

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Sixth Ward Democratic Organization**  
Southside Wellness Center – Saint Louis, MO  
General Membership Meeting – March 19, 2009 at 7:00 pm

Alison Gee (Chair) called the meeting to order at 7:10pm.

**Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the January 15, 2009 meeting approved with one correction. Moved/Seconded: Ollie Stewart/Brandi Davis.

**Treasurers Report:**

Mary Sue Rosenthal, serving as Interim Treasurer, presented an oral report. Income for the period was \$1,622; expenditures were \$402.20; the end balance was \$6,696.88. Printed reports will be available at future meetings. Moved/Seconded: Alison Gee/Christine Ingrassia.

**Speaker: Why Taxes are not the Enemy; TABOR, the MO Budget, & the Stimulus**

Amy Blouin, with Missouri Budget Project, noted that her organization was founded in 2003. She explained that taxes 'get a bad rap' yet create astronomical benefits when used effectively. Under the Blunt administration, when Medicaid was slashed, the priorities of Missouri families are not being protected; given current legislative leadership, this has not improved. MO ranks 46<sup>th</sup> in income taxes from corporation; if the statements were true that companies go where the taxes are lowest, then corporations would be streaming to MO. That is not true. Companies look for education, housing, entertainment and other quality of life issues when they locate; taxes have been shown to be low on the list of priorities. The bad decisions regarding budgets and taxes in Jefferson City are based on these scary tax myths.

Currently, state revenue is slightly higher than in 1999 when adjusted for inflation. For the past 20 years, MO has been: 44<sup>th</sup> in overall spending, 44<sup>th</sup> in K-12 spending, 41<sup>st</sup> in higher education spending, and a family of 3 can make no more than \$292/month to qualify for healthcare coverage. The legislature is considering \$260 million in tax cuts while tax credits have doubled in 10 years. The revenue/tax base is eroding which means there is no money to invest in infrastructure like schools and healthcare.

During this session there is an opportunity to fix some issues with stimulus funds. The Economic Recovery Act promises to bring \$4 billion to MO. If money is put into core services it could create 98,000 jobs and restore healthcare to those living up to 100% FPL (currently, it is at 17%). But the House Budget Committee is making cuts that could cost \$160 million in federal 'draw down' funds, putting 3700 jobs at risk and not making any restorations to Medicaid. They are denying SCHIP funds, propose cutting childcare funding, cutting services for abused and neglected children, cutting meals for seniors, and cutting diapers and clothes for children in fostercare (wards of the state). The cuts, according to Amy, are unnecessary as well as cruel. Rather than use stimulus funds to prevent cuts, the Republican leadership is talking about using the federal money for tax rebates. One problem with this approach is that rebates would likely be saved and not put back into the economy.

Amy encouraged members to contact the House and Senate leadership and tell them not to cut essential services and use the stimulus funds to stop the bleeding, start the healing.

TABOR. Amy described the devastation that this public policy had created in Colorado. Putting a cap on spending lead parents to have to raise funds privately to turn the heat on in public

schools. Parks closed. Colorado voters suspended it five years ago; former proponents of the policy have come to MO and warned legislators not to implement it here. It is being proposed as a ballot measure, but there is a strong coalition opposed to it that includes AARP, the KC Chamber, and social services organizations.

Bill Stock asked why, with Democrats in power, we aren't winning. Amy explained that only 11 of 34 Senators are democrat. Term limits have had a dramatic influence on the players. John Maxwell asked how we change the dialogue on taxes; developing countries don't have taxes and don't have infrastructures. Amy noted that some legislators want to replace income taxes with sales taxes, but this would disproportionately hurt low-income individuals and families. She suggested members sign up for MBP email alerts and read the updates on the website. Damon Jones asked if there is a model state for tax reform. Amy responded that no state has a perfect structure. She did note that Rep. Mott Oxford has a bill that would change the tax structure. Currently MO starts taxes at \$9000 adjusted gross income using the same rate as for those making \$500,000. Barb Geisman noted that not all tax credits are bad. Amy agreed, but noted they had still doubled.

#### **Motion on SWDO expenditure**

A motion to expend \$3000 to pay for legal fees connected to MEC fines was approved with two abstentions. The motion was moved by Alison Gee and seconded by Bev Buchheit. Damon Jones raised the issue of incorporation which is being pursued by the Board.

#### **School Board Candidate Rebecca Rogers**

Mike Manini represented Rogers and described her credentials. She is an educator, published author, board member of two national organizations, and advocate for teachers and parents. She believes we should 'let teachers teach' and would advocate for full-service schools as the cornerstone of the community. She does not believe in outsourcing jobs. She has been in St. Louis since 2000 and has no children in the school system.

#### **Elected Officials Reports**

President of the Board Lewis Reed noted that the board is coming back into session. He also noted the very low turn-out in the primary.

Alderman Triplett invited all to attend Aldermanic meetings at 10am each Friday. It is still not clear how much stimulus funds will come, but suggested people email request for alley and street pavings. L'Ouverture and Shenandoah schools escaped closure this time. Smoking Joes BBQ opened on Washington in the ward. She also noted St. Louis Jacks Café at the old Red Moon location and talked about new construction at Magnolia and Michigan. She introduced Derric and Melissa as new members. April 21<sup>st</sup> session restarts. She also talked about the naming ceremony of Obama Boulevard.

Rep. Tishaura Jones encouraged constituents to complete and return her survey. 80% of those returned so far want local control of the police board. She has worked hard on her committees dealing with the budget. She encouraged everyone to call Rep. Icet, the Budget Chair.

Sen. Robin Wright Jones handed out flyers with contact information and encouraged everyone to stop by the office on Olive.

#### **New Business**

There was no new business

**Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 8:28pm