

Benton Park West Neighborhood Association

Neighborhood Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 20, 2020

Submitted by Erin Godwin

Call to order, Scott McIntosh - 7:04 pm

Attendance - **19 adults**

- President - Scott McIntosh - **Present**
- Vice President- Tim Thomas - **Present**
- Secretary - Erin Godwin - **Present**
- Treasurer - Linda Hennigh - **Present**
- Member At-Large - Pam Welsh - **Absent**
- Member At-Large - Gwynn Jackson - **Present**
- Beautification - Stephanie McKinney - **Present**
- Block Link - Chris Schmidt - **Present**
- Communications - Scott McIntosh
- Community Garden - Linda Hennigh
- Our Neighborhood Garden - Scott McIntosh
- Dog Park - Jeni Poole/Pam Welsh - Absent
- Facilities - Bill Byrd - **Present**
- Fundraising - **Vacant**
- Housing Committee - Scott McIntosh
- SLACO Committee - Linda Hennigh
- Membership – Bill Byrd /Rosie Jackson - Absent
- Quality of Life and Safety - **Vacant**
- Youth Outreach - **Vacant**
- Cherokee Street Liaison - **Vacant**

DeSales Community Development, Tom Pickle and Becky Reinhardt

Last year they submitted to the Missouri Housing Development Commission for some low income housing tax credits to develop a senior building at the corner of Jefferson and arsenal with 40 two and three bedroom apartments. They were not successful so they met with MHDC staff to get their critiques of the proposal. The project grew from 40 to 49 units to make it a more efficient project from a development standpoint.

MHDC recommended it be mixed income with at least 10% of units market rate, so five of the 49 units will be market rate. An affordable one bedroom apartment would be \$600 a month, but a market rate unit would be \$720 a month; those units were added at the south end of the building. The building changed from an L-shaped building to one where the wing on Arsenal is tilted to parallel Arsenal and In

the rear will be the main resident entry with a canopy for vehicles to pull in the shelter from the rain to pick up and drop passengers. The vacated alley has been proposed to Alderman Guether.

They added a resident garden amenity, and they've identified potential rain gardens there. MSD said no stormwater remediation is needed, but they may include retention on site. They're looking at solar panels on the roof powering all common spaces in the building. To the west, will be the relocated community garden which was discussed with the gardeners. They combined more traditional architectural styles with contemporary to break up the building. Environmental work and surveys were done, and they applied to the City of St. Louis Community Development Administration for federal funds; they've been approved for \$500,000 in Home Funds for the project. Total project cost is just over \$10 million. They'll submit by October 30.

The corner commercial retail space is 900 square feet. They hope to get a cafe or sandwich shop; to appeal to small businesses they budgeted for tenant improvements including outdoor seating and maybe, due to COVID, a walk up window. They didn't want to compete with other spaces along Jefferson or Cherokee, and commercial space is not eligible for tax credits so they had to keep it small. There is a parking area to the west of the building on Arsenal mostly for residents of the building, but there will be some spaces for community garden members. They don't think there's a need for off-street parking for the commercial space as Arsenal has a lot of open space along the curb.

Treasurer's Report for July

Totals at end of July were \$19,280.15 in the checking account and the money market is \$5365.57 for a total of \$24,573.72 for current assets.

Chris Schmidt motioned to accept the Treasurer's Report. Tim Thomas Seconds. Approved.

Board Nominations and Committees

September is when board nominations are due for the 2021 Neighborhood Association Board. If anyone is interested, we would encourage you to do so. There's information on BentonParkWest.org; you can read about the board positions. Just shoot an email to any board member saying you want to run for a board position, and we will add you to the ballot for October.

You can also read about various committees and how to join those as well; you can decide how much time you want to put into something.

Surveillance Cameras

Chris Schmidt has a list of surveillance cameras facing the street or alley, so if a crime happens, video footage can be shared with the police to help solve that crime. If you're willing to share your footage in the event of a crime, message Chris Schmidt or any board member to get your address added to that list.

Alderman Dan Guenther, Ward 9

Dan likes the changes to the **DeSales** project fitting the building to the streetscape of Jefferson and Arsenal and having market rate mixed in with affordable to make the project bigger. DeSales deserves support from the neighborhood

COVID cases in the City have been right around 40 new admissions per day, more restrictions may be imposed. They're trying to avoid closing everything down. Tell neighbors to follow guidelines to avoid the need to shut down again. This week the mayor allocated an additional \$2 million to rental and mortgage assistance, so tell everyone there is rental and mortgage assistance available through the City of St. Louis right now for COVID.

Traffic Safety The Alderman is pleading with the streets director to come up with a comprehensive plan, because this one off study situation does not work. They're heavily working on trying to get the mayor to take this seriously, and she did this when she shut down the roads in downtown.

August election There were some pretty amazing wins and voter turnout rose from 29% two years ago to 42% this August.

DeSales won't get **TIF money** but maybe an abatement which guarantees their tax rate for a number of years. So we're getting both the projects, both the sales and the new lamps and Zeppelin project, have a similar sort of incentive structure that is based on what their actual taxes would be at market rate. And what incentive we can offer as a payment in lieu of taxes, sort of thing. So, but not

Barb Potts, Neighborhood Improvement Specialist

There has been more crime this year with COVID. Nuisance properties are still being addressed.

There is a house on South Jefferson that is vacant and had the door open a while back so Barb responded to a resident's call by putting in a notice to secure. Please watch that building. If you see anything awry, do not hesitate to call the police. The neighbor Anthony is helping watch out too, so say hi to him and thank him too. We wouldn't want to lose that really nice building.

They're only towing for police and if they are extremely dangerous and hazardous. I don't know how long that's going to be but that's how it is right now. They are extremely selective, and even some seemingly dangerous ones are taking a long time to get towed.

Emily Thenhaus, Cherokee Street CID

Six new businesses have opened on Cherokee street since March, They have had a number of closures announced. Overall, we're seeing a number of businesses being able to kind of pivot to different operations. A number also try to seek out these kind of temporary patio situations that the city has been allowing. Yaqui's is doing curbside concerts on Saturday evenings and closing down parts of the streets on Iowa and Fortune Teller Bar is looking to use some of the sidewalk space to change up their operations.

The CID had a call for artists for new public art in the district and received a good amount of proposals and are hoping to announce which they're moving forward with in the next couple weeks. Love Bank Park's new gazebo should be finalized in the next few days.

Last week or maybe the week before they distributed LED porch light bulbs donated by Ameren in an effort to brighten up the street and make things more visible and improve public safety. They have leftovers so if you are around Cherokee or in the neighborhood in general and need some new porch lights drop her note by email: Emily@Cherokeestreet.com.

The CID was trying to come up with new ways to improve public safety in the district and had a few listening sessions with neighbors. They'll be setting up a couple more dates, probably in the first or second week in September. If you're interested in having a small kind of zoom conversation with your neighbors about ways that we can improve safety, keep an eye out for that.

They are still in conversation about end of year events with the virus. The events have big sources of community and also of revenue for small businesses. If you have ideas or strong feelings about whether the show must go on or whether they should wait until next year email Emily.

Beth motioned to adjourn. Gwynn seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:02

Sara Johnson, Salvation Army and EntreMom

Sarah requested a letter of support from the neighborhood association for a grant she is writing; it doesn't impact the neighborhood association directly. Sarah works for the Salvation Army headquarters in Redmond, Washington. She is writing a grant in collaboration with Young Life, led by Darren Young, for a program called EntreMom, "entre" as in entrepreneur. The idea is a six month series of entrepreneurial workshops and mentoring for teen moms with Charlene Young; at the end, the teens in the program can present business plans and receive seed funding for a small business. Many of the teen moms they work with have a desire to start a business and just need a little help to get there.

The program will use neighborhood assets like small businesses on Cherokee and the businesses and business people connected to the neighborhood association to guide the young women. Many work in the service industry, so their hours have been cut significantly, or eliminated altogether by COVID. It is a competitive grant, and the program will take place at the Salvation Army on Arsenal's meeting space with women already connected to them. They need to show the Thomas Lyle Williams Trust Young Life and the Salvation Army have a wide network of neighborhood connections to make it sustainable through donations after the initial three years of funding end.

Alderman Guenther gave Sarah a letter of support today. There's so many great businesses in the area that could help 10 participants. They're keeping it small so they don't need additional staffing; Charlene and Sarah will do the program in addition to their current responsibilities. Young Life already has established volunteers who have offered to provide childcare for the young moms during the program.

Chris motioned to write a letter of support for EntreMom. Tim seconded the motion. The motion passed.