

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FLORISSANT CITIZENS REQUEST FINANCIAL AUDIT

A group of Florissant citizens, the Friends of Florissant, have hand delivered 3,211 signatures to Missouri State Auditor Susan Montee's office requesting an audit of the City of Florissant's finances. Based on the number of Florissant registered voters who voted in the November, 2008 gubernatorial election the State required 2,681 valid signatures. The petition drive, initiated in September 2007, took just over a year.

According to the group's website (www.friendsofflorissant.com), citizens' concerns include years of deficit spending, understaffing of the police department, thousands of dollars spent on unnecessary, extravagant purchases and the practice of paying salaries from the Sewer Lateral and Park Improvement Funds. In addition to receiving one of the highest salaries in the State of Missouri for a public official, Mayor Robert G. Lowery Sr., is provided a city paid vehicle, has a \$20,000-a-year expense account and has appropriated a police officer who serves as his full-time personal assistant and chauffeur even though he has an administrative assistant. Residents also expressed concern about recent increasing crime and high-profile shootings. Several Florissant residents have spoken out during City Council meetings about the need for additional police officers.

The Florissant Golf Course is another area of concern to the Friends of Florissant. The golf course has cost thousands more to maintain than it has generated. These losses have occurred over a period of years on Mayor Lowery's watch, while he continued to insist that the city's finances were fine and that no financial audit was needed. Insights to the losses at the Golf Course were gained only after felony stealing charges were filed against two employees of Florissant's golf course. The employees were hired by the Mayor after an accredited golf professional was let go. Officials are unable to say exactly how many thousands, or hundreds of thousands of dollars, were stolen from Florissant taxpayers.

The Friends of Florissant group has also raised questions about a real estate deal involving the former Our Lady of Fatima parish convent which has cost thousands of dollars in legal and other professional fees. The City of Florissant purchased the convent for \$1,000 from Johnny Londoff, then obtained an appraisal of \$450,000 from Kirkwood developer Matthew Burghoff, who recently pled guilty to charges of bank fraud and money laundering for unrelated real estate deals. The building is presently sitting vacant and in apparent disrepair.

The group Friends of Florissant note that all they want is an honest and independent accounting of the city's finances and that they have been unable to get that from the City or the mayor. Thus they undertook the effort to collect the signatures to request an official outside audit.

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