

The Pacer

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City Council Meets

At City Hall

The City Council resumed meeting in person in the council chamber June 14. The meeting was not open to the public, but City Manager Gregory Rose said that would change in July. City Hall is open, with masks encouraged and temperature checks. Centennial Commons and the pool have re-opened. Attendance at the pool has varied, depending on the weather. At Cent Comm, the gym is busier than the fitness machine area. There are no programs at the pool because of a lack of staff. There has been some minor disorderly conduct at the pool and gym at Cent Comm. Regulations for behavior will be posted. Enhanced police presence is a possibility. The date for re-opening the Community Center has not been set. The council approved a motion to forward the special events policy to the Parks Commission. The council also approved a conditional use permit at 8630 Delmar (the Avenir project) and denied one at 1004 Pennsylvania. The latter was not recommended by the Planning Commission. Tim

Cusick of the Second Ward commended city staff for responding quickly to citizen



Some of the 650 runners at the Memorial Day Run negotiate the socially-distanced start line.

complaints about vehicles, trees, streetlamps, trash and other issues. Mayor Terry Crow noted the 90th anniversary of the Ruth Park Golf Course.

Covid in the Rear-view?

Not so fast

Missouri experienced a surge in new cases of Covid-19 in

June. KSDK reported on June 21 that cases were up 72% in the last two weeks. Axios reported June 23 that Missouri ranked first among the states for new cases per capita. Two-thirds of the 30 U.S. counties with the highest current rates of hospitalization are in Missouri, Yahoo News stated on June 25. Statewide, only 37% of Missouri's population have been fully vaccinated. New cases are rising particularly in the southwest portion of the state, with the two largest hospitals serving the region "pleading with residents to get vaccinated because COVID-19 patient loads are increasing at a rate they have not previously seen during the pandemic," said the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. The highly contagious Delta variant "has become prevalent" across the state, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services said.

Road Risk

Dangerous driving

Missouri's road are increasingly unsafe--for drivers, pedestrians and motorcyclists. The Missouri Department of

Transportation said that increases in speed observed during the early stages of the pandemic have carried over into 2021, even though there are a lot more people out and about since the lockdown has ended. 127 pedestrians were killed by vehicles in Missouri last year, a record number, and this year is on pace to be as bad or worse. A total of 987 people lost their lives on Missouri roadways last year — a 12% increase from 2019. A majority of the people in vehicles who were killed were not wearing seat belts. There's no mystery about what drivers need to do to avoid accidents, or give themselves a better chance of surviving if they do get into one: wear seat belts, slow down, avoid distraction. The Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety invites motorists to take a Buckle Up Phone Down pledge on its website, savemolives.com. The Missouri Highway Patrol reports 18 motorcycle fatalities in the first four months of 2021, compared to 11 fatalities in all of 2020. Six of the 2021 fatalities were not wearing helmets. A new law went into effect in August, allowing motorcyclists 26 and older, with insurance to cover a crash, to ride without a helmet.

Land Acknowledgement

Opinions vary

Before presenting its report to the City Council last month, the task force on changing street names respectfully acknowledged that we are living on the traditional, ancestral lands of the Osage Nation. An-

drew Jorgenson, general director of Opera Theatre of St. Louis, made a similar statement before this season's performances. Land acknowledgement statements before events are becoming increas-



The folks at Felafel Saha sell yummy Mideastern treats Saturdays at the Midtown Farmers Market.

ingly common. The Pacer editor went to the web for more information and opinions. It was pretty predictable what pundits on the left and right would say ("long overdue" vs. "virtue-signaling"), so I was more interested in what Native Americans think. The National Museum of the American Indian said, "Today, land acknowledgments are used by Native Peoples and non-Natives to recognize Indigenous Peoples who are the original stewards of the lands on which we now

live." The Osage Nation said, "The process of knowing and acknowledging the land we stand on is a way of honoring and expressing gratitude for the ancestral Osage people who were on this land before us."

The Duwamish Tribe said that the statements are "a simple way of resisting the erasure of Indigenous histories and working towards honoring and inviting the truth." The Native Governance Center offers guidance to those making the statements: "If you're hoping to inspire others to take action to support Indigenous communities, you're on the right track. If you're delivering a land acknowledgment out of guilt or because *everyone else* is doing it, more self-reflection is in order." Some of the advice is self-contradictory. The website said, "Don't sugarcoat the past. Use terms like *genocide*, *ethnic cleansing*, *stolen land*, and *forced removal* to reflect actions taken by colonizers." But it also said, "Land acknowledgments shouldn't be grim." Inside Higher Ed was critical of the statements: "It's hardly news that the United States was built on land violently taken from indigenous people. But if you actually want to help people from your speaking platform, then ask the audience to *do* something." Cliff Cardinal, Native American poet/performer, called land acknowledgments "condescending." He added, "I don't want to think about that history every time I see a show and I don't want to listen to an apology from an artistic director who is not in any way responsible."

Reading & Zooming

At UCPL

The U City Public Library continues book group meetings online. Email reference@ucitylibrary.org to attend. All start at 7 pm.

July 26 Adult summer reading group discusses *The Good Lord Bird* by James McBride. July 28 Adult summer reading group discusses *The Portable Frederick Douglass*.

Aug. 9 Orcs and Aliens group discusses *The Gods of Jade and Shadow* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia.

Happy Renters

In home-owning America

Parkview Gardens is known as a neighborhood of young students who will soon move on. But some of us residents are well along in years, and we've spent many of them, quite happily, in rented apartments in Parkview Gardens. So we're looking at the current house-buying frenzy with wry detachment.

Home ownership is the American dream, of course. But why? June was a good time to be asking that question, because it was National Homeownership Month, and real estate agents' websites were loaded with answers. Keepingcurrent-matters.com offered the five top reasons from a National Housing Survey:

"1. It means having a good place to raise children and provide them with a good education." Because children need a

backyard to do their homework in? No, they're advising you to buy a house in a highly-rated school district. Why didn't they come right out and say so? Because funding schools through local real estate taxes has long been a main driver of racial inequality.

"2. You have a physical structure where you and your fam-



The Loop Roadshow presented by Assassin Vintage was June 12.

ily feel safe." If an apartment building is not a physical structure, what is it? An abstract concept? A mirage? And other people living under the same roof are a threat?

"3. It allows you to have more space for your family." By now, it becomes clear that this list is imbued with the mystical American belief that you've got to own a house to have children. There's no point in talking about enormous lofts for rent in St. Louis, or children growing up happily in apartments in Paris and other crowded cities. You can't fight a myth.

"4. It gives you control of what you do with your living

space." This one is true, but only to a limited extent. I know homeowners involved in prolonged, bitter battles with the city about code violations, and others receiving death threats from neighbors over property line disputes. "5. Paying rent is not a good investment." People want to own houses, so they've come up with this self-justifying

myth. Long-term renters know that whenever they go to a family gathering, some relative will tell them they've got to buy a house, because "every month when you pay rent, you throw your money (a)out the window (b)into the trashcan (c) down the toilet." The assumption here is that homeowners, once they pay off the mortgage, are living free. But of course they have the recurring, nonrecoverable

expenses of taxes, insurance, and upkeep. The other component of the myth, that a house is a special type of investment that can only go up, was disproved by the 2008 home loan crisis. A house is like any other investment: you make money if you can buy low, sell high, and that's not guaranteed. Other types of investment are better. "The stock market has generated returns at more than *four times* the rate of real estate appreciation," says millionaires.com. (It's a tricky comparison, and opinions vary, but I haven't found anyone who said real estate beat stocks long-term.)

So, while homeowners cut the grass and muck out the gutters, while they fret about reappraisals and cracks in the foundation, we the carefree renters of Parkview Gardens happily take our ease.

Back to School

And National Night Out

The community-wide National Night against Crime and Back to School Rally will be held from 5 to 8 pm Aug. 3 at Jackson Park Elementary School, 7400 Balson. Free haircuts, health checks, music and refreshments.

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News of the Neighborhood:
*City Council: recreation facilities
*What is Land Acknowledgement?
*Happy Renters of Parkview Gdns