

The *TIMES* of.... SKINKER DEBALIVIERE

Vol. 53, No. 1

April - May 2023

<http://SDTimes.org/index.html>

The oldest neighborhood newspaper in St. Louis

FREE

Independent and all volunteer-run since 1970

GREAT ADDITION TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

By Jorge Riopedre, Executive Director, Delmar Divine



Eight years ago, Maxine Clark, founder of Build-A-Bear Workshop, conceived the idea of transforming the former St. Luke's Hospital on Delmar Boulevard into a place that would give nonprofit agencies the tools they needed to maximize their impact, while simultaneously working in partnership with the community in which the campus is located.

In 2022, that vision became reality. Delmar DivINE welcomed 33 nonprofit organizations and began providing them with a variety of capacity-building programs from our Center for Human Service Leadership, a partnership with Washington University that delivers top-flight resources for all of our agencies. The project also helps improve efficiency and contain costs by making available over 18,000 square feet of shared space, including an auditorium. Moreover, in response to feedback from the West End neighborhood in which Delmar DivINE resides, several retail organizations were added, including GreaterHealth Pharmacy & Wellness, which, in collaboration with SSM Health, responded to a specific community request for more healthcare options in the area.

In addition, we opened our Community Multipurpose Room where civic groups and residents of North City can convene and enjoy a variety of programs. Those programs are vetted by our Community Collaborative Board, a group of people who reside in the 63112 zip code who advise Delmar DivINE and help ensure that all programming is based on community-identified needs. Activities currently scheduled or under development include older adult enrichment classes, a coder camp, and youth programs from the office of Senator Brian Williams.

To complete the project, we are about to open the Deli Divine, a New York-style Jewish deli from renowned restaurateur Ben Poremba. The Deli Divine will serve breakfast and lunch Sunday through Friday featuring traditional dishes such as matzah ball soup and chicken salad, and also include a market with a selection of prepared foods and wine.

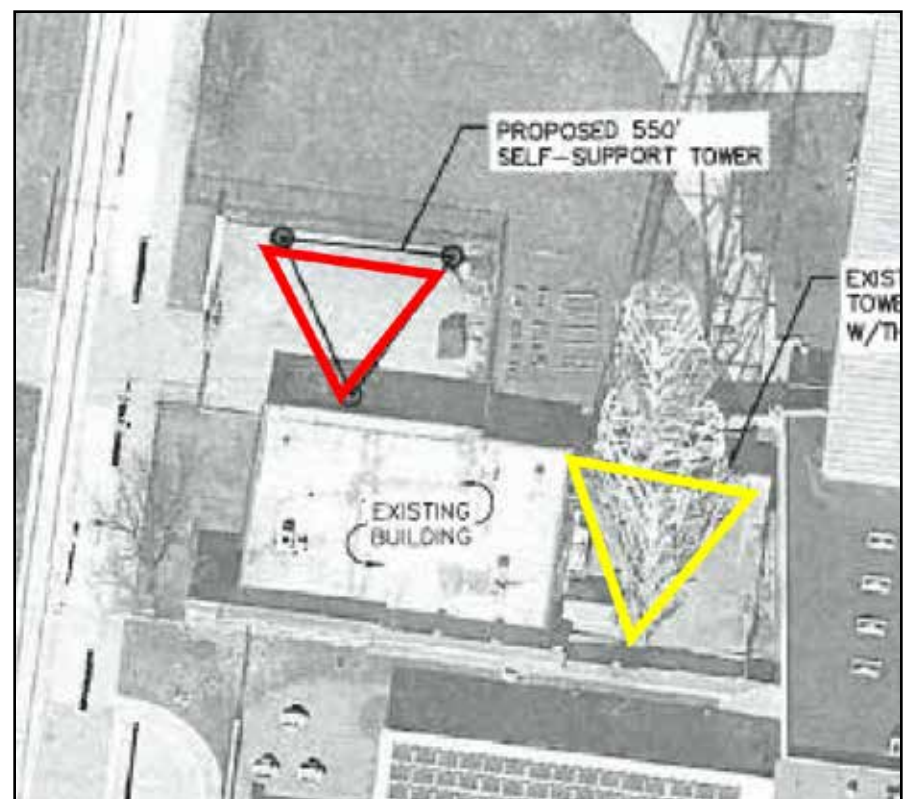
Delmar DivINE is making good on its commitment to INnovate, INvest, and INclude so that, together with many people and partner organizations, we can start changing the story of Delmar Boulevard from "divide" to "divine."

A tour of the Delmar DivINE is being planned. For more information, call 391-2444 (office) | 314-709-0767 (cell) | jorge@delmardivine.com.

REPLACEMENT TRANSMISSION TOWER PROPOSED ON DEBALIVIERE

By Richard Bose

The owner of the 1930s era transmission tower at 532 DeBaliviere plans to replace it this summer. Minneapolis-based Hubbard Radio LLC (no relation to the Hubbard family of St. Louis) filed a \$2.3M building permit application for a 550-foot tall transmission tower that hosts equipment for four radio stations on January 23rd. They plan to build the new tower closer to DeBaliviere while the old one remains in service until such time that equipment can be moved over to the new one and the old one demolished.



The plan was presented at the March 27th Preservation Board meeting. The site is within the Central West End Historic District which forbids antennas. The Cultural Resources Office Director denied the permit on that basis. Curtis Holland of the Polsinelli Law Firm spoke on behalf of the owners at the meeting. He testified that the tower was overloaded by 600%, and that it presents a "very significant safety issue." He said they've been in communication with Crossroads School, and that they are not opposed to their plan so long as construction occurs during the summer months when there is less activity at the school. He agreed to work with the Cultural Resources Office on screening options at the street level along DeBaliviere. The Preservation Board voted unanimously to overturn the CRO Director's denial and approved the applicant's appeal.

The next step for the proposal is the Board of Adjustment for consideration of zoning variance(s). It is on the agenda of the April 19th meeting at 1:30pm.

Editor's Notes

By Linda Cross

This spring issue is one for me of gratitude. Spring is finally here! The colors, the smells, the sun on your face. More neighbors out and about, walking, talking, sharing. I had a surprise cancer diagnosis and surgery and have been enveloped in a cocoon of love and support that is palpable. My cancer, thyroid, is one of the most survivable and the prognosis is good. I am taking some time to enjoy the weather, the architecture, and the friends around me. Since we have a tiny break between elections, enjoy the gardens and the gorgeous nature in the park and put your face in the sun.

Save The Date



BREAKFAST GARDEN TOUR

When
Sat, June 3, 8am – 12pm

Where
McPherson Community Garden

Guidelines for Submitting Copy

The Times welcomes unsolicited articles and letters. Because of the small size and volunteer nature of the writing staff, the quality and range of the Times has always depended in large part on submissions from non-staff area residents.

The writer is responsible for the accuracy of the data, including times, dates, location, and particularly the spelling of names. The editor retains the right to omit or alter any material. Opinions expressed in Commentaries are the opinion of the author.

Deadline for next issue: May 15, 2023 for our Summer 2023 Issue. Please send copy by e-mail to Linda Cross, lcross@sdtimes.org.

The TIMES of... SKINKER DEBALIVIERE

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Readers are welcome to send us e-mail or letters commenting on any of our content. Send to lcross@sdtimes.org.

SKINKER-DEBALIVIERE COMMUNITY COUNCIL BOARD UPDATES:

February 13, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present: Tracy Granneman (President, Rosedale), Molly Rater (Secretary, Kingsbury Square), Jim Holzer (Rosedale), Jeff Stokes (Grace Methodist), Tim Woodcock

(Rosedale), Mike Stephens (Parkview), Kim Freter (St Roch), JoAnna Schooler (Washington University), Kathryn Bulard (Busey Bank), AnnaMarie Bliss (at large)

Not Present: Carl Merritt (Cote Brillante), John Wright (Parkview Agents), Yvette Kell (Treasurer, Washington Heights), Linda Cross (Rosedale)

Visitors: Ald. Shameem Clark-Hubbard, Grady Vaughn (Security chair), June Vaughn

(engagement chair), Marvin Nodiff (Zoning and housing chair), Emmett Coleman (Ward 10 aldermanic candidate), Kaitlin Daniels (dog park chair)

Executive Director: Michael Reid

Meeting was called to Order at 7:05 in person

Introductions

Vote to approve two new board members, JoAnn Rankins and Georgia Barnett, was postponed as neither were present

Meeting Minutes: November and January minutes were approved.

Aldermanic report: Ald. Clark-Hubbard was available throughout meeting for questions. She noted that the Board of Alderman was back from break.

Executive Director Report: Mike Reid reported that he had applied for two grants: St Louis City and Ben and Jerry's company

RAC has released money from the Cares Act. May be able to apply for funds and use for concerts, Big Draw Art show and possibly new computers. Mike is continuing to do porch walks to meet neighbors.

Financials: Yvette Kell was not present but end of 2022 report reviewed. We are in a budget deficit. Quickbooks could use some cleaning up and motion made to approve 1500 dollars for an accountant audit. AnnaMarie made the motion to approve and Mike Stephens seconded. The motion carried. Mike Stephens made a motion to table approving the 2023 budget until after the audit and AnnaMarie seconded. The motion carried. Kathryn Bulard suggested putting some of our reserves in a CD-earning 4.25 percent interest/15 month term.

Committee Reports were submitted in separate reports via Google Docs, our new mode of communication. Some members had trouble accessing the docs and needed to be granted permission.

Committee announcements: Grace Methodist: Jeff Stokes reported that flyers with surveys had been sent out about vision of neighborhood. Survey also available on Grace website. Electronic sign will be revisited with new Historic Committee. AnnaMarie said she would communicate about the issue with Jeff more off-line.

St Roch: Tracy reported that there would be an All Things New Again listening session at St Roch on Wednesday evening. St Louis Archdiocese will be closing/combining some parishes so information is relevant to the SDCC neighborhood.

Washington University: JoAnna reported that Mardi Gras was this weekend and Wash U Police would be partnering with the SLPD. She continues to work on the trash issue/audit in the SDCC neighborhood.

SDCC Strategic Plan Planning Session:

Board discussed SWOT: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for SDCC.

Tracy asked that the board prioritize goals and come up with objectives for the goals before the next meeting.

The top four goals were identified and board members asked to volunteer to take ownership of goals. Board Members are responsible for coordinating with the relevant committees to seek input on proposed objectives. Board will consolidate/discuss the proposed objectives in the March Meeting and bring them to the neighborhood in the April community meeting. This will allow time for residents to provide feedback. Objectives will be voted on and signed off on during the May meeting.

Governance: Tracy Granneman and Mike Stephens

Finance: Molly Rater and Yvette Kell

Communication: AnnaMaria Bliss and Jim Holzer

Engagement: Tim Woodcock

Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm

Minutes submitted by board secretary Molly Rater 2/22/2023

MAY 13: PLANTING DAY 2023



Saturday May 13, 10:00am-12:00 Noon
Greg Freeman Park, 6000 Kingsbury Ave.

This is our neighborhood planting day. Operation Brightside flowers will be available to block leaders who placed orders and for planting in parks/public spaces.

Wood chips will be available for public planting areas, e.g. tree lawns.

This is also a chance to drop off plants that are crowding your garden -OR- pick up some free plants that your neighbors had to thin out. (You don't have to make a trade; you can donate or receive plants.)

Grass seed packets for small bare spots in lawns may be available

Sign up to help us keep the flowers watered at Greg Freeman Park through the summer!.

MAY 13: ELECTRONICS RECYCLING FAIR 2023



12th Annual E-Cycle Fair
Saturday May 13, 9:00am-12:00 noon
Greg Freeman Park, 6000 Kingsbury Ave.

Partner: Pro Computers & Consulting, www.recycle.pcerecycle.com

If it plugs in or uses a battery recycle it!
 Large metal items accepted.

RECYCLE FOR FREE:

computers, cables, office/business equipment and machinery, telecommunications equipment including phones and clocks, VCR's, stereos, cameras, other audio/video equipment, data storage devices including CD's, VHS tapes and computer software, home electronics, blenders, toasters, irons, washing machines and dryers, dishwashers, furnaces, hot water heaters, home medical equipment, industrial machinery, lawn mowers, tillers, tools, air conditioners, refrigerators, humidifiers, old motors, transformers, electrical equipment, power supplies, car batteries, household batteries and printer cartridges.

RECYCLE FOR FEE:

\$25 disposal fee per each TV or Computer Monitor of any size.

NOT ACCEPTED:

light bulbs, tires, wood furniture, other wood products, paint and paint cans, household and industrial chemicals.

News of Neighbors

Robert Earl Bracey, age 79, departed this earth Saturday, October 29, 2022, with family by his side. Known affectionately as "Bobby", Robert was born December 6, 1942, in Jackson, Mississippi. As the child of a career Navy man, Robert often found himself recalibrating, with his childhood divided between Mississippi, Illinois, California, Florida, Maryland, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Kansas. Robert attended Pittsburgh State University in Pittsburgh, KS where he met the love of his life, Deborah Mack whom he married in 1965 and remained for 57 years. In 1966, he was drafted into the United States Army to serve in the Vietnam War. Robert went on to a career in accounting and eventually opened his own tax business, Bracey Tax Service. Robert and Deborah had two daughters, Kimberly, and Borah, who they raised in the Skinker DeBaliviere neighborhood in Saint Louis, Missouri. In 1991 Robert and Deborah relocated to Tulsa, Oklahoma to support aging parents. In 2012, Robert and Deborah relocated one last time back to St. Louis, Missouri, focusing on spending time with their children and grandchildren. Those that knew him, speak of his kindness. They speak of his goodness and the way he brought joy and a quiet strength to his family and interactions with others.



Robert Earl Bracey



Keith and Simone Atkinson

Keith Atkinson and my Simone Atkinson, formerly Simone Maxwell were married on October 23rd. They are residents of the 6100 block of Westminster. Keith says his family was the first black residents of the Skinker DeBaliviere neighborhood. He went to St. Roch's

Catholic school, then Dewey Elementary. He graduated from Rockhurst University in Kansas City, Missouri and has an MBA from Webster University. He is currently working with Serco Inc, which is a subcontractor for the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. Simone went to Parkway West High School and Truman University and is currently retired.

On March 22, 2023, Dolores (Lola) Judith Hoefel (nee Bozada) joined her beloved husband Gene Robert Hoefel in eternal union. Lola went peacefully in her sleep while at Hospice at Evelyn House in St. Louis. Gene, who predeceased Lola on December 28,



Judith and Gene Hoefel

2020, was reunited with his life partner of over 60 years. Known by their grandchildren as "Mema and O'Dad", they will be dearly missed by their children and grandchildren, Kurt & Peggy (Dani, Tamaryn) Karl & Teryl (Calvin, Noah, Taylor) and Ketti & Michael North (Jaxon, Eli, Louie) They will be missed, by many nieces, nephews and friends whose lives were touched by their unconditional love and acceptance of all who they met. The Hoefels were long time residents of McPherson.

Do you have news to share? Please send your submissions via email with the subject line News of Neighbors to lcross@sdtimes.org. Be sure to mark it "News of Neighbors". We love to hear about neighbors accomplishments, awards, travels, weddings, anniversaries, births, and more!

THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND Bring your own bags to the store!

By Mark Banaszak and Katrina Stierholz

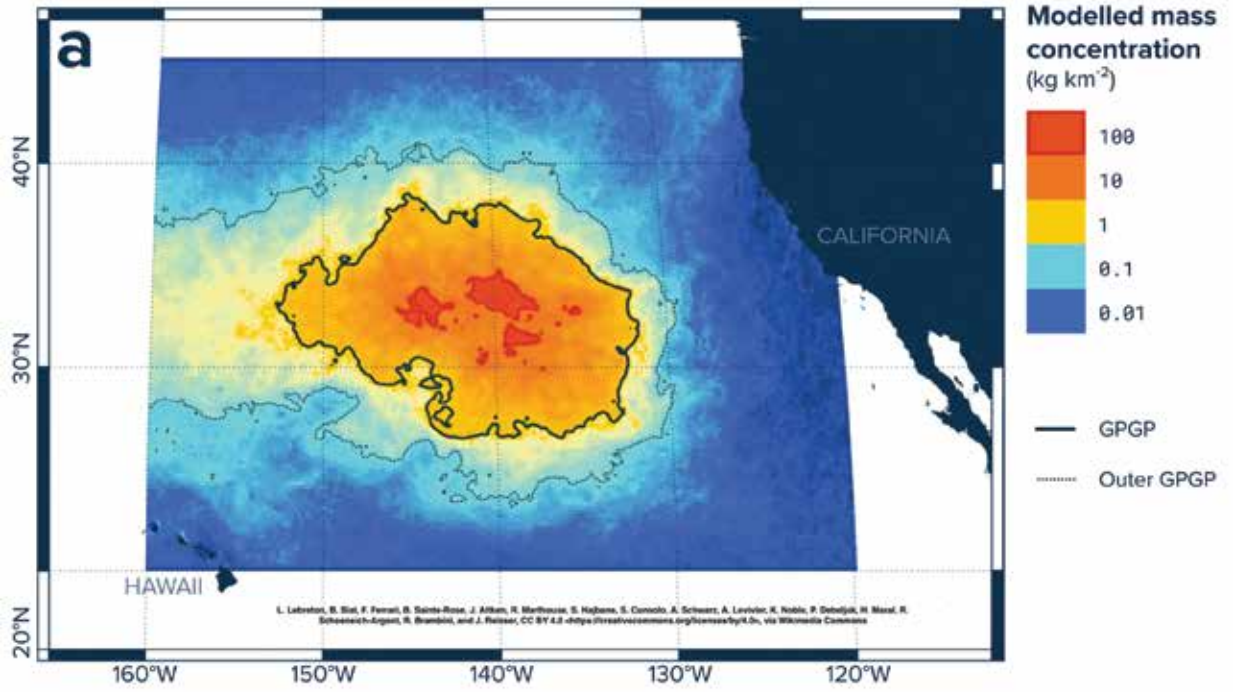
The question of “paper or plastic” is one we’ve all heard thousands of times, but it is an important decision. It’s interesting how something as boring as shopping bags can be important, but they are. It’s similar to a problem with health. We are all afraid of the gruesome dangers to our health and well-being, like sharks or rattlesnakes, but common things that surround us are much greater threats, like cars and refined sugar.

Plastic shopping bags are the perfect example of a convenience gone amuck. They are something that started as useful and good, but has grown excessive and destructive.

The history of plastic bags is not old. Polyethylene was discovered by accident in 1933 in a chemical plant in England. It was first used for military products in World War II, but by 1965 the predecessor for all plastic grocery bags (“the t-shirt bag”) was invented in Europe. It quickly began to replace cloth and paper bags. By 1982, Kroger and Safeway grocery stores had begun to offer a choice of paper or plastic. Although plastic bags were consistently cheaper than paper for stores, consumers still tended to choose paper. In the 80s, big oil producers set explicit goals of changing that habit from paper to plastic, because important ingredients in polyethylene are a byproduct of crude oil refining. With the change to plastic over paper in grocery bags, plastic bag production soared.

These developments eventually led to the discovery of the Great Pacific Garbage patch in 1997, by Charles Moore. This patch of garbage circulating in the Pacific Ocean is now twice the size of Texas. Soon after the discovery of the patch, countries began to understand the hidden costs of excessive packaging waste, especially shopping bags. In 2002, Bangladesh became the first country to ban plastic shopping bags when it found that they were responsible for flooding problems by clogging drainage systems.

One important way to avoid problems in our neighborhood is making sure that plastic bags enter the correct waste stream once they leave your household. Recycling them is not easy, however; they are not acceptable in our recycling bins and may cause the recycling to be dumped in the regular trash if they contaminate our single-stream bins. You can take them back to the store that gave them to you. Some stores have boxes to deposit old plastic bags, but no local stores are



willing to state that those bags are recycled. Of five local grocery stores, two offer bag drop-off stations, but none have verified that the bags are recycled.

While there are recycling efforts involving those bags, nothing seems available at the stores that distribute them. That fact brings the check-out line question back to mind - “Paper or plastic?” The question suggests that these are the only two possible responses, but that is untrue. You do not have to use paper or plastic. Reusable grocery bags are now available at almost every store. It is a task no more difficult than making a grocery list to grab some cloth bags before you head out to the store. So please, bring your own bags to the store!



Thank you to all who flatten their boxes!

It saves space in the Blue Bin and leaves room for more recyclables.

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DOG PARK KICKOFF

By SDCC Dog Park Committee

Dozens of neighbors braved freezing temperatures to show their support for creating a place where our dogs could run, play, and socialize off the leash.

Supplied with hot brats and hotdogs prepared by volunteer grill master Ian Eaves, Dog Moms and Dog Dads gathered at Four Corners on March 18 and viewed designs for the neighborhood dog park.

The park will use the remnant property on the east side of Des Peres, north of the school annex. The Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Council (SDCC) has formally established the Dog Park Committee.

“Some people have claimed it would be a cold day in hell before we get this,” said committee chair Kaitlin Daniels, noting the wind chill at the event, “but today’s turnout demonstrates strong support for the project. With the closest dog park located in U. City, our kickoff shows that this facility is needed in the community, regardless of whether you own a dog.”

Volunteer Kim Gladstone distributed architectural drawings depicting separate areas for small and large dogs, each in the shape of a dog bone, enclosed by wrought iron fencing. Fresh drinking water and waste cleanup facilities will be available.

Committee member Callie Kesel handled donations at the kickoff event. “We intend to have the necessary money for initial construction costs and ensure long-term financial stability.” With her day job as a professional architect, Callie is helping with the facility’s design.

“The contributions received at the kickoff prove that the dog park has terrific support,” Callie said. “They range from one youngster -- probably just six or seven years old – who gave a pocketful of quarters, to a resident who pledged a five-figure donation.”

Committee member attorney Marvin J. Nodiff (ret.) said, “The dog park represents an immediate need and a long-term investment, an asset for our community. The support we’re getting is contagious, and the committee brings a dogged determination to make it happen.”

A survey of potential users and financial supporters was included at the kickoff. The survey is also available, and donations may be made, on the dog park’s website: <https://sdccdogpark.wixsite.com/home>.



KIDS CORNER

By Jenny Mathews

Spring

G	F	S	Q	O	I	I	S	L	S	U	R
E	D	U	R	Y	G	N	D	M	B	K	V
B	T	A	P	T	I	Q	E	K	D	I	F
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P	T	D	R	F	B	W	S	Q	P	R	J
I	S	R	E	W	O	L	F	D	T	L	S
L	F	H	Z	F	G	D	S	A	N	U	M
U	X	U	U	F	R	R	I	D	J	T	Z
T	H	C	U	Z	A	J	A	L	U	T	V
U	M	B	R	E	L	L	A	S	S	B	M
B	N	S	M	G	N	I	R	P	S	M	K
R	A	I	N	B	O	W	D	J	A	C	P

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SDCC RESIDENTIAL HOUSING AND ZONING COMMITTEE (HZC)

Meeting Minutes: February 1, 2023

Present: Marv Nodiff (chair), Bob Dowgwillo (vice chair), Hitch Powell (secretary), Stephen Kesel, Jim Holzer, (SDCC board representative)

Absent: Lana Stein, Linda Cross, Karleen Hoerr

Guests: Emmett Coleman (candidate for St. Louis Board of aldermen)

Meeting Agenda:

- Elect new secretary
- Welcome our SDCC rep and guest
- Guest comments
- Vote on minutes from last meeting
- Recent events discussion
- Problem Properties
- Short term rentals
- Other matters

Meeting called to order 5:30 p.m. at 500 N Skinker, a quorum present.

Election of new Secretary:

With regret, the committee chair informed us that our longstanding member Lana Stein had moved out of the neighborhood and would no longer be able to serve as secretary. Hitch Powell was elected to fill the role of secretary of the committee.

Welcome Jim Holzer:

The committee was pleased to welcome Jim Holzer as the SDCC Boards representative to the committee. Jim and the committee had a productive discussion about his role as SDCC

representative. For our committee.

Guest comments:

Emmett Coleman introduced himself as a candidate for the Board of Alderpersons and shared a little about his vision for that role. He also expressed a desire to learn about the objectives and plans of the committee and offered his support. He stayed for the remainder of the meeting.

Minutes from our last meeting:

Health issues prevented our previous secretary from preparing minutes for the prior meeting, so there was nothing to approve:

Discussion of recent events:

Committee members discussed the recent acquisition of multiple properties along Delmar by Washington University and how that might impact the neighborhood and the work of this committee. No motions were made, and no votes were taken.

Problem Properties.

The Committee monitors properties for possible occupancy violations:

- 6151 Westminster: The LLC owner has done no new renovation work since the committee last met. The residence remains secure and is not deteriorating however it remains uninhabitable. HZC will monitor for proper permitting and any attempt by the owner to rent it going forward.

- 6137 Westminster: It appears that the number of occupants has not changed and remains below the 3-resident limit, HZC will monitor. . .

6169 Westminster: Front yard remains a problem is all weeds, no ground cover, soil eroding onto public sidewalk. Same for more than a year. A neighbor volunteers to mow occasionally. HZC has had limited success with our Neighborhood Stabilization Officer getting action by city. HZC members as individuals to report complaints to Citizen Service Bureau.

5953-55 McPherson (NE corner of Des Peres). New building. Construction completed and building occupied. Building contains three floors plus finished basement, totaling four units HZC is concerned that the building is being rented to more occupants than permitted. We will continue to monitor

6188 Waterman: Same owner as 5953-55 McPherson. HZC is concerned that occupancy may exceed the city limits, will continue to monitor.

5835 DeGiverville: burned out and vacant. HZC has no tools at this time to address this. SDCC is aware of the property.

Short-Term Rentals ("STRs").

There was nothing reported on this subject at this meeting.

Other Matters.

No other matters were discussed

Next Meeting: Tuesday February 15th 5:30 pm. Same location:

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectively submitted by John (Hitch) Powell, secretary.

SDCC HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMITTEE

February 8, 2023 at 6:30pm

Attendees: AnnaMarie Bliss, Chair; Jim Holzer, Dan Hudspeth, Mike Stephens, Dan Lodholz, Venita Lake

AGENDA NOTES:

5800 Westminster – permit drawings

- Send comments to CRO and Preservation Board
 - Windows at level 1 are missing common symmetry
 - Columns are not proportional as represented
 - Balcony should be adjusted to mirror neighbors

Continuing plan to assist neighbors

- Google drive with information
- Standards should be readily accessible from SDCC website
- Window resources most needed
- Alternatives and understanding based on cost should be addressed
- Possibility to update bylaws for leniency? Evaluate appropriate materials and proposed changes should be approved by committee

WashU acquisitions on Delmar

- Can we get more information about plans moving forward?
- How does this affect FBD?
- Is their transparency in next steps?

Grace Methodist Sign

- Standards and ordinances do not allow for LED or backlit signs
- Foot traffic does not necessarily need electronic sign
- Social media would be better use of effort
- Letter to church forthcoming

SWOT goals for SDCC

- Strengths:
 - Historic District

-- Linked to property value

-- Historic District Committee to provide technical support, resources, and protection of historic integrity of the neighborhood

-- Historic District Committee as liaison between city and neighbors

• Weakness:

- Poaching of vacancies by developers with lack of knowledge or care to develop with historic standards
- Economic costs of property maintenance and conservation

• Opportunities:

- Update Historic Standards to include more information for making decisions about addition, subtraction, and change to historic homes
- Engagement with realtors with regard to community amenities and historic standards (HDComm)
- Sharing information with neighbors in a clear and easily accessible format (digital, unlimited storage, online)

• Threats

- Developers not familiar with the Community Council and our community engagement
- Systemic disinvestment in underserved, geographically close, neighborhoods.
- Lack of knowledge or consideration neighborhood historic standards and practices by residents, LLC's, institutions, etc.
- Short term rentals)
- Gentrification
- Lack of power to stop certain development or building
- Too quick to accept development and major change to built environment without understanding for repercussions
- WashU encroachment

Meetings going forward are the second Wednesday of the month at 6:30pm in the SDCC office. Next meeting is March 8. Following meeting is April 12.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT - MARCH 13, 2023

Submitted by June Vaughan, Committee Chairperson

The Community Engagement Committee of The SDCC met on February 14, 2023, at 1:00 P. M. at the home of June Vaughan. Present were Arline Webb, Cecilia Nadal, Peter Lukasiewicz, and June Vaughan.

This informal meeting included getting acquainted and general discussion of what the committee might achieve. Consensus was that improved communication within in the neighborhood and between the board and the residents is a primary need to address in order to facilitate other activities. When June Vaughan volunteered in November, 2022, to chair the committee, the main task of the committee was described as responsibility for encouraging strong communications throughout the neighborhood, which meshes with the goals of attendees. Since objectives put forward by the board in the new year appear to separate the roles of engagement and communication, which we see as intrinsically linked, we need clarification from the board on this issue before we can go forward.

The theme of inclusion ran throughout the discussions of engagement. For example, we can work to restore the Block Captain system and see it become a channel through which community concerns are communicated to committees and on to the board. New residents can be welcomed, and interest in the history of Skinker-DeBaliviere and the Community Council, encouraged. We can bring Block Captains together on a regular basis, seeking input on development of activities and goals. An assessment of current needs and concerns of residents similar to the one conducted a few years ago by Washington University students relative to older residents would be valuable.

In late January/early February, 32 emails were sent to persons listed by the SDCC as either Block Captains or Flyer Distributors, and one was contacted by phone. We queried whether they currently performed this service and planned to continue. All but five have replied, some after a follow-up message sent in late February. A letter will be hand-delivered to those who have not yet responded in case there was a problem with e-mails.

We need 31 Block Captains. Currently we have eight committed Captains with several others possible. Persons have committed to deliver newspapers/flyers on 18 blocks. After allowing time for responses from hand delivery of letters to current non-responders, we will begin working to fill in the empty positions, assuming the board decides that this falls within the scope of this committee. Some

responders expressed enthusiasm for the revitalization of the Block Captain system. We believe it is important to continue this process in a timely fashion before the enthusiasm is replaced by apathy. During the meeting attendees specifically said they wanted a commitment of support from the SDCC Board for the committee's activities.



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Rachel is Proud to be a Skinker DeBaliviere Resident!




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IN YOUR EAR

By Hawkeye Z. Hoerr, Commentary in the TIMES since 1980

“How are things going up there?” I asked rhetorically as I looked at her gravestone, knowing there would be no answer. My mom had been gone for more than a decade, yet I felt the need to periodically come to her graveside to talk to her. The visits were brief, one person talking is much quicker than an actual dialogue, but I always felt a bit better, uplifted, after talking to her. And then the last time, as I turned to leave, I saw Angel Fred standing next to me. I immediately knew his identity because he was wearing a gold name tag.

“It’s been a rough century or so,” said Fred, the angel. There wasn’t much light, it was a Waning Gibbous Moon (known more commonly as the first night after the full moon), and the cemetery was appropriately desolate, but he wore a large cape which kept most of his wings hidden.

Oddly, I wasn’t startled by this ethereal presence next to me. I mean, he was quite tall and large, and while he was wearing a corduroy sportscoat and checkered shirt under his cape, his feathers were quite apparent. They covered all of his visible skin, face, and hands, but they were tiny feathers, like those you might see on a small bird. His wings were folded in to his body, and he wore New Balance tennis shoes. I wasn’t afraid but my eyes must have displayed my disquiet. “Relax,” said Angel Fred, in a low voice, “I’m here to give you comfort,” he paused, “and to seek your thoughts.”

“Comfort?” I not so cleverly replied and gulped. And waited.

“I know you miss her,” he replied, “and I just want you to know that she is doing well.”

“Doing well?” I again not so cleverly replied, and Angel Fred nodded. “She is in her Heaven. She eats sweets all day and night and never gains weight. She smokes KOOLS, talks to her friends, and volunteers at the Cloud Eight gift shop. She’s with your dad every day and they enjoy being with one another.”

“But my dad,” I began, and he interrupted me. “Yes, I know,” Angel Fred said, “that may be a bit confusing, but you see, your dad is also with his three other wives at the same time, and everyone is happy. Remember, this is Heaven.”

“Wow, that’s great,” I said, “I’m so pleased for her, for him. For them.” I was lost in my thoughts, envisioning my mom consuming the never-ending supply of chocolates while sitting next to my dad, when Fred spoke.

“But I want your thoughts,” he said. And he paused. I could not imagine what thoughts of mine might be of interest to him. Unless he was curious about the baseball Cardinals, brands of gin, or cheap cigars, there wasn’t much wisdom that I could offer.

Angel Fred took a deep breath and continued. “You see, we observe the Earth most intently. You are, if you will, a bit of an experiment, and...” I tried to interrupt but Fred quieted me by raising his hand. Being grazed by an arm of feathers elicits silence.

“We’ve observed your evolution and admire many of your achievements. I mean, smallpox is gone and Covid is in retreat, plus you’ve discovered how to stream movies. We see that Earth life is good and we are pleased.” I knew better than to ask why he didn’t mention the microwave oven as an achievement of mankind, so I waited.

“We are concerned about the demise of organized religion,” Fred said. “This is quite distressing. A Pew Research Center survey found 29% of U.S. adults said they had no religious affiliation, an increase of 6 percentage points from 2016, and this decline is similar around the world.” I nodded in agreement and recalled reading a recent article in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch about how former church buildings were being converted to restaurants and condominiums.

Fred smiled and said, “After much thought and fluttering of wings, we have the solution!” My eyes widened and he continued. “You see, thanks to Dante’s Inferno, most people are familiar with the hellish conditions of hell, and its levels. While people are not familiar with the conditions of each level of hell – in level 2, for example, zippers get stuck, the Internet is sporadic, and you are late to every meeting - they know that hell is increasingly horrible.

“But there are levels of Heaven, too, and we realized that if people knew them, if they understood the increasing levels of rapture and ecstasy, it would encourage a return to penance and prayer.” A big smile appeared on his face and his wings fluttered. “If they know the levels of Heaven, what awaits them for behaving in the right way, we are

confident that participation in organized religions will surge.

“That would be true, whichever God people choose,” Fred said with emphasis, “And I should note that the selection of which God is immaterial, pun intended. We simply want people to work toward good in honor of a higher being.” I waited silently, trying to absorb all that he had said.

Suddenly the temperature dropped, the wind picked up, and I was immersed in a cyclone of feathers. Angel Fred leaned closer to me and whispered: “But misinformation is everywhere! We see the demise of traditional news sources and the distrust of social media. So we convened a Cloud 47 Think Tank to search for a trusted, objective source and we found it.” His face drew closer to mine. “We need you, Hawkeye, to publicize the levels of Heaven in The Times of Skinker DeBaliviere,” and he stuck his feathered finger against my chest.

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