



LAFAYETTE SQUARE RESTORATION COMMITTEE

May 11, 2021 via Zoom

CALL TO ORDER 7pm

Tom Murphy, President (President@lafayettesquare.org)

Welcome New Residents: David and Marla Taubenheim

Review and approve April 13, 2021 Minutes: Motion by Sheri Mistretta, 2nd by Suzanne Sessions

[~40 participants logged in]

ALDERMAN REPORTS

7th Ward

Jack Coatar (coatarj@stlouis-mo.gov)

- Back in session, meeting virtually and expecting return to in-person meetings, which are more productive.
- Priority is passing budget by July 1. Board of Alderman's role is limited; can move things around but not add items. Anticipating discussion regarding funding police department (e.g. cutting 98 positions that have been waiting to be filled); issue is funding overtime and what that number realistically needs to be.
- Also will be discussing how to spend American Rescue Plan dollars; likely will seek public input.
- There will likely be some Ward capital but don't know what that number is yet. When that amount is set, will discuss with the neighborhood what the needs are, such as traffic calming.
- **Question:** How can neighbors provide feedback on how this money is spent? **Answer:** There will be public input/forums on the budget, and people are always welcome to email Jack or Christine directly.
- **Question:** Will major be transparent regarding where the big buckets of dollars will be going? **Answer:** Jack expects it will be very clear how the rescue plan money will be spent.
- **Question:** A lot of residents have received assessments that have risen up to 100% (!). How do we proceed if we are not agreeing with the assessment? **Answer:** This is a residential re-assessment year. On average, 7th Ward residences went up 8%, which is a sign that property values are going up. If the assessment went up significantly more than that, Jack's guess is that abatements have expired, and there will be sticker shock as a result of that! If that's not the case though, you can appeal to the city...you can also go to the state board (but Jack recommends hiring counsel if it gets to that point). Every once in a while, there is a glitch though.

6th Ward

Christine Ingrassia (ingrassiac@stlouis-mo.gov)

- **Question:** What is the progress of the traffic study in the NW Quadrant? **Answer:** There was supposed to be a study done in conjunction with the developers of the NW Quadrant properties. This was all slowed down because of COVID. We have also been putting pressure on MODOT regarding Choteau (speeding, safety, crosswalks, etc.)...making progress but no meaningful results yet.

POLICE REPORT

3rd District

Officer Sherdon Douglas (sdouglas@slmpd.org)

- April: 6 crimes—2 vehicle thefts, 2nd was recovered and led to an arrest; 3 larcenies – construction equipment, cell phone, laptop from a vehicle
- May: 2 thefts from a vehicle
- Crime is down 60% from last year.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Circuit Court Judges

Michael F Stelzer and Katherine M Fowler

- **Katherine Fowler:** Lives in LafSq, appointed to the bench in November of 2017; felony criminal trials and civil cases >\$25K.

- **Judge Stelzer:** Appointed in 2004 as an Associate Circuit and rotated through family, criminal, and civil courts. Has been a Circuit Judge since 2012 serving in all divisions except Juvenile. Have been presiding Judge since January. We have done a good job of continuing to stay open throughout COVID except for a period last spring when we had to shift from 95% in-person to 95% remote. We have kept dockets moving. Since March, we have started bringing jurors back in the building. We have been scheduling high-level cases 3-4 per week.
- **Question: How much of a backlog is there and what is the plan to address it? Answer (Judge Stelzer):** Last year caseload was 1800, and now its up over 1900. Total cases pending on felonies has gone up 150 total. Historically the docket has been higher than now, was at a low point when COVID started, so we feel this is a manageable load. Confident that by the end of the year we can move the cases in which suspects have been confined.
- **Question:** Please talk about the moratorium on evictions. **Answer (Judge Stelzer):** The moratorium is in place, but we do have a number of exceptions, such as if the tenant has committed a crime. The judge hears the case and may rule for the landlord in certain cases.
- **Question:** What is the impact of the plan to close the workhouse by the current budget that came out, and what is the impact on the court system? **Answer (Judge Stelzer):** The judges are not in charge of the workhouse or the city jail, but we do make decisions on conditions of release that could lead to someone being held in those places prior to trial. There is a division that handles this exclusively. We have greatly expanded our pre-trial services, using, for example, GPS. If evidence has been produced that someone is a danger to a community or the suspect has consistently failed to appear, then they need to be held. Reducing the jail population in general is [positive], but if attorneys have to start driving long distances, it could impact our docket. **Judge Fowler:** Judges have nothing to do with who goes to the workhouse, whether it should be closed or not, what the conditions are. Judges decide whether someone needs to be held prior to trial.
- **Question:** Please speak to bond decisions. **Answer (Judge Stelzer):** It is a judicial decision what the bond is set at. If defense lawyer and state agree that there is a set of conditions appropriate for release, the judge does have to sign off on it. **Judge Fowler:** We are honoring the Supreme Court rules and only holding people if they are a danger to a community or failing to show up for trial. **Judge Fowler:** The populations have come down considerably since moving out federal inmates. Prior to that, we had 800 detainees, and only 8 misdemeanors; those were all domestic violence charges. [Some of the information shared in the media] is simply not accurate.
- **Question:** Are landlords someone compensated during the rent moratorium. **Answer (Judge Stelzer):** There is a lot of local, state, and federal money out there for both landlords and tenants. There is opportunity but cannot speak to individual cases.

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION UPDATES

Lafayette Preparatory Academy

Gail Buffington

- Last day of school for 8th grade is May 22 and rest of school on May 28.
- Uptick in traffic is because testing is happening for students, which includes virtual students coming in at different times.
- There will be activity during most of June and part of July for summer sports activities.

Lafayette Park Conservancy (LPC)

Michael Bushur

- Not present.

Lafayette Square Arts Council

Donna Korando

- Not present.

Barr Branch (Mar/Jun/Sep/Dec)

Tonnya Joy (tjoy@slpl.org)

- N/A

NEW AND ON-GOING BUSINESS

Apartment Fire in LafSq

Tom Murphy

- There was a devastating an apartment fire across from Clementine's on Monday 5/3 that displaced 3 families.
- Christina Ryan organized a donation drive that ultimately turned over to the LSRC and raised ~\$5800 from 70+ unique donors.

- Everyone is doing okay and is very appreciative. They are in temporary housing. They would love to stay in the Square or as close as possible. They have been in the neighborhood for as long as decades.
- On the back end, we did get some guidance from our LSRC accountant. We hope it never happens again, but if we did need to, we would go through a 3rd party such as GoFundMe rather than fundraising through the LSRC.
- **Question:** For those that weren't aware of the fire, is there a way we can still help? **Answer:** Once the families are settled, there will be a need for material donations and gift cards. As those opportunities for needs arise, Tom will share through social media and general membership. Please share any opportunities for housing, as well. One family has 4 kids (teens and early 20s).

House Tour Update

Jill Peckinpaugh/Suzanne Sessions

- Virtual House Tour and in-person Garden Tour May 29-31. Everyone should have received a flier. We have been in the newspaper, on TV (Show Me STL), on radio shows...we are marketing in a different way than we ever have, as well. A LOT is online. Volunteers have been working hard to make this happen!
- Live garden tour (7 stops) is limited to 800 tickets, and there will be business vendors as well.
- **Please spread the word!** Website: www.lafayettesquare.org/housetours
- This is a deciding point on whether we are going to continue to do this...it's a LOT of work, and we need everyone to pull together. 😊

Auction Update

Suzanne Sessions

- As of today, we have ~47 confirmed items...aiming for 51 to commemorate the 51st house tour.
- 3 Different vacations spots (Spain, Michigan, Cape Cod); wonderful services—i.e. watercolor painting services; special objects, etc.

Summer Farmer's Market

Tom Murphy

- Finalizing a date with the group that provides Tower Grove and other markets. Hold the date of Friday, August 15. It will be on Park Ave between Missouri and Mississippi. There will be all kinds of food trucks and vendors (including LafSq businesses).

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Treasurer's Report (Jan/Apr/Jul/Oct)

Sheri Mistretta (treasurer@lafayettesquare.org)

- N/A

Business

Bethany Budde

- Not present.

Development

Suzanne Sessions

- We've had a change in administration at Cultural Resources, which has affected ability to get projects through to the Preservation Board. Back, temporarily, with Jane Cameron until new leadership. Cultural Resources is really struggling because of COVID. We haven't had any project presented to Development Committee in many months...expecting this to change soon when more things open up and more construction can happen.
- Problem Properties: srcproblemproperties@gmail.com

Beautification

Linda Weiner (linderweiner@gmail.com)

- Thank you to volunteers pitching in (Brightside volunteers as well as neighbors). We still have medians on Lafayette to mulch and marigolds to plant on Park Ave. For anyone that has a public space that would like marigolds or dianthus, or anyone that would like to volunteer, please let Linda know.

Communications

Jeff Baird (communications@lafayettesquare.org)

- We continue to push the House Tours on social media.
- There will be a LafSq merchandise table at the House Tour with all the old merchandise that has been found in the Park House!
- There will be handout bags given out at random to in-person attendees.
- New folding chair colors coming – red and dark blue.
- Be on the lookout for the first quarterly newsletter.

Membership

Christina Ryan (membership@lafayettesquare.org)

- Currently at 264 Memberships

Capital ImprovementIan McCormack (ian.mccormack@mccormackbaron.com)

- Sign posts are going in at the Plaza to hold information for Brick and Bench Program going in within a few months.
- Putting together list of historic signs/sign poles; more to report in coming months.
- The column that was knocked over on Lafayette Ave is in progress.

Block Captains/SafetyGlenn Eckert (safety@lafayettesquare.org)

- We have more Block Captains now than we ever have! Thank you to everyone volunteering.
- If anyone is interested in learning how to operate the camera and software system at the substation, let Glenn know. We would like to have several people who are comfortable using and utilizing it.
- Traffic/Noise—small groups of neighbors meeting to problem-solve.
- Thank you to Bev Murphy who has put a lot of work into the design and improvement of the substation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Gateway Cup: Their website is advertising the race as happening. We do not have a formal announcement yet though.
- Saturday May 29, there will be a significant brick donation/dedication celebrating Jim King and several of his friends and family. Jim's brother Paul King and his wife will be present for the ceremony. It would be nice to see turnout from the neighborhood in appreciation of the family's very generous donation to the LSRC.
- Joe Millington: PRIDE-CARE-A-VAN is SUNDAY, JUNE 6, 2021 AT 12 PM CDT – 3 PM CDT, parade of vehicles will be cruising on three sides of Lafayette Park!

Next LSRC Board Meeting: June 1, 2021 @7pm**Next LSRC General Membership Meeting: June 8, 2021 @7pm****ADJOURN:** 8:15pm, Motion by Sheri Mistretta, 2nd by Ian McCormack