was driving in a revoked license and was casing the neighborhood. Take down license plates. Call the police and let them decide. We are doing what we can to provide the best with the resources that we have.

Q: When we first moved in police officers were required to live in the city. Maybe we need to revisit that policy. The neighborhoods were a lot safer when the police lived in the city.

A: Appreciate your comments. That will not likely change. The police union fought for a long time, the Mayor opposed. It was in the initiative petition to get local control. I think that our cops are professionals. They do have to live in the city for the first 7 years.

Q: Gun docket. Any idea why the judges are so quick now to put these criminals back on the street? Why are the judges releasing them?

A: It's not all the judges, but too many judges. He doesn't know. They live in our city. He can speculate...part of it is that the judges know the prosecutors and defense attorneys. The judges like to have the anonymity. The gun docket would focus on a certain judge, easier for the media to follow the case. I can't imagine any other reason other than trying to do a favor for defense lawyers. Within the last few days, the police chief called a judge out in a tweet. Defendant had multiple gun arrests, ordered him not to possess a gun anymore and let him go.

Q: Any plans to increase the patrols in the park or enforce the 10pm curfew? Park rangers are splitting time among 7 other parks.

A: The curfew is enforced per Officer Wilson. The Mayor walks the park and takes down license plates.

Q: Is there a way to hold a gun owner responsible for someone stealing their gun? To have that weapon properly secured.

A: Several hundred guns have been stolen in the city this year. People keep guns in their cars and do not secure them. You are not required to report it stolen. Another thing that the state legislature is against changing.

Q: Read that there was discussion of hiring state patrol. Is that off the table?

A: That won't happen. We need to hire more cops. Try to convince voters of that. At least \$90 million is needed.

Q: Crowd control in the park for incidents like the South Side Party. Crowds keep getting bigger.

A: The Mayor will talk to the chief and the Parks Dept. for these larger events.

Q: We still have 28 alderman. Any plans on redistricting?

A: We already have redistricted. After the 2020 census wards will be reduced to 14 alderman. Will save \$500,000. Not pocket change, but the police budget is considerably higher. Could hire maybe 10 cops with that money.

Q: New to Holly Hills. Moved from the county. Someone made a joke about having more people move in and move them out to the river. Are there any programs for taking back our neighborhoods such as the ones she saw in Brooklyn?

A: What do you mean by programs? More renovation in the last 10 years than ever before in the city. Crime is half of where it was 10 years ago. We are experiencing overall crime being down but uptick in violent crime. We have such a low crime rate in this neighborhood that even a small number of crimes is a big uptick compared to other areas of the city. Having said that when you start getting carjackings that is certainly very concerning. We are going to keep policing this but need help with more cops and gun laws. It's just what I believe.

Q: Dr. Rosenfeld mentioned the heroin epidemic. While the guns are #1 the drug epidemic is problematic too.

A: More heroin, purer forms of heroin. More heroin overdoses in the county than in the city. That is part of the undercurrent, the drug trade, bad drug deals. It is a big issue. Young people get addicted to the opiates at home from family prescriptions.

Q: Couple comments. Listening to the Mayor's K.C. peer, he and his police chief were at a crime scene where a 2 year old kid was killed. Can't fix stupid. Too many guns, too many stupid people with guns. KC Mayor said he is here, the chief is with me, but they are almost out of ideas. More police officers is good for response time. But we all have to be vigilant. 2 year old had 4 cop cars near the incident. Show other people that it is a safe neighborhood, know your neighbors, be on the lookout for others.

A: This is true. Cops were blocks away from the downtown shooting.

NOM:

Dee Brown – coordinates the South Side Safety Group (now the St. Louis Safety Group). Monthly meetings supplement or complement your neighborhood meetings. Group offers support and positive ways of dealing with city living issues. People from HOPE were present at last meeting. Next meeting is Oct. 19th. Location will be at Dojo Pizza. Meeting topic is Domestic Violence Awareness. November topic is Juveniles, December is team building event. Tandy Neighborhood Improvement Assoc has a program this Sat. They are partnering with Home Depot for a free home repair workshop.

Green Space Committee:

Mechelle Minden, our committee is in charge of all of the boulevards and green spaces. Hold monthly volunteer Saturdays. Working fairly well, we would love to increase the number of volunteers. Gardening and Grapes. Wed nights. Come out from 6-7, focus on one little spot, then retire to another spot and have a glass of wine and some snacks. Meet at the corner of Holly Hills and Leona. Makes a big presence in the neighborhood. Regarding the discussion of flower pots on NextDoor. They have talked with most business owners. A lot of business owners will be taking over ownership of the pots. They will be removing most of the other pots. We don't have the infrastructure and volunteers needed

to care for the pots. Many adopted beds look fantastic. Drive by Bellerive Blvd. It is absolutely beautiful.

Amy Trapp – HHIA Survey:

New Covenant United Methodist Church is having a Sunshine Crowd. Senior focus program. Charitable Estate planning workshop. She is part of the Neighborhood Leadership Academy. UMSL program. Come together and look at community projects. Working with Anna, Stacy, and some others. Composing a Community Assessment (survey). Before you can address a problem, you have to know what the problem is. My goal is to complete the survey by Halloween. It will be available on Nextdoor and HH Facebook page. Centralized drop spots. She will collate and present results with recommendations and action steps. Online option as well as paper.

~~13th Ward NIS – Chris Howard~~

Neighborhood Liaison Police Officer Stephen Wilson

Been on the force 21 years. Neighborhood liaison. My information is in this pamphlet. If you want to get a hold of me, please email and I will send out crime trends. You are the eyes and ears of the neighborhood. Great resource. Your neighborhood is one of the best neighborhoods in the city. Policemen can't do their job anymore. The minute they stop a bad guy, he records it and they claim harassment. If you guys call we have a reason to be there. He handles four other neighborhoods in addition to ours.

Q: Any analytics?

A: Daily crimes stats.

Every neighborhood is a "hot spot". When you email him, he will look at it. Derelict cars should be a focus. Zero tolerance. Part of the problem is they dump cars. If you see characters that don't belong there, get him license plates. Lived in the city for 10 years. They have personal lives too...but residents knocked on the door at 2am. It can be hard for police officers to live in the city. The officer's family becomes a target. Appreciate everyone that helps us with recording anything.

Q: Does it help to make more calls?

A: They prioritize everything. They are busy...they will get there when they get there. You have a lot of power. Get the info and come out...you take your neighborhood back.

Burglar running over in Princeton Heights, into a backyard, tells the resident he was playing hide and seek. They did end up catching the guy. Repeated calls to 911 or non-emergency number show demand and demonstrate patterns.

Q: 2am we heard a gunshot. Posted it on NextDoor. Then heard it a little farther off.

A: It never hurts to call.

Q: Recent carjacking. What should we do? What if you have a child in the car?

A: Give up the car. Be aware of your surroundings at all times. Two carjacking victims were on their phone and didn't know it was happening until the gun was in their face.

Q: Should I get a gun?

A: His personal opinion is yes. Don't keep it in the car.

13th Ward Alderwoman – Beth Murphy

Paving Holly Hills and Leona. Habitat for Humanity house being built at 4309 Gertrude. Gertrude and Morganford. Market rate home when sold. Will get tax abatement for 10 years. Right now it is an empty lot.

Ameren rebates, replace appliances and make them more energy efficient and you will get a rebate. Start Here Resource Directory. Printed by the Buddhist Outreach. You can get it online. When you get accosted by panhandlers, hand them out. They don't want us giving them money...we want to teach them how to fish. No matter what they say the problem is, there is a phone number in the directory. Bill that the mayor spoke of is in the Public Safety committee. Losing red light cameras really hurt the bill. Where will the funding come from?

Renovation at Grand and Holly Hills. Far from being completed. It's not for veterans. Vecino group did a similar building for veterans up on Delmar. Ours is going to be mostly for elderly people that are 80% of the poverty income level. 9 or 10 units set aside for young adults aging out of foster care. Run in connection with Epworth and Family Services. Start at 18 and can only stay until 23. They will get help with the rent. Help them get their feet on the ground. Southern Funeral home will be torn down, Shoppers Cleaners will be rehabbed. Stucco building could not be saved per the architect. 50 total units.

Q: Who is going to manage the building? Building near St. Anthony's had great mgmt., then mgmt. changed and now it is a horrible place.

A: Vecino Group

Q: Is it a done deal? Heard that the city tried to take the property by eminent domain.

A: Not at all. Passed through the Preservation Board hurdle. Two young men own both buildings now. They cannot tear the funeral home down until everything is in order. Have to jump through a lot of hoops.

Q: Retail on the lower level?

A: Lower level will be offices. We have to be vigilant and make sure it doesn't go down the tubes.

Q: Are they going to pave Grand Ave going through the park?

A: I don't think it was on the list.

Q: Bicycle paths, can they be timed better?

~~11th Ward Alderman – Tom Villa~~

Announcements

Holly Hills Pumpkin Parade on Halloween. At noon on Oct. 31st.

Holly Hills Newsletter is available.

Next meeting with be Nov. 16th at the Marine Corps League on Leona Street. Social event for the holidays.

50/50 Drawing

Next Meeting – Nov. 16th at Marine Corp League on Leona Street