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A message from County Executive Steve Ehlmann

The passage of House Bill 1434 by the General Assembly was the culmination of efforts that began 16 years ago to rein in the abuse of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) in the St. Louis region. The bill passed unanimously in the Senate and 114-37 in the House of Representatives and was signed by Governor Nixon. The legislation puts the final decision on TIF funding in the hands of a county-wide TIF Commission that will consider the benefit of the proposal to the entire county, not just a single municipality. Hopefully, it will eliminate the competition between cities for sales tax dollars that have lined the pockets of retail developers like Stan Kroenke at the expense of other taxing entities, including our schools.

In response to requests from leaders in St. Louis, the delegates to the convention who drafted the 1945 Constitution allowed tax breaks for “blighted” property. Using this concept, the legislature authorized TIF in 1982 to spur economic development by allowing a developer to keep the additional property taxes that development generated. When the legislature later also allowed the developer to keep one-half of additional sales tax generated, the main use of TIF quickly became retail development.

From the beginning, schools and other taxing districts complained that others were giving away their future revenue. In 1997, after St. Charles County received a bill for $31,954 to fund TIFs in St. Charles and a bill for $20,353 to fund TIFs in St. Peters, County Executive Joe Ortwerth declared TIF “intergovernmental thievery,” bewailing the fact that one political subdivision had “the legal privilege to raid the treasury of another political subdivision for special-interest purposes. This amounts to public larceny.”

Most members of the “consumer society” did not appreciate how TIF was being abused until the City of Des Peres declared the West County Mall to be “blighted” in 2000. That year, Senator Wayne Goode passed a bill in the Missouri Senate to clarify the definition of “blight.” The bill was blocked by a House committee. The legislature amended the TIF statute in 2007, requiring municipalities to take their proposals before county TIF commissions for their approval. However, municipalities could override the county TIF commission with a two-thirds vote. Since then, developers have blocked efforts to reform TIF, and Missouri courts have refused to apply a common-sense definition of “blight,” holding that defining “blight” was a legislative decision to be made by the governing body of the city.

Many municipal officials and legislators defended TIF, claiming it was the only economic development tool available. The East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWGCOG) has studied the economic development resulting from TIF. In the last 25 years, cities in the St. Louis region pledged more than $3 billion dollars, most of it for retail development, to retire TIF bonds. Yet, in that period, the number of new retail jobs created was a mere 1,200, an increase of .08 percent, one-tenth the increase in population over the same period. Meanwhile, the drain on St. Charles County’s treasury has risen to $1.8 million per year.

House Bill 1434 still allows municipalities to approve TIFs for the clearing and grading of land. This approach is consistent with the original intent of the Missouri Constitution and will guarantee that any TIF in the floodplain, like the proposal by developer Stan Kroenke in Maryland Heights, will have to be found to be in the best interest of the entire county by the St. Louis County TIF Commission. Of course, this legislation means nothing unless the county TIF commissions do their job. We have appointed good people to the St. Charles County TIF Commission who will not allow developers to influence them, as they have done in the General Assembly and the cities the last 25 years. TIFs will be approved only if in the interest of St. Charles County as a whole.

St. Charles County Government Contact Information

Airport: 636-949-1893
Assessor: 636-949-7425
Auditor: 636-949-7455
Circuit Court: 636-949-3080
Collector of Revenue: 636-949-7470
Community Development: 636-949-7345
Corrections: 636-949-3003
County Council: 636-949-7530
Election Authority: 636-949-7550
Executive Office: 636-949-7520
Family Arena: 636-896-4200
Highway: 636-949-7305
Human Resources: 636-949-7320
Juvenile Justice: 636-949-3040
Municipal Court: 636-949-1833
Parks and Recreation: 636-949-7535
Police: 636-949-3000
Prosecuting Attorney: 636-949-7355
Public Administrator: 636-949-7315
Public Health: 636-949-7400
Recorder of Deeds: 636-949-7505
Registrar: 636-949-7560
Sheriff: 636-949-3010
Workforce & Business Development: 636-255-6060
Traffic Technology Keeps St. Charles County Drivers on the Move

The Family Arena in St. Charles was the site of 20 high school and college graduations, the Gypsy Caravan and a Boston concert—all in a six-week period in May and June. Add to the mix the Missouri River Irish Festival, Ribfest, a baby expo, a car show and Memorial Day activities throughout the county (not to mention the Fifth Street Road Improvement Project) and you’ve got the potential for traffic nightmares. But, thanks to a program called Gateway Green Light (GGL), signals were monitored and coordinated and people were kept moving.

GGL is a joint transportation initiative between St. Charles County, Cottleville, Dardenne Prairie, Lake Saint Louis, O’Fallon, St. Charles, St. Peters, Weldon Spring, Wentzville and the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT). The goal of GGL is to constantly coordinate traffic signal operations throughout the county to improve traffic flow—not just during special events, but every day.

“It’s working,” said John Greifzu, assistant director of administration for St. Charles County, “and our proof was over that six-week period when there were a lot of special events across the county. Because we were able to coordinate the signals, we didn’t see lines of cars backed up onto Arena Parkway and Route 364 like we have in past years. Once the events were over, traffic flowed.”

Construction on the GGL project started in 2013 with the installation of more than 120 miles of fiber optic cable linking signals, road sensors and observation cameras. Hardware and equipment on all 337 stoplights in the county were upgraded, and in 2015, the program became operational. What all that means is that now traffic signals can be managed and monitored in “real time,” improving traffic flow and reducing delays and emissions that contribute to ozone pollution.

Earlier this year, GGL was used to assist the City of Cottleville and local law enforcement during the St. Patrick’s Day Run for the Helmet and Parade, an event which attracts more than 50,000 people to the area. “The system proved extremely effective in moving traffic throughout the roadways and reduced the manpower needed at signalized intersections,” said Rich Francis, city administrator of Cottleville. “Police officers were able to focus on other crowd and safety priorities.”

Scott Laxton, a contracted traffic engineer for GGL, monitors traffic for St. Charles County along with staff at MoDOT’s traffic management center. “Through the use of the central software, observation cameras, and time-space diagrams of traffic, the program can be proactive in identifying concerns,” Laxton said. “GGL technology allows us to cover twice the ground with half the resources. In the past we had to adjust traffic signals through observation and each signal had to be programmed manually in the field.”

Utilizing and refining GGL during local events will be an ongoing process. “We will keep analyzing traffic flow during holidays and special events and continue to improve,” said Greifzu.

Looking Ahead

This past spring, residents were given an opportunity to voice their opinions about traffic and related issues through an online survey. Responses are assisting GGL personnel to set goals for the future. Congestion and who to call about a traffic issue are major concerns, according to Greifzu, who coordinates GGL for St. Charles County. “These are two prime reasons why GGL is needed,” he said. Based on survey results, Greifzu said next steps include improving traffic flow along Route 94 between I-70 and Route 364, improving safety by monitoring pedestrian crossings and improving travel time along heavily traveled corridors such as Mid Rivers Mall Drive.

“As the program continues to expand, residents will continue to see improvements. Backups and congestion will happen at times,” Greifzu said, “but we have proof this system works to keep traffic moving.”
Progress in the making
Click Through Monthly Photo Albums of I-70 Fifth Street Improvements Project

Construction is moving rapidly on the I-70 Fifth Street Improvements Project – and there are pictures to prove it! This busy area will look quite different by the end of the year, and you can see this exciting progress month-by-month in photos. Visit our online photo album at http://flickr.com/photos/sccmo/albums and stay tuned for more updates!

The I-70 Fifth Street Interchange Improvements Project was initiated to alleviate congestion, improve economic development and provide better access to the area from the interstate. This is important as the area is a hub of retail activity, and 50% of traffic crossing the Blanchette Bridge into St. Charles County exits at Fifth Street or First Capitol Drive. As construction began early this spring, the overall project is on track to be completed by May 2017, with a goal of all roads opening to traffic by November 2016.

Keep track of project updates and find out more on the Missouri Department of Transportation website at http://modot.org/stlouis/major_projects/705thStImprovements.htm.

Preserving, Making history
Lindenwood Donates Historic Daniel Boone Home, Property for County Park

A formal signing ceremony was held on April 29 to celebrate Lindenwood’s donation of of the historic Daniel Boone Home and surrounding property. It was announced the property would be named Lindenwood Park. Participating in the signing are from left, Julie Mueller, former Lindenwood COO; Dr. Michael Shonrock, Lindenwood president; County Executive Steve Ehlmann, and Bettie Yahn-Kramer, County Parks director.

Read more about this donation in Councilman Joe Cronin’s column on page 7.
Making the Case for STEM Education and “Brain Sports”
County Executive, Local IT, Education Leaders Discuss Future of Economy

County Executive Steve Ehlmann is concerned about the current and future supply of qualified information technology workers. And he’s not the only one.

At an IT and Business Leaders Luncheon hosted by Ehlmann in late May, local information technology professionals and educators from the K-12 systems, colleges and universities met to address the need for more focused training to meet the growing need of qualified applicants for high-wage IT positions. Forging new partnerships between business leaders and educators is another step in the right direction, and the goal of Ehlmann’s luncheon.

“It is clear we need a ‘cultural shift’ in making technology a core skill taught from childhood through adulthood as we prepare the next generation of problem-solvers and innovators to compete in the global economy,” Ehlmann said. “Some of the best wage rates – from entry level to management – are earned by dedicated and well-trained workers in the growing information technology sector. Employers are telling us too many of their IT jobs are going unfilled from the local pool of graduates and the general populations in St. Charles County and metro St. Louis.”

The group discussed the need to emphasize STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education, more “brain sports” (coding, robotics and science competitions) in our schools, better align technical training and college degrees with the current IT trends, and emphasize soft skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication and effective team work. Ideas from educators on how to better integrate business and education include: more business leader advisory panels that oversee curriculum development and student project assessments; increased business leader involvement with work-study programs, business sponsorships and scholarships; growth of the business mentor program; and more effective legislative lobbying efforts in Jefferson City.

Businesses and schools throughout the county were represented at the luncheon, as well as EDC Business and Community Partners and the St. Charles Chamber of Commerce and O’Fallon Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Further discussions, focus groups, surveys and special events on these issues are planned.

For more information about the local workforce and economy, contact the St. Charles County Department of Workforce & Business Development at 636-255-6060.

Summer’s not over – be diligent!
Prevent Mosquito Bites, Breeding Grounds

Mosquitoes are not only a nuisance, but a health issue. While the Department of Public Health’s Mosquito Control program works to reduce the mosquito population in the county, individuals should also take personal responsibility to protect themselves and eliminate breeding grounds. Taking precautions at home and on vacation keeps our community healthy and reduces the chances of viruses like West Nile, Zika, Chikungunya and others from spreading. Here are some tips:

- Use insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, IR 3535 or oil of lemon eucalyptus when outdoors.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants and staying indoors during dawn and dusk.
- Mosquito larvae take seven to 14 days for development. Take steps to drain areas where water settles, clean clogged gutters and fountains, ponds and bird baths to eliminate breeding grounds.
- Protect the four-legged members of your family by keeping up-to-date on heartworm medications.

The Mosquito Control program operates in unincorporated St. Charles County as well as some contracted municipalities. Residents living in unincorporated St. Charles County or within Augusta, Cottleville, Dardenne Prairie, Flint Hill, Lake Saint Louis, Portage des Sioux, Weldon Spring, Weldon Spring Heights and Wentzville who are concerned about nuisance mosquitoes should visit http://scemo.org/Mosquito-Control to request assistance. Those living in O’Fallon, St. Charles and St. Peters should contact their city. To learn how the division helps to ensure public safety, please call 636-949-1800.
Department of Public Health Now Processes Passport Applications

The St. Charles County Department of Public Health, located at 1650 Boone’s Lick Road in St. Charles, now is equipped to process passport applications. Citizens are able to apply for or renew a passport and obtain a passport photograph through the department. All adults and children must apply in person. If you need a birth certificate for your application, you can apply for one at the department, as well. More information about services and fees can be found at [http://sccmo.org/US-Passport-Applications](http://sccmo.org/US-Passport-Applications) or call 636-949-7412.

Trifecta of Family Fun: Movies, Music and Food Trucks!

Movies in the Park and Music and Food Truck Nights have returned to the St. Charles County Heritage Museum, 1630 Heritage Landing in St. Peters! Catch a movie under the stars at Movies in the Park, or enjoy local music and food at one of the Music and Food Truck Nights. Movies start at sunset. Find more information online at [http://stccparks.org](http://stccparks.org) or call 636-949-7535.

Music and Food Truck Night: Aug. 27, 5–8 p.m.; Movies in the Park, “Ant Man”: Sept. 17
Music and Food Truck Night: Sept. 24, 5–8 p.m.; Movies in the Park, “Frankenstein” and “Bride of Frankenstein”: Oct. 15

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Now Available Year-Round

You can now dispose of Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) items such as automobile fluids, pesticides, chemicals and oil-based paints collection year-round at Recycle Works West at 2110 East Pitman in Wentzville, and through Sept. 30 at Recycle Works Central at 60 Triad South Drive in St. Charles. Items such as automobile fluids, pesticides, chemicals and oil-based paints are considered HHW. Collections are accepted from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, as well as the last Saturday of the month. There is no appointment necessary to participate in the program, but a $15 fee is required for loads up to 50 pounds, with a fee of $1 for each pound of material more than 50. For questions, please call 636-949-1800.

Need Home Repair, Utility or Transportation Assistance? Help is Available

Programs to provide home repair, property improvement and transportation assistance are available to eligible residents who live in the cities of Cottleville, Dardenne Prairie, Lake Saint Louis, St. Paul, St. Peters, Weldon Spring, Wentzville and unincorporated areas of St. Charles County. In cooperation with HUD, St. Charles County Government is able to offer these programs, which include:

- **The Down Payment Loan Program, or HOME St. Charles Program:** Interest-free down payment loans.
- **The Emergency Repair Program:** Interest-free, five-year forgivable loan up to $5,000 for emergency home repairs.
- **The Home Improvement Loan Program:** Interest-free, five-year forgivable loan up to $5,000.
- **The Homeless Prevention Program:** Assistance to those who are behind on utility and/or lease payments.
- **The Property Maintenance Program:** A grant of up to $2,500 to address certain property code violations.
- **The Transportation Services Program:** Transportation for necessary medical, shopping and other essential services.

For more information, visit [http://sccmo.org/Loan-Housing-Assistance-Programs](http://sccmo.org/Loan-Housing-Assistance-Programs) or contact Amy Heckart, City of St. Peters Department of Community Services, at 636-477-6600, ext. 1204, or communityprojects@stpetersmo.net.

Add a Piece of St. Charles County History to Your Library!

Copies of *The Star Between the Rivers: A History of the St. Charles County Sheriff’s Department, 1805–2015* still are available! The book is loaded with photos and the journey of the sheriff’s department—from the appointment of the first sheriff following the Louisiana Purchase to the creation of a separate county police department after voters approved a charter change. More information is available at [http://sccmo.org/The-Star-Between-the-Rivers](http://sccmo.org/The-Star-Between-the-Rivers) or 636-949-1864. Pick up your copy for $20 at the St. Charles County Finance Department, 201 N. Second Street, Suite 541 in St. Charles; the St. Charles County Police Department, 101 Sheriff Dierker Court in O’Fallon; or the St. Charles County Heritage Museum, 1630 Heritage Landing in St. Peters.
Lindenwood University gave the citizens of St. Charles County an amazing gift this past spring with the donation of the Historic Daniel Boone Home, Boonesfield Village and surrounding property. One of the goals of the St. Charles County Parks and Recreation Department is to preserve the open spaces of the county by acquiring and protecting valuable land for historical and natural heritage. This nearly 300-acre site, which has been named Lindenwood Park, definitely fits this bill.

The park represents a unique segment of American frontier history and has added value as a national treasure that people can embrace and enjoy year-round. Like all of our parks, the beautiful land surrounding it is a major asset. Lindenwood acquired the Boone home in 1998 from a private owner and purchased the additional property over the next several years. The home was built by Boone’s son, Nathan, with his father’s help. Boone spent his final years in the home and died there in 1820. More than 20 additional historic structures make up Boonesfield Village, which were all relocated to the property over the course of several years.

The opportunities ahead to educate and share the rich history of the property with new visitors are especially exciting. The Parks Department is continuing to operate the Boone Home as before, including tours, field trips, and the site’s signature events. Looking ahead, staff is exploring opportunities to portray frontier skills and crafts, as well as new events and amenities. New generations of students from Lindenwood also will continue to have a variety of academic activities at the site, including field biology, archaeology, history, and recreation classes and activities.

I want to commend and thank Lindenwood University, St. Charles County Administration and the Parks and Recreation Department for the work it took behind the scenes to make this wonderful donation possible.

St. Charles County is a wonderful place to live and raise a family – and one of the reasons why is our fantastic county park system. The St. Charles County Parks and Recreation Department has been diligent in maintaining its vision to provide green space and to preserve and protect land and historical features throughout the entire county.

One of our park system’s gems in my district is Heritage Park. Located at the entrance to Heritage Landing in St. Peters, this park is on a site known to many as Kuhlmann’s Grove, which was a popular recreation area for nearly 100 years. The park features the County Heritage Museum, which houses exhibits about the history of our community. It is also the starting point for the Centennial Greenway trail, part of the Great Rivers Greenway that connects to the Katy Trail and extends into Creve Coeur Lake Park.

Heritage Park will be in the spotlight in 2017 as construction begins in April for the new Centennial Greenway Trail Bridges over Routes 364 and 94. This .8 mile project will expand the Centennial Greenway to allow safer access for pedestrian and cyclist travel over these highways and greater community access to the greenway. The first phase, which will connect Centennial Trail to a commuter lot near Route 94 and Muegger Road, is scheduled for completion in 2018.

This is only the beginning of a plan for future connections that will eventually connect other parks in St. Charles County, and when fully completed, connect it to greenway trails in St. Louis County and St. Louis City. This impressive trail is to be constructed with use of public right of way, which in itself is an achievement. For more information about this project, visit http://greatriversgreenway.org/centennial-greenway-master-plan/.
Sit. Stay. Roll over. These are typical commands for a dog to obey or show off a trick. But Bonnie, a 2-year-old Labrador Retriever and the newest member of the St. Charles County Cyber Crime Task Force, knows a lot more than just the typical.

“Let’s get to work, Bonnie,” prompts Detective Brigid Oldani, Bonnie’s handler and fellow member of the Task Force. This command, paired with the promise of a treat for a job well-done, triggers Bonnie to search for hidden electronics.

Bonnie is the Midwest’s only Electronic Storage Device Detection (ESD) K-9 officer, trained to use her nose to detect a chemical found in electronics such as computers, DVDs and mobile devices—a skill handy when searching for hidden evidence in cyber-crime investigations. In addition to the Task Force, which is part of the St. Charles County Police Department’s Bureau of Criminal Investigation, Bonnie assists the Missouri Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (MOICAC).

ESD was first implemented by the Connecticut State Police in 2013. The dogs imprint, or train to detect, the odor of the chemical compounds found in electronic devices for five weeks. Afterwards, the dogs meet their law enforcement handlers for an additional six weeks of training. Bonnie is a member of the second class of canines to graduate from the program. Her fellow graduates were sent to work with their handlers in task forces throughout the U.S.

Before it was decided Bonnie would come to walk the halls of the Police Department, Detective Oldani and the Task Force compiled research and worked on acquiring funding and support for an ESD dog for three years. The Marc Bulger Foundation donated the cost to purchase Bonnie, and the Connecticut State Police covered Bonnie and Oldani’s training.

Bonnie lives with Oldani, who says Bonnie knows when to get to work and when to play. As Labradors are food-driven working dogs, Bonnie practices her skills at least twice a day, and her reward for finding the devices Oldani hides is her meal. She sniffs out flash drives, hard drives, DVDs and other devices as Oldani leads her, and once she finds them, Bonnie snorts and sits near the item.

Oldani and Bonnie have been in service and conducting search warrants for the Task Force since April 18, 2016. Oldani said they are also available to assist the FBI and other local law enforcement agencies with cyber-crime investigations. Along with this work, they have met and educated citizens at community events.

Those who meet Bonnie are drawn to her energetic and loving nature, and Oldani credits Bonnie’s puppy raiser for instilling her drive and disposition. “What makes Bonnie unique is her demeanor and personality. It’s perfect for uplifting spirits,” she explained. This makes her a helpful therapy dog to children involved in cases, but also to the members of the Task Force and Police Department. If a detective or officer is dealing with a difficult case or situation, he or she can take Bonnie for a walk or play a game outside to take a break and de-stress.

“Bonnie helps us leave our work at work and be more present with our families when we leave,” Oldani said.