



St. Charles REALTORS® (MO) Help Elect Real-Estate Friendly Board of Aldermen; Re-Electing One of Their Own, As Well – March 2013

When highly restrictive building ordinances were proposed in Wentzville, MO, Mark Stallmann, Chief Executive Officer of the 1,200-member St. Charles County Association of REALTORS®, paid a visit to the Board of Aldermen to express his concerns about the impact on the cost of home ownership.

Wentzville, under an hour's drive from St. Louis, is the state's fastest growing city. One of the Aldermen suggested that his members lower their fees, and home builders lower their prices, to offset the increased cost of homes. "That about summed up the climate for business and real estate in Wentzville," he recalls. "Our members were ready to storm City Hall."

That was five years ago. Since then, the St. Charles REALTORS® have effected major positive change for homeowners and the housing industry in Wentzville – by changing the makeup of the Board of Aldermen. With the help of endorsements and RPAC contributions from the St. Charles REALTORS®, five of the six of Wentzville's current Aldermen are "real estate-friendly". And, the President of the Board, Rick Stokes, is an active REALTOR® in the Wentzville area. "Although my broker questions how much I'm actually selling these days..." laughs Stokes.

Last spring, Stokes' campaign for re-election to the Board of Aldermen became one of the first in the nation to benefit from an Independent Expenditure Grant from the NAR's REALTOR® Party. "We didn't have to vet Rick too carefully," notes Stallmann, explaining that he is a Sterling-R RPAC member, vice-chair of the St. Charles REALTORS® Government Affairs Committee, and a Director of the Missouri Association representing St. Charles County. "We were pretty sure he was in line with our values!"

According to Stallmann, the grant application was a simple process, and the direct mail piece that resulted was produced and even mailed by the pros on NAR's team. "The National staff was awesome!" The hard part, on the other hand, was the strictly confidential nature of independent expenditure campaigns, which meant keeping the support secret from the candidate, who was such an insider at their organization.

NAR Campaign Services staff talked with the local association to jointly come up with the best way to support the Stokes campaign. After looking at the demographics of the district, finding out through polling what the voters were looking for and talking to REALTORS® who understand the needs of the area, St. Charles and NAR developed an effective effort to support the Stokes campaign. The effort was indeed helpful to the cause, and when the mailing was sent out to the community, everyone, including the candidate, was impressed.

Stokes was bowled over, all right. "We had decided that the campaign could only afford three mailings, and, in fact, a portion of the final one had somehow been lost in the mail, which was a real blow. It's hard enough getting out the vote for an April election, and I was in a tough three-way race. Then, out of the blue, I got a call from my campaign finance guy saying, 'Hey! Did we put this together? Who's paying for it?!'" Stokes was



baffled. “I didn’t know what he was talking about, until I got home and my wife showed me the one that had landed in our mailbox. It was a little like Christmas – and the timing could not have been better.”

“For 99.99 percent of the voters here,” he explains, “their house is their single largest asset. Home value is a huge issue, and our industry speaks to that. When I’m campaigning door-to-door, it sure helps to be a REALTOR®. People see that “R” and recognize that we’re the guys working to protect their homes; it keeps them from shutting the door.” When the mailing from the St. Charles REALTORS® arrived, it was great backing for Stokes.

And what has Stokes been doing for REALTORS®? It hasn’t been quick or easy, but he and his colleagues on the Board of Aldermen have been steadily chipping away at what they call “code creep,” or the vast accumulation of pointless regulation governing new and existing home sales that, in aggregate, was putting Wentzville’s home stock at a 5 percent cost disadvantage compared with those in neighboring communities. “It’s much harder to roll back these old codes and requirements than to create them in the first place; in fact, it’s very rare that this kind of reversal happens at all,” says Stokes. “We haven’t lowered our quality standards one bit,” he adds, “but by cutting the ‘code-creep’ we’ve been able to get our home values back on par with those of our neighbors.”

Stallmann adds that, thanks largely to Stokes’ efforts, new home starts were up by 44 percent in Wentzville in 2012, leading the whole county by a large margin. The positive change for REALTORS® and homeowners in Wentzville, he says, ultimately comes from cooperation between city officials, the Home Builders Association, the REALTORS®, and many individual REALTORS® who live and work in the community. “Like-minded groups working together are so much more powerful than one.”

It has only been successful, Stokes agrees, because of the business-friendly attitude of the Board of Aldermen over which he presides, and he credits the REALTORS®, as well as the Home Builders’ Association, for their strong political support. “It makes all the difference, having a Board that is mostly on the same page. Because we’re politicians, and a few of us are REALTORS®, mind you, it doesn’t happen without a whole lot of discussion... but we do finally get to the same place!”

To learn more about how the Wentzville Board of Aldermen has turned around the business climate for its housing industry, contact Mark R. Stallmann, Chief Executive Officer, St. Charles County Association of REALTORS®, at 636-946-4022.



Campaign Mailer – side 1

RICK STOKES. Promises Made.

Promises Kept.

Campaign Mailer – side 2

Promises Made.

<p>Economic Development "Bring more jobs to Westville, and help retain existing businesses."</p> <p>GM plant expansion. Ben's Club</p>	<p>Lower Taxes "Lower our city taxes and bring fiscal responsibility to government."</p> <p>Proposed and passed the \$100,000 property tax reduction. A first in Westville history.</p>	<p>Expanded Parks "Grow our parkland and increase green space for our community."</p> <p>Ensuring early completion of Penque Valley and Heartland Parks and Splash Station Aquatic Park.</p>	<p>A Record of Leadership In his two years on the Board of Aldermen, Rick Stokes has kept his promises.</p> <p>Vote on Tuesday, April 3rd to keep RICK STOKES working for Westville and Ward 3 in City Hall.</p>
---	---	--	--

Promises Kept.

Re-elect RICK STOKES Alderman. Tuesday, April 3rd.