**We had ~53 attendees at the March NHNA General meeting. We hosted several of the candidates running for three open seats on the St. Louis School Board. Matt Devoti gave a quick update on his preparations for taking office in April at the next Ward 5 alderman. We heard updates from the Neighborhood Improvement Specialist, NHNA committees and from the community engagement librarian about early voting and upcoming St. Louis Public Library events. The next NHNA General meeting will be held on April 28th at Gethsemane Lutheran Church.**

**Please email the NHNA admin at** **admin@northamptonneighbors.com** **with any questions.**

**3/24/25 North Hampton Neighbors Association meeting:**

* Jane Rain, President NHNA opens the meeting at 6:05 pm. She announces the agenda for the meeting.
* Matt Devoti, next Alderman 5th Ward, Contact: (314) 223-7387, facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61568213091306>

 - Matt takes office on 4/15/25 and will send out his official email contact once he’s in office.

 - He is in the process of interviewing candidates for legislative assistants.

* Shanieka Jackson, Neighborhood Improvement Specialist for Northampton, Southampton, Old North St. Louis, Hyde Park. Contact: (314) 901-3065, jacksonshan@stlouis-mo.gov

-Shanieka summarized the 204 closed service requests (meaning work was completed) from the prior month including 17 vehicle tows, 14 potholes, 11 residential area potholes, 8 requests to move containers

-She noted that green waste alley container pickup began March 12th so grass clippings, leaves, plant waste should be put in the green waste containers.

-A new recycling drop-off site is open at 3207 Meramec in Dutchtown.

* Marissa Owen, Community Engagement Librarian, gave the SLPL community activities update. -HVAC installation in Buder Library is almost complete

-Early voting starts Tues 3/25/25 at Buder, but she reminded residents that the voting times do not correspond to library hours. Please check the website for details.

-Upcoming activities include chair yoga, and Dia de los Ninos. Details about all of the upcoming classes and events can be found on the website or pick up informational flyers at the table near the entrance.

Committee Reports:

* Annette Nowakowski, Vice-President and Chair of Policy Cmte gave updates on MO House Bill 495 and Senate Bill 4.

-She provided hand-outs with the summary of legislation she wanted to highlight for residents.

- House Bill 495 proposes state takeover of the St. Louis metropolitan police department. The governor is visiting on Thurs this week and is planning a signing ceremony at the Police Officers Association next door.

- Senate Bill 4 proposes an increase in the rates utility companies may charge to pay for future construction of gas and electricity generating facilities. As of this weekend the governor has not decided whether to sign it. For anyone who still wants to weigh in they can contact his office at 573-751-3222.

- Nick Kimble puts together a capitol report every 2 weeks. His latest report has a good discussion on these bills. To sign up you can visit his website (https://house.mo.gov/memberdetails.aspx?district=082)

* Teresa Heilich, NHNA Treasurer, gave her report and the Beautification Cmte report

- 18 households (28 residents) have paid dues—thanks for all who have paid

- Yard signs have been ordered thanks to anonymous donation

- We collected additional donations to support the candidate forum this Thursday to pay for the sound system rental and insurance (Anna Garcia and Jane Rain).

- Tilles Park spring clean-up (weeding, trash pick-up, planting annuals) will be held on Sat. April 26th from 9-11:30 am. Contact Tina Wong for more information tinaawong@gmail.com

- NHNA survey will be sent out via email and we encourage feedback about the activities of the organization.

* Rob Meckfessel, NHNA Safety Cmte report

- Reported the fatality of a local resident, Brian McKenna, that occurred while he was crossing Hampton between Murdoch and Nottingham. He reminded residents of the inherent danger of crossing a busy thoroughfare like Hampton without using crosswalks at stoplights.

- He has heard that with the state takeover there is increased interest among officers to return to SLMPD.

* NHNA Development Cmte, annam.roche@gmail.com

- No new issues

* Jane Rain introduced the candidates present who are running for St. Louis Board of Education in the April 8th election. She explained that the format of the forum will include opening statements (2 min) followed by Q/A and closing statements (1 min). During the Q/A, residents’ questions will be read and answered by each candidate called on in random order.
* The following will summarize statements made by each candidate and list the questions posed by NHNA president and residents. Details of the candidates’ answers to resident questions can be provided from the meeting transcript upon request.

- Candidates present at the beginning of the forum were Zacheriah (Zach) Davis and Brian Marston.

- **Brian Marston** has a degree in education (math/spanish concentration) and works as a web developer at WashU Medicine. His previous experience in community service and education include serving as director of North St. Louis YouthBuild, a construction training and GED program and as president of Metropolis St. Louis. He believes that public education is the foundation of a functioning democracy. He was educated in the public school system as are his children. He can be reached at <https://brianhmarston.com/>).

- **Zacheriah Davis** has 30+ years of experience as an educator in public schools. He believes that residents should not have to go out of the city to find quality education for their children. The strength of the public schools can contribute to the vibrancy and success and growth of St. Louis city. He feels that he offers a unique perspective because he is still in the classroom, teaching in government/social studies SLPS. He knows first-hand the issues facing the SLPS but envisions a transformation of the school district to the crown jewel of the city that it once was.

Board Q: Currently there's an opportunity to improve the school ratings, what are 3 major issues that you think need to be tackled? Both candidates agree that there has been a severe erosion of the public trust which can be improved with improved student academic performance and financial transparency. Each would prioritize different approaches to achieving these goals.

- **Andre Walker** (arrived late) is an investment adviser running a small investment practice for the last 25 years. He has no experience running for elected office but thinks that his experience can help to correct the fiscal irresponsibility of last year. The current school board has governance issues and fiscal responsibility issues and transparency issues. He admits to having little background in education, which is why he is running with 2 other candidates (Zach Davis and Krystal Barnett) as a slate. During his meetings with current board members he found that the board members don’t speak much and rarely discuss education, which he finds alarming. If elected he will prioritize improving relations on the school board.

Board Q: What technology would you introduce to St. Louis public schools that is attainable and affordable?

Marston and Davis agree that there is already adequate technology in place in the schools. Marston suggested a student information system (like workday) but doesn’t think it’s the answer to improving student performance. Davis listed several tech tools already implemented in the classrooms and suggested that teachers may want to reduce tech in the classroom to improve student focus. Walker suggested software to improve financial transparency (to public and board) and AI responsibility software.

- **Toni Cousins** (arrived late) is the current president of the St. Louis School Board who has served in this office for 4 years. There has been a lot of tech integration in collaboration with Verizon to bring virtual STEM lab into the classrooms. Regarding finances, St. Louis Public Schools have a surplus of funds ($200M) the district may need to weather any loss in Title I, II, and III funding that may occur during the current administration. The board and district have also taken steps to improve transparency of the financial activity of the district.

Board Q: There are 3 open positions on the St. Louis School Board. So knowing that multiple people will

be elected, how will you all work together to improve the St. Louis public school systems?

Walker emphasized the slate of candidates (Walker, Davis and Barnett) who have already been working together during the campaign. He would ensure that all members have information and time to make informed decisions. Marston emphasized that the school board needs to work as a team despite any internal differences. The board needs to present themselves publicly as a unified team. Davis proposed that the board members need to agree on a common theme and build structure around that theme. He suggests their common goal is advocating for children. Cousins indicated that the board serves many entities: children, community, taxpayers, teachers. She stressed the importance of governance and that board member disagreements should be handled internally—not in the press. She also stressed that board members need to show up to work focused and prepared.

Resident Q/A questions:

What are candidates positions on open enrollment?

Is there something the city government could do to better support SLPS?

What steps can the board take to improve teacher and support staff retention?

What would you say is the biggest problem right now that has to be handled first when the new board comes in?

Candidates made short closing statements during which additional late arriving candidates, A.J. Foster and Collins-Adams, made quick introductory remarks:

-**Allisa “AJ” Foster** (arrived late) has been invested in the St. Louis public schools her entire life as a student and in her career. She will prioritize support for the teachers in the district through salary, training, safety, incentive pay for extracurricular work and job security.

- **Karen Collins-Adams** (arrived late) has long 40+ year career in education in the K-12 environment. She believes it is a priority to keep an elected school board and not return to a state appointed board which means we need to reestablish the public trust in the school board. The board needs to keep focused on their work and not respond too much to bad press. They need to create a better environment for students. She expressed concern about teachers leaving the field and stressed the importance of career development to help retain teachers.

* Jane Rain announced the candidate forum being hosted by NHNA and Southampton neighborhood association on Thursday, March 27th at 7pm. The “Forum at the Hamptons” will be held at the Mary Magdalen Catholic Church Parish Hall (Bancroft and Kingshighway) located in the back of the campus. The League of Women Voters will moderate the forum that will feature the mayoral, comptroller and alderman candidates.

* Jane Rain – adjourned meeting

**To be added to the general meeting agenda, please submit a request though the NHNA website: https://northamptonneighbors.com/**