

# Benton Park West Neighborhood Association

## Neighborhood Meeting Minutes

Thursday, July 16th, 2020

Submitted by Erin Godwin

Call to order, Scott McIntosh - 7:04 pm

### **Attendance - 19 adults- 13 members, 6 guests**

- President - Scott McIntosh - **Present**
- Vice President- Tim Thomas - **Present**
- Secretary - Erin Godwin - **Present**
- Treasurer - Linda Hennigh - **Present**
- Member At-Large - Pam Welsh - **Present**
- Member At-Large - Gwynn Jackson - **Present**
- Beautification - Stephanie McKinney - **Present**
- Block Link - Chris Schmidt - Absent
- 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**

**Attendees:** Christa Hughes, Rick Shang, Marit Lau, Kathryn Turban, Beth Fowle, Nate Fowle, Jen, Will

### **President's Report**

Scott is adding all neighborhood association meeting minutes to the website. 2019 has been added, and he's started 2020. All neighborhood meeting minutes will be reviewed in August.

### **June Treasurer's Report**

Income included a couple donations and renewals, Bill Byrd's Facebook birthday fundraiser, and the fees from a few community garden plots. Costs were insurance on the vegetable and botanical gardens, a couple bank fees on money sent through PayPal. Money was moved from the money market account to balance out the budget.

Christa Hughes motioned to accept the June Treasurer's Report. Bill Byrd seconded. Passed.

## **Annual Budget**

The annual budget hasn't been approved yet as everything kept changing this year. Income is down as Fair St. Louis, usually \$4,500 to \$5,000 of income, was cancelled. Money was moved from the money market accounts to cover expenses. 50/50 is still a line item in case we are able to meet in person this fall. There are general donations which were lowered to \$300 since people are less likely to renew or join without in person meetings. Same for the dog park. Expenses: The website, web addresses, and Dropbox storage of BPWNA files and pictures were renewed. The copier lease expired, and the copier was returned; that monthly maintenance fee and supply cost is gone. Annual events were cancelled due to the pandemic, so expenses for events were zeroed out as not much will happen this year. There may be community activities this fall that maybe won't cost anything. Facilities costs are insurance for the dog park and gardens and other annual expenses. Some annual bills have not come in yet. Dog park maintenance is budgeted, but volunteers have been taking care of it so far this year. More was spent than anticipated for the vegetable garden to get more dirt, mulch and things for people.

## **Neighborhood History**

Christa noted Trailnet did a tour/scavenger hunt you could do alone to find a location and learn the history. She wants one in Benton Park West to share history and bring neighbors together. Edna Campos Gravenhorst's book *Benton Park West* has information about the different houses and more history. The museum stocks it, or it can also be bought from Arcadia Publishing; the link is at the bottom of the BPWNA website's History page. The History page has an overview of neighborhood history and there's more in Throwback Tuesday blog posts linked at the bottom. BPWNA still has books on researching your house's history which were donated for new neighbor packets. Homeowners can email BPWNA to get a neighbor packet including the book.

## **DeSales Senior Housing Development**

DeSales Housing Corporation will present updates at the August board meeting on their proposal for a new mid-rise, senior living facility with street level commercial space at Jefferson and Arsenal. They'll also meet the gardeners of the community garden as they still want to incorporate a community garden into the project for both them and the seniors. The senior living facility would be mixed income. They also want to join the general meeting potentially in August.

## **Volunteering**

Anyone interested in getting involved in the neighborhood association, a committee, or with an idea/project should reach out to board or committee members. We always need more volunteers. Contact information is on [BentonParkWest.org](http://BentonParkWest.org).

## **Security Cameras**

Chris Schmidt, Block Link Captain, records contact information of residents with exterior security cameras who are willing to share footage with the police if a crime occurs nearby. Email any member of the board that you've got cameras; we just need your name and address.

## **Vacant Properties**

The board met with Peter Hoffman, an attorney for Legal Services Eastern Missouri, about privately owned vacant properties in our neighborhood and ways to encourage property owners to fix it up or sell to someone who will. We're sending him five properties in our neighborhood that are in such bad shape that they may collapse soon. His team will research the property, identify the owner and any code violations or back taxes they may have, and provide the neighborhood association with that information free of charge. We will then send letters to those property owners asking about their properties and start a conversation. More to come.

## **Board Meetings**

Anyone can attend the board meetings. The Zoom link for the board meeting will be on the neighborhood website. Board meetings are the second Monday at 6:30 on Zoom.

## **Dan Guenther, Ward 9 Alderman**

**Covid Safety** A full bar and restaurant shut down is trying to be avoided as Covid cases rise. We're reminding everyone to continue to social distance, wash your hands, and please wear a mask. Hopefully, if we all follow that, we won't have to shut things down again. It's been devastating a lot of our small businesses, and a lot of our community works in service.

It's important to always carry a mask with you; people may approach you and not practice social distancing. If somebody starts getting into your space, it doesn't take much to put on your mask.

**COVID Financial Relief** Please take a look and share info especially in the neighborhood and with neighbors. The State of Missouri announced a \$5,000 grant for small businesses this week. Rental and mortgage assistance is available now including an up to \$1,600 grant; info is on the city website. Utility assistance is available at Guardian Angel Settlement Association (3300 South Jefferson); they help with contacting utility providers. Please help spread the word of these programs to neighbors.

**Board of Aldermen** Board Bill 71, on airport privatization, was scheduled for a vote the following day. Board Bill 77 to revoke Ward reduction is going to be perfected tomorrow and will be debated through next March. Board Bill 92 to Close the Workhouse will be passed; Alderman Guenther thanked residents for their support of the proposal over the past two years. Board Bill 63 regarding excessive force passed unanimously and is on the mayor's desk.

**DeSales Senior Housing Development** DeSales will be at the BPWNA general meeting, because the application is due in September. The biggest change to the proposal is that the southern half of the lot along Jefferson was originally a second phase, they're adding 9 units for 249 total and making 10% of the units market rate. Anyone that wants to be part of that conversation should attend next month.

**August 4 Election** Booth Manor and St. Agnes won't be polling locations, because they are senior homes. Anyone that votes there will now be going to the Salvation Army Temple Corps at 2740 Arsenal, because it's a giant gymnasium. Please help spread that word.

There's a ninth ward candidate forum and endorsement Thursday, July 23 at 7pm via Zoom. Candidates will speak and attendees will vote who to endorse for the August election.

Sarah Johnson is up in Michigan because her father passed. Sarah's done a lot for the neighborhood, so send her love.

### **Officer Jazmin Garrett, District 3 Police Liaison**

Benton Park West had 26 reported crimes from June 11 to July 15: 1 rape, 3 aggravated assaults, 1 burglary, 3 vehicle thefts, and 18 larcenies. Most larcenies were items left inside vehicles and vehicle parts taken off vehicles. No stolen vehicles have been returned to the owner. Make sure car doors are locked and alarms are on; do not leave any valuable items in plain view.

Overall crime is up year-to-date compared to last year. Most significant was larcenies: last year there were a total of 48 larcenies, and this year in July there's already 75. We are down in robberies.

The rape last month in the 3100 block of Oregon was a person the victim saw in the neighborhood prior. The rapist may be from the neighborhood or nearby. Video surveillance footage is being sought.

The only stats for gunfire related calls for service are the number/location of shots which are tracked but not a part of the statistics given the neighborhood unless someone is injured.

### **Barb Potts, Neighborhood Improvement Specialist**

Gravois Park and Benton Park West have had a rough couple weeks, and it is extremely important if you have a camera to give Chris Schmidt your address as cameras have been absolutely critical in a number of situations. Even when authorities can't identify someone immediately, pictures are submitted to their social media accounts, and people have reached out anonymously with information on subjects. We've had a number of shots being fired/ shootings and fires that were either arson or caused by fireworks. There've been a lot of larcenies in every neighborhood, especially Gravois Park. Neighbors are working very hard with police to get this guy off the streets.

### **Emily Thenhaus, President of Cherokee CID**

**Public Art Proposals** Yesterday Cherokee Street made its first call for artists for new public art this summer. The arts committee is running the process and has two categories for proposals funded by the CID. First for a mural at the El Leñador building at Michigan/ Cherokee which is

often tagged with graffiti. There's also an open category of any kind of public art ideas for the street. Submit ideas by August 7. Information is in the forums at [Cherokeestreet.com](http://Cherokeestreet.com).

**Real Estate** A new part of the website lists available property within the Cherokee Street Community Improvement District for sale or commercial rent. You can submit listing with the form at the end of the page, [CherokeeStreet.com/property](http://CherokeeStreet.com/property).

**Public Safety** Last month's CID meeting included a community conversation about ways to improve public safety on Cherokee Street beyond law enforcement. They've created a forum at [CherokeeStreet.com/public-safety](http://CherokeeStreet.com/public-safety) to collect ideas and will host listening sessions with smaller groups in coming weeks. Folks can check out the website page or reach out to Emily directly.

### **Miscellaneous**

**Neighbor Networking** Christa asked if residents on a street might share their information to get to know neighbors.

**Diversity** Christa stated she felt meeting attendance didn't match neighborhood diversity and asked how to diversify the organization; Scott noted in person meetings are more diverse than most other neighborhoods' meetings but agreed more diversity is needed.

**Dog Park** Christa noted she hasn't seen another person when at the dog park and would like a dog for her dogs to play with.

**Neighborhood Party** Christa volunteered to organize a socially distanced block party or other event to bring folks together. It was noted that a street could be temporarily closed, or it could be held at Love Bank Park at Nebraska and Cherokee.

**NextDoor** On NextDoor, you have to click into an event and then click on the Zoom link or Google Form.

Bills Byrd motioned to adjourn, Tim Thomas seconded.  
Meeting adjourned at 8:03