

East Village Magazine

April 2021



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Edwin D. Coates

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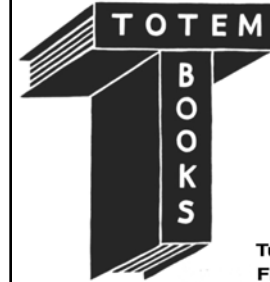
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Commentary Is it time to get back to “normal”? Maybe, but not yet

By Paul Rozycki

“It ain’t over till it’s over” -Yogi Berra

There is a feeling of spring in the air. The days are getting warmer. The snow is melting. More and more people are getting the COVID vaccine. The Flint water crisis seems to be reaching some sort of conclusion. And the divisive, tumultuous election of 2020 is now history.

So, we’re ready to move on and get back to “normal”.... Right?

No so fast. After a week of spring-like temperatures in mid-March, we fell back to a week of wintery chill, as Michigan often does. Just when we were about to get the garden tools out, the snow shovel is still waiting in the garage.

COVID-19 cases rise

Yes, the vaccination rates are moving along better than expected. Over 100 million people have been vaccinated so far, and soon nearly everyone will be eligible to get their shots. But the virus is still out there, and as many states let down their guard, the infection rates are starting to jump up again. In particular, Michigan has shown a significant spike in cases in the last few weeks. Many states have dropped their mask requirements, and eased entertainment and dining restrictions. More schools are returning to traditional classroom learning. College students enjoyed spring break with little regard for social distancing or masks. Along with melting snow and warmer weather, there is the feeling that the

cold hard COVID crisis is past.

It isn’t.

In the last few weeks, Michigan’s infection numbers have started to edge upward once again. The initial success against COVID caused many to step back from the actions that have led to progress. Even as the vaccine becomes more available, a surprising number of people say they won’t get the shot. One recent poll indicated that 42 percent of Republicans probably won’t get the shot. In recent weeks, much of Europe has been forced to shut down as their numbers began to climb again.

What may be most worrisome is that, if the virus is given more time to spread, and mutate, those new mutations may be more threatening than the current version of the virus. If the virus can be stopped, so can the mutations, and we can be confident that the current vaccines will continue to be effective.

It’s not over yet. We’re getting there, and with luck, by this summer we may be able to return to something that resembles “normal.” We’re almost there. But that will only happen if we hang on a little longer, stick with the masks, social distancing, and make sure we all get our shots.

Flint residents wait for water crisis resolution

After more than five years,

(Continued on Page 12.)

Cover: Artifacts of Flint’s 20th century prosperity remain



Photo of the Month: Tilling Time

(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

City of Flint is estimated to receive \$99.33 million from American Rescue Plan

By Tom Travis

As part of the federal coronavirus stimulus bill, The American Rescue Plan, the city of Flint will receive an estimated \$99.33 million. Flint households are projected to get more than \$125 million in direct benefits, according to Flint Mayor Sheldon Neeley.

In a March 1 press release, Neeley thanked “the City of Flint’s friends in Washington D.C. for stepping up to help our community and the entire nation rebound from the economic impact of COVID-19.”

The sweeping \$1.9-trillion measure also includes support for small businesses, schools, counties and states.

City of Flint Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Shelbi Frayer explained that the \$99.33 million is to be

spent over a four year period with two disbursements. The first disbursement will happen in 60 days and the second payment will happen in two years.

Councilperson Eric Mays (1st Ward) asked Frayer in last week’s city council meeting, whether the \$99.33 million is “unencumbered” and if it will “go into the general fund,” and asked her for specifics on how that money is to be spent.

Frayer replied that the stimulus money is for specific purposes.

adding that there is a list of “allowable” and “unallowable” expenditures for the money posted on the U.S. Congress’ website. Frayer said the City Administration is looking at those options and said that “the council will certainly be a part of those discussions.”

The U.S. Congress’ website highlights these specific areas where the stimulus money is to be spent:

- Toward the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel and hospitality;
- Towards workers performing essential work during the



Flint City Hall
(Photo by Tom Travis)

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... Rescue Plan

(Continued from Page 4.)

COVID-19 public health emergency by providing premium pay to eligible workers of the state, territory, or tribal government that are performing such essential work, or by providing grants to eligible employers that have eligible workers who perform essential work;

- Towards the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue of such state, territory, or tribal government due to the COVID-19 public health emergency relative to revenues collected in the most recent full fiscal year of the state government prior to the emergency; or

- To - ward making necessary investments in water, sewer or broadband infrastruc- ture.

Flint families to “directly benefit” with over \$125 million in benefits

Flint families also will direct- ly benefit, Frayer said. The City of Flint Finance Department estimates that Flint households will get more than \$125 million from the benefits included in the package, including an

additional federal stimulus check as well as the expanded Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit.

“This is a big win for our community, and we will continue ad- vocating for Flint and Flint families at all times and in all places,” Neeley said.

“We still are learning more about the details of any restrictions on this funding, but we know it will al- low us to invest in true recovery from the intersection of crises we have weathered. These dollars will help al- leviate financial pressures caused by

the pandemic and help us to con- tinue to move forward in a positive direction,” Neeley said in the press release.

“Congress- man Dan Kildee de-

serves particular praise for making sure Flint and other hard-hit commu- nities were provided additional sup- port, but we are thankful for all of our many friends in Washington — in- cluding Sen. Gary Peters, Sen. Debbie Stabenow, and President Biden — for their leadership and support,” Neeley added.

EVM Managing Editor Tom Travis can be reached at tomntravis@gmail.com



Downtown Flint
(Photo by Tom Travis)

... New CFO

(Continued from Page 14.)

“In this proposed budget, we are keeping costs down while also fulfilling our responsibilities to serve residents, care for our re- tirees and fulfill Charter require- ments,” Neeley said in the press release.

Mayor Neeley outlined large increases to the city’s pension system that are draining the gen- eral fund. Last year’s budget pro- jected a \$12 million deficit for the FY22 budget. Through the city’s operational audit, that \$12 million gap was closed and the mayor pre- sented a balanced budget.

“This is a blessed budget, but it is a fragile budget,” Mayor Neeley said.

“Emergency managers failed to truly fix the city’s financ- es because they never addressed these known legacy costs — and at the same time they created a false sense of security by raiding the Water & Sewer funds and tak- ing out loans that the city still is paying back,” asserted Neeley in the press release.

A proposed budget was presented to the council earlier in March. EVM will continue to re- port on the city’s budget online at www.eastvillagemagazine.org.

EVM Managing Editor Tom Travis can be reached at tomntravis@gmail.com

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Education Beat

Flint students return to school buildings as COVID rates rise, water fountains still inoperable, water filters not yet installed

By Harold C. Ford

Flint Community Schools' (FCS) K-3 students began returning to school buildings March 15. Students in grades 4-12 began returning March 22.

At its meeting on March 17, the Flint Board of Education learned that 81 hydration stations (drinking fountains) funded by billionaire Elon Musk and the C.S. Mott Foundation are not yet operable. Additionally, only 40 of 300 PUR water filters for sink faucets ordered by the district had been received.

As students return to buildings across the state, schools have become the number one source of COVID-19 outbreaks, surpassing nursing homes, prisons, and worksites, according to state government sources.

Back to school

Flint students with last names that start with letters A-L, who choose to do so, report to school buildings on Mondays and Tuesdays. Those with last names that start with letters M-Z report on Thursdays and Fridays. Buildings are closed on Wednesdays for cleaning and disinfecting.

Students are expected to report for remote/online learning during those days they are not in the buildings.

A January 2021 poll of FCS families indicated that about 40 percent of FCS families favored a return to face-to-face instruction. MLive reported on March 15 that, according to FCS

Assistant Superintendent Kevelin Jones, "around 70 percent" now say they would like to return. (FCS officials did not respond to *EVM's* query about attendance figures for its first back-to-school week(s) in more than a year.)

"I appreciate all the work that has been done since March 2020 to make sure our children have gotten their education ... to have classrooms ready ... to pull things together, to make something from nothing," Board Vice President Vera Perry said about the schools' reopening.

"We went that extra mile to make sure our kids were safe," added Joyce Ellis-McNeal, the board's assistant secretary-treasurer.

"I haven't received any emails or phone calls about anything that's bothering anybody," said Danielle Green, treasurer. "I am very pleased."

On March 15, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services reported 169 new clusters/outbreaks of COVID-19 in K-12 school settings (classroom, before/after school programs) in the state. In Region 3, which includes Genesee County, 22 new clusters/outbreaks were reported.

"The largest number of outbreaks are in kindergarten-twelfth school settings ..." reported Sarah Lyon-Callo, director of the Bureau of Epidemiology and Population Health at the state health department, on March 17. Lyon-Callo said that children

ages 10-19 now have the highest COVID-19 case rate in Michigan.

"The classroom environment itself has not been a strong signal for outbreaks," explained Lyon-Callo. "It tends to be more the activities associated with schools, and including sports, but not limited to sports."

State officials announced on March 20 that young athletes, from middle to high school, must get COVID-19 antigen tests before games and practices starting in April.



**Laura Sullivan, professor of mechanical engineering
Kettering University**
(photo: Kettering University website)

Hydration stations inoperable

Laura Sullivan, professor of mechanical engineering at Kettering University (KU), told the board at its March 17 meeting that hydration stations, funded with donations from billionaire Elon Musk and the C.S. Mott Foundation, were not yet operable.

FCS was granted \$430,350 in mid-2018 to purchase, install, and test hydration

(Continued on Page 8.)

THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

"This Month" highlights a selection of events available to our readers — beginning after our publication date of Apr 1. It is not an exhaustive list, rather a sampling of opportunities in the city, which, due to the pandemic, is still very limited. To submit events for our May issue, email your event to pisenber@gmail.com by Apr. 20.

Longway Planetarium

"Propeller Power," Sat., Apr. 10, 1:00-3:00 p.m., 1st-3rd grades

Kids make propellers and find out how they can make helicopters, cars and boats go.

"Water Wonders," Sat., April 10 or 14, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. 4-7 year olds

Kids explore water and build rivers, learn about the ocean and test objects to see if they float.

"Maker Space: Reduce for Earth Day Extravaganza," Sat., Apr. 17, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.. 4-7 year olds

Kids celebrate Earth Day and learn how to keep our planet beautiful.

"Maker Space: Reuse for Earth Day Extravaganza," Sat., April 17, 1:00-4:00 p.m. 1st-3rd grades

Kids learn new uses for recyclables in this whimsical building experience.

All tickets are \$8.

Longway Planetarium

1330 Kearsley St., Flint

Call 810-237-3400 or visit sloanlongway.org.

Flint Public Library

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 are required.

Capacity is limited. Plan on visiting one hour or less.

Flint Public Library

Courtland Center (corner of Center

Rd. and Court St.), temporary location during renovation

For more info

visit fpl.info.

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.

Safety measures have been put in place. For guidelines check the FIA website before your visit. The FIA Theater currently cannot hold public viewing of the FIA films, but the new films on the schedule are available for virtual viewing. The galleries are open to the public. "Art of Jade," works made from jade, runs through May 23 in the Ann K Watch-Chan Gallery. "Found Objects: The Art of Purvis Young" features works that include found objects on canvas. This runs through Apr. 11. "Posing Beauty in African American Culture" presents a diverse range of media showing ways in which African and African American beauty have been represented. This exhibit runs through Apr. 18.

Flint Institute of Art

1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint

For more info

visit flintarts.org.

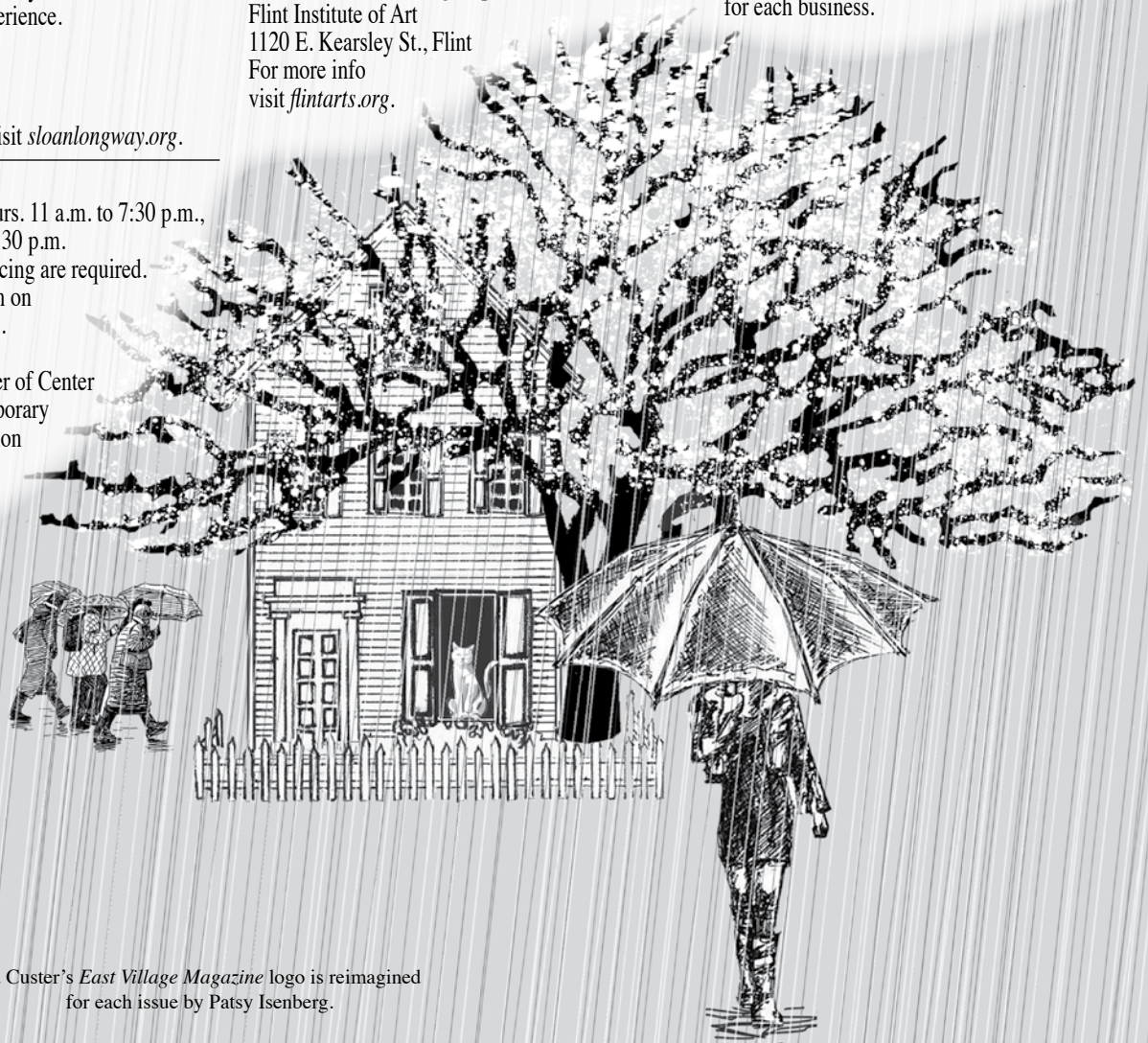
The Towering Inferno

This 1974 disaster flick starring Paul Newman, Steve McQueen, Faye Dunaway, O.J. Simpson, and others is a great escape, can be enjoyed at home and lasts almost three hours. Roger Ebert called it "by far the best of the mid-1970s wave of disaster films." See O.J. Simpson rescue a cat, an all-male firefighting team and these actors when they were their prime.

On Prime and other streaming services.

Shopping and Eating in Downtown Flint

Many restaurants and shops are open with restrictions for shopping and eating, too many to list. For info on what's available, simply google "stores in downtown flint mi" or "downtown flint restaurants." Convenient lists of these businesses will come up showing the addresses, rating, website, hours, services and phone number for each business.



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

... Schools

(Continued from Page 6.)

stations that utilized a three-step process of drinking water filtration: first, an ultrafilter (to screen out particles); then, a standard carbon block filter (to remove lead); and finally, ultraviolet light (to kill bacteria).

Installation, testing, flushing and maintenance is being overseen by a team of KU students and staff, including Sullivan and Michelle Ammerman, a professor in the KU Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. Other partners in the project have included the State of Michigan,



Michelle Ammerman,
professor, Dept. of Chemistry
and Biochemistry
(photo: Kettering University website)

the University of Michigan, and Brighton Analytical, LLC.

Sullivan explained that the project had been delayed by COVID-19, a nonresponsive manufacturer and failed testing.

Testing of the hydration stations involved two phases: “challenge testing” in a laboratory environment; and “field testing” inside the school buildings.

The early failed tests will bring modifications of the hydration stations that will substitute a prefilter for the ultrafilters and carbon filters and remedy a problem with the firmware (permanent

software) necessary for the functioning of the ultraviolet light filter Sullivan explained.

She assured a wary board, “You will know that” the filters are removing lead and bacteria.

“You’ve taken it upon yourself (without compensation) to make sure that our staff and our students and our teachers are safe,” said Laura MacIntyre, board vice president. “I can’t thank you [Sullivan, Ammerman, KU] enough.”

“We would be nowhere without Elon Musk,” Sullivan said.

Lead in the water

Sullivan’s board presentation also included the results of testing for lead in the school buildings. The percent of water taps with at least five pbb (parts per billion) of lead is shown below for each building.

Brownell: 74%
Doyle-Ryder: 59%
Durant-Tuuri-Mott: 47%
Eisenhower: 23%
Freeman: 52%
Holmes: 58%
Neithercut: 85%
Northwestern: 100%
Pierce: 34%
Potter: 32%
Southwestern: 78%

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set the maximum contaminant level for lead in drinking water at zero.

Short of filters for sink faucets

As he had at its February meeting, William Chapman, FCS director of operations, informed

the board that the district was still short of PUR filters for sink faucets. Chapman said that only 40 faucets had been received from the City of Flint; an additional 300 have been requested.

“I would have voted ‘no’ for the return (to school buildings),” Green declared.

“I’m at the mercy of the manufacturer,” Chapman responded.

Continuity of learning

Kevelin Jones presented a report titled “Extended Continuity of Learning” to members of the Flint panel. Highlights included:

- Student enrollment: 3,260. Daily Attendance Rate: 75 percent.



Kevelin Jones,
Assistant Superintendent
(photo: FCS website)

- NWEA test completion rate (district total): Math, 82.6 percent; Reading, 82.1 percent. (Northwest Evaluation Association, standardized testing)

- Student growth rate (fall 2020-winter 2021; district): Math, 43.6 percent; Reading 41.1 percent

- DIBELS (K-3; at benchmark or above; district): 16.8 percent (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills)

(Continued on Page 11.)

VACCINE INFORMATION

The following information about the vaccine rollout in Genesee County was provided by Bryant Nolden, Chair of Genesee County Health Committee

ELIGIBILITY:

- **As of April 5, all Michiganders 16 and up will be eligible for the vaccine**
-

REGISTRATION:

The following phone number can be called to register or get information on vaccine locations and appointments:

810-344-4800 (between 9 am. and 4 pm.)

SITES:

- *Generally the health department and its community partners have been hosting 8-10 vaccine events per week. The permanent sites are Northwestern High School and Bishop Airport.*

Genesee County Health Department
3 AFC - Mt. Morris Twp
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Perry Center
Flint Southwestern
Whaley Childrens Center
Mt. Morris High School
Davison High School
Flushing High School
Lake Fenton High School
Woodhaven Senior Independent
Hamilton Health Clinic
Mapleplace AFC Home
Sherrif Department - Pastor/clergy
Genesee Intermediate School District - Base Camp
Communication and Access Center for Deaf,
Hard of Hearing

Shiloh Missonary Baptish Church
Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church
Grand High School
St. Johns Catholic Church
Central Church of the Nazaren
U of M @ Northbank Center
Insight
Bishop Airport
American House Independent Living of Grand Blanc
Genesee County Jail
Shelter of Flint
New Path Rehabilitation
Salvation Army Rehabilitation Center
Carriage Town Ministries
MSU extenstion @ Flint Farmers Market
North End Soup Kitchen
Wellness Center

Rise in child abuse, violent crimes, home repairs, and dead trees highlighted at March FNU

By Coner Segren

A rise in child abuse in Genesee County, a \$200,000 grant to remove dead trees, available funds for home owners' home repairs and a presentation addressing violent crime were items discussed at the monthly Zoom meeting of the Flint Neighborhoods United (FNU).

The Zoom meeting was moderated by Theresa Roach, program director of the Crim Foundation, and FNU president Carma Lewis.

Cases of child abuse in Genesee County on the rise during pandemic

A "severe" increase in childhood physical and sexual abuse in Genesee County correlates alarmingly to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a presentation by Claudnyse Holloman, president and CEO of the advocacy group Voices for Children. Studies cited by the group show that about 1 in 4 children in Genesee County will be victims of some form of sexual abuse, higher than the national average of 1 in 6.



"What we're seeing is the abuse is just egregious and it's so severe, it's happening daily to the kids and it's even more rampant," Holloman said. "In a given week, we'll see between 16 to 20 families for just the new cases."

Voices for Children provides services to any children in

Genesee County who have suffered sexual, physical, as well as emotional abuse. According to Holloman, Voices for Children serves about 2,000 children a year. The group leads a multidisciplinary team consisting of law enforcement, Child Protective Services (CPS), the county prosecutor's office, mental health providers, and hospitals.

"We all collaborate together so that we insure that we are not dropping the ball on any of our child abuse cases," Holloman said. "Instead of having the kids and their parents go through the systematic barriers of each entity, they come to one place, Voices for Children."

In addition to services for children and legal advocacy for the life of the case, the group also provides material support to non-offending family members who are the primary caregivers for the child. This includes finding safe housing, providing diapers and clothing, as well as other needed items such as car seats.

"It's imperative for our community to recognize that it's happening, to begin talking about it and to not allow it to continue being a silent epidemic," Holloman said.

Voices for Children can be contacted at 810-238-3333 or at their website www.voicesforcac.org. Their offices are located at 515 East Street, Flint, 48503.

Neighborhood Impact Program offers funds for home repairs

Homeowners in need of repairs to make their homes more

accessible can apply for funds through the Metro Community Development's Neighborhood Impact Program (NIP). Qualifying homeowners can receive up to \$7,500 to make repairs to things like roofing, siding, HVAC, and knob and tube wiring replacement. The program is funded by grant money from places like the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and Kettering University.

To qualify, the homeowner's gross household income must be at or below 80 percent of Area Medium Income (AMI). The homeowner must also have lived in the home for at least six months prior to applying for NIP, and mortgage and property taxes must be paid as agreed and current. To check your AMI, you can visit the Metro Community Development website at <https://metrocommunitydevelopment.com/>

To apply, contact Metro Community Development and request an application for NIP by calling 810-767-4622 extension 360.



Genesee Conservation District receives grant to remove dead trees

The Genesee Conservation District (GCD) has received a grant of \$208,579 from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation for the removal of over 330 dead and dangerous trees throughout the city of Flint. GCD Administrator Angela

(Continued on Page 11.)

... Neighborhoods (Continued from Page 10.)

Warren said the targeted trees are those between sidewalks and curbs that pose a threat to nearby people and property.



“Our forestry work is improving safety while restoring neighborhood vitality through green infrastructure,” Warren said. “The Genesee Conservation District will continue to encourage and activate conservation in the revitalization of our neighborhoods and community.

More information can be found on their website [Our Work is Life Genesee Conservation District | Genesee County, MI \(geneseeecd.org\)](http://OurWorkisLifeGeneseeConservationDistrict.org)

Flint police and Michigan State Police partnering on initiative to address violent crime

The Flint Police Department (FPD) is partnering with the Michigan State Police to start the Safe Neighborhood Initiative. The aim of the program is to strengthen bonds between communities and police to help address violent crimes in neighborhoods, according to Lt. Jeffrey Short, a state trooper from the Michigan State Police.

When violent crimes occur in a neighborhood, information gleaned from residents is important. However, Short cited several

reasons, such as issues of trust or safety, that often prevent residents from coming forward.

“We’re trying to find a way to get out into the community and try to educate or build trust with the community so that they feel safe enough or so they know how to share this information that is very vital to the investigation [of a violent crime],” Short said.

One part of the plan Short outlined is using Flint community groups such as Flint Neighborhoods United and Crime Stoppers to connect with neighborhoods and get out requests to residents for information. The plan also involves direct appeals to residents through door-to-door canvases.



Flint Police Vehicle
(Photo by Tom Travis)

“We need them to see that we care, that we need information and that we need your help,” Short said. “In the end, I think it’s important that we, being the community, and we, being law enforcement, are now coming together on a regular basis.”

The next Flint Neighborhoods United monthly Zoom meeting is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. Saturday, April 3. The link to join the meeting can be found on the FNU website at www.flintneighborhoodsunited.org or on the FNU Facebook page.

EVM reporter *Coner Segren* can be reached at csegren@umich.edu

... Schools (Continued from Page 8.)

“Hopefully we can get these scores up,” Ellis-McNeal said.

A recording of the March 17 FCS Board of Education meeting can be accessed on YouTube.

The next meeting of the FCS board is scheduled to begin at 6:30 p.m. April 14. The public can attend the meetings virtually by registering at the district’s website www.flintschools.org.

Questions and/or comments for FCS officials can be submitted to the following internet address: fboe@flintschools.org. Also, the email addresses of various FCS officials can also be found at the district’s website: www.flintschools.org.

EVM reporter *Harold C. Ford* can be reached at hcford1185@gmail.com



Lead/galvanized tainted pipes replaced so far in Flint: 9,912

The numbers are from last month, and while work is continuing, the city provided no new numbers for March. As of then, a total of 16,240 pipes have been discovered to be copper service lines.

... Normal

(Continued from Page 3.)

it seemed that the Flint water crisis was on track to be finally resolved as the year began. Nearly all the pipes had been replaced, the water was testing better, and a legal settlement had been reached over the civil lawsuits. Even the criminal cases were moving forward. But, like the pandemic, we're getting there, but it isn't quite over yet.

As Rowe Professional Services prepared to check and replace the pipes in Flint's last 500 homes, the city council voted against the final \$500,000 payment for the services. It's not clear whether the action was a response to the fact that Rowe was a party to the civil lawsuit over the water crisis or some other factor. But, at the very least, it may delay the final pipe replacement in the city.

The water crisis seemed to reach another final stage as the \$640 million lawsuit against the state of Michigan, the City of Flint, McLaren hospitals, and Rowe Professional Services was approved by Federal District Judge Judith Levy early in the year. The funds are to be allocated to those harmed by the Flint water crisis, particularly those under age 18. However, the settlement was delayed when the attorneys bringing the lawsuits requested \$202 million in legal fees, about 33 percent of the overall water crisis settlement. As a result of the public reaction against the large legal fees, Judge Levy will be reviewing the settlement and may reduce the percent paid to the attorneys. While a 33 percent fee is common for many routine lawsuits, there are legal precedents that would limit attorney fees in what are called "megafund" cases, like Flint's. How long that takes remains to be seen, but it may take longer than expected before any checks are in the hands of

those harmed by the water crisis.

Can we restore trust after the 2020 election?

After one of the most divisive and contentious elections in American history, it seemed that we could put that behind us as we entered 2021. There have been more than 60 unsuccessful legal challenges to the election results, charges of cheating and fraud, and an ex-president who sulked off to Mar-a-Lago and refused to be part of the Biden inauguration on Jan. 20. After all the auditing, checking, and double checking, the 2020 election may have been the most fair and honest in our history, and it looked like we were about to return to "normal" elections in the future.

Not quite. According to some conspiracy theories, some expected Donald Trump to be inaugurated for a second term on March 4; others thought that somehow Pres. Biden was Trump in disguise. Rioters stormed the U.S. Capitol in an attempt to block the vote count. Many refused to accept the election results months after they were made official.

Beyond the QAnon-style conspiracies, more than 40 states have introduced 250 laws that would make it more difficult to vote in the future. A few of them may have been reasonable, such as cleaning up registration rolls, but most were aimed at discouraging voters, (particularly minority and Democratic voters), by limiting absentee or mail-in voting, closing polling places, and restricting early voting. On the national level there is legislation (HR.1) that would protect voting rights. It has passed in the U.S. House but may have a tough time in the Senate.

The 2020 election may be history, but the divisions and distrust

are still there and it looks like we'll be dealing with both for some time before we get back to "normal" elections, where the winners celebrate, and the losers graciously concede and wish their opponents, and the nation, the best.

It will be over

While all these delays might be discouraging, there is at least some good news. While it's true that "It ain't over till it's over," there will be a time when it really will be over. The pandemic will end, the water crisis will be settled, and we will have elections that are trusted and open to all voters.

It may take longer than expected, but in the end, we will be able to get the garden tools out, and put the snow shovel away, at least until next winter.

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



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... Pandemic Village

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her room? Is that a good idea?

As it turns out, yes. Preschool at Pierce has become the pinnacle of our pandemic days.

Our child became the only member of our household responsible for keeping a schedule with people outside of our home. Monday through Thursday, she'd eat breakfast, brush her teeth, get dressed, and report to her room to meet with her teachers and ten other four-year-olds for Zoom preschool.

It was amazing to sit in the next room and listen as her two teachers engaged each child and developed rapport with ten little four-year-olds all sitting in their own homes at dining room tables and on couches. We were amazed at how the initial chaos formed into predictable patterns of greetings, lessons and music.

On her first day of "preschool meetings," she sat at her desk listening to her teachers read *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* to her over Zoom. When asked if she had questions, she said, "Yes. How do noses breathe?" Then she asked if she could read *Chica Chica Boom Boom* to them because it was a gift from Flint Community Schools in our welcome packet. When they asked her to read it out loud, she said, "I need help with the language." Then she taught them to play charades, introduced them to her cat, and counted to 14. She only got to E in the alphabet, though.

By Halloween, she felt close enough to her teachers to complain to them during class that Crossroads Village wasn't handing out her favorite candy, gummy burgers, at their drive-thru trick-or-treat this year. Her sweet teachers picked up on this one child's wish over the internet, went all over town until they found them at Joanne Fabrics, and made our daugh-

ter's Halloween by presenting her with gummy burgers at the school's drive-thru trunk-or-treat that night.

Every morning, the teachers start Zoom preschool by saying good morning to each kid individually. Our outgoing child caught on to that pattern pretty quickly and started also greeting each classmate by name. One morning, her classmate said good morning back to her and then asked her to come over to his house to play.

This was the sort of social interaction we hoped for, but we had to explain that we can't do that right now, because of the virus. We can only talk on Zoom.

The next day, she and her friend got in good trouble for trying to tell each other their moms' phone numbers and set up a Zoom playdate. I guess I should be proud that she correctly gave my phone number to her entire class, twice. At the end of class, they told each other, "Goodbye! I'll miss you!"

This March, we had our first day with the option for students to be in-person, so there now are kids in class with the teachers when our child logs on each morning. These amazing teachers manage to maintain their typical Zoom class routine, with kids in-person and online, all at the same time. The transition was not completely flawless, but it has been quite impressive.

Our daughter was excited and comforted to see kids on the other end of Zoom in the classroom with their teachers. She no longer fears going into school or being in class.

Just a bit longer, we tell her. Just a bit longer until we will be vaccinated. Just a bit longer and we'll finally be together, at last, with all of the new friends we made in our virtual village.

EVM reporter Melodee Mabbitt can be reached at melodee.mabbitt@gmail.com.

City of Flint yard waste collection begins April 5, 2021

Flint resumes yard waste collection the week of April 5, 2021. Yard waste is picked up weekly on residents' regularly scheduled trash collection day through Thanksgiving week.



According to a City of Flint press release, compost is limited to 50 pounds in each brown paper lawn and leaf bag. Bags should be placed at the curb at least 10 feet from regular trash no later than 7 a.m. on pickup day.

Acceptable materials include grass clippings, weeds, leaves, and twigs. Brush up to two inches in diameter and four feet in length is accepted if it is tied in bundles and weighs less than 50 pounds.

The City of Flint also offers free curbside recycling every week. For more information or to report any problems with trash, recycling, or yard waste service call (810) 410-1134. More information can be found the city's sanitation website at www.cityofflint.com/category/public-works/sanitation.

EVM Staff can be reached at eastvillagemagazineflint@gmail.com.



Flint's new Chief Financial Officer Shelbi Frayer hits the ground running as city council considers \$71 million budget

By Tom Travis

Shelbi Frayer has joined the City of Flint Finance department as the new Chief Financial Officer (CFO).

"Frayer comes to Flint with a wealth of experience in municipal finance, previously serving in key leadership roles with the City of Lansing, State of Michigan, and multiple school districts," Flint Mayor Sheldon Neeley explained in a press release.

Frayer, 35, lives with her husband of 13 years, Chris, north of Lansing. The Frayers have two children ages 8 and 11 and a five-year-old tea cup poodle named Mardi. Frayer told EVM that, with school-age children, they have chosen to stay where they live and not move to Flint. Frayer commutes to City Hall saying, "I actually enjoy the drive as it gives me some down time!" Frayer's salary, once approved by city council, will be \$148,000 per year. Frayer is currently serving as Interim Chief Financial Officer.

\$71 million 2021-2022 city budget

Frayer comes to the city just in time to help navigate upcoming negotiations on a proposed \$71 million 2021-2022 city budget. A hearing before the city council on the budget is set for 5:30 p.m. Thursday, March 25.

The proposed budget, and if approved by council the final budget, can be viewed online at www.cityofflint.com and choosing the finance tab. Links are available online at the EVM website as well.

Neeley explained that as Chief Financial Officer, Frayer will oversee all aspects of the City's finances, including preparation and administration of the city's budget and financial reports as well as accounting payroll, grant reporting and purchasing.

"We are so pleased to have Shelbi Frayer join our team. Her leadership, expertise, and eagle-eye toward savings are exactly what the city of Flint needs," Mayor Sheldon Neeley said. "With her extensive knowledge, the city of Flint will tackle its financial challenges and continue to move forward in a positive direction."



"I am excited to be a part of this team that is creating positive change in the city of Flint. I am eager to work with the administration, council, and residents to continue moving this city forward," said Frayer in the press release.

Frayer brings a "wealth of experience"

Before joining the City of Flint team, Frayer served the City of Lansing as its first chief strategy and financial officer.

Frayer also previously

served at the State of Michigan, where she specialized in sustaining financially stressed areas. Her roles included serving as executive director for the Financial Review Commission, director of the Office of School Review and Fiscal Accountability, and director of Local Government (overseeing audits, municipal borrowing, issuance of State bonds and notes). Frayer also led a team that implemented legislation for fiscal solvency in Detroit Public Schools.

Frayer started at the City of Flint in February and is currently serving as interim CFO. The CFO appointment must appear before the city council for consent. In last Monday's council meeting Frayer's appointment was sent back to the Government Operations committee for consideration which will meet April 7.

Frayer has joined every council meeting since she came on as interim CFO answering questions and explaining the City's financial situation to council.

\$71 million proposed budget presented by Mayor Neeley

The mayor presented earlier in March a \$71-million FY (fiscal year) 2021-22 proposed budget to the Flint City Council.

"The balanced budget proposal makes investments in blight cleanup, the City Clerk's office and the Ombudsperson's office while keeping staffing levels and expenses stable," a press release from the mayor's office stated.

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To the House Without Exit



LECTURE

The Sheppy Dog Fund, Dr. Alan Klein, Advisor, presents topics of art, religion, and history through its funded lecture series.

ONLINE @ flintarts.org

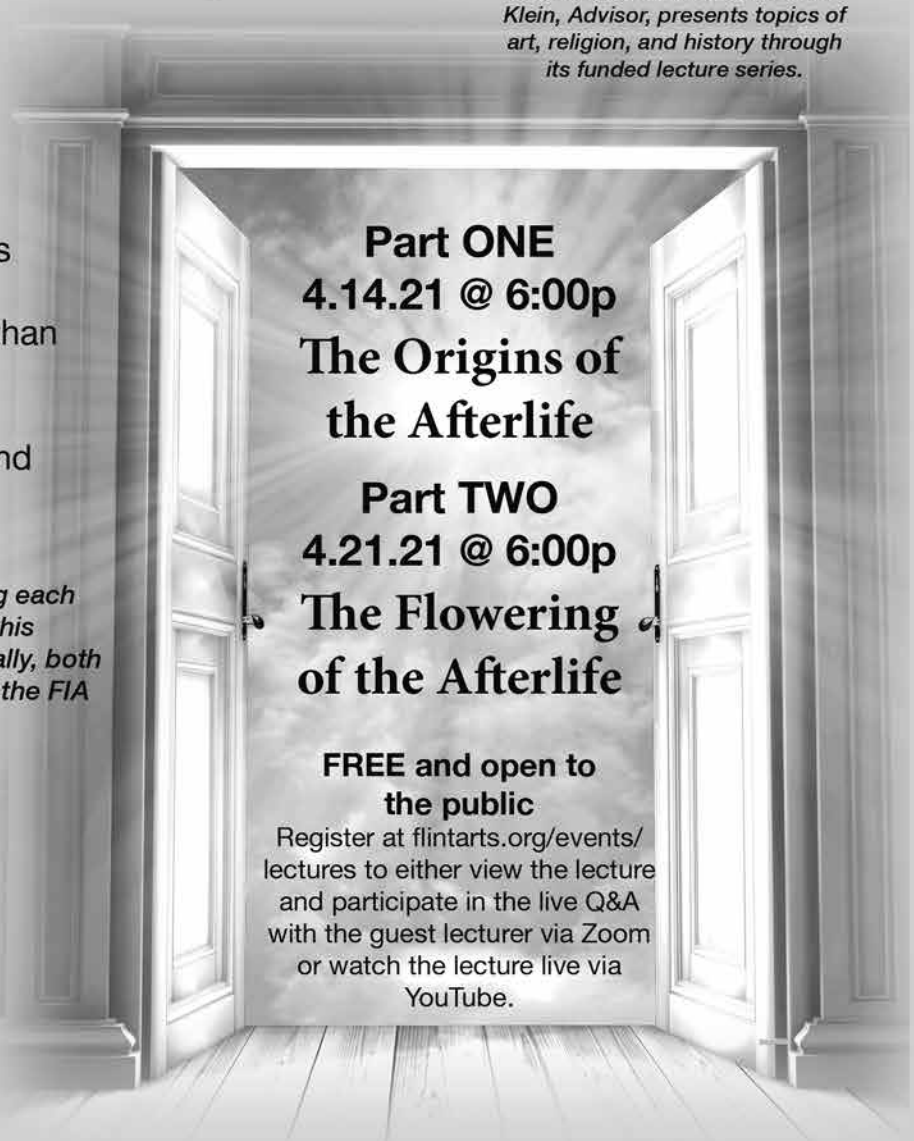
Dr. Justin Sledge
Guest Lecturer

Explore the simultaneously fascinating and arcane dimensions of the afterlife! It's thought that there is no more fundamentally religious idea than the afterlife. While ubiquitous in the western world, this concept is both historically and philosophically complicated: How old is this notion?

Both lectures stand alone, so viewing each is not mandatory for understanding this intriguing religious subject. Additionally, both parts will be available for viewing on the FIA website.



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Part ONE
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Part TWO
4.21.21 @ 6:00p
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UPCOMING ONLINE LECTURES

5.5.21
The Conservation of Paintings: Historical and Technical Discoveries

6.2.21
Notre-Dame of Paris: In the Light of the Fire

7.14.21
The Greatest Bible Ever Written: Kennicott no. 1, La Coruña, Spain, 1476

Village Life

Pierce Preschool connected us to our pandemic village

By Melodee Mabbitt

Before the pandemic hit, I was the kind of parent who relied heavily on my village to help raise our child.

Pre-pandemic, I was lucky to have a flexible schedule with the ability to work remotely. I even got away without needing a babysitter much of the time by going places where our three year old could socialize with other kids while I worked from my laptop.

We had dance class on Thursdays, but the rest of the week we found places to play that are free to Flint kids. I worked from playgrounds and parks in nice weather, and passed endless hours of bad weather inside the children's area at the Sloan or the children's room of the Flint Public Library.

In February of 2020, I panicked during the celebrations of the last day we could play at the library before they closed for renovations. How could I find new ways to occupy her until they opened again in Courtland Center later that spring?

Little did I know that two weeks later, my partner would also be sent home to work for the foreseeable future while the entire village on which we depended also closed up indefinitely.

That spring was hard and lonely. My partner is immune compromised, so we were cautious. We were immersed in the full pandemic experience: isolation, grocery delivery, masks, Zoom holidays, unemployment, death of dear family and friends, grief without funerals. We spent seemingly endless hours try-

ing to maintain schedules and calm for our child, while my partner and I struggled through the COVID-19 fallout in our lives without anyone to relieve us.

Those first few weeks, our daughter watched more kids and dogs walk by our house than we had ever seen in this neighborhood. For the first time ever, we didn't feel safe letting her interact with any of them. She would spot passersby out the window,

your loved one. I offered to help her make them for her grandparents, but she wanted to make one for her friend instead. So we did. When she painted the face, she made the mouth frown.

We arranged porch trades with her grandma, exchanging some artwork for some of grandma's chicken nuggets or more art supplies, sending our love through the screen door.

I drove her past the places we missed; Meijer, downtown Flint, her dad's old work and its pool, and the torn-up library. One day on a drive, she yelled, "Go away, virus!" the way one of her favorite books yells, "Go away, big green monster!" So, I encouraged that spirit and we rode for a while singing, "Go away, virus!" I like to think we did some good toward the global effort.

"Tell me what we did before the virus," she said one day. Then we started telling stories about favorite places we'd been, what we did there, and

who was there with us. She is comforted by us repeating the same stories of Life Before The Virus.

Summer weather offered some reprieve as we were able to spend time outside with masked family and friends, but as fall set in we stared into the coming cold weather with more than a little chill.

That's when Flint Community Schools called and said we qualified for preschool at Pierce because we've lived here through the water crisis.

Send our child to optional preschool in the middle of a pandemic? Learn for the first time from an iPad in

(Continued on Page 13)



Pierce Patriot on her first day of virtual preschool through Pierce Elementary School
(Photo by Melodee Mabbitt)

run to the door to shout greetings and wave, only satisfied once they saw her and responded. She's madly in love with our neighbors and cried every couple of days when she'd see them outside and realized she couldn't go within six feet of them.

One day in April, I asked if she wanted anything else after lunch, and she said, "Yeah, a friend!" Then she cried a little.

Drawing and painting occupied much of our time. I found a pandemic craft idea where you trace your kid's silhouette onto paper, cut it out in the shape of "a hug," and mail it to