

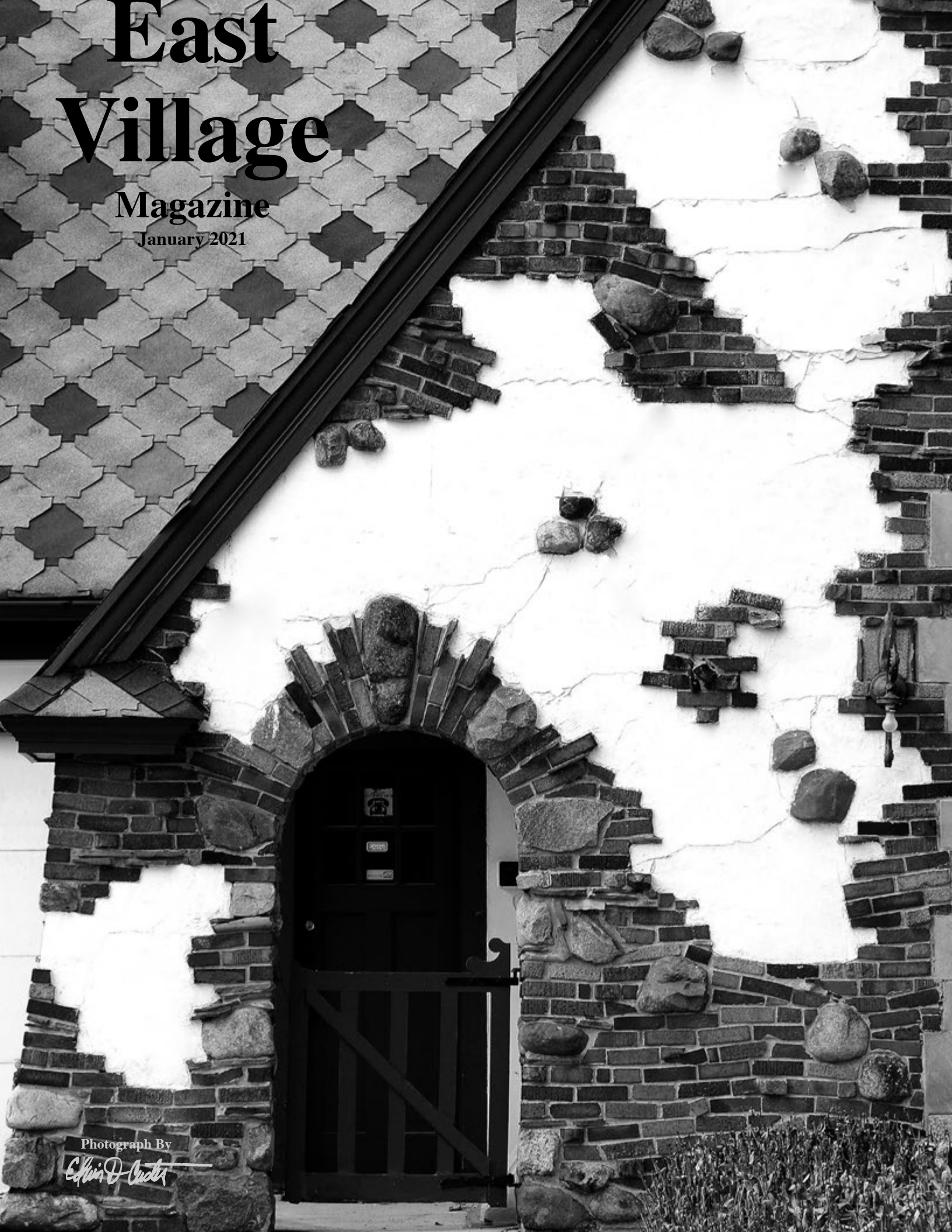
# East Village

Magazine

January 2021

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720 E. Second St.
Flint, Mich. 48503
(810) 233-7459

Website:
eastvillagemagazine.org

E-mail:
eastvillagemagazineflint@gmail.com

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Commentary
Happy New Year!!!
The good news is 2020 is history!

By Paul Rozycki

By now we've all trashed our 2020 calendars, with the hope that 2021 will put the COVID-19 virus, Donald Trump, and much of last year in the rearview mirror.



2020 to the shredder
(Photo by Paul Rozycki)

We've all been eager to say goodbye to a year of pandemic, racial division, political polarization, an unprecedented election of vote counts and recounts, presidential impeachment, as well as a record number of tropical storms, and California forest fires.

What's ahead for the new year? If last year is any indication, predictions are a risky proposition, but here are some possibilities and questions.

More than anything else, the key issue this year has been the lack of trust in so many institutions.

What kind of presidential transition and inauguration in 2021?

Obviously, the inauguration of President Joe Biden will be the biggest story this month. Yet, it has the potential to be one of the most unusual inaugurations in American history. The pandemic will set the stage for a largely virtual inauguration, without the usual crowds, bands, and balls that have ushered in most of our presidents. Yet, that may not be the most unusual and worrisome part of the inauguration.

Not only has President Trump refused to concede, but he has made ominous suggestions to his remaining staffers that there could be a "new election", a

military intervention, or a coup to keep him in power. In spite of nearly 50 court rulings to the contrary, he continues to claim that the election was fraudulent, and that he was the real winner.

There have been suggestions that he may stage a "counter inauguration" to kick off a 2024 campaign, or refuse to leave the White House. It may all be typical Donald Trump bluster, but his words have motivated more than a few of his supporters to storm government offices, issue threats against election officials, and undermine trust in the electoral process.

Trump's threatening comments, and his undermining of the trust in the electoral system, caused even some of his most loyal supporters to back away, declare the election over, and that it's time to move on. But the distrust he raised may last long after Trump is gone. Will Biden be able to govern effectively and restore trust?

With the COVID pandemic, can we trust science?

Just as the lack of trust has undermined our political institutions, it is also a major factor in weakening our response to the COVID pandemic. Nearly every attempt to take action to limit the spread of the virus has been met with charges that it was all a hoax, and government guidelines should be ignored or resisted.

Michigan, like many states, saw armed protesters marching around the state capitol, urging resistance to the governor's orders. Much of the division followed partisan lines as well. In the end, that led to a haphazard response, where some states shut down, others stayed open, some did a little of both, leaving the public confused, not knowing who could be trusted to deal with the virus.

That lack of trust shows itself as vaccines are becoming available, with as many as 40 percent of Americans hesitant

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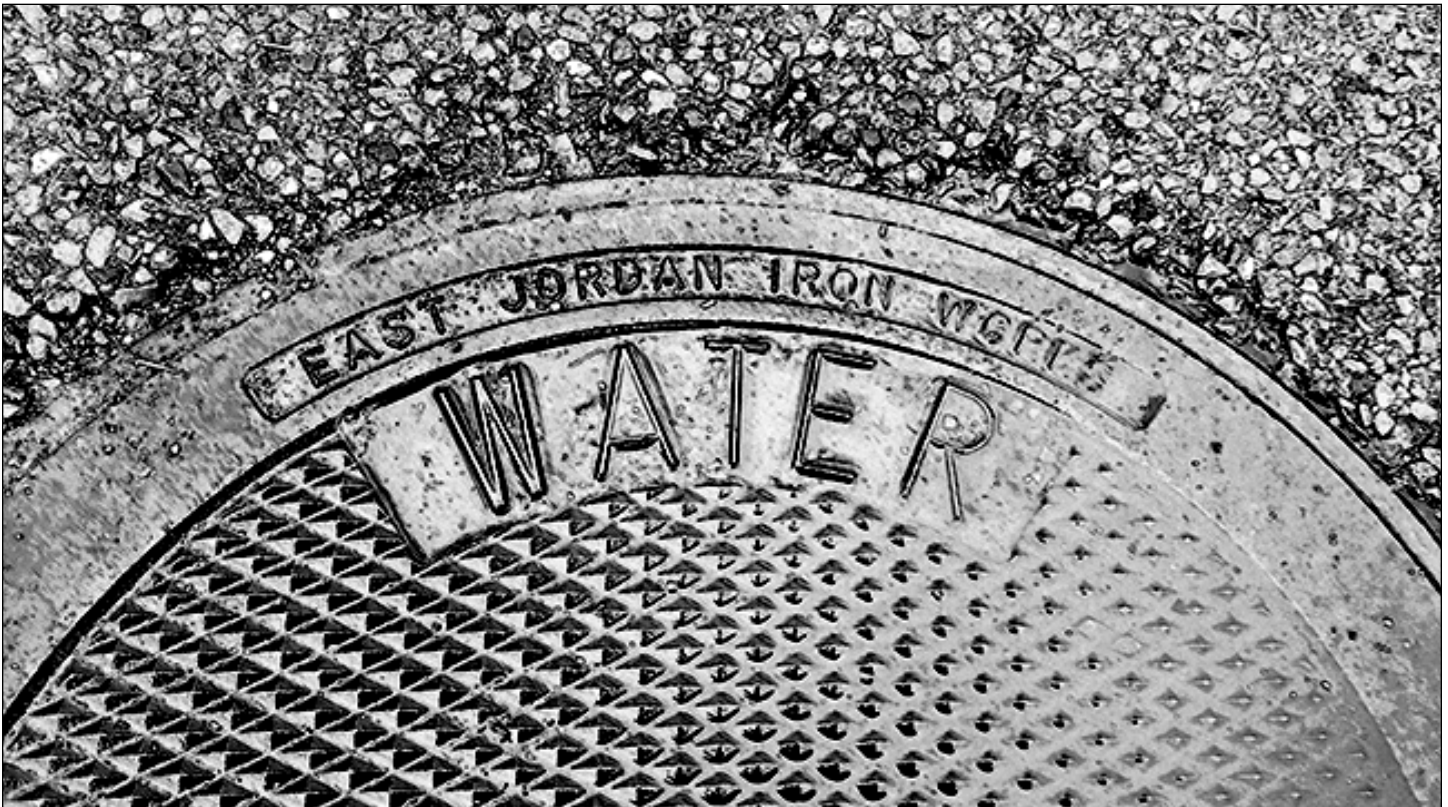


Photo of the Month: Old manhole cover catches part of Flint's history

(Photo by Tom Travis)

## Democracy Beat *Council approves \$20 million insurance portion for \$641 million water crisis settlement*

*By Tom Travis*

Flint City Council in a 6-1-2 vote approved a \$20 million portion of the \$641 million water crisis settlement (WCS) at a video conference meeting Monday, Dec.28.

The council vote was required on the \$20 million portion because it is being offered from the city's insurance

Allan Griggs (8th Ward) and Eva Worthing (9th Ward). Councilperson Jerri Winfrey-Carter (5th Ward) was the only no vote. Both Councilpersons Eric Mays (1st Ward) and Monica Galloway (7th Ward) abstained.

### **The City Attorneys have three clients — Mayor, City Council, and The City of Flint.**

The city council was in a unique and perplexing position in the water crisis settlement, according to officials and legal experts following the situation. The city council is an elected body representing citizens of Flint in a legislative role in city government. In this case, in the WCS, while the city council was not named as a defendant, the City of Flint was named.

The City of Flint relies on the city council to approve or not approve monies spent. In the case of the WCS,

the city council was the city entity to decide whether to accept the city's insurance company's \$20 million offer towards the WCS.

Before the vote, Councilperson Galloway said, "You can't put a price tag on the residents who ... didn't die from lead. We minimize what has hap-



(Photo by Tom Travis)

company and the City of Flint is named as a defendant in the settlement case.

The Council's yes votes came from Council Vice President Maurice Davis (2nd Ward), Santino Guerra (3rd Ward), Council President Kate Fields (4th Ward), Herb Winfrey (6th Ward),



**Councilwoman Monica Galloway**  
(Photo by Tom Travis)

pened to this community under the optics of lead because that makes it easy. But it was about negligence. This was about deliberate negligence ...

*(Continued on Page 5.)*

# ... Settlement

(Continued from Page 4.)

“The reality is that this is not okay,” Galloway continued. “The Michigan Civil Rights Commission says (in a February, 2017 report) that this is systemic racism ... so I will not allow myself to operate as a defendant in this when actually we are very much plaintiffs.”

“Unfortunately, the fear factor has taken its roots and we find ourselves where we are. But my name, my legacy, won’t be attached to any of this — the small amount that was paid for the attempted murder of an entire city.”

During public speaking, water warrior and local activist Claire McClinton called in to add her thoughts.

“State of Michigan is getting away, they getting it real light,” McClinton said. “They have abused this city unbelievably, horrifically. They sent in the emergency managers. The emergency managers switched us to the river water. The EPA (Environmental



**Activist Claire McClinton**  
(Photo by Tom Travis)

Protection Agency) sued us to get on the 30-year deal (an agreement with the Great Lakes Water Authority, passed by the Weaver administration) talking about our health. But then you turn around and offer this \$600 million of settlement *not* for our health.

“We are about tired of the State of Michigan beating up on this community and all for the interest of nameless, faceless, bond holders and corporate interests to privatize and steal our water,” she added.

“That's what this all started with. So the votes are in. I'm not a council person. The deck is stacked. But the question is this, after you vote and I'm proud that y'all found a way to fight for

your own representation (referring to the city council hiring their own outside attorney), I think that's a good thing, regardless of how you vote now. What will you do about it?”

“When will the city council take up the banner and take the State of Michigan, its cohorts, like the bond holders and the MDEQ, when do we fight that at city council?” McClinton said. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality was renamed the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) by executive order of Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. The change took effect in April 2019.

## 144 join in the hearing with Federal Judge Levy

U.S. District Federal Court Judge Judith Levy held a two-hour Zoom/YouTube preliminary hearing Monday afternoon. During that hearing there were, according to Judge Levy, 144 people, mostly attorneys, on the screen.

Included were attorneys Flint has become familiar with through the water crisis and settlement talks: Corey Stern, Ted Leopold, Michael Pitt, Rick Berg, Val Washington, and many others. Also present on the video were City Attorney Angela Wheeler and Assistant City Attorney Bill Kim.



**Councilpersons (l to r) Eric Mays (1st Ward), Maurice Davis (2nd Ward), Santino Guerra (3rd Ward), and Kate Fields (4th Ward) in a 2019 Council meeting.**  
(Photo by Tom Travis)

## U.S. District Judge Judith Levy hears from Flint

During the hearing Judge Levy recalled she was appointed to the Federal Court by former President Barack Obama in March 2014, one

month before the Flint water switch occurred. She said she would be willing to have “days” of hearings so that everyone could be heard.

“I have received numerous communications from the residents of Flint. I will consider everything that’s been said here today,” Levy said. “I hear you. I’m reading your papers. I intend to fully address what needs to be. We want what’s fair and just here. I will issue a written decision by mid-January,” she said.

Judge Levy maintained a calm and gentle voice as she addressed a group of attorneys who, from both sides, became passionate and heated about the cases they are working on.

## Ad hoc committee of two — Kate Fields and Eric Mays — met Monday

Council President Fields and Councilperson Mays met Monday with “several different” law firms looking for an attorney who could represent the Flint City Council in regards to the WCS Fields introduced from Grand Rapids.

Fields explained that she and Mays would be an “ad hoc committee of two” to seek an attorney to represent the council. Fields stated they looked for a law firm large enough to handle the water settlement case and who had experience with municipal law and class action and environmental

cases. Fields added it was important the law firm have no conflict of interest. Fields said they had chosen two firms but at “the last moment” one of the firms dropped out.

Fields asked Wilson, “Do you think the city council has the right to file a response to the motion (WCS)?” Wilson

(Continued on Page 6.)

## ... Settlement

(Continued from Page 5.)

responded, “Absolutely not. The city council is not a party to the litigation, as far as I know. It is the City of Flint that is the party. The city council, as a body, would have to first seek leave or permission from Judge Levy in order to file something.” He said the firm would charge \$295/hour.

It is not yet clear if the council will proceed with retaining an attorney



**City Attorney Angela Wheeler (standing) during a 2019 council committee meeting.**

(Photo by Tom Travis)

to represent them in further water settlement litigation or to file for permission to go before Judge Levy.

Referring to the council’s complicated legal representation situation, during public speaking, frequent commentator of the water crisis story Patrick Rose, an attorney and Flint native now of East Lansing, raised the issue that the city attorneys do represent city council. He referenced Charter section 4-601b. Quoting the Charter, “The language says the city attorney shall manage and direct those matters not only in the interest of the Mayor and City Council but also in the interest of the City of Flint.”

Rose continued, “Now the council, as I understood it from the last meeting, I only know what I heard from the public session of the last three meetings council, wants to settle unconditionally and dedicate the \$20 million to obtain a release and may have a majority vote for that and still want to be heard in front of a court in a pleading that the court accepts.

“And yet the violations of 4-601b that I heard essentially were that no offers to settle were shared with city council and the council was denied the opportunity for input. That was said by various members that they weren’t given a chance to have input. Council was told it’s not a client by one of the attorneys. Council was told it lacked standing by another attorney.

“Council was told it can’t seek permission to file a response for the

and I heard the council pass that resolution to hire an independent attorney.

“Today in court, listening to the entirety of Judge Levy’s open court session not one of the city’s attorneys notified Judge Levy, Judge Murray, or Judge Farah of that resolution or of the city council’s request for an independent attorney prior to the rulings that concern the motion to confirm the settlement. Why is that important? It’s important because it’s an open question whether the city attorneys have breached the duty to represent the council adequately,” Rose said.

If residents want to communicate to U.S. Judge Judith Levy her contact information is provided here: Judge Judith Levy, U.S. Eastern District of Michigan, 200 East Liberty Street, Suite 300, Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

The City Council will meet again by video conference on Monday, Jan. 11, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

*EVM Managing Editor Tom Travis can be reached at [tomntravis@gmail.com](mailto:tomntravis@gmail.com).*

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# THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

*"This Month" highlights a selection of events available to our readers — beginning after our publication date of Jan. 5. It is not an exhaustive list, rather a sampling of opportunities in the city, which, due to the pandemic, is currently very limited. To submit events for our February issue, email your event to [pisenber@gmail.com](mailto:pisenber@gmail.com) by Jan. 20.*

## Shopping and Eating in Downtown Flint

Many restaurants and shops are open with restrictions for holiday shopping and eating, too many to list here. For information on what's available, simply google "stores in downtown flint mi" or "downtown flint restaurants." Convenient lists of these businesses will come up showing each of their addresses, ratings, websites, hours, services, and phone numbers.

## Flint Institute of Arts

Reopened July 6.  
Open Mon. through Sat. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sun. 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.  
For guidelines regarding COVID-19 restrictions, check the FIA website before your visit. The FIA Theater has new films on the schedule but are available only for virtual viewing. The galleries are open. "Pure Abstraction," abstract art in the Henry and Hodge Galleries runs through Jan. 10. "Art of Jade" runs through May 23 in the Ann K Watch-Chan Gallery. "Field of Vision," nature photography, in the Graphics Gallery is on display through Jan. 10.  
Flint Institute of Art  
1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint  
Open Tues. and Thurs. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Sat. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
For more info visit [flintarts.org](http://flintarts.org).

## Flint Farmers' Market

Reopened June 15.  
Safety measures are still in place and masks required.  
Flint Farmers' Market  
300 East First St., Flint  
For more info visit [flintfarmersmarket.com](http://flintfarmersmarket.com).

## Buckham Gallery

Reopened July 15.  
Open Wed. through Fri. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sat. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sun. 1 to 5 p.m.  
Masks are required by visitors and staff. Visitors are limited to 8 at a time. "A Climate of Change" features work by 24 artists. These members of the Buckham Artist Collective interpret current events of all kinds. Also featured is "Shadows," a print exchange of limited edition prints among the participants and also archived for Buckham Gallery to their collection.  
Buckham Gallery  
121 W. Second St., Flint  
For more info visit [buckhamgallery.org](http://buckhamgallery.org).

## Stay Home and Read a Book

Pass the hours while waiting for your group to get the vaccine, inauguration day, the results of the Georgia senate race, or even just waiting for the weather to warm up. Got a new book as a Christmas gift? Now's a great time to read it. Or visit the library to get one. Read at home any time.  
No masks or social distancing are required.

## Flint Public Library

Reopened July 23.  
Open Tues. through Thurs. 11 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Fri. and Sat. 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.  
Masks and social distancing required and capacity limited. Visit one hour or to give everyone a turn.  
Flint Public Library  
Courtland Center  
corner of Center Rd. and Court St.  
(temporary location during renovation)  
For more info visit [fpl.info](http://fpl.info).



Ed Custer's *East Village Magazine* logo is reimaged for each issue by Patsy Isenberg.

# Education Beat

## *Flint Community Schools launch new year with new leadership, familiar challenges*

*By Harold C. Ford*

Flint Community Schools (FCS) begins calendar year 2021 with three new members on its seven-member board of education, at least eight administrators with less than a year of experience in new assignments, and a host of familiar challenges.

Challenges include educating children in a pandemic, ongoing fiscal dilemmas, continuing loss of students, infrastructure needs, and the uncertainty of a three-year, state-imposed partnership plan.

### **Three of seven are new to the board**

Three new members with no education board experience stated in their resumes — Anita Moore, Joyce Ellis-McNeal, and Laura McIntyre — will begin six-year terms Jan. 13, 2021, when the Flint board holds its annual organizational meeting to elect new officers.

Three retiring members — Casey Lester, Blake Strozier, and Betty Ramsdell — take with them more than two decades of experience on the Flint panel.

### **Fresh faces in FCS administration**

Anita Steward became assistant/interim superintendent on May 20, 2020. She was elevated to the superintendent's position about one month later on June 25.

Kevelin Jones became assistant superintendent at the start of the 2020-21 school year. William Chapman moved into the central office as director of operations in July. Ayunna Dompreeh, deputy director of finance, assumed the duties of Carrie Sekelsky, executive director of finance, when she resigned her position in November.

Several new building administrative appointments were made in July and included: Notoya Coleman, assis-

tant principal at Southwestern; Daphne Jackson, acting assistant principal at Doyle-Ryder (now acting principal); Eddie Thomas, principal at Eisenhower Elementary; Scott Henwood, principal at Holmes.

### **Whitmer administration says all schools can reopen**

The most immediate and vexing challenge for Flint's board of education may be approving a plan to reopen schools for face-to-face instruction. All FCS school buildings have been closed to students since Mar. 16, 2020.

At a press conference on Dec. 19, the administration of Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced Michigan high schools could reopen for face-to-face instruction starting Dec. 21.

"Michiganders have done a really good job bringing down our seven-day average ... by wearing masks, avoiding enclosed gatherings, maintaining social distance," Whitmer said.

Whitmer reaffirmed her decision to reopen high schools at a subsequent press conference on Dec. 29. "The numbers have improved," she said. "Our numbers are better than all of our mid-western neighbors."

The numbers Whitmer relies on include hospital capacity dedicated to COVID-19 patients (13-day decline), overall case rates (27-day decline), and positivity rate (11-day decline).

While face-to-face classroom instruction has been allowed for K-8 students since the start of the 2020-21 school year, high school instruction had been restricted to a virtual/online format prior to Dec. 21.

"If we have to go back to school next week, we'll be ready," Steward said on Oct. 13, 2020.

FCS protocols have been in place

since July 2020 for the reopening of schools and include: movement; screening students, staff, and visitors; personal protection equipment, including hand-washing and cleaning; busing; athletics; dining, gathering, and extracurricular activities.

FCS has relied on a local team of health professionals to guide the district about the possible reopening of schools. The team included:

- Gwendolyn Reyes, MD, pediatrician, Hurley Medical Center;
- Bobby Mukkamala, MD, head and neck surgeon;
- Lawrence Reynolds, MD, pediatrician;
- Eileen Tomasi, FCS school health coordinator;
- and Genesee County Health Department officials.

### **FCS virtual learning data**

Jones presented plentiful virtual learning data to the FCS board at its Nov. 18, 2020, meeting:

- 3,251 students enrolled in FCS establishing a "daily attendance rate" of 93%;
- Technology "connectivity" included delivery of 149 hotspots, 3,180 devices (iPads and Chromebooks), and 2,135 "technology tickets" (to solve technology issues);
- Special populations served included 67 ELL (English Language Learner) students, 864 IEPs (Individualized Education Programs), and 2,252 student contacts (individually and in small groups); 272 students served in ECDD (Early Childhood Development Delay) class; and 2,252 total student contacts;

• NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) standardized tests administered to 44 percent of students in math and 51 percent of students in reading; DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators

*(Continued on Page 9.)*



## ... Schools

(Continued from Page 8.)

of Basic Early Literacy Skills) administered at eight elementary schools with test completion rates, thus far, ranging from 18 percent to 52 percent.

Jones also presented considerable data in the categories of: family support; FCS Wellness Team support; Crim Fitness Foundation Community Education initiatives; professional staff support; and meals served by Sodexo/MAGIC (over one million since the start of the pandemic).

### **Mott Foundation assists virtual learning**

On Nov. 16, 2020, the Flint-based C.S. Mott Foundation awarded a grant totaling \$1,051,000 to FCS for the purchase of 600 iPads, 1,200 Chromebooks, and 1,400 mobile Wi-Fi hot spots to assist students and families with virtual learning.

On Nov. 20, 2020, the foundation awarded a similar \$1 million grant to five Flint community centers “to provide Flint students with a safe space to participate in virtual learning.”

### **Financial picture improves, challenges remain**

An annual audit presented to the FCS board in November showed an improved financial picture for the district along with ongoing challenges.

The audit results were presented to the board by Plante Moran’s Holly Stefanski, assurance manager, and Kimber Smail-Benedict, managing partner.

According to Stefanski, “voter-approved stability bonds (in March 2020) that totaled about \$30.6 million,” and “utilizing federal grants less than expected” helped pay off some of the district’s long-term debt and reduce the annual deficit.

Additionally, FCS was to receive \$6 million in federal funding after the passage of the CARES Act in March 2020. The act routed ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund) funding

through state governments to local districts.

Improved accounting practices in the district’s financial office were also highlighted by the Plante Moran team. “There was tremendous improvement that we saw during and throughout the year,” Stefanski said, citing the work of Sekelsky and Dompree.

“We’re in a stronger financial position because of you (Sekelsky),” said then-president Lester at the board’s Oct. 21, 2020 meeting. Sekelsky had just uncovered \$2 million in lost revenues to the district due to faulty reporting of Flint non-home-stead properties.

### **Significant financial challenges**

“The school district continues to face significant financial challenges stemming from loss of students, ongoing cash flow shortages, and significant debt obligations,” Stefanski said. “There are recurring operating deficits and continued financial distress.”

FCS “debt obligations” are largely the result of an approximate \$20 million loan taken out by the district in 2014, along with the loss of students.

“The magnitude of the decline in Flint has been quite substantial, which continues to create that financial distress,” Smail-Benedict said. She noted that school enrollment had dropped from 12,569 in 2010 to 3,775 in the 2019-20 school year. “It has resulted in significant (revenue) losses.”

### **Initial 2020-21 data indicate a continuing loss of students**

Due to pandemic-plagued uncertainties in gathering school data, the Michigan Department of Education is using amended and complicated formulae that utilize various data — past, present, and future — to determine student enrollment for the 2020-21 school year. Initial data indicate that FCS has slipped to the seventh largest school district in Genesee County.

(Note: The fall 2020 student enrollment numbers shown below for

some Genesee County school districts were generated by: this reporter; an Oct. 13, 2020, MLive report by Winter Keefer; the MI School Data website of the Michigan Department of Education; a Dec. 24, 2020, report by John Wisely of the Detroit Free Press.)

1. Grand Blanc: 7,968 (down 256 students, or 3 percent, from 8,224 in spring 2020)

2. Davison: 5,651 (down 123 students, or 2 percent, from 5,774 in spring 2020)

3. Flushing: 4,104 (down 119 students, or 3 percent, from 4,223 in spring 2020)

4. Carman-Ainsworth: 4,004 (down 85 students, or 2 percent, from 4,189 in spring 2020)

5. Swartz Creek: 3,633 (spring 2020 count; no current school year data showing at the MI School Data website as of 12-29-20)

6. Fenton: 3,287 (down 156 students, or 5 percent, from 3,443 in spring 2020)

7. Flint, 3,207 (down 526 students, or 14 percent, from 3,733\* in spring 2020)

(\*3,749 is the spring 2020 student count according to the MI School Data website. That would mean a loss of 542 students, or 14.5%. The Dec. 24, 2020 *Detroit Free Press* stated, “Flint saw a 17 percent decline.” Despite uncertainty in student enrollment numbers, initial 2020-21 school year data indicate that FCS lost 14 to 17 percent of its student population from the previous 2019-20 school year.)

If these numbers are accurate, then Flint has about 500 fewer students than last school year. Each student generates approximately \$8,000 in state aid. A loss of 500 students would mean an approximate loss of \$4 million in state aid.

“Every student we get in attendance, we (FCS) get roughly \$8,000 for that pupil,” Steward said in an Oct. 2020 interview with *East Village Magazine*. “That is how we pay the teachers’ salaries, books, materials, furniture.”

Reliable attendance data for pub-

(Continued on Page 15.)

# Book Review

## A five-day odyssey of Motown Man explores familiar themes, settings in Flint author Bob Campbell's first novel

By Harold C. Ford

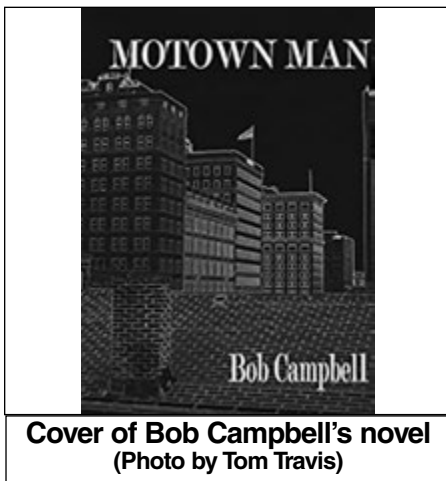
*"The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the colour-line."*

—from Address to the Nations of the World, W. E. B. DuBois, July 1900.

*"As much as we all try to think we have all reached the promised land, the reality is there's a lot of separation."*

—Bob Campbell, *Motown Man* author, Dec. 11, 2020.

Flint author Bob Campbell's first book, *Motown Man*, was virtually launched Dec. 11 via Zoom and Facebook in an event sponsored by the Flint Festival of Writers. Katie Curnow, a Flint Festival board member, hosted the event. Jan



Cover of Bob Campbell's novel  
(Photo by Tom Travis)

Worth-Nelson, *East Village Magazine* consulting editor, moderated the discussion.

*Motown Man* follows the main character, Bradley Cunningham, for five hellishly cold days in the Flint area during a November in the 1990s. "A cold wind swept down out of Canada" and enveloped Cunningham and his fiancée, Abigail Larsen, in events that would have a profound and lasting impact on their future.

Bradley is "Motown Man," a moniker bestowed on him by his brother James — not Gospel Man, nor Rapper Man, he points out — rather "an agreeable and likable kind of brotha ... you're like Motown music for all these white folks."

### Flint and Anytown, USA

The setting should be familiar to Flintstones: "Buick City, a place where the American dream was crumbling and rusting away, a city so far removed from its glorious and arrogant past when it made America go places ... his (Bradley's) once muscular hometown was emaciating before his eyes."

Though Campbell never specifically names the hometown of the main characters — Bradley, Abby, and James — in the book's 200 pages, the clues are unmistakable, starting with "Buick City" and including:

- "Grand Heights," a predominantly white suburb filled with upwardly mobiles;
- A river that divides Campbell's fictional town, north from south;
- An "open housing ordinance that passed narrowly ... in late 1960s";
- A "planetarium ... with granite monoliths";
- A deadly Halloween prank in which young men hung a scarecrow from an expressway overpass, causing the driver to swerve and crash to her death.

Nonetheless, the decimation of the urban center depicted in Campbell's novel could be Anytown, USA: Butler, Pa.; Muncie, Ind.; Youngstown, Ohio; Springfield, Ill.; or others. All have faded from their glory days of mid-20th century industrialization.

In fact, the high-rise structure illustrated on the cover of *Motown Man* is The Wick Tower, the second tallest building in Youngstown.

Recognizable moments in the book tip the reader that *Motown Man* unfolds early during the decade of the 1990s, when boxer Buster Douglas springs his jaw-dropping upset of Mike

Tyson (1990) and Magic Johnson shocks the world with his HIV diagnosis (1991).

### *Motown Man and Demolition Means Progress*

*Motown Man* can be appropriately cast as a fictional companion to Andrew Highsmith's scholarly work of nonfiction, *Demolition Means Progress*. Both are about Flint and the excruciating manifestations of the "color line."

*Demolition* painfully reminds readers that: "By the close of the 1930s, the widespread use of restrictive covenants by local residents had helped make Flint the third most segregated city in the nation, surpassed only by Miami, Florida, and Norfolk, Virginia."

*Motown Man* is the fictional descendant of *Demolition* set some six decades later.

In his review of *Demolition*, *EVM* writer Bob Thomas judges that, "*Demolition Means Progress* excels in delineating truth from fiction ..." It is arguable that Campbell's *Motown* excels in extracting truth from fiction.

Many American works of fiction and non-fiction, including *Demolition* and *Motown*, cry out for resolution of America's long racial nightmare. Will this nation ever get it right in the next 244 years of its history? The events of 2020 were not promising.

Oh, did I mention that the main characters — Bradley and Abby — comprise an interracial couple? Bradley is black; Abby is white. I'd first imagined Bradley to be white and blue collar. Instead, he was black and white collar.

### Chocolate Ken, Vanilla Barbie, and the color line

Campbell's book is an addition to the initiatives of African American men of

## ... Campbell

(Continued from Page 10.)

letters — Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, and Henry Louis Gates — that have wrestled with this nation’s “color line” in their creative works. Campbell’s contribution diverges



**Author Bob Campbell**  
(Photo source, Goodreads website)

from those of predecessors in that *Motown Man* is a work of fiction closer to the literary style of James Baldwin’s *If Beale Street Could Talk*.

Campbell told the book launch audience that Baldwin is one of his favorite writers. “I read *The Fire Next Time* every few years,” he said. Baldwin wrote, “Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

With *Motown Man*, Campbell tackles a variety of issues — deindustrialization, factory culture, class differences, gender issues, and the ethics of journalism. And he assuredly confronts race relations.

For starters, Campbell’s fictional “chocolate Ken” and “vanilla Barbie” negotiate the sometimes uncertain waters of an intimate relationship that leads to a wedding engagement.

Bradley suffers racial indignities such as the corporate asshole who “wore black shoe polish on his face ... (and) went to the Halloween party ... dressed as a black hobo.”

Campbell writes, “Bradley had bitten his tongue so often it felt as though he had scar tissue for taste buds.”

Readers learn that, “The northside was another way of saying nigger, Negro, coloured, Afro-American, African-American or simply, black side of town.”

Racial stereotyping abounds and

cuts in many directions in *Motown Man*:

- Bradley was not really a good dancer, but “in white gatherings, he noticed some folks tended to watch him like he was an NBA star playing a pick-up game at a country club.”

- A Hispanic woman informs Abby that “many non-Latinos see us and automatically think ‘foreigner’ or ‘illegal alien.’”

- An Asian-American trainer asks, “If Asian-Americans are the model minor-i-tee and so damn smart, then why don’t you see us in management?”

- Abby’s father “really couldn’t understand what his daughter saw in a black man.”

- Bradley’s father, Ellis, is disapproving of his son crossing the color line: “Why does he want to hurt himself like that?”

### Metaphor and simile

Campbell’s fondness for metaphor and simile are obvious. Here are some examples, starting with my favorite and ending with my least favorite:

- “His sometimes-fragile confidence bulked up like a boy who returned to school after summer vacation several inches taller and twenty pounds heavier.”;

- “The program’s hard copy was Bible thick”;

- “Old factory mustiness ... it hung around like the ghost of greatness past”;

- “Their bodies swirled together like marble ... melded black-and-white stone”;

- “Flat abs, an inviting pan of sliced, moist brownies”;

- “Head full of tiny braids that resembled a plate full of black pasta”;

- “Mr. Coffee pissed into the thermal urinal.”

I love creative metaphors and similes and I kept looking for them in Campbell’s book. I’m not sure that’s what an author wants a reader to do.

### The plot thickens

About halfway through *Motown Man* — chapter 14 of 24 — I was flush with details about location, time, and

main characters; I was looking for the plot to thicken.

In the final chapters of *Motown Man*, I was not disappointed. The book’s climax was a gut punch.

### James has the final word

Brother James may have had the final word in Campbell’s book with a soliloquy-like reflection reminiscent of the history told in Highsmith’s *Demolition*:

“Well, we had been bused over to a different junior high school in a lily-white part of town. You know, for integration.

And I did not feel welcomed. Nope, I just did not feel welcomed. I did not want to be there. Me and my boys did not want to be there. Not that things were happening on a daily basis. I mean, there were some fights early on and a lot of talk and that sort of thing. Mostly, a lot of talk. You know, occasionally you’d see stuff like, ‘I hate niggers’ or ‘go back to Africa’ scribbled in the bathroom stalls. But we’d laugh about it, especially when you saw the word ‘nigger’ misspelled. Every now and then, you’d see the word ‘niger’ written somewhere — you know, spelled with only one g’ — and I’d think, these idiots can’t even spell.”

### Buying options:

*Motown Man* is available for purchase from the publisher, Urban Farmhouse Press.

Worth-Nelson noted the book may be available from Book Beat, 26010 Greenfield, Oak Park, MI; online purchases are possible at Book Beat’s website.

*Motown Man* is available at the following Flint locations:

Totem Books, 620 W. Court St; and Comma Bookstore and Social Hub, 132 W. 2nd St.

Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble also sell the book.

EVM staff writer Harold C. Ford can be reached at [hcford1185@gmail.com](mailto:hcford1185@gmail.com).

## ... History

*(Continued from Page 3.)*

about taking the inoculation. When the pandemic is finally under control, will that trust in science finally be restored? In 2021, let's hope the success of vaccines will grow the public's trust.

### **A plot to kidnap the governor?**

Nothing highlights 2020's discord and lack of trust more than a hare-brained plot by a bunch of self-styled militia members, to kidnap Michigan's governor, and put her on trial for her actions dealing with the pandemic.

Though a substantial majority of Michigan citizens support the governor's decisions, more than a few local officials and individuals refused to abide by her orders, national leaders urged resistance, and those actions encouraged fringe groups to emerge from the shadows, threatening violence.

### **After the water crisis, who can we trust?**

When it comes to distrust in governmental institutions, the City of Flint has been the poster child of distrust long before the current pandemic. The lengthy list of official errors, misdeeds, and cover-ups that led to the Flint water crisis has done little to encourage trust in government on any level.

Though the pandemic has taken Flint's water problems off the front page, the lack of trust is still a major factor, even as most of the pipes get replaced and the water quality seems to be improving.

The recent divisive meetings of the city council over a proposed settlement for most of the water crisis lawsuits facing the city only underscored the level of distrust in the system. Though the council finally supported the settlement, most members voiced doubt that it was a truly "fair" deal for their constituents, and many constituents reflected that distrust.

The city still waits for a federal judge's final approval to the proposed settlement. And the delay in bringing criminal charges against those responsible only adds to the doubt and distrust. However, and whenever, the legal cases

are finally settled, the distrust will remain for a long time in Flint.

### **What else to look for in 2021?**

While restoring trust may be a long-term project, there are a number of things to look for in the upcoming year, many of them tied to both the pandemic, the election, and the trust issue.

### **What will COVID do to government finances?**

Whenever the pandemic is history, the aftermath will be painful. All the COVID bailout money for those out of work has been a critical and necessary means of keeping the economy alive during this crisis. But the cost will be enormous.

Deficits at the federal, state, and local levels may last for years after the pandemic is gone. Will we be able to find the funds to "fix the damn roads," support our schools, defend the country, provide medical care, and fund all the normal activities we expect of government?

Even when the pandemic is gone, and things "return to normal," there will be many painful choices ahead for any administration. For example, last minute veto threats that put COVID bailout funds in jeopardy, and threaten a government shutdown, do little to restore trust.

### **What will Trump do? What will the Republicans do?**

After their years in the White House, most ex-presidents step back from the limelight to write their memoirs, establish their presidential library, work for a favorite charity, give occasional speeches, and allow the new chief executive a chance to govern.

That's not likely to be Donald Trump's role. Will he form a "shadow government," tweeting his opposition to everything that Biden does? How many of his 74 million voters will stay with him? Will the Republican Party remain the "party of Trump," or will it return to its traditional roots?

Will he form a third party, as Teddy Roosevelt did, if he loses his Republican support? Or will Trump fade, as other

demagogues, like Joe McCarthy, and George Wallace did, after their time in the limelight passed?

### **What will Democrats do?**

While Democrats celebrated victory, winning the White House by seven million votes in 2020, that's about the only good news they had on election night. In what should have been a "blue wave." Democrats lost seats in the U.S. House, governorships, and statehouses, and are dependent on Georgia's special elections for a chance to take the U.S. Senate. Just as the Republican Party may look very different after Donald Trump, so may the Democratic Party.

### **Can new city council elections restore civility and trust?**

This is the first year for city council elections under the new Flint City Charter. This year voters will elect council members for a five-year term, where they will serve until 2026. After that, the council and the mayor will be elected to four-year terms, in the same year as the governor.

Will the voters elect council members who will be able to bring an end to the conflict and turmoil that has plagued the council for years? Will the newly elected council be able to restore trust in the council, and bring an end to the conflict, chaos, and marathon meetings in City Hall?

### **A new direction for Flint Community Schools?**

With the election of three new members, Joyce Ellis-McNeal, Anita Moore, and Laura Gillespie-MacIntyre, the Flint School Board is facing a challenging year as student numbers drop dramatically, and the pandemic makes any turnaround more difficult.

Will the school board be able to stabilize the Flint Community Schools, and restore trust in what used to be a nationally recognized school system?

### **Can new election districts rebuild trust?**

This year, as the census numbers are finalized, the states will begin drawing elec-

*(Continued on Page 15.)*

# Folk duo Mustard's Retreat to stage live-streaming benefit concert for East Village Magazine

By EVM Staff

A reviewer once called the folk group Mustard's Retreat "music to cure what ails you." Now they are dedicating that cure to Flint, a community like so many others wracked by COVID, in a virtual performance to benefit *East Village Magazine*.

The popular duo featuring David Tamulevich and Flint native Libby Glover, plan to stage a virtual concert to benefit *EVM* at 7 p.m. Jan. 23.



Mustard's Retreat's Libby Glover and David Tamulevich performing at the Ark in Ann Arbor  
(Photo by Michael Fleshman)

The concert is part of the duo's "Defiantly Hopeful Series," launched during the pandemic as opportunities for in-person concerts dried up.

The concert will be on Zoom, which gives everyone there the opportunity to see and talk with each other and the artists. You can connect on Zoom using the ID and passcode as follows:

**Meeting ID: 856 9805 3474**

**Passcode: 354769**

**For a direct link, write:**

***David@mustardsretreat.com***

The concert also will be streaming on Facebook and YouTube. The links to those connections are:

**Youtube:**

***https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25yIEn3Fx54&feature=youth.b***

**Facebook:**

***https://www.facebook.com/mustardsretreat/live/***

While clicking into the concert is free, viewers will be invited to donate to *EVM* and Mustard's Retreat through a link available during the event. After covering costs for technical support, MR and *EVM* will split the donations fifty-fifty.

The folk duo have a special connection to *East Village Magazine*. Mustard's Retreat this year supplied the closing song for "Faces of Flint — A message from the anvil of America's Democracy," a get-out-the-vote video produced by *EVM*'s Ted Nelson and Jan Worth-Nelson. The song, "(Ours is a) Simple Faith," was written by Tamulevich and has been extensively performed and recorded nationally.

While based in Ann Arbor, Mustard's Retreat has been a fixture in the

Flint music scene for 40 years, with memorable performances in many downtown bars, at the Flint Public Library, at the Flint Folk Music Festival, and many other locales in Michigan and around the country.

For many years the group included Michael Hough, who left due to family issues two years ago; he still occa-



Cover of most recent (2018) album

sionally appears in the group's virtual events.

At the 2015 Folk Music Festival, the group co-headlined with Peter Yarrow of Peter Paul & Mary.

"They've traveled more than a million miles and performed more than

6,000 shows, from pig roasts and pool parties to Lincoln Center Out of Doors, The Barns at Wolftrap and the Kennedy's Center's Millennium Stage," according to their website.

Their first album, called simply Mustard's Retreat, was recorded in 1979 in Clio and is a Flint fan favorite, Tamulevich said. They have since produced 17 albums, the latest being *Make Your Own Luck* in 2018.

As described on their website, Mustard's Retreat recently begun referring to their career and touring as "Defiantly Hopeful." — partly due to their long career, but more as a statement about what the music has meant to them. "Folk music is, at its heart, defiantly hopeful!" Tamulevich says. "We came of age in the 60s, at the confluence of Pete Seeger, Peter, Paul & Mary, Bob Dylan and the singer/songwriter revolution. We care much more about what we do and stand for and finding that common ground with our audiences, than fame or money: this is our community of choice, and we consider ourselves so fortunate to be here."

It was the Michigan Times, University of Michigan student newspaper, who concluded Mustard's Retreat produces "music to cure what ails you."

"We are so delighted and touched that our friends of Mustard's Retreat offered to partner with *East Village Magazine* for this concert," said *EVM* Managing Editor Tom Travis. "We know they love Flint and they love community journalism. We're honored to have their joyful, positive and unifying music come into our homes Jan. 23."

More information about Mustard's Retreat is available.

**To Zoom into the Jan. 23 performance:**

**Topic: The Defiantly Hopeful Series and East Village Magazine in Flint present Mustard's Retreat!**

**Time: Jan 23, 2021, 7 p.m.**

**Meeting ID: 856 9805 3474**

**Passcode: 354769**

—EVM Staff.

BE DEFIANTLY HOPEFUL – JOIN THE MUSIC



# MUSTARD'S RETREAT

*Livestreaming on Zoom, Facebook and YouTube  
Saturday, January 23, 7 pm*

*This concert, part of the folk duo's "Defiantly Hopeful" series, is a joint fundraiser for both the group and East Village Magazine. You'll have the opportunity to see and talk with each other and the artists while enjoying a beloved Michigan folk duo. While clicking into the concert is free, viewers will be invited to donate to EVM and Mustard's Retreat through a link available during the event. After covering costs for technical support, MR and EVM will split the donations 50-50.*

*\*surprise special guests  
\*afterparty*

## Connection Info

Zoom Meeting ID: 856 9805 3474  
Passcode: 354769

Or, for a direct link, write to:  
[David@mustardsretreat.com](mailto:David@mustardsretreat.com)

Youtube:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25y1En3Fx54&feature=youth.b>

Facebook:  
<https://www.facebook.com/mustardsretreat/live/>



**Lead/galvanized tainted pipes  
replaced so far in Flint:**

**9,912**

Because of the governor's order, no pipeline replacements were conducted in April and May. Totals as of Dec. 25 were 9,912 lead or galvanized pipes replaced, 26,750 pipes excavated.

A total of 16,838 pipes have been discovered to be copper service lines.

## *Unclassified ads*

• **Tools Needed:** We are mentoring a student enrolled in auto class at Mott. We are in need of tools. Please check grandpa's, dad's, or mom's toolbox for donation or sale of wrenches, pliers, screwdriver sockets compression gauges, etc; Thank you! IT TAKES A VILLAGE and there's none better than East Village. Call Jerry at 714-342-7531.

• **One-bedroom Apartment for Rent:** Clean, partially furnished, upstairs. Walking distance to UM-Flint and Mott College. Call 810-625-3924 for appointment. Please leave a message.

## Support community journalism!

Donations to *East Village Magazine* are tax deductible. For easy giving, go to: [eastvillagemagazine.org](http://eastvillagemagazine.org)

## Volunteer Distributors Wanted

*East Village Magazine* is looking for volunteer distributors in some of the residential blocks bounded by E. Court, Franklin, Tuscola and Meade streets. Spend less than one hour a month getting exercise and ensuring your neighbors get the magazine. Contact [ecuster@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ecuster@sbcglobal.net) or write to 720 E. Second St. Flint, MI 48503.

**HAPPY NEW  
YEAR!**  
(at last)

## ... History

(Continued from Page 12.)

tion districts for the next decade. In Michigan, as a result of Proposal 2 in 2018, the election districts will be drawn by a non-partisan Citizens Redistricting Commission.

In Michigan, we are likely to lose one of our 14 congressional seats. In Genesee County, Flint's loss of population is likely to lead to some very different political maps locally, and Flint ward maps will change.

The goal is to have the new maps completed by the end of 2021 in time for the 2022 elections. Though much remains to be seen many feel that drawing truly competitive election districts, could play a role in reducing the partisan division in the state legislature, and the U.S. Congress.

There is certain to be conflict and controversy as the commission does its work, but there is a real possibility that the results could change the way we elect our officials, reduce partisan divisions, and, perhaps, lead to a restoration of trust.

Restoring trust in the election system, political parties, science, Flint schools, Flint water, and the Flint City Council is no small task. But if we can begin to do that in 2021, it will be a much better year than 2020.

EVM political columnist Paul Rozycki can be reached at [paul.rozenki@mcc.edu](mailto:paul.rozenki@mcc.edu).

## ... Village

(Continued from Page 16.)

an EBT card, and clothing. As the formerly incarcerated re-enter society, they do not have any of these important things.

The real success is measured by the person "getting a job and seeing they can stay at a job." He said the MADE Institute has a 90 percent success rate. EL-Alamin said that for the 10 percent who don't make it through their program, it is usually attributed to the fact that a lot of individuals in prison have become socially conditioned to the environment of how prison is structurally set up.

EL-Alamin said MADE has hired a social worker to work with their subscribers. The social worker provides trauma-informed counseling, anger management and behavioral therapy.

## ... Schools

(Continued from Page 9.)

lic school students is elusive due largely to two factors: 1) The pandemic; it is suspected that many students have not yet reported to school for the 2020-2021 school year; 2) The pandemic again; data indicate that 17,000 Michigan students have thus far transitioned to home school learning in 2020-21.

"This year's unaudited fall enrollment (for Michigan's public school population) was approximately 53,000 fewer students," wrote Michael Rice, state superintendent, in a Dec. 16, 2020, op-ed piece.

Student count numbers are scheduled to be tallied again in the spring semester on Feb. 10, 2021.

### Ongoing infrastructure needs

At a Sept. 14, 2020, meeting of the FCS board, members were informed by then-finance director Sekelsky that only three buildings in the district were served by air conditioning. At least eight FCS buildings needed upgrades in their HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) systems to meet the needs of a pandemic era and a balanced calendar school year.

"The elementary schools have just got to be a major project for us...for those

EL-Alamin said this additional resource has provided tremendous help toward the subscribers succeeding.

"If you want to make a change in marginalized, violent communities, a pipeline of opportunities has to be provided for at-risk youth and those with criminal histories," said Leon EL-Alamin.

The MADE Institute has created a partnership with Kettering University and Dr. Laura Sullivan and her students. EL-Alamin said. "The partnership is called SAGE (Student Association for Global Engineering). Kettering helped construct a newly designed hoop house that is a self-sustainable system that runs off solar energy. MADE Urban Farming will be launched this spring to help provide organic fruits and vegetables for residents in our community and living within our transitional houses."

The MADE Institute's website

kids to come in and have good air to breathe, to be warm in the winter and cool in the summer," Ramsdell said. "If we can give them a positive environment, that's got to be our first priority.

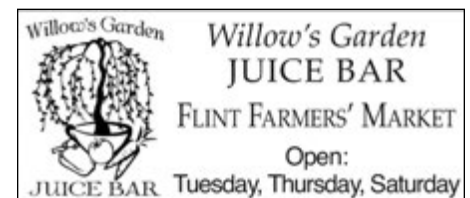
HVAC upgrades were to have gotten underway in the late-fall/early winter of the 2020 calendar year.

### Looming three-year, state-imposed plan

The 2020-21 school year marks the end of a three-year, state-imposed partnership plan to improve test scores by 10 percent, reduce suspensions by 10 percent, and increase student attendance to 90 percent.

There has been no reported interaction between FCS and the State of Michigan on this matter in recent months. Few would be surprised if the partnership deadlines were extended due to the pandemic.

EVM Education Beat reporter Harold C. Ford can be reached at [hcford1185@gmail.com](mailto:hcford1185@gmail.com).



cites some staggering statistics: 60 percent of U.S. inmates are parents; 68 percent of state prison inmates did not receive a high school diploma; and there are 2.3 million people in U.S. prisons.

### How to contact MADE Institute

You can find MADE Institute on Facebook and on Instagram @made.institute. More information about MADE Institute can be found on their website, [www.madeinstitute.org](http://www.madeinstitute.org). The MADE Institute downtown offices are on the second floor of Woodside Church at the corner of Garland and Second avenues and can be reached by calling 810-835-8304 between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

EVM Managing Editor Tom Travis can be reached at [tomntravis@gmail.com](mailto:tomntravis@gmail.com).

# Village Life

## Where is the Village? It's right here — it's Flint

By Tom Travis

Over the past few years *EVM* has reflected on its purpose and coverage of neighborhood news. In 44 -plus years *EVM* has grown and changed. Since Jan Worth-Nelson took over as editor after *EVM* founder, Gary Custer's untimely death in 2015, *EVM* has continued to change and evolve into what it is today.

As I work with Worth-Nelson and our executive board to see what the future holds for *EVM*, we all agree on one thing — *EVM* is more than just the "East Village" of Flint.

While at this time we're not considering a name change, we are clear that when we think of "the village" we are thinking of all of Flint. Especially in recent years, *EVM* has focused on stories of local government, democracy stories that involve "the people's money" — taxes. At the same time, we have maintained our coverage of neighborhood news and specific stories from specific neighborhoods.

*EVM* is community journalism. We rarely, if ever, cover stories outside of the Flint city limits. We care about the stories that are happening in neighborhoods. You can help us — let us know what's going on and we may cover it.

The editorial team and *EVM* board agree that "the village" is Flint. To that end, this column that always bookends our print edition by appearing on the back page, Village Life, is going to become a place where we feature stories of people and places from around our city.

Side note: Jan Worth-Nelson has written more than 100 Village Life columns since the first one appeared in March, 2007. This is a substantial volume of work from one of Flint's finest writers and journalists. Her collection of Village Life columns will be available in the near future ... keep watching.

Flint is bubbling over with interesting and fascinating people. In a city rich with history, our people have been

involved with some key historical happenings here in Flint. As we observe and listen to history, time marches on. There are people right now working and doing in Flint what is critical and key to our future. Here is one such person Flint can be proud of and should listen to as he and his organization enrich the Flint community.

### People in Flint

Flint native Leon EL-Alamin (born Leon Wilson) faced challenges early on in his life, including being arrested at age 19 for drug and gun possession. In a Michigan Radio/Story Corps recording, EL-Alamin tells his story, which can be heard in its entirety. In 2003, EL-Alamin was arrested and sent to prison for seven years.

EL-Alamin's reentry into society after seven years in prison was tough, as it is for most who are formerly incarcerated. That post-prison reentry process is what drove EL-Alamin to develop his



**Leon EL-Alamin**  
(photo from M.A.D.E. Institute website)

non profit organization called MADE Institute here in Flint.

EL-Alamin is the founder and executive director of the MADE Institute, a nonprofit organization he started in January 2015. The MADE Institute works with at-risk youth and veterans in addition to the formerly incarcerated.

"MADE" stands for Money, Attitude, Direction and Education.

"MADE Institute is currently providing a professional relationship between returning citizens and at-risk youth. This relationship is collaborative in nature and focused on a strength-based model. We assist our subscribers to connect with available resources and help negotiate for them relationships with other established organizations in our community who can meet their needs.

"We work to restore the civil/human rights of formally incarcerated and those affected by violence through organizing and mobilizing individuals to become advocates to social changes and personal development," according to their website.

In his published book of poetry, EL-Alamin recounts his early life. Marked by violence and tragedy, he made a change in both his mind and his life.

"I channeled my energies into petty theft, hustling, experimental sex at an early age and things like that. Those same uncontrollable desires led me to develop immortal fear of the police," EL-Alamin recounts. "I had become a product of my environment, but yet I had dreams that were only able to come to light inside of a dark and small prison cell."

During a socially distanced pandemic phone interview in December, EL-Alamin told *EVM* the MADE Institute has six employees and works with 16 people in their transitional housing and life skills mentoring program.

EL-Alamin said the MADE Institute has far exceeded what he had dreamed it could be. He recalled that in the beginning "there was a lot of pushback and lot of lack of interest from the population."

That has changed as they have experienced success with the citizens who work the program. EL-Alamin described success starting with their subscribers getting basic needs like signing up for health care, getting

(Continued on Page 15.)

LIX: 1 (693 issues, 7,168 pages)