

Benton Park West Neighborhood Association

September 16, 2021

Elected Board Members

Erin Godwin, President present

Chris Schmidt, Secretary present

Tim Thomas

Linda Hennigh, Treasurer present

Kathryn Turban, Member At-Large present

Vacant, Member At-Large

Call to order at 7:04 This was a hybrid meeting (virtual and in person)

Review and accept August neighborhood meeting minutes and review

September Board meeting minutes Elaine Brune asked to correct the minutes to indicate that she is the MTUG Board President. Emily Thenhous's name does not have an e at the end. Kathryn motioned to accept and Elaine seconded. Passed.

Review and accept August Treasurer's report Kathryn motioned to approve, Chris seconded. Passed. Linda mentioned that someone paid via square for the dog park, and she didn't know who. Sarah and Erin will look into those details.

Upcoming Events and Committee Reports

Membership Committee report Gwynn has nothing to highlight this month. Elaine mentioned that MTUG is not a resident or a business but an organization. We may want to update that category.

Block Link ChrisSchmidt reported on how the Drive In movie night went. Attendance continues to be low. September 25 will be the last movie for this year, Coco. It starts at dusk!

Open Board & Committee Positions: 1 Member At-Large, Fundraising, Quality of Life + Safety, Communication., Youth Engagement and Beautification. Erin encouraged people to become more involved by just joining in. Getting to know others makes it much easier. Next month is the board election. All positions except for President will be open; nominees for President need at least one year of the board. Go to BentonParkWest.org for information about different positions.

Historic Preservation Policy Development: We have been in talks with Dutchtown South Community Corp to work on this. If you have input you can contact Michael sullivan6312@sbcglobal.net or Rick at mail@RickShang.com

The *problem property* at 3320-26 Michigan is falling down. We have an attorney from Legal Services of Eastern MO who is currently helping us get it taken care of. We have other buildings that are falling down, but this one is our first experience suing the owner.

The Neighbors Naturescaping project near the corner of Cherokee and Gravois is a small space that needs some serious work. We will be doing prep work this coming Saturday from 8-12 in anticipation of a group of volunteers on Friday September 24. The space needs to be cleared before any planting can happen. Erin won a grant from Operation Brightside to purchase plantings once it's ready to go.

There will be no Trunk or Treat again this year because of Covid. Instead, we'll have a *house decorating contest*. The form to let us know you're participating is on the website at bentonparkwest.com. There will be cash prizes.

Board meetings will move to the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7pm for at least the next few months because multiple board members are participating in the Neighborhood Leadership Academy on Monday evenings.

MTUG Memorial Garden cleanup on September 18 from 9am-noon. They have a professional gardener leading them, and it's really lovely. There is also a "Little Greenhouse" in the garden for plant clippings as well as a Little Library and a Geocache.

There will be a *MTUG Telethon* on the 2nd Saturday in December from noon Saturday to noon Sunday. It will be livestreamed on Youtube and Facebook.

Dog Park Yappy Hour will be September 19 from 3-6pm at the corner of Nebraska and Utah. This is to encourage new membership. The gate code has been changed recently. They are also looking for bids to remove dead limbs from older trees. This has become a safety issue. They currently have 2 bids and are seeking another. Membership is \$35 for 1 dog and \$15 for each additional dog.

Neighborhood Cameras: Please contact ChrisSchmidt if you have an exterior camera! If there is an incident near you, this might be a resource for the police to

solve it. You do not need to testify or identify yourself other than giving the police access to your camera so they can make a copy of the incident on a thumb drive. That recording is the evidence they need.

9th Ward Alderman, Dan Guenther (c) 314-304-6797 | guentherd@stlouis-mo.gov Cameras are encouraged because they produce arrests.

He mentioned that Benton Park is hosting a free concert of Jake's Leg this Sunday at Benton Park from 4-7pm.

Regarding city business, there was recently a Health and Human Services Committee hearing. The Health Department is pushing out a survey for all residents about how they can best provide services to residents. They are looking beyond just Covid, like clean air, healthy home repairs for seniors to help particularly with utility cost saving services. The survey just started but Dan doesn't know the closing date.

There was also a Public Safety Meeting with much discussion about the city jail system. Locks need to be changed at the Justice Center so the Workhouse is being used temporarily. So far, it's cost about 6 million dollars, and they expect it to cost about 12 million dollars more. The crime issues downtown are a big issue right now as well. There are major problems with large groups of youth where people are getting shot or robbed. There will be an increased police presence coming from special units in the police department rather than neighborhood patrol officers. Covid has made downtown a ghost town, making it inviting to groups interested in mischief.

Trash. About a month ago the city started collecting trash and recycling together because we are short about 40 drivers. The schedule of pickups is better, but recycling is being neglected. It IS being collected at recycling dumpsters near firehouses. The closest to us is at Jefferson and Pestalozzi.

Cherokee Street CID, Emily Thenhaus, Executive Director emily@cherokeestreet.com Lots of new businesses. Black Coffee just opened at the Luminary and hours are Wednesday through Saturday from 9-3pm; Cherokee Grill just opened near Nebraska and Jefferson. Swade dispensary is at the intersection of Cherokee and Jefferson; Gifted Dreams photography is open at Louisiana and Cherokee; Apotheosis Comics will have its grand opening at

Cherokee and Jefferson this coming Saturday. The CID is working on adding new trees and some concrete planters in December. The current planters will be available for free relocation in the community. An additional (private) trash collection service has been added for Saturdays. They just awarded 13 new camera grants for businesses and homes to have updated cameras. They are getting proposals for new art and are hoping to have it installed soon. There is a new mural on the Ohio side of Whiskey Ring that will be finished tomorrow.

Events include a successful movie night of their own in August. They are hosting Second Saturdays again, Trick or Treat on Cherokee, Cherokee Street Jazz Crawl will be on November 6, Cherokee Street Thanksgiving Potluck on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, and the Print Bazaar is back on the first week of December. Emily got a donation from Ameren of porch lights that she is giving out for free as well as some masks.

The Cherokee Street CID voted tonight to remove the Cherokee Native Statue that was installed in 1986. It has become clear that it is not an appropriate way to honor indigenous communities and not a good symbol for Cherokee Street. It will be removed and donated to the National Building Arts Center in Sauget.

The future of Indi Hop was brought up. The Grove has been a partner but is not interested next year. They are considering doing it just on Cherokee Street, but no decision has been made yet. LoFi and Cinco de Mayo are anticipated to return in the spring if they can be done safely.

Next Meeting: Thursday, October 21 at 7:00 p.m., Five Star Senior Center & Google Meet

Elaine won the door prize of a \$50 gift card to Schnucks which will be used to refill the pantry at MTUG.

Sarah motioned to adjourn. Kathryn seconded. Adjourned.