



LAFAYETTE SQUARE RESTORATION COMMITTEE

June 8, 2021 via Zoom

CALL TO ORDER 7pm

Tom Murphy, President (President@lafayettesquare.org)

Welcome New Residents: Mike & Michael (Dolman) – 1st meeting 😊; Courtney (Dolman); Chris & Marlene (Whittemore) moved into the house they've owned since 2015

Review and approve May 11, 2021 Minutes: Motion by Sheri Mistretta, 2nd by Kelly Schlueter

ALDERMAN REPORTS

6th Ward

Christine Ingrassia (ingrassiac@stlouis-mo.gov)

- Not present.

7th Ward

Jack Coatar (coatarj@stlouis-mo.gov)

- Board is still meeting remotely. Budget is dominating discussion, which has to pass by the end of the month. The Board can make cuts but not additions.
- After that, will decide what to do with the federal dollars from Rescue Plan.
- Also looking into how to spend the limited amount of discretionary ward funds (about \$250K vs usual \$500K because it's based on sales tax dollars); will work with neighborhoods on prioritizing capital projects.
- **Question:** Property taxes have been going way up...seems like neighborhoods should have more money. Will body cameras be funded for the police? **Answer:** The delay on body cameras was actually the uniforms; they needed specific kinds of shirts, for example, to mount the cameras. Many officers now have the cameras. As for property taxes, there is a very specific process for appealing. Historically, properties have been undervalued; most of these dollars go to the school district and other special projects. Also, remember that we're facing a \$70 million shortfall coming out of the pandemic. So that is coming right off the top of the federal money coming our way to fill in holes in the budget from so much lost sales tax. We cannot use federal funds for cutting taxes.
- **Question:** During the pandemic, the streets were very noisy at night...**Answer:** There's no great answer...it takes enforcement. We can talk about restricting size of lanes, but ultimately, it's bad behavior and people feeling like they can get away with it. The new mayor had initially cut back some of the patrols downtown, but she has said that we're going to get some of those back.
- **Question:** The morale is terrible in the police force...they don't want to address things other than the essentials because they don't want to be accused of ... I'm concerned for the future. **Answer:** It's true that morale is low. The mayor has cut about 98 vacancies of the 150; She left 50, but we probably won't fill those. We're going to have to take a hard look at city hiring processes, which may be exacerbated in the police department, but affect ALL city departments. (There are vacancies in every department from forestry to lifeguards.) Currently we're losing more officers per pay period than we're bringing in. (We need to do away with the residency requirement.)
- **Question:** Is there anything we can do as a neighborhood? **Answer:** You could provide a list of top 3 priorities to the Mayor's office...but not a laundry list. We need to be cognizant that, while there *are* issues in Lafayette Square (not downplaying those), some neighborhoods are going to have 30-40 murders this year....have to keep that in perspective.

POLICE REPORT

3rd District

Officer Sherdon Douglas (sdouglas@slmpd.org)

Crimes for May:

- Officer Douglas was on Zoom, and due to tech difficulties with audio, we will have her combine stats at next meeting.

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION UPDATES

Lafayette Preparatory Academy

Gail Buffington

- Not present.

Lafayette Park Conservancy (LPC)

Michael Bushur

- New fence section at SE corner (Laf/Miss) was installed. This was a pilot to figure out how to do the engineering. ~50 years ago fence was renovated but the way they were installed was unstable.
- Cook Pavilion (gazebo for concerts) has been getting attention with repainting and restoring. Thank you to Tom Dahms and other volunteers.
- New group has completed survey to invest in the trees in the park. The city doesn't have the resources to invest in the trees the way we'd like. They can cut down dead trees but cannot invest in new trees.
- Calling for volunteers with gardening experience who would like to take on a section of garden, be a garden "captain." Some areas need this continuity of an organizer to recruit and direct volunteers.
- The Parks Department will allow the Conservancy to open the bathrooms on the weekends.

Lafayette Square Arts Council

Donna Korando

- 4 of the 6 concerts are booked: Ralph Butler 7/3, Jeremiah Johnson 7/17, The Antics 7/31, Rogers and Neinhuse (sp?) 8/14

Barr Branch (Mar/Jun/Sep/Dec)

Tonnya Joy (tjoy@slpl.org)

- Not present.

NEW AND ON-GOING BUSINESS

House Tour Recap

Jill Peckinpaugh/Suzanne Sessions

- Suzanne: The filming took 6+ hours of scouting and filming per house. Applause to the homeowners on virtual tour and garden tour! Thank you to everyone who volunteered an item and who bid on items.
- Sheri: Raised \$45K. There were almost 1,000 views representing 8 countries!
- Thinking about what comes next...feasibly we can do one on-ground tour per year. We need to diversify our fundraising, which is exciting!
- On Saturday at 9am KMOV will have a feature on the Lafayette Square house tour, flashing back to the past (69-70?).

Future Events/Light Up the Square

Sheri Mistretta/Kelly Schlueter

- Save the Date! Saturday, December 4: Light Up the Square
- Looking for volunteers to join the events committee

Reminder – Board Elections in October

Tom Murphy

- We need representation throughout the neighborhood and new energy on the board. Let anyone on the board know if you are interested or want to know more.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

Sheri Mistretta (treasurer@lafayettesquare.org)

- n/a

Business

Bethany Budde

- Not present.

Development

Suzanne Sessions

- Jan Cameron is eager to see the end of the last changes to the historic code, which applies to the Hickory Reserve (hardyboard versus brick).
- Problem Properties: lsrcproblemproperties@gmail.com

Beautification

Linda Weiner (linderweiner@gmail.com)

- Thank you to volunteers! There are some places that need weeding and watering (i.e. new medians/bump outs on Lafayette).

- Weeding and Watering Event, this Saturday 6/12 9-11am on Park Avenue medians.
- Tom: All the hard work of volunteers is what keeps the neighborhood looking beautiful. If you have the opportunity to volunteer your time and talents, please do!

Communications

Jeff Baird (communications@lafayettesquare.org)

- The biggest project during COVID was re-doing the Lafayette Square website – check it out! LafayetteSquare.org
- The events section on the website is getting rolling because things are happening again so keep an eye on that; it is being updated. Email events@lafayettesquare.org if you have something you'd like added to the calendar.
- Merchandise section on the website should be getting the ability to purchase online soon.
- If you are a current member of the LSRC, communications started a quarterly newsletter that you'll receive.
- If you are interested in volunteering, go to the website, which has a page that describes the opportunities, and a form to submit with your interest. LafayetteSquare.org → Get Involved → Volunteer

Membership

Christina Ryan (membership@lafayettesquare.org)

- Last year we had a wonderful membership drive and generous donations of time and talent from neighborhood photographers. It would be awesome to get these new folks to renew! Please be "billboards" for the LSRC and make sure neighbors/friends know who we are and what we do. → The LSRC provides funding for environmental stewardship, maintenance, safety, beautification, and to support other nonprofit organizations in and around Lafayette Square. The Lafayette Square Restoration Committee (LSRC) is a not-for-profit organization that facilitates the preservation and redevelopment of Lafayette Square, respecting its special historic character and enhancing its overall livability for residents and visitors alike.

Capital Improvement

Ian McCormack (ian.mccormack@mccormackbaron.com)

- Not present.

Block Captains/Safety

Glenn Eckert (safety@lafayettesquare.org)

- We have a camera installed at the police substation (Park/Mississippi).
- We maintain the police substation. Thank you to Tom and Bev Murphy for cleaning and perking up the substation.
- We are in need of (only!!) about 10 more block captains; if you would like to volunteer, please contact Glenn.

Fundraising

Kelly Schlueter

- Covered earlier.

Other:

Neighbor Inquiry: Soundwalls along 44 in south border of neighborhood. Response from Tom: The neighborhood/LSRC can advocate but there's really not a lot we can do as a neighborhood association. **Response from neighbor** (who works for MODOT on planning side): The state will not put up sound walls unless a highway is being expanded. 44 is actually underutilized; the work MODOT has been doing is to replace not expand. The neighborhood can do its own assessment, but that would cost around \$60K.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

-

Next LSRC Board Meeting: July 13, 2021 @7pm

Next LSRC General Membership Meeting: June 8, 2021 @7pm

ADJOURN: 8:07pm