

East Village

Magazine

November 2019



Photograph by

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East Village Magazine

Vol. LVII No. 11 November 2019

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Layout by Ted Nelson. Printing by Riegle Press Inc., 1282 N. Gale Rd., Davison, Mich. 48423.

East Village Magazine is a program of the Village Information Center Inc., a nonprofit corporation. We welcome material from readers, but all submissions become the property of the publication and if published will be edited to conform to the editorial style and policies of the publication. All inquiries about the publication should be mailed to *East Village Magazine*, Village Information Center, 720 E. Second St., Flint, Mich. 48503. Distribution is the first Thursday of each month. Display advertising rates are \$34 a column-inch plus any other costs. Unclassified ads are \$2.50 a printed line or part of a printed line. Rates subject to change without notice. The deadline for advertising is 10 days before each publication date.

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Commentary

A top ten “to do” list for Flint’s mayor

By Paul Rozycki

At this writing, the mayoral election is a week away, and a good case could be made for either Mayor Karen Weaver or Rep. Sheldon Neeley coming out on top. They have both waged strong and spirited campaigns for their voters. By *EVM*’s publication date we will know who our mayor will be for the next three years.

Whoever wins the top job in the city, the challenges for Flint remain the same. What follows is a top ten “to do” list for our mayor, whoever he or she is.

1. The water crisis

Clearly, Flint needs to bring our water crisis to a conclusion. It seems like we are getting closer to getting all the pipes replaced, and scientists and experts are saying that the water is now as safe as it has ever been. Maybe we’re almost at the point when the water crisis is winding down. But it will take more than just pipes and scientific reports to assure Flint citizens that the water is OK to drink. With all the distrust that has built up over the last five years, it will take a long-term concerted effort to restore the trust in the system that brought about the water crisis. That will be a major job for any mayor.

2. Crime

But we have other challenges, some of which may be as important as the water crisis. Crime rates are edging up, and the number of police who are available is limited by the city’s resources. Flint has half as many officers as many similarly sized cities. Thankfully, the state police and several college police forces have been able to step up and play a major role in law enforcement in Flint. Flint needs to stay off the “top ten most dangerous cities” list.

3. Police lawsuits

In addition to needing more police officers, the newly filed lawsuits against the city and its police force need to be fairly resolved if trust is to be restored

and confidence established with our police department.

4. Population and economic loss

A combination of population loss, along with the loss of GM plants and wages, have led to a dramatic decline in our tax base. To make matters even worse, when a city goes from 200,000 people to less than half that, the costs don’t decline as quickly. There are just as many roads to maintain, streets to patrol, and pipes to replace as there always have been. Yet the resources are much less. Even more challenging, legacy costs for retirees become more burdensome as fewer city workers are available to support the many who have retired from a city of 200,000.

5. Economic development

As Flint has faced economic decline, the top job for any mayor is economic growth and development. There is some sign of that taking place, but all too often the image of Flint as a “problem city” discourages investors and innovators from starting new businesses here. The city government must be more welcoming to those with new ideas and projects and remove barriers to those who wish to start new projects.

6. Work with foundations

As we wait and hope for new jobs and economic development, the city needs to work effectively with the major foundations and non-profits that have been so critical to keeping things moving in recent years. The foundations can’t bail us out forever, and they have their limits, but they must know that they have a working partner in the economic growth of the city.

7. The ombudsperson and the new charter

After much delay, Flint has now appointed an ombudsperson as required

(Continued on Page 14.)

Cover: I-Beams for science at UM - Flint



Photo of the Month: Local deer before evading firearm season

Education Beat

School board mulls water, promotions, attrition

By Harold C. Ford

The month of October was filled with consequential developments and decisions for Flint’s public schools at the Oct. 9 (Committee of the Whole) and Oct. 16 (Regular Board Meeting) board of education meetings.

It included the introduction of “smart water stations,” the launch of a new partnership with the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB), controversy about a board member’s residency status, adoption of a new policy for student promotion-retention, the continuing search by paraprofessionals for a new contract, and ongoing attrition of staff and students.

Musk partners with Flint schools to provide clean water:

In partnership with the Musk Foundation, “smart water stations” are being installed in Flint Community Schools to provide a safe water supply to students, staff, and visitors.

“There are none like them ever created,” said Derrick Lopez, superintendent for

Flint Community Schools (FCS). “They were created specifically for Flint.”

At least two of what Lopez referenced as “smart water stations” have already been installed and are being tested at Southwestern Classical Academy and Doyle-Ryder Elementary. Plans call for installation of 125 units in FCS buildings during the Nov. 4-8 intersession and the Dec. 23-Jan. 3 holiday break.

Development, testing, and installation of the water stations was made possible by a \$480,000 donation from the Elon Musk Foundation. Musk is best known for his Tesla electric auto and SpaceX projects.

A “water station demonstration” was held at the FCS Administration Building Oct. 23. Another demonstration will take place Nov. 12 at Southwestern Classical Academy, 1420 West 12th St.

Lopez touted “three safety mechanisms” of the new system. The first two are filtration phases that remove hard particles. The third involves ultraviolet light that, according to Lopez, “actually

kills and/or immobilizes bacteria and soluble materials that you can’t see in the water.”

Lopez credited a team of private and public organizations for “working together to make sure that we are doing all of the things ... around the science of keeping our children and our water safe.”

The team included: Flint-based Goyette Mechanical; Murdock Manufacturing; Gray Matter Technology Services (GMTS); the office of Pamela Pugh, chief health advisor for the City of Flint; and a team of academicians from Kettering University, the University of Michigan, and Wayne State University.

Murdock Manufacturing promotes itself as “a leading designer, manufacturer and supplier of innovative hydration stations for indoor and outdoor use.” GMTS self-describes as “an Information Technology and Public Health Firm with more than a decade’s experience, providing Peer Monitoring.”

(Continued on Page 6.)

City Attorney protects mayor in City Charter violation lawsuit

By Melodee Mabbitt

City Attorney Angela Wheeler is attempting to narrow the scope of an ongoing lawsuit by Flint resident Linda Pohly that seeks to force the city to implement and follow the Flint city charter and other laws.

Wheeler refused to allow interrogations of the mayor and other city officials and has asked the court to refuse admission of a list of ongoing charter violations alleged by Pohly.

On Oct. 28, Seventh Judicial Circuit Court Judge F. Kay Behm agreed to prevent interrogation of the mayor, but upheld Pohly's right to interrogate city officials in order to prove the city has violated the charter.

Pohly is the first resident to take advantage of a new right created under the 2018 city charter revision which allows any resident of Flint to file suit in circuit court for charter violations by an elected official. Pohly is not seeking financial or personal gain, but simply to uphold the charter.

Sec. 1-603 C.1. Any resident of the City of Flint and the Ombudsperson shall have standing to file suit in circuit court for a finding of a violation of this Charter on the part of an elected official.

"I got fed up with emergency managers doing whatever they pleased," Pohly said. "If we aren't going to follow the charter, we may as well go back under emergency management because we aren't following home rule anyway. There is very little difference. I don't care to live in a city with total disregard for the law."

Pohly's initial filing alleges that the City failed or refused to implement the charter by failing to appoint an ombudsperson, establishing a Human Relations Commission and Revenue Estimating Commission, and alleged ongoing violations. The case also alleges violations of the Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act.

Pohly's Attorney Alec Gibbs request-

ed to admit a laundry list of additional charter violations to the case, including everything from failure to implement entire articles within the charter to very specific charter requirements like those around date changes for tax cycles.

Wheeler denied every violation that was not in the initial filing, arguing that they are not within the scope of the case.

When Gibbs requested to interview Mayor Karen Weaver, her Chief Advisor Aonie Gilcreast, Planning and Development Director Suzanne Wilcox, and Lead Planner Adam Moore for depositions, Wheeler asked the court to intervene to prevent the interrogations

Links to those video discussions include:

1. February 7, 2019:

<https://www.facebook.com/candice.m.71/videos/10156225619333014/>

2. November 2018:

<https://www.facebook.com/jpatricksingleton/videos/10211976545880309/>

3. Mayor's Charter discussion at beginning and at 17 minutes:

<https://www.facebook.com/candice.m.71/videos/10156225589018014/>

Judge Behm ruled that while the mayor is protected by the "apex rule" which protects department heads from deposition unless they have special knowledge, that rule does not apply to Gilcreast. She also allowed for deposition of Wilcox and Moore because they have unique knowledge that informs Pohly's complaints.

Pohly alleged that the city violated the charter over the summer by selling Chevy Commons to Genesee County. The charter requires voter approval prior to selling

Sec 4-507 Prohibition on Sale of Park Land. No City of Flint owned land which is in use as a park or was used as a park shall be sold, transferred or diverted to any use unless approved by a majority of the electors voting thereon at any general or special election.

park land. Wheeler argued that this is outside of the scope of the case.

Pohly also points to public discussions wherein Weaver and Gilcreast appeared on WFLT radio on Thursday mornings between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. to denounce the charter, call for revisions to it, and to state explicitly that they have no responsibility to implement the charter.

Wheeler told the judge that these discussions are not relevant because personal opinions do not prevent them from implementing the charter. She argued that charter implementation requires action on the parts of many city officials, including council members and other city officials.

"The broadcast simply points out the difference of opinion with the mayoral term being reduced from four to three years and increases the City Council term from four years to five years," Wheeler said in an email to EVM sent through Public Information Officer Candice Mushatt.

In October, the city remedied one of the allegations by hiring Tané Dorsey as the new ombudsperson.

Pohly's attorney Alec Gibbs says the next step is to ask the court to admit the list of charter violation allegations that Wheeler has refused to admit.

EVM Staff Writer Melodee Mabbitt can be reached melodee.mabbitt@gmail.com.

Lead/galvanized tainted pipes replaced so far in Flint: 9,376

Numbers provided by pipeline contractor ROWE Engineering are now posted at cityofflint.com under Fast Start Replacement Program. Totals as of Oct. 18 were **23,711 pipes excavated** (wording changed to "explored" since returning to the "predictive model") and **9,376 replaced**.

The city aims to have all of Flint's lead-tainted service lines replaced by 2020.

... Education

(Continued from Page 4.)

MASB partnership targets governance culture:

A new partnership with the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) was unveiled with a presentation at the Oct. 9 meeting by Deborah Macon, MASB consultant.

“You have committed to three things,” Macon told board members, “leadership coaching, governance team capacity building, and wraparound learning activities.”

According to Macon, the process will include: one or two “leadership assessments”; quarterly gavel-to-gavel observations at board meetings with follow-up conversations; attendance at five three-hour workshops to “assure the highest level of effectiveness”; attendance at a Nov. 9 conference on restorative practices; leadership coaching for the board president; and access to MASB staff including a trio of attorneys.

The MASB partnership was made possible by a \$25,000 grant from the Mott Foundation. The grant period is from Oct. 2018 to Dec. 2019. “This grant is literally unlike any other I have seen,” said Macon.

The grant is not directly related to FCS’ three-year make-or-break partnership with the Michigan Department of Education, now in its second year. “This plan ... is not directly part of that,” Macon told *East Village Magazine (EVM)*. “This (generally) comes out of the Mott Foundation’s support for Flint Community Schools ... It is indirectly related.”

The key question, Macon told FCS board members, is “What culture do we desire at the governance table for Flint Community Schools?” She asserted that “behaviors at the board table” are directly related to an “uptick in student achievement.”

“This is a robust journey,” Macon said. “It is going to be some heavy lifting.”

“We should’ve started this six months ago,” remarked Diana Wright, FCS board president.

Board residency flareup

The generally positive tone of the Oct.

9 meeting was broken with a statement read by Danielle Green, the board’s treasurer. Green took umbrage with an apparent investigation by the board’s attorney, Kendall Williams, into whether or not she meets the residency requirement for being a board member.

“I have been threatened with prosecution (and) media exposure,” Green charged.

She said her family was “forced to move temporarily to another residence” for safety reasons. “I have not violated any policies or broken any laws.”

Green urged Wright, who requested the investigation, to “cease and desist so I can do the job I was elected to do ... After being pressured to resign, I refuse to surrender.”

“When an issue is brought to me regarding a board member’s eligibility to serve,” Wright responded, “it is my responsibility to ask questions and determine whether or not that is true.”

“It is not my responsibility to prove it’s true,” Wright continued. “The information I was given says that she (Green) did not reside in the city of Flint.”

New contract sought by paraprofessionals

The board was challenged to settle a new contract with the district’s paraprofessionals by FCS employee Carmella Johnson. “We are the glue that holds the

schools together,” said Johnson, president of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 517, which represents the district’s paraprofessionals.

FCS paraprofessionals have been working under the terms of their old contract that expired in June 2018. “We are going above and beyond,” Johnson said, “and we will continue going above and beyond.”

Johnson expressed optimism about chances for a new contract based on the August settlement of a new agreement with the teachers’ union, United Teachers of Flint, and the June hire of Cassandra Wilson, the district’s new executive director of human resources.

“We are on the right road,” Johnson said.

New promotion-retention policy adopted

A new policy for the retention and promotion of students was formally adopted by the Flint board at its Oct. 16 meeting. The policy was derived from the education consulting firm Neola, formerly known as the North East Ohio Learning Associates.

According to the new policy, a student will be promoted when s/he has: completed course requirements; achieved instructional objectives at the present grade; demonstrated sufficient

(Continued on Page 8.)



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The advertisement features a black and white photograph of a young girl in a dark, long-sleeved dress and white tights, holding a large, ornate Nutcracker figurine. The background is a soft, snowy or starry pattern.

Clowny commentary on Council carryings-on

By Tom Travis

One Flint resident who frequently attends Flint City Council meetings finally had enough, quietly donning a costume with a pointed message at the Oct. 23 session.

Here is how it happened:

Twice a month the Flint City Council meets in committee sessions. There are several committees that meet throughout the year including Grants, Legislative, Special Affairs, and Governmental Operations.

One of the most significant and influential committees is the Finance Committee. Monica Galloway (7th Ward) has chaired this committee since January 2019 when the council voted out Eric Mays (1st Ward) as its chairperson and voted in Galloway. It has

caused some contentious moments in various Finance Committee meetings in the past year. Mays has several times stated to Galloway and the council that Galloway is “not the legitimate chairperson of the finance committee” as he feels he was unrightfully voted out.

A Finance Committee meeting began as usual with some agenda changes and adjustments. The purpose of committees is for the council to work through in a more detailed way the ordinances and resolutions before they are sent to the full city council for a vote. Present in the meeting Oct. 23 were eight of the nine council members [Eva Worthing (9th Ward) was not present]; Joyce McClane, director of purchasing; Tamar Lewis, deputy finance director; Steve Branch, city administrator; and about six city residents.

As has been typical of council meetings in recent months and years, the meeting quickly degenerated into squabbling, interruptions, accusations and counter-accusations about almost every one of the items discussed.

At only 26 minutes into the two-and-a-half-hour meeting, a flareup occurred as

the group discussed a proposed resolution to purchase several Genesee County Land Bank properties. Most of the properties chosen are in the Councilperson Eric Mays’ 1st Ward, but there are properties in other wards as well.

Councilperson Kate Fields (4th Ward) attempted to make a motion to postpone



Oh, my!
(Photo by Tom Travis)

each of the resolutions concerning the purchasing of properties until the next committee meeting. Mays then made a motion to separate each ordinance. Galloway intervened, suggesting there cannot be two motions on the floor at once.

Debate ensued between Mays and Galloway. Mays accused Galloway of discriminating against him because he is black and from the North End. Chairperson Galloway, who also is African-American, told Mays he was out of order and that she was giving him his last warning.

The final discussion topic of the evening was a payment by the city of \$300,000 to cover salaries at the Flint water treatment plant. Galloway asked City Administrator Steve Branch why this matter was coming up now, but Mays interrupted, asking Galloway if she knew these were state-mandated positions and the city has to pay for them.

Galloway replied that since this was the last committee meeting before the election (at which Mayor Karen Weaver faced competition from State Representative Sheldon Neeley) it was important to her to find out the facts.

Mays accused Galloway of bringing the election into the council’s business. Galloway got up to leave the meeting and residents present began to chime in their opinions about having the election brought up. Meanwhile, council members raised their voices at each other.

That was when Flint resident Mezon Green began to pull out pieces of a clown outfit from her bag. She put on a colorful polka-dot clown tie first, then a red clown nose, next a fuzzy rainbow-colored wig, and finally a rainbow clown skirt. She put on the clown outfit piece by piece as the meeting disintegrated into yelling and bickering.

As Green put things on, Councilpersons Jerri Winfield-Carter (6th Ward), Santino Guerra (3rd Ward), and Maurice Davis (2nd Ward) laughed and took her picture. Fields was gone by then. No one made any official comments and Galloway, who was sitting directly across from her, seemed to ignore the stunt.

By the time the full clown outfit was on, the meeting had broken up but yelling continued. Local activist Art Woodson spoke up and May turned to him and said, “You’re out of order.”

Asked why she did this, Green said, “The reason I put that outfit on is this kind of foolishness with Eric Mays always clowning, disrespecting women here and on Facebook. All this clowning on this council — if they gonna clown, then why not the residents, too? When in Rome, do as the Romans. They clown, I clown.”

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... Education

(Continued from Page 6.)

proficiency to move to the next grade; and demonstrated social, emotional, and physical maturation necessary for the next grade.

According to the policy, the superintendent will develop guidelines to: provide support to students needing assistance; require staff recommendations for promotion or retention; require parent notification in the case of retention; assure remediation efforts before retention.

The office of Anita Steward, FCS assistant superintendent, will be instrumental in providing services under the new policy. Steward said a Student Assistance Team (SAT) will be created "to help a child that is struggling academically, behaviorally, or with attendance."

Further, a Corrected Action Plan (CAP) will be developed by district staff with parent participation to develop a course of action to help students "overcome deficiencies." Newly adopted intersession periods will provide additional time for delivery of "wraparound services."

Staff attrition continues

Attrition of educational staff from Flint schools continued with the announcement of seven more departures by FCS educators at the Oct. 16 meeting. Those educators took with them more than 68 years of educational experience.

That brings the total number of educators who have departed from Flint schools (including one death) in the first 10 months of 2019 to 67, representing more than 900 years of experience.

As reported in a post by *East Village Magazine* Sept. 26, many vacant classrooms are being filled by "guest teachers," several of them college students completing classes to achieve certification.

FCS Supt. Lopez suggested that Flint's staff shortage was caused by "the lowest starting rate" of teacher pay in Genesee County. However, losses continued despite ratification of a new collective bargaining agreement with United Teachers of Flint in August. The new pact raised teacher pay after a five-year pay freeze and reduced class size for all grade levels.

Teacher shortages in Michigan are

exacerbated by fewer Michigan college students opting to become educators. "Enrollment at Michigan's teacher preparation programs dropped 70 percent in eight years," according to an Oct. 17 article in *Bridge Magazine*.

"There were 16,000 fewer college students majoring in K-12 education degree programs in 2016-17 school year (the most recent year that statistics are available) than there were 2008-09, according to data from the U.S. Department of Education," *Bridge* writer Ron French reported.

Thus, Michigan's public schools, including Flint, continue to turn classrooms over to long-term substitutes that lack certification. French reported that more than 2,500 long-term subs were employed by Michigan districts in 2018-19.

FCS student enrollment drops below 4,000

There is a corresponding, not necessarily commensurate, decline in FCS student enrollment. Numbers from the Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information show Flint's 2018 enrollment at 3,937.

This continued a decades-long drop in student enrollment from a high of nearly 47,000 in 1970. Enrollment in the last decade has dropped from 11,765 in 2009 to last year's total of 3,937.

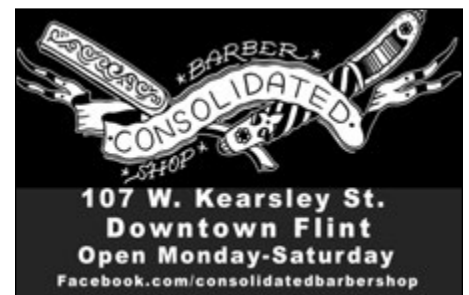
Generally, public school enrollment has

been on a downward trajectory statewide since 2003. It is now at a level last seen in the 1950s, when enrollment spiked with an influx of the Baby Boom generation.

The state's public school enrollment, which hovered near 1.7 million in 2003, fell to 1.45 million in 2018. Loss of students to charter and private schools has contributed to the decline.

FCS has discontinued the practice of presenting enrollment figures in documents available to the public at meetings of the board of education.

EVM Staff Writer and Education Beat reporter Harold C. Ford can be reached at hcford1185@gmail.com.



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WANTED: Garage Space, approx. 10'X10' to store display shelves for FIA student Art Fair ceramics. Access needed only once or twice per year. Email John at: applegroveclayworks@gmail.com.

THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

"This Month" highlights a selection of events available to our readers—beginning after our publication date of Nov. 5. It is not an exhaustive list, rather a sampling of opportunities in the city. To submit events for our December issue, email your event to us by Nov. 24 to pisenber@gmail.com.

Tai Chi Fall 2019

Now through Dec. 14

Thurs. and Sat., beginners at 9:30 a.m., intermediate at 10:30 a.m. and advanced at 11:30 a.m.

No classes Oct. 24 and 26 and Nov. 9, 28 and 30.

McLaren Hospitality House

G-3170 Beecher Rd., Flint

Cost: \$105 for Fall Session and drop-ins \$6 per class.

Contact Chi Force Tai Chi at 810-348-6530

"The Chairs"

Nov. 1-10

Fri. and Sat. at 8 p.m.,

Sat. and Sun. matinees at 2 p.m.

This is a comic portrait of human folly with an experiment in theatrical possibilities. Enjoy this comedy starring Flint's Kay and Michael Kelly.

Admission: \$20 reg., \$18 seniors and teens,

\$16 children (12 and under)

Flint Repertory Theatre

Bower Black Box

1220 E. Kearsley St., Flint

For tickets and more info visit flintrep.org.

Flint Second Friday ARTWALK

Nov. 8

6-9 p.m. Friday

Various locations on and around Saginaw St.

Downtown Flint

Visit Greater Flint Arts Council at 816 S. Saginaw St. for the walking tour.

For more info visit geneseefun.com.

Free Admission

OHL Flint Firebirds Hockey Game

Nov. 8

7-10 p.m. Friday

Flint Firebirds battle it out against Mississauga Steelheads.

Dort Federal Credit Union Event Center

3501 Lapeer Rd., Flint

For more info visit flintandgenese.org or flintfirebirds.com.

Tickets: \$12-16

The Delfonics Live in Concert

Nov. 9

7 p.m. Saturday

Philadelphia's Delfonics R&B/Soul group was popular in the late 60s and early 70s with several big hits at that time. They'll be performing live.

The new McCree Theatre

2138 W. Carpenter Rd., Flint

For more info visit thenewmccreetheatre.com.

Admission: \$35

Master Works II Classical Concert

Nov. 9

7:30 p.m. Saturday

Several classical works will be conducted by Enrique Diemecke with Sharon Isbin on guitar.

This concert is sponsored by Hurley Medical Center and WCMU Public Media.

The Whiting

1241 E. Kearsley St., Flint

For more info visit thewhiting.com.

Tickets: \$25-\$55

Hurley's "November" Men's Health Event

Nov. 14

5-7:30 p.m. Thursday

This is an evening devoted to men's health.

Learn about heart, stroke prevention, joint replacement, hernia issues and more. Earn poker chips for a chance at prizes.

Health screening 5-6 p.m.

Speakers 6-7:30 p.m.

Admission: Free

For more info visit

hurleymc.com/wellness/movember-mens-health-expo

Call 810-262-4855 to reserve a spot.

Harlem 100

Nov. 15

8-10 p.m. Friday

This is a multimedia show featuring those artists that gave their creative expression and entertainment to the world, the Harlem Renaissance. This show was created in collaboration with the National Jazz Museum in Harlem and JMG live.

The Whiting

1241 E. Kearsley St., Flint

For more info visit thewhiting.com.

Tickets: \$33.50-\$43.50

My Wedding Bridal Fair

Nov. 17

12-5 p.m. Sunday

Check out the latest bridal fashion and decor, find vendors, taste wine, see the latest trends in weddings, and taste some delicious bites.

U of M-Flint Riverfront Banquet Center

1 Riverfront Plaza, Flint

For more info visit mycitymag.com/bridal.

Admission: \$5

Festival of India

Nov. 23

4-8:30 p.m. Saturday

This full day of sights, sounds and flavors of India will feature gift items from Deeya's Boutique & Events, dishes from the Grill of India, a henna artist and more.

Flint Institute of Music

1025 E. Kearsley St., Flint

For more info visit thefim.com.

Tickets: \$15

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“We are in this fight with you,” Martin Luther King III tells Flint audience

By Tom Travis

The nation needs to continue to hear about the Flint water crisis, Martin Luther King III, the oldest son of the late Martin Luther King, Jr., asserted during an appearance Friday, Oct. 26 at Grace Emmanuel Baptist Church in Flint.

“Perhaps this is a crisis that could have been avoided,” King said in response to questions from *East Village Magazine* at a press conference preceding the event.

“It seems to me that someone has to be held accountable. I’m looking at it from afar and I don’t personally believe that is being done thus far. Clean water should be available for each and every citizen of this nation,” he said.

“We have the resources, technology, the ingenuity. In majority minority communities in particular, discrimination occurs at disproportionate levels.”

King commended Mayor Karen Weaver and her team, and said it was important “to continue to use our megaphone and to say, ‘Look. The crisis is not over’ in this community.”

Weaver welcomed King and an audience of about 75 area pastors, community leaders and visitors to the church for what was billed as “a community conversation” about solutions for the water crisis. A luncheon was provided by the staff of Grace Emmanuel.

Among the visitors were Andy Buchsbaum, vice president of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) and Simone Lightfoot, NWF national director of urban initiatives and environmental justice.

The NWF leaders had invited King to come to Flint to see the water line

repair in action and observe the progress and restoration.

King, who was 10 years old when his father was assassinated in Memphis in 1968, expressed his heart for Flint and why he came to the city.

“Once stories move from the front pages, the assumption is that the crisis is gone, and the reality is that this crisis, while there have been aspects that have been addressed, it is still very much in

and Genesee Chamber of Commerce; Rev. Marvin Jennings, host and pastor of Grace Emmanuel Church; and Sean Croudy, City of Flint director of community recreation

“The nation needs to continue to hear about this issue because there is nothing more important in our lives than basic clean water, affordable water, quality water,” King told the crowd, “and this certainly is in my judgment Ground Zero for how a major catastrophe can occur that impacts the whole community and in a real sense, directly attacks the people.”

Buchsbaum, of the NWF, stated, “Bishop [Bernadel] Jefferson told me four years ago when I first came to Flint, ‘Don’t call it a crisis; it’s a disaster. A crisis passes; a disaster doesn’t. I’m based in Michigan, but I work all over the country and I can tell you that what happens to Flint doesn’t stay in Flint.”

“There are communities all over the country that have high lead levels and they are looking at what you all are doing as whether it’s working or it’s not working, whether they have hope or whether they have despair. In this, they have to have hope. We have to help them have hope. What you do here is a model for this country and we are all behind you.”

King closed by saying, “I want you to know as a community that we are in this fight with you.”

King reminisced, “I can’t imagine what my father and mother would say about a crisis that began in 2015. So I wanted to come to hear from you, what it is that we can do to be helpful.

“My dad taught us a few good women and men can bring about change,” King said. “It doesn’t take masses always, but



Martin Luther King III (center) with Doyle-Ryder students and Principal Kevelin Jones
(Photo by Tom Travis)



From left, Mayor Weaver, Martin Luther King III, Kevelin Jones, Pamela Pugh
(Photo by Tom Travis)

Steve Branch, city administrator; Pamela Pugh, City of Flint chief public health advisor; City of Flint Fire Chief Raymond Barton; Deputy Fire Chief Carrie Edwards-Clemons; Isaiah Oliver, president and CEO of the Community Foundation of Greater Flint; Adrian Walker, director of Government Affairs and Community Relations for the Flint

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... MLK III

(Continued from Page 10.)

it's a few good women and men who are focused, who are dedicated, who are determined, who are dependable, that will bring about the change."

"My dad understood the dignity and worth of every human being," King said, "and he tried to promote a philosophy that created respect and admiration for every human being.

"He used a method called 'non-violence' to bring about change — to teach us how to live together without destroying persons or property, but respecting humanity and human life. We're God's highest creation and yet when we get ready to resolve conflict we resort to low animal means to do it."

Dr. Pamela Pugh, City of Flint chief public health advisor, also offered remarks.

"When we look at lead in the city of Flint, it does impact learning," she warned. "Lead is one of the most studied environmental toxins that there is, and if we don't know anything else about lead, we know it's a neurotoxin that impacts our children's learning ability, and we have seen the levels go up in IEPs [Individualized Education Programs]" for special needs students.

Weaver stated, in response to a question from a community member, "People have asked me, 'When's everybody going to trust again?' I just got that question today. I said, 'I don't know, it depends on how you were impacted. If you lost a loved one, you may never trust this water again and you can't be blamed for that. If you have a child that's been damaged cognitively, you may never trust again.

"I'm glad to have Dr. King here so he can take this message back," Weaver said, "because it's going to take more than just us ... we don't seem to have a friend at The White House."

Michael Harris, from the Flint Development Center, described what his agency is doing.

"We've been working on solutions. We offer young people an opportunity to make a change in their community, to become lab techs, to become chemists to test their own water," he said.

"I had a death in my family from this

water, but that's made me rise up even stronger, more powerful and say 'doggone it, we gonna do something in this community,'" Harris said. "This is Flint, Michigan — we put the world on wheels, we fought the wars. We made sure that this country was solvent in Flint, Michigan. We can come through this, and we can be better for it, and we can make a difference."

Following the Grace Emmanuel event, King, Weaver, and others traveled to Doyle-Ryder School, where King met Principal Kevelin Jones and several students. Jones showed King and others the

newly installed ultraviolet water filtration system. The system was made possible by a \$480,350 donation last year from the Elon Musk Foundation to add ultraviolet water filtration systems and water stations to all 12 area schools. The systems employ an ultraviolet purification process to remove lead and bacteria from the water.

EVM Staff Writer Tom Travis can be reached at tomtravis@gmail.com.

New EVM contributing writer Robert Baumgart can be reached at robert.j.baumgart@gmail.com.

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Analysis: Medicaid work requirements take effect Jan. 1 — difficulties likely for poor

By Madeleine Graham

A law establishing work requirements for about 270,000 Medicaid recipients in Michigan takes effect Jan. 1, 2020 — sending state officials and recipients scrambling to understand how they will be affected.

“At this time what we have to do is prepare to implement the law as it is written currently,” according to Bob Wheaton, public information officer of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

Letters notifying recipients who fall under the requirements started going out in September and will continue through December, Wheaton said.

“To clarify, the work requirements are for people enrolled in Healthy Michigan Plan (HMP), which is Michigan’s expanded Medicaid. People enrolled in traditional Medicaid are not subject to the work requirements,” Wheaton said.

The previous administration, under former Gov. Rick Snyder and former head of the MDHHS Nick Lyon, began to institute the work requirements under a pilot program approved by the Trump administration called the “1115 Waiver” program.

People can meet the work requirements by:

- Employment or self-employment, or having income consistent with being employed or self-employed
- Education directly related to employment, including but not limited to high school equivalency or post-secondary education
- Job training directly related to employment
- Vocational training directly related to employment
- Unpaid workforce engagement such as internship
- Tribal employment programs
- Substance use disorder treatment,
- Community service completed with a non-profit (maximum allowable of three months in a 12-month period)
- Job search directly related to job training

Barriers to employment

Many Medicaid enrollees face barriers to work such as functional disabilities, serious medical conditions, school attendance, and care-taking responsibilities. Many Medicaid adults do not use computers, the internet or email, which could be a barrier in finding a job or complying with policies to report work or exemption status.

Controversial requirement

Because of these and other arguments, work requirements are controversial and were opposed by the Obama administration and current Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

However, on Sept. 23, Whitmer signed Enrolled Senate Bill 362 enabling the work requirements program along with other elements.

“The Healthy Michigan Plan (HMP) was a landmark bipartisan effort to cover 680,000 people, increasing primary care usage and reducing emergency room reliance, and bolstering our economy,” Whitmer stated in a press release.

System is backlogged

The system to help people prepare for the new requirements along with other bureaucratic challenges is backlogged, Wheaton acknowledged.

At Genesee and 49 of the state’s 83 counties, DHS specialists are not assigned to any particular case because of what’s called the “Universal Case Load” (UCL) system, Wheaton explained.

“We still need to make further improvement here, but have come a long way. Backlogs in handling case applications have dropped from 32 percent of cases to 6 percent in Universal Caseload counties.”

Previously, caseworkers were assigned to clients at DHS. The UCL was developed to streamline those applying for benefits so that any specialist could answer questions.

“No example of a success”

Work requirements efforts have been tried in nine states so far. Many are

being challenged in the courts, as in Arkansas and Kentucky.

“There is no example of a successful requirement for people on assistance for medical, food stamps and cash assistance to work,” stated Darryl Douglas, PsyD., who formerly taught psychology at the University of Michigan-Flint.

Amber Bellazaire, MPH and a policy analyst for the Michigan Municipal League (MML), acknowledged it had been tried in other states including Arkansas where it “failed miserably,” but stated Indiana has implemented a program still underway.

Whitmer has pointed out the work requirements in the Michigan program are more stringent than in other states, including Indiana.

Political minefield

Even though she opposes the program, “the governor, being subject to the Republican House and Senate, has limited power,” Douglas said. “I believe she didn’t have a better option than to sign the bill (362) putting work requirements into effect.”

And, in fact, the state’s new budget signed by the governor Sept. 30 includes a \$6.1 million General Fund transfer to the Healthy Michigan Plan Administration to support implementation of new work requirements.

“My administration is doing everything in its power to facilitate compliance with work requirements,” Whitmer stated. “The MDHHS is partnering closely with health plans, providers and community organizations to communicate with program participants wherever they are.”

“With the encouragement of numerous stakeholders, the Department will defer implementation of new healthy behavior and premium requirements [privatizing many services] until Oct. 1, 2020, in order to focus on successful implementation of the work requirements,” she said.

EVM Staff Writer Madeleine Graham can be reached at madeleine4841@gmail.com

“Faces of Flint” — an election year ‘Get Out the Vote’ EVM project — seeking volunteers, support

By Ted Nelson

Expanding on last year’s “Get Out the Vote” partnership with the League of Women Voters, *East Village Magazine* is now working on the creation of a short film aimed at promoting the vote in the 2020 elections.

Local residents are invited to participate in this project, both as subjects and volunteer assistants in its creation. The film, tentatively titled “Faces of Flint,” is a collaboration between native Flint artists Dan White (Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer), violinist William Harvey (currently concertmaster to the National Symphony Orchestra of Mexico), and *EVM* editors Jan Worth-Nelson and Ted Nelson.

The film will be 7-8 minutes long. Facial portraits of 80-100 Flint residents will be shot in Flint by Dan White, with foundational music by William Harvey and a narrative script by Ted Nelson.

On screen the portraits will be trans-

posed from one face to another through very slow dissolves. As each transition evolves, moments of mystery, surprise, and delight will emerge — every flowing instance showing a momentary tableau of the American ideal “e pluribus unum.”

Reinforced by the power of William Harvey’s violin solo of the “Star Spangled Banner,” (hailed by many as one of the best ever), “Faces of Flint” aims at becoming an emotionally provocative piece that elevates a basic message of human oneness and encourages participation in the democratic process.

In this time of deep discord, division, and danger, advancing the message of human connection and community is essential. We believe that a creation such as this could play a vital role in the critically important values clarification exercise that our country

is now engaged in.

Deadline for completion is the end of this year. Photos for this project will be shot on the following dates at these locations:

- Thursday, Nov. 21 at Farmers’ Market
- Friday, Nov. 22 at Berston Field House
- Saturday, Nov. 23 at Farmers’ Market

Volunteers for the portraits will receive a small cash stipend for their efforts, involving about 15 minutes of time.

For additional information on how you can participate in this project, please contact Ted Nelson or Jan Worth-Nelson at 310-977-3302. Support is also needed for the funding of this work.

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ACLU Michigan

... Election

(Continued from Page 3.)

by the new city charter. The ombudsperson has been the most visible symbol of the new charter and it's time to give her the authority to make her office work as it is intended. It took a long time and a lot of effort, but the mayor elected under the new charter must honestly and effectively make sure that the charter is truly the working document of the city — not only with the ombudsperson, but with all elements of the new charter.

8. The Flint City Council

The endless meetings and continual bickering of the city council are an embarrassment to Flint, and discourage investors and others from considering the city. While it may be beyond the control of the mayor, he or she needs to do whatever possible to bring some level of civility and productivity to council meetings. Flint can't afford to be a YouTube joke for the rest of the country.

9. Cooperation with the county

Flint needs to work effectively with the rest of the county. There was a time when the city of Flint had the majority of the population, and the largest tax base in Genesee County. Maybe there was a time we could ignore the areas outside of Flint. That hasn't been true for many years. It won't be easy. There is certainly suspicion and distrust on both sides of the city's boundaries. But other counties, like Oakland, have made progress by learning to work together with their central city.

10. Racial divisions

While this election has been the first time two African American candidates faced each other for mayor, race remains a significant problem in Flint. Typically, for the last four decades, Flint saw a white candidate and a black candidate run for the mayor's job and, to a large degree, votes broke down along racial lines. Those frictions are still there, and it will be critical for the mayor to do whatever he or she can to heal those divisions.

It's not just the mayor's job

Finally, all of us need to remember that no mayor can accomplish these things alone. Any mayor needs the support, advice, and assistance of the citizens to make any of this work. In the end, that's a job for all of us. Whether your candidate won or lost, (or even if you didn't vote at all) it's now up to everyone in Flint to work together on our top ten list.

Political columnist Paul Rozycki can be reached at paul.rozycki@mcc.edu

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Flint hires new ombudsperson, office opens

By Melodee Mabbitt

Two years after Flint voters elected to fill the position, the city of Flint has a new ombudsperson. Tané Dorsey started the week of Nov. 4, 2019.

Dorsey is a Flint native, a graduate of Flint Northern High School and the University of Michigan. She has years of experience as an investigator in the U.S. Federal Court system and as the chief ombudsman analyst for the State of Michigan.

The Office of the Ombudsperson will be located in City Hall on the first floor next to the mayor's office. Office hours are Monday-Friday 9 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. Dorsey may be reached at ombudsperson@cityofflint.com or 810-237-2020.

Creation of the ombudsperson position had been mandated by the City of Flint's new charter, approved by voters 2-1 in August, 2017. The position and the office to support it was enabled by a \$250,000 budget. Dorsey will be paid \$70,800.

According to the job description, the ombudsperson is to receive and investigate complaints, concerns, reports and issues arising under the ethics provisions of the charter.

Along with the rest of the charter, the first revision of the document in 40 years, the ombudsman's office was to have taken effect Jan. 1, 2018. *East Village Magazine*

had been documenting the days since the charter was to have been implemented with a monthly box — on Oct. 1, the number had risen to 640.

The ombudsperson was selected by the new Ethics and Accountability Board (EAB) — another facet established through the revised charter — after many delays during which board members said they struggled to work with the city's Human Resources and Labor Relations Department during the hiring process.

Dorsey was appointed as ombudsperson with a 6-4 vote in which Linda Boose, John Daly, Bob Gallagher and Nicholas D'Aigle dissented.

On Oct. 31, board member Daly told *EVM* in an email that board member Bob Gallagher resigned from the Ethics and Accountability Board, principally due to the search processes used by the City of Flint Human Resources Department in the hiring of the ombudsperson.

EVM has reached out to Gallagher for comment.

Eight people had applied for the ombudsperson position, but only three applications initially were provided by the city's Human Resources Department to the EAB for review. The matter went to court through a Freedom of Information/Open

Meetings Act case pertaining to implementation of the charter filed by Flint attorney Linda Pohly.

Seventh Judicial Circuit Court Judge F. Kay Behm ruled in *Pohly v. Flint* that the City's Human Resources Department did not have to provide all eight applications, but that nothing stopped the EAB from asking for them. Eventually, the EAB requested and received the full set.

According to the new charter detailed in an Aug. 7, 2018, *EVM* article, the main functions of the EAB include appointing the ombudsperson and hearing resident concerns. The board is empowered to hold public servants accountable per the ethical standards outlined in the charter. This power manifests in various ways, outlined in the charter, from calling hearings to subpoena powers, should it be necessary.

The city of Flint previously had a series of ombudspersons, but the position has been vacant since 2011 in the city's emergency manager era, when funding for it was cut.

EVM Contributing Writer Melodee Mabbitt can be reached at melodee.mabbitt@gmail.com. EVM Editor Jan Worth-Nelson contributed to this report. She can be reached at janworth1118@gmail.com.

Poet Laureate Semaj Brown to perform at UMF

By Jan Worth-Nelson

Flint's new poet laureate Semaj Brown will present a poetry and prose reading at 6 p.m. Nov. 13 in Kiva Auditorium at the University of Michigan-Flint.

The event, sponsored by the UM-Flint English department, is free and open to the public.

Also part of the evening will be a discussion with UM-Flint linguistics professor Erica Britt, along with a book signing.

Brown, a poet, author, scientist, educator, and artist, was named Flint's first poet laureate in September by proclamation of Mayor Karen Weaver. In the volunteer position, Brown already is working to develop literacy initiatives, especially for children, citywide.

Author of the 2019 book *Bleeding Fire*:

Tap the Eternal Spring of Regenerative Light, Brown has brought literacy through hard-hitting poems of empowerment. In her 2012 book, *Feasts and Fables from the Planted Kingdom*, she combines whimsical original tales and advice on cooking, science and nutrition, which began as supports to the family medical practice of her husband, Dr. James Brown.

With Dr. Brown, she has led more than 70 workshops on diet and nutrition in Genesee County. In 2018, she began teaching and consulting for the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Flint.

Brown graduated from Wayne State with a degree in biology and taught science in the Detroit Public Schools, creating innovative science education curricula

statewide and nationally.

"Science is my work; art is my work — I really don't see the difference," she said in a September *EVM* article about her appointment and asked to reflect on her omnivorous background and body of material. "It is all one—it's all connected in my world."

Brown has performed widely in Flint and Detroit, including at the launch of *Bleeding Fire* at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. She was part of the 2017 "Women of a New Tribe" exhibit at the Flint Institute of Arts and created a poem inspired by the show called "Mother Ocean."

EVM Editor Jan Worth-Nelson can be reached at janworth1118@gmail.com.

Village Life

Remembering a Flint walk from afar helps me cope

By Jan Worth-Nelson

I swear, by the time I stride onto the south end of Kensington, just a few hundred yards from my house, the endorphins already are kicking in. My breathing evens out, and there's often a cardinal or two darting around in the brush bending over Gilkey Creek.

I don't know what most of those plants are — mostly "weeds," I guess, but I don't care. They're green and they're wild and they belong there as much as I do.

And I love the sun-yellow signs tucked along the creek, installed by neighbors of the winding little waterway—no bureaucrat involved, just a clutch of good folks acting out of love. "Please be respectful. No littering, no dumping," they kindly exhort.

Those signs argue quietly for the goodness of human nature — something in short supply in my gloomy heart when it seems these days we are most of all a pestilence on the earth.

But not me, not today. I am just walking.

I stop at the bridge where Kensington turns onto Sunnyside to see how the creek's doing. I pause to listen for a little musical babbling — sweet sound if the creek is running right, and not jammed up by garbage and blow-down.

I consciously take in big gulps of air — counting the same way we do in yoga ... four in, four out, then, as my rhythm improves, five in, five out, then maybe by the time I head up Sunnyside, it's eight in, eight out, and I feel my body smooth itself and dispel some of my cares.

Sunnyside runs uphill and I aim for the curve onto Franklin, trying not to mind too much about the noise of I-69, enjoying the architecture of the "round house" there and the other almost racy 60s-style homes so different from the predictable Tudors and colonials on my side of the creek.

I like looking at every house, imagining the lives who've passed through, the likely dramas, loves and disappointments. There used to be a black dog on the corner of

Franklin and Cadet Street that worried me — he was tied up and barked piteously every time I made the turn — but he seems to be gone now — I hope to a happy home.

Cadet leading into Pierce Park is one of my favorite parts of my route. For that short stretch you could forget you're in the city. I've seen deer and wild turkeys and a heron back there ... I know there are a lot of critters abiding in the woods. Sometimes I yell up into the trees, "Thank you, Mother Earth," for no reason except



Sign of Gilkey Creek love
(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

that I love the way the world smells there and how the breezes often are velvety and soothing.

Through Pierce Park, I saunter along Brookside by the creek and eventually find my way across Court to Second Street where, by now in a trance of deep breaths and relaxation, I sometimes forget where I am and savor being lost in thought.

I've hatched poems along that stretch, thought through various knotty work and personal issues, murmured songs I love, had bursts of fondness for old friends, dead and alive.

By the time I make the turn onto the brief, single block of Cromwell, I know I'm almost home. I like seeing the whimsical scary face nailed to the tree at the turn of Cromwell onto Maxine, and by then I see the stoplight ahead at Court.

My final treat is passing through the impossibly extravagant overgrowth at Sherry Hayden and Mike Keeler's house — a tangled tribute to honeybees, monarch butterflies, milkweed and grace.

Like the signs along the creek, Sherry and Mike make me believe

there's hope for us human doofuses — that we can find our way back to what the earth needs most, turning away from willful ignorance and cruelty.

That is my beloved walk, three miles of meditation and the considerable nourishments of nature.

But here's the kicker: I'm actually not taking that walk today. I'm 2,400 miles away in Southern California enmeshed in the midst of family needs.

I'm sitting in a second floor walk-up staring out at roofs and more crisscrossed roofs atop beige stucco, the building material of LA. Tough-looking cacti and other trees I don't know the names of are crammed into crevices and tiny concrete block corrals.

Worst of all, five fires are burning to the north and east and the air is acrid with smoke. Within walking distance is the clogged Pacific Coast Highway and ugly, monstrous Hawthorne Boulevard; somebody said yesterday we are lucky here because of all the concrete: one might say there is nothing to burn. California today feels that way — hard, dry, used up — the idea of California a lost and naïve dream. It's pretty clear there are rough days ahead for the Golden State.

We Flint people know what it feels like when the promise, the delusions of "progress," crash and burn. We also know that after the crash, sometimes there might be beauty to be reclaimed, peace in the quiet after the purveyors of greed go away. A lot of us are damaged in the ruins, but that doesn't mean we're not still capable — we can still see a carpet of red and gold in somebody's unraked yard, for example, and passionately love it.

If you can't tell by now, I'm homesick for my Flint. For now, LA is where I am. And reliving my cherished walk is how I'm getting through today — the memory of a walk through the neighborhood I call home convincing me the world can still be good.

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