

1,800+ voters sign to recall Councilman Jackson

The effort to recall embattled Ward Three City Councilman Kevin Jackson is moving closer to its goal of submitting the required number of signatures on recall petitions.

According to activists in the recall drive, more than 30 volunteers stood outside all four polling places in the ward on Election Day, offering the opportunity to sign and more than 1,800 registered voters did.

If all those are validated by the city's Board of Canvassers, they represent about 85 percent of the 2,100 signatures required to institute a recall election. The group has until March 3 to gather the remaining support. If that happens, an election is called for the entire ward to decide if Jackson should be removed from office. If he is voted out, another election is to be called to elect a replacement.

If a recall election is called, SNA will hold a public forum on the issue.

Jackson has been indicted for unlaw-

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Will you help deliver the SNA newsletter?

It's published three times a year and distributed free to all households in the Summit neighborhood. But this distribution system depends on volunteers to take about an hour to put copies in their neighbors' doors. That's a total of about three hours per year to spread the word about what's happening in your community.

Routes are clearly designated on an instruction sheet that is delivered to the volunteer's door along with the needed number of newsletters.

We are now in need of a few more people so we can maintain the coverage of the entire community. To join the effort, please contact SNA Vice President Kerry Kohring at 401-272-6323 or kerrykohring@gmail.com. Come on along - it's fun.



Summit News

FALL 2016

www.SummitNeighbors.org

Good taste, good fun at SNA's sixth annual Cook-Off

In a Halloween near-emulation of the three witches of Shakespeare's "Macbeth," the SNA's sixth annual cook-off met again in rain, although without the lightning and thunder.

But the traditional foul weather (one year there was a hurricane, one year snow) did not deter about 45 people from gathering Oct. 27 in Seven Stars bakery on Hope Street to sample 15 dishes made by neighborhood residents using pumpkin as a common ingredient.

And in keeping with the holiday spirit, there was also a parade of children in costumes ranging from a hotdog to a suffragette, although some of the smaller participants seemed more interested in chasing the balloons provided by Hope Street merchant Kim Clark of Rhody Craft than marching.

After being welcomed by SNA President Dean Weinberg and tasting the various pumpkin offerings plus a sampling of fine oils from Olive del Mondo, another Hope Street merchant, participants voted for their favorite dishes. The results were counted by SNA board member Emily Spitzman and organization member Sandy Kohring, who collaborated in organizing the event. The winners were:

- 1st prize, a \$30 gift certificate to Seven Stars, went to Jasper Summers for pumpkin tiramisu;
- 2nd prize, a \$20 gift certificate to Rhody Craft, went to Sri Mitta for pumpkin curry;
- 3rd prize was a tie, with \$15 gift certificates to Olive del Mondo going to Ethan Itkin for cinnamon pump-



kin rolls with cream cheese frosting and Gailia Rutan for pumpkin cake roll.

The recipes for the winning dishes will be posted on the SNA web site as they become available. Some of the chefs experimented and are trying to remember what they did.

However, their example of inventiveness bodes well for the delicacies expected in next year's competition.

Caroling for a cause

The holidays are fast approaching and SNA is once again sponsoring Caroling For A Cause in the Summit neighborhood.

This year it will be on Sunday, Dec. 11. Anyone interested in expressing the spirit of giving by song should meet at Miriam Hospital, the cosponsor of the

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SNA Yard Sale brings Summit neighbors together



The Summit neighborhood gave a community-wide yard sale on Sunday – and everybody came.

“From my vantage point at my house,” one participant said, “I could visibly see neighbors out and about, talking to each other, sharing stories and getting to know one another. And we brought a lot of people in from other areas too, so they could see what a fun and useful event it was.”

That “useful event” was centered on the parking lot of Citizens Bank on Hope Street, where the SNA distributed maps showing the 48 locations where residents had set up their own sale tables. Added to that were about 10 people who brought their valued items to the core location, according to Britt Page, the SNA board member who organized the event.

Topping off the day were seven merchants along Hope who had special sales to coordinate with the yard sales,

plus a truck from Indie Cycle parked in the CVS lot across the street to accept unused or unwanted electronics so they could be disposed of in a responsible manner.

“I can tell you that my store was busier than usual that day,” said Kim T. Clark, owner of Rhody Craft, a shop at 780 Hope that specializes in products made by local craftspeople, “and there was a lot of fun, festive energy all over the neighborhood because I was roaming around.”

The yard sale is an annual event that SNA sponsors, but in previous years it had been at the Church of the Redeemer at 655 Hope. This year it involved the entire neighborhood. “We’re building community, not just in Summit, but potentially in areas beyond our reach,” said Dean Weinberg, SNA president.

“Great event,” said Clark, an SNA board member. “I think we should definitely do it like that every year!”

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ful appropriation, embezzlement, filing a false document with a government entity, and personal use of campaign funds. He has resigned his leadership positions on the City Council, but not his seat.

Patricia A. Kammerer, a leader of the recall group, said in a news release, “The willingness of so many Ward Three

voters to sign the petition confirmed our belief that Councilman Jackson has lost the confidence of his constituents and needs to be removed from office. Support for the petition was high in all neighborhoods of the ward – Mount Hope to Summit to Blackstone.”

Her organization has a web site – <https://RecallKevinJackson.org/>

How to make government work? Participate

“The real key” to making government work properly, says John Marion, the executive director of Common Cause Rhode Island, is for “people to take advantage of the right to participate.”

Speaking at the second in SNA’s lecture series, Marion said, “We can build institutions, but who is going to take advantage of them?”

He said citizens must become “active visitors” at meetings of governmental bodies and “have to file complaints” to make laws effective and figure out how to enforce them. He cited the history of Common Cause, which was formed nationally in the 1970s as a “people’s lobby” and worked in Rhode Island during the 1980s on the separation of powers in state government.

Marion, who lives on the East Side, said citizens hold legislators accountable at election time but also must monitor “how they hold the public trust between elections.” Unfortunately, he noted, the district has been represented by people who abused that trust.

He urged voters to support the proposals on the November ballot to modernize elections in the state. He said Common Cause was working to get Ethics Commission jurisdiction over legislators restored, and urged his listeners to support that effort. [Update: it passed overwhelmingly.]

In answer to a question, Marion said that a constitutional convention is not necessary to revise election laws, but can be accomplished by ballot questions.

He closed by pointing out that in such a small state, “government is readily accessible and citizens can take advantage of that.”



John Marion, right, is introduced by Mark Tracy, coordinator of the SNA lecture series

Progress on Summit Ave. community garden

The Summit Avenue Park community garden project has seen promising progress in the past few months. The fence and gate are built, the water line has been installed, and there is a gardening shed on the way.

SNA has been working with a dedicated group of park activists and the City of Providence Department of Parks and Recreation to complete this first phase of the build. At the same time, the group has been working to develop a system of governance for the new community gardens, including the planning of a lottery to determine the initial allocation of garden plots for the 2017 growing season.

There will be a community meeting scheduled to hold the lottery and subsequently to vote on some initial business related to first-year leadership of the newly formed garden group. If there is more interest than garden plots available, a waiting list will be created. Once the garden plots are allocated, the new garden group will plan a timeline for building the garden beds and filling them with soil, all expected to happen in advance of the growing season.

As of the time of this writing, the community meeting is expected to take place in January at Rochambeau Library. Keep an eye on the park bulletin board, Summit email listserv, www.SummitNeighbors.org website, and Summit Neighborhood Facebook pages for final scheduling.

The group continues to pursue the next phase of the park renovation project, which is intended to include new and restored playground amenities, as well as space to foster interaction between the gardeners and the children in the park. The community garden group plans to create a subcommittee with these interactive programming opportunities specifically in mind.

History comes to life at the North Burial Ground



Sarah Helen Power Whitman, a poet and romance of Edgar Allen Poe, recounts her life.

Ghosts walked amid the gravestones along North Main Street two days before Halloween as re-enactors talked about their characters' lives – and deaths.

It was part of a continuing project by the Friends of the North Burial Ground and Randall Park, in collaboration with Rhode Island College to raise awareness of the historical and recreational aspects of the area.

RIC students and professors led nearly 100 people around the grounds to meet with, among others, Sarah Helen Power Whitman, a poet and girlfriend of Edgar Allan Poe, and Samuel Whipple, who may have been murdered so his land could be taken and ultimately become the cemetery.

Providence Journal reporter Tom Mooney wrote that Francis Leazes, a

professor of political science and public policy at RIC, said "The people who are interred here can tell the story of the state since its founding. But like all historic cemeteries, it needs the care and attention before the stories disappear, literally."

Mooney continued that Leazes and some of his colleagues such as Erik Christiansen (an SNA board member), Michelle Valletta and Cathy Hurst, started the Friends group that sponsored its first round of tours in June, featuring a Civil War enactment with stops at some of the historic graves that include early governors, leaders of the Revolutionary and Civil wars, barons from the Industrial Revolution and men such as John Brown, a rich merchant, slave trader and co-founder of Brown University.

For more information, go to www.facebook.com/northburialground/.

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event, at 4 p.m. for hot chocolate and cookies.

After a couple of Hanukkah or nonsecular songs there, we proceed up and down Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Streets between Summit Avenue and Bayard Street, singing and collecting donations of cash or jars of peanut butter to benefit the food pantry at St. Raymond's church. The final carols are to be sung on Fourth as we near Hope Street about

6:30 p.m., early enough to enjoy dinner at one of the local restaurants and still be home in time to get homework done before school on Monday.

The festivities are open to everyone, especially families with small children. Songbooks will be provided as will vocal leaders, but please bring flashlights to read the words.

For further information, go to SNA's web site, SummitNeighbors.org, or to its page or group on Facebook.

What to do about the problem of panhandlers

The recent surge in panhandling in Providence is directly caused by a rise in poverty, a panel of experts said Sept. 21, but is also linked to the publicized curbs on the city's ordinance against it.

Appearing before almost 40 people at a public forum at Summit Commons, 99 Hillside Ave., sponsored by SNA, the speakers were: Jeffrey Dana, Providence city solicitor; Linda Katz, policy director of the Economic Progress Institute; Rabbi Alan Flam, executive director of the Helen Hudson Foundation for Homeless America; and Diana Burdett, executive director of PICA, a charitable nonprofit that runs the state's largest food pantry. They were joined by Cliff Wood of the Downtown Parks Conservancy. The session was organized and moderated by Gayle Gifford, president of Cause & Effect Inc., an advisor to nonprofits, and assisted by R.I. Rep. Aaron Regunberg.

Flam summed up the cause of panhandling, which is the act of seeking handouts from passersby, by saying it is a problem of poverty. "People don't have enough money to live," he said, adding that it's "not a question of homelessness, it's poverty."

Katz supported that assessment, pointing out that 27.9 percent of the people in Providence live at or below the poverty level, which for a family of one parent and

two children is \$20,000. She cited the shift away from manufacturing jobs at which a high-school graduate could still make a living, but now the pay from available jobs is "not enough to support a family," even with available benefits.

Getting those benefits, Burdett said, is often difficult, with children and the elderly being the most affected. "Many people wouldn't be able to eat if they couldn't access food pantries," she asserted, adding that many also can't access the health-care system so they self-medicate with alcohol or drugs. "It's a full-time job being homeless," she said, and that makes them vulnerable.

In answer to a question about who seems to be organizing the panhandlers, Wood echoed Burdett's theme by saying the victims of poverty are targets of predators who steal what little help is given. He had said earlier that the city's decision to not enforce the law against panhandling "opened

the floodgates for petty criminal activity" downtown, prompting an increase in police presence. He said there was absolutely no criminalization of panhandling, but there is no city tolerance for petty crime. He said the downtown activity "has nothing to do with the homeless situation."

Dana added that the city is working to get more housing and shelters available during the day and is cooperating with other agencies to develop jobs for the homeless. He stated that many anti-panhandling laws have been struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court as infringements on the First Amendment and that "enforcing an anti-panhandling law is clearly not legal." But, he added, "just because panhandling is OK, that doesn't mean crime is OK." He said "we're not going to arrest our way to a solution of poverty."

Flam gave this guidance to residents who "clearly want to help people in distress." Don't give money to the panhandler, he said. "It's not about giving to the individual on the corner - give to the organizations that are working on the problem."

Panel members and the two moderators wrapped up by urging residents to, a Flam put it, "turn attention and outrage toward public officials who don't address" the underlying causes. "Citizens have not demanded solutions, have not participated in the public square," he said.



Moderator Gayle Gifford introduces panel members, from left. Jeffery Dana, Linda Katz, Rabbi Alan Flam and Diana Burdett.

Yes, I'm joining Summit Neighborhood Association today!

Enclosed is my member contribution of: \$15 \$25 \$35 \$50 Other: \$_____

Name: (please print clearly) _____

Street Address: (required) _____ **Zip Code:** _____

Phone: (____) _____ - _____ (day) (____) _____ - _____ (evening)

Email: _____ Yes, I can distribute newsletters

Family Membership - list information about other adults in your household who wish to be members:

Name: _____ Email: _____

Name: _____ Email: _____

Please enclose a check made out to: **Summit Neighborhood Association**

MAIL TO: **SNA, P.O. Box 41092, Providence, RI 02940**

TODAY'S DATE ___ / ___ / ____