

Gifford Park Association General Membership Meeting
April 21, 2022

MEETING DATES TO NOTE

Wed., May 4, 7 pm: House Tour Steering Committee

Thurs., May 19, 6 pm: Historic District, Membership & Publicity committees

Thurs., May 19, 7 pm: General GPA membership meeting with the focus on providing detailed information about GPA grant programs

Note: All GPA meetings are held at the History Museum but can also now be attended via Zoom.

IN ATTENDANCE: Paul & Jean Bednar, Bill Briska, Amanda Carlson, Barbara Evans, Carly Steurer-Gorick, Tyler Grace, Greg Hagen, Janine Hnatusko, Paul & Sue Kuester, Laura Knoerr, Trish LaFleur, John Marston, Dan & Pat Miller, Mark & Glenna Preradovic, John & Heather Svast, Debra Vruble, and the EPD officers noted in the next paragraph.

GUEST SPEAKER: Elgin Police Department Chief Ana Lalley

As GPA had publicized, EPD Police Chief Ana Lalley was present to discuss issues in the Elgin Historic District [EHD] over the past year, something she said the EPD gladly does for neighborhoods when requested. Accompanying her were Commander & Lieutenant over the R.O.P.E. program, Kevin Senne & Jim Roscher, respectively; Commander of the Patrol Division Dave Lesko; Special Investigations Unit overseer Lt. Scott Holmes; and Senior Patrol Officer Tom Wolek, who is also in the Special Investigations unit. Impressive were the number of years these men and their chief have been in the EPD.

Chief Lalley first addressed our concern about the EHD's resident officer, who is under investigation. Because it is ongoing, however, she could tell us no more than that it involved a personnel issue. Though on partial administrative leave and thus able to work at the police station, this officer has no policing power. But, Lalley stressed, this does not mean that the EHD is going without the services normally provided by him because others are covering his duties, including patrolling, serving as a resource officer for the elementary schools and even attending GPA meetings. She is hoping that his case can be resolved by summer.

Before reviewing the shots-fired cases in the EHD, Lalley explained that prior to mid-2018, an incident was so categorized only if a person was struck. Included in the statistics since then are also incidents in which a person suffers only a graze wound, incidents when only an inanimate object is struck as well as those for which the only evidence of shots being fired are bullet casings on the ground.

Of the three shots-fired cases that occurred in the EHD in 2021, one case is inactive and arrests have been made in the other two. To date in 2022, there have been 19 shots-fired incidents in Elgin, three of which were in the EHD. One of those cases is inactive and the other two remain under investigation. (A case is declared inactive after all investigative leads have been followed but no

suspect can be identified. If/when new information is discovered, the case will be reopened.)

Although 2021 saw Elgin at a 50-year low for crime, the EPD has seen an increase in shots-fired cases in the past two years. In response to a question, Lalley noted that while there is an increase in gun violence nationwide, a correlation with COVID has not been established and would, indeed, be difficult to. But that it could be a factor in stressors that are causing some of the uptick in cases is not out of the realm of possibility, she added.

As for who is doing the shooting, Lalley noted that those arrested were basically an even mix of Elginites and non-residents. Furthermore, few are random shootings but rather the result of prior histories of "interpersonal conflicts." Some cases though were just gun shots into the air.

The majority of cases in the EHD, however, involve non-shots-fired assaults, typically in domestic disputes. In answer to another question, Lalley noted that the EPD is getting many calls involving mental health crises and it has two units designed to deal with them:

- The Collaborative Crisis Unit

Consisting of a sergeant, 3 other EPD officers, 1 full-time and 3 part-time mental health professionals, these are the ones who respond immediately to crisis calls and stay on the scene to resolve them, however long it takes. And a recent case took 19 hours.

- The Social Service Unit, consisting of 4 professionals who offer follow-up counseling after the crisis has been resolved.

In response to a question about thefts of vehicle parts, we were informed that the thieves were moving from cars on the street to industrial areas such as car dealerships. We were also cautioned against confronting the thieves, for they're becoming increasingly aggressive.

As for the desire to find out why police car(s) with lights flashing are gathered nearby your home, Lalley made several important points. First, the EPD has a Transparency Site that updates such particulars as crime statistics, calls for service, shots-fired data, and case status every 15 minutes. This can be accessed at <https://epdopendata-cityofelgin.hub.arcgis.com/> It is far better that one visit this site than to walk over to the cars, especially at night. One could also simply call the EPD dispatch center at 847-289-2700 to ask for information.

Second, the EPD also has a RAVE ALERT/SMART 911 site that enables registered users to receive timely and actionable emergency alerts. This is a free subscriber-based service that sends messages to your email or via text or voice messages on cell phones. To register, go to <https://www.cityofelgin.org/1972/Emergency-Alerts>

Third, realize that Facebook posts are the main means the EPD uses to communicate with the public and discount any posts about an incident that are not issued by the EPD. Unlike bystanders eager to get "the word" out, the EPD posts reflect accurate information. <https://www.facebook.com/ElginPolice>

Perhaps the most important message of the evening, however, was to never, ever hesitate to call 911 or 847-289-2700 if a particular situation makes

you uncomfortable and/or seems suspicious. Though, for example, a police car sitting in a park may turn out to simply have an officer finishing a report or the spotlights at night sweeping an area may simply be officers on patrol checking to see that all is well, you will be informed of this and the EPD will have fulfilled one of its primary duties: making the public feel safe.

SECRETARY'S & TREASURER'S REPORTS (B. Evans & L. Knoerr)

After Barbara called attention to the two dates that were incorrect in the minutes for February, a motion to accept the amended minutes was made, seconded and passed unanimously.

Laura reported that GPA currently has \$87,396.36 in four CDs and, thanks to the generous donation of \$15,000 from the Mike Alft estate, \$72,661.43 in its checking account. (The checking account figure included the deduction of \$1,288.11 for checks written that had not yet cleared.) The GPA thus has a total of \$160,057.79. A motion to accept the report was made, seconded and passed unanimously.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Elgin Historic District [EHD]

Trish LaFleur, reporting for Committee Chair Sarah Hunt, noted that a postcard of the four major GPA events this year had been sent to all residents of the EHD. She also noted that the first is the Neighborhood Litter Patrol this Saturday, April 23. The correct dates for the others follow: Saturday, July 23 for the picnic gathering; Saturday, Oct. 8 for the Fall Festival; and Friday, Dec. 2 for the holiday party and potluck.

2. Membership

Committee Chair Janine Hnutasko was beaming when she held up the tote bags in which much information as well as tickets to the Ed Schock Center, Elgin Symphony, and tentatively the History Museum will be included and delivered to new residents of the EHD. She's hoping to have them filled in time for delivery to begin on May 1st. An updated membership list is also targeted to be ready in May.

3. Historic House Tour

Dan Miller, reporting for Chair Matt Martin, noted that the target area for the Sept. 10-11 tour is the EHD, on and south of E. Chicago St. To date, three homeowners have agreed to participate. Brian Schmidt of the Site Selection Committee hopes to have more by May 4th, when the Steering Committee next meets.

4. Publicity

Chair Trish LaFleur noted that the postcard announcing GPA's new Architectural Grant Restoration Program had been sent to all property owners in the EHD. Though she declared her update of the website still a work in progress, all who'd visited it congratulated her on all she'd done so far.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. As noted in the Dates to Note, the May general membership meeting will focus on the details of GPA's new Architectural Restoration Grant Program. Paul Bednar recommended that the Great Unveiling grants also be detailed as we've increased each from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

2. Paul read the following letter from Mike and Fran Alft's son and daughter: "As you are aware, our parents were immensely interested in the heritage of Elgin, from the preservation of historic buildings and neighborhoods to educational outreach. Their love and pride for the City of Elgin was evident in their involvement in [the Elgin] Historic District. They were grateful for the vitality and passion the Gifford Park Association brings to Elgin, from the famous Historic House Tours to the many programs that promote pride in the community. It was their wish that this \$15,000 gift [to GPA] help to resource continued support of the appreciation and preservation of Elgin's important history." Needless to say, we were grateful for the faith the Alft's have in GPA and are putting our heads together to come up with ways that will fulfill their wish.

3. John Marston, Chair of the Heritage Commission, thanked us for letters we'd sent urging the City Council to not remove the historic designation or otherwise change the boundaries of the Elgin National Watch Historic District. Though the City Council meeting was well attended by people who supported keeping the ENWHD as is, John believes that the issue will arise again.

Carly Steurer-Gorick and Debra Vruble, two who live in that district, are working to revive the neighborhood organization it once had and have received the Heritage Commissions' okay to call it the Elgin National Watch Neighborhood [ENWN]. Pat Miller and Laura Knoerr urged them to create a bilingual newsletter as well as to see if a grant from the Sustainability Council could help fund the first issue. John said that the Heritage Commission had a small budget but could help out a bit.

4. The Firefighters Memorial Plaza is under construction and will enhance Elgin Fire Barn No. 5 Museum at 533 St. Charles Street (in the Elgin National Watch Historic District). On the National Register of Historic Places, No. 5 houses the Elgin Fire Department's most prized artifacts. To finish the project, which will include a bronze statue of a firefighter, \$30,000 is needed. Because GPA members had been involved in getting the fire barn on the National Register, it was not surprising that Paul Bednar suggested that we consider making a donation to the project. After discussion, Laura moved that GPA donate \$5,000 to the Memorial Plaza project. Seconded by Mark Preradovic, the motion passed unanimously. Plans are to make our donation newsworthy by creating an oversized check and inviting the press to attend.

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Evans, Secretary