

East Village Magazine

December/January 2021-22



Photograph By

Edwin D. Coates

DEXEL BUILDING

The Tom Sumner Program

Produced live weekdays from 9 to noon


Ways to listen...

★ **STREAM IT ON-LINE:**
www.tomsumnerprogram.com
 (810) 339-8255 (TALK)

★ **ON THE RADIO:**
 WFOV 92.1 FM in Flint

★ **ARCHIVED:**
 Episodes & Podcasts





**Books
Vinyl
Cafe**

Tu-Th: 11am-7pm
 Fr-Sa: 10am-6pm
 Su-Mo: Closed

Ph.: 810-407-6402
620 W. Court St. Downtown Flint

VERN'S COLLISION INC.

Free Loaners

- Unibody • Frame
- Paint Specialists • Glass
- State-certified Mechanics

More than 40 years
 at the same
 location.

(810) 232-6751
 2409 Davison Rd.



*Healthy Home
Cooking!*

810-235-1968
 Flint Farmers' Market



Located inside the Flint Farmers' Market



Grant Hamady



Mark Fisher
*Your College Cultural
 Realtor*

Buying or Selling?
 I'm here to help!

810-285-8624
markfishersells.com

4265 E. Court Street, Burton MI 48509




FREE Home
 Warranty

Flint's Resident Realtor
*The Name Trusted in
 More Neighborhoods*

(810) 234-1234
www.RyanEashoo.com



OCTOBER 2, 2021 – JANUARY 2, 2022

SLOAN MUSEUM AT COURTLAND


HOURS
 Tues.-Sat.: 10:00 AM-5:00 PM
 Sun.: 12:00-5:00 PM
 Closed Mondays

Spin the wheel and your adventure is real!
 Spider webs, jungle vines, swinging bars
 and more await you in this a-maze-ing
 Mission Safari adventure that's both
 educational and fun.

Mission Safari is created by Minotaur Mazes, a company specializing in interactive maze exhibits. Mission Safari is funded in part by the Genesee County Arts Education and Cultural Enrichment Millage. Your tax dollars are at work.

Visit SloanLongway.org/MissionSafari

4190 E. Court St. Burton, MI 48509 | 810-237-3450



107 W. Kearsley St.
 Downtown Flint
 Open Monday-Saturday
[Facebook.com/consolidatedbarbershop](https://www.facebook.com/consolidatedbarbershop)

Founder Gary P. Custer

Managing Editor Tom Travis
Consulting Editor Jan Worth-Nelson
Consulting Editor Ted Nelson
Reporters Harold C. Ford
Madeleine Graham
Patsy Isenberg
Melodee Mabbitt
Coner Segren
Columnist Paul Rozycki
Photographer Edwin D. Custer

Distribution Staff

Director: Edwin D. Custer. **Staff:** Sue Bailey, Kim Bary, Jacob Blumner, Connor Coyne & Ruby Coyne, Casey Custer, Caroline Fechik, Christine & Patrick Figgins, Marabeth Foreman, Charlie & Linda & Patrick & Terrance & Christan & Jillianne Goldsberry, Patsy Isenberg, Carol Larzelere Kellermann, Stephen Kellermann, Jo Larzelere, Mary LeRoy, James & Lillian & Livia Londrigan, Alan & Julie Lynch, Ron & Mary Meeker, Robert & Nancy Meszko, Ted Nelson, Dave & Becky Pettengill, Julian Rodriguez, Paul Rozycki, Mike Spleet, Kim & Ronan & Jude Streby, Holly West, and Karen Wilkinson.

Board of Trustees

- FaLessia Booker • Edwin D. Custer
- Alec Gibbs • Paul Rozycki
- Jan Worth-Nelson

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

Website:
eastvillagemagazine.org

E-mail:
eastvillagemagazineflint@gmail.com

Layout by Patsy Isenberg. Printing by Riegle Press Inc., 1282 N. Gale Rd., Davison, Mich. 48423.

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

Commentary
Looking back and looking ahead — will 2022 be better than 2021?

By Paul Rozycki

Looking back

This past year was supposed to be the year when we put the COVID pandemic, the 2020 election, and the turmoil in the Flint City Council behind us. So far only one of those three things might be true, and even that remains to be seen.

The Jan. 6 insurrection and the inauguration

After the 2020 election, the year began with traditional plans for the formal certification and inauguration of the new president, as has happened for over 200 years.

But the **Jan. 6 insurrection** and attack on the U.S. Capitol set the stage for the most unusual inauguration in our history. For the first time, a losing presidential candidate refused to concede, and spent much of the year claiming the election was stolen from him. Because of the pandemic, the inauguration was socially distanced, and many traditional events were virtual.



President-elect Joe Biden during a 2019 campaign stop at Berston Field House
 (Photo by Paul Rozycki)

COVID and its variants

At the beginning of the year, with the arrival of the COVID vaccine, there were hopes that the pandemic would be history, and that we could return to something

like normal by the summer. We thought July 4 would be the time we could put COVID behind us. In spite of the resistance of some to get vaccinated, that seemed like a realistic plan.



Nurse Jackie Morris administers vaccine to Juliette Hardwick on her porch
 (Photo by Tom Travis)

Then along came the delta variant, which led to another pandemic spike in the fall, as students went back to school, and many stopped wearing masks in public gatherings. By the end of the year, hospitalizations and infections returned to their peak numbers, and more people died in 2021 than in 2020. The emergence of the omicron variant in November made the future look even more challenging and worrisome.

The Flint City Council

The Flint City Council, which was the center of conflict and contention for most of the year, saw a dramatic change as the voters elected six new members in November. Eric Mays, who had been as the center of much of the earlier conflict, was elected council president and, to the surprise of many, the first few meetings were more civil and effective than expected. Time will tell if that pattern continues.

(Continued on Page 16.)



Photo of the Month: Early winter blankets crab apples

(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

Education Beat

Pontiac School District officials offer fiscal recovery strategies with Flint Board of Education

“It doesn’t look good when you’re divided ... it makes you look dysfunctional.”

–Shaquana Davis-Smith, treasurer, Pontiac Board of Education

“We’re not going to present a united front as if everything is OK, because it’s not OK.”

–Laura MacIntyre, treasurer, Flint Board of Education

By Harold C. Ford

At a special meeting of the Flint Board of Education (FBOE) Nov. 16, five Pontiac School District (PSD) officials shared their remarkable story of financial recovery with FBOE members. In the past decade, PSD turned a \$52 million debt into a \$7.9 million surplus.

A slide presentation titled “Best Practices: Lessons Learned, Steps Taken to Financial Solvency” stimulated conversation in the two and a half hour meeting not just about the importance of data-driven fiscal strategies but also eventually about effective partnerships and how to engender trust.

At the start of the last decade, PSD officials found themselves in an existential predicament very similar to that confronting FBOE members at present: financial instability; declining student enrollment; a low rate of high school graduation; multidirectional mistrust; and pressure from the State of Michigan to make things better.

Resolving to make improvements, PSD officials undertook affirmative steps that yielded measurable progress:

- In the past decade, PSD turned a crushing \$52 million debt into, at present, a \$7.9 million fund surplus – the first time in 20 years PSD has

reported a positive fund balance.

- A \$147 million bond proposal was passed by Pontiac voters in March 2020 on a third attempt after board members, school officials, and others went into the neighborhoods on a weekly basis to drum up support.
- PSD has welcomed and cultivated relationships with more than 50 community partners.
- Pontiac High School has raised its graduation rate from 59 per cent in 2014 to 76 per cent in 2019.
- The district’s curriculum has been reshaped to include preparation for careers that do not require a four-year college degree. One wing of a

(Continued on Page 5.)

Schools ...

(Continued from Page 4.)

PSD school building puts students on a “pathway” to skilled occupations such as nursing.

- PSD was released from its consent agreement with the state, a status currently existing between the state and Flint Community Schools (FCS).
- **Most important, perhaps, is the progress PSD made on trust issues in all directions.**

PSD officials at the Nov. 16 meeting included: Kelley Williams, Pontiac’s superintendent for the past nine years; Gill Garrett, board of education president; Kenyada Bowman, board vice president; Shaquana Davis-Smith, board treasurer; and William Carrington, trustee, a product of Flint schools.



William Carrington, PSB board trustee
Photo source: PSD website

FBOE members present included: Carol McIntosh, president; Joyce Ellis-McNeal, secretary; Laura MacIntyre, treasurer; Adrian Walker, assistant secretary/treasurer; and trustees Chris Del Morone and Allen Gilbert.

Danielle Green, board vice president, was absent. Kevelin Jones, interim superintendent, sat in the audience. (Jones was appointed superintendent of Flint Community Schools (FCS) at the FBOE’s regular meeting the next night.)

Jessica Thomas, administrator of the Michigan Department of Treasury, began the meeting by explaining, “Our goal is to analyze the fiscal health of school districts across

the state ... and (provide) technical support, tools, resources, and data.” After few comments, Thomas yielded the remainder of the time for the PSD presentation and subsequent discussion.

Muddled financial picture

FCS is under pressure from state government, specifically the Department of Treasury, to achieve financial solvency. At least two amended Enhanced Deficit Elimination Plans (EDEPs) were sent to Treasury from the district in calendar year 2020.

EDEPs seek to achieve balanced annual budgets and eliminate long-standing debt.

FCS has been burdened with substantial debt for nearly a decade, largely the result of an approximate \$20 million loan taken out by the district in 2014. Declining student population and resultant loss of state aid have also contributed to the district’s challenging financial picture.

As reported by *East Village Magazine* in June 2020, Carrie Sekelsky, former FCS executive director of finance, projected a fund balance deficit at the end of fiscal years 2020 and 2021 of nearly \$13 million.

Much has happened in the past two calendar years to muddy the financial picture of FCS:

- Flint voters approved a fiscal stability bond proposal in March 2020 allowing the district to restructure 4 mills for the purpose of more quickly paying off the district’s debt.
- FCS student enrollment has declined to about 3,000 students signaling a commensurate declination in state aid.
- The state aid formula, based on student enrollment, was recently increased to a baseline per-student amount of \$8,700.
- The new Michigan school budget includes \$135 million to districts, like Flint, with a year-round or “bal-

anced calendar.” The new budget also includes “new teacher” stipends of up to \$1,500; FCS has plenty of new teachers and is looking to hire more.

- FCS expects an infusion of cash in three waves from the Federal Government in the form of ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) or COVID-19 Relief funds.
- Special education programs in Flint and neighboring school districts will receive about \$9 million as a result of lawsuit settlements related to the Flint water crisis.
- FCS officials have likely come to the realization that abandoned school buildings – most requiring millions of dollars in upgrades – are not likely to be a “goldmine” for the district, as once predicted by board treasurer MacIntyre.



Lowell Junior High, no longer in operation, now shuttered
(Photo by Tom Travis)

- Infrastructure challenges in old buildings that currently house FCS students continue to drain money from the FCS budget. Hot buildings served by outdated HVAC (heating, ventilation air conditioning) systems closed schools for several days in August. Black mold remediation is underway at Doyle/Ryder and bat removal at Potter.
- An offer by the Flint-based C.S. Mott Foundation to help renovate or rebuild FCS school buildings may only be in the beginning discussion phase.

FCS’s financial picture is muddled such that it brought back Sekelsky on a part-time basis to help clarify the district’s financial state.

(Continued on Page 6.)

Schools ...

(Continued from Page 5.)

Prior to her departure from FCS in November 2020, Sekelsky led an in-house effort that made progress toward fiscal clarity, according to a report by the auditing firm Plante Moran.

Treasury Department report is not muddled

A report by the Michigan Department of Treasury was very clear about FCS finances as of Sept 1, 2020. It showed an audited fiscal year 2019 fund balance of -\$3,349,028.

Flint was one of 10 districts in the state listed as “Current EDEP Districts.”

The Treasury report included the following statement:

“... School District of the City of Flint is projecting a positive general fund balance for FY2019-20 due to a fiscal stability bond and additional ESSER funding, however, the District projects to remain in deficit until FY2035-36.”



Sharing stories

“We are here to share our stories,” said PSD’s Williams. “This is a partnership.”

Garrett, a former police officer, said he was young and naïve and resisted input from Michigan government about a decade ago.

“Who gonna tell me about Pontiac?” recollected Garrett rhetorically. “I’ve been in Pontiac all my life!”

“Well, ‘all your life’ ain’t saving these students,” Garrett eventually concluded.

Trust essential

Trust was a theme throughout the meeting. Pontiac officials said trust was a scarce commodity at the start of their EDEP process.

“We did not trust Treasury initially ... the Michigan Department of Education, and we did not trust our ISD (Oakland County Intermediate School District), Williams admitted. “Our guards were up.”

Trust issues extended to and through and among PSD administrators, teachers, support staff, and district partners, recollected Williams. “It was not easy getting all of them to the table because there were trust issues.”

Gaining **trust** from the larger community was particularly daunting, Williams recalled. “Building that trust is not an overnight process ... We had to show them we were going to be good shepherds.”

Williams and other members of the PSD team said they built trust through “courageous conversations” and “build(ing) relationships” at community meetings held on a weekly basis for five years. “It took all of us to do this.”

Communication vital

PSD officials declared that poor communication, in all directions, also handicapped their school district at the start of the EDEP process.

There existed in 2012, “a lack of effective communication among the board and administration,” Williams recalled.

“Some board members knew what was going on and some did not ... information was held in silo(s).”

“It is a board of eight (counting the superintendent),” Carrington said. He warned of consequences “if the school board does not have an effective communication with the

superintendent.”

“If your board is not communicating with the superintendent, it will not work,” Garrett agreed. “I needed to learn how to communicate from the top all the way down to the bottom.”

Those comments by PSD officials prompted Flint board president McIntosh to admit, “My board, they don’t trust nobody, not even me.”

Student-centered, data-driven

Williams urged “prioritization of student achievement” as a guiding principle for FCS officials. “What can be resolved is how you’re going to educate your children.”

Williams said PSD educators committed to the notion, “All Pontiac students will significantly increase scores on standardized achievement tests.” Toward that end, pillars were built around academics, attendance,



Kelley Williams, PSD Superintendent

Photo source: PSD website

and student/building climate.

Carrington admitted that safety was the number one issue that drove students to transfer to charter schools.

Williams said PSD educators focused on both non-academic and academic needs of students. “You want to find programs that (distinguish) you from other surrounding districts.” Toward that end, PSD revamped the wing of one of its buildings to provide curricula for careers that do not require a four-year degree.

Dual enrollment in college and

(Continued on Page 8.)

THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

For this combined December and January issue, a selection of events available to our readers is highlighted — beginning after our publication date of Dec. 16. It is not an exhaustive list, rather a sampling of opportunities in the city. To submit events for our February issue, email info about your event to pisenber@gmail.com by Jan. 10.

Buckham Gallery

Dec. 10-Jan. 8

Horizons, Emily Legleitner

Ritual: 2021 Indexing

Schizophrenia, Diane Zeeu

Seeking Solace, Rebecca Zeiss

Screen yourself for COVID-19 symptoms and reschedule your visit if necessary.

Buckham Gallery

121 W. 2nd St., Flint

For more info visit

buckhamgallery.org

or call 810-239-6233

Christmas at Crossroads

Holiday Magic 2021

Dec. 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 21, and 22.

4-9 p.m.

Many holiday activities for the whole family including light displays, shopping, Santa, Dinner, Huckleberry Train rides and craft demonstrations

Crossroads Village

6140 Bray Rd., Flint

Visit: geneseecountyparks.org/crossroads-village#

for the various ticket

packages.

Cosmic Christmas

Now-Jan. 2.

each day except Mondays.

This light show is set to music with visuals of Christmas.

Longway Planetarium

1310 E. Kearsley St., Flint

Visit sloanlongway.org/longway-planetarium/

for ticket info

and choice of

performances.

Michigan Water Color Society

Dec. 10-24 and Jan. 3-7,

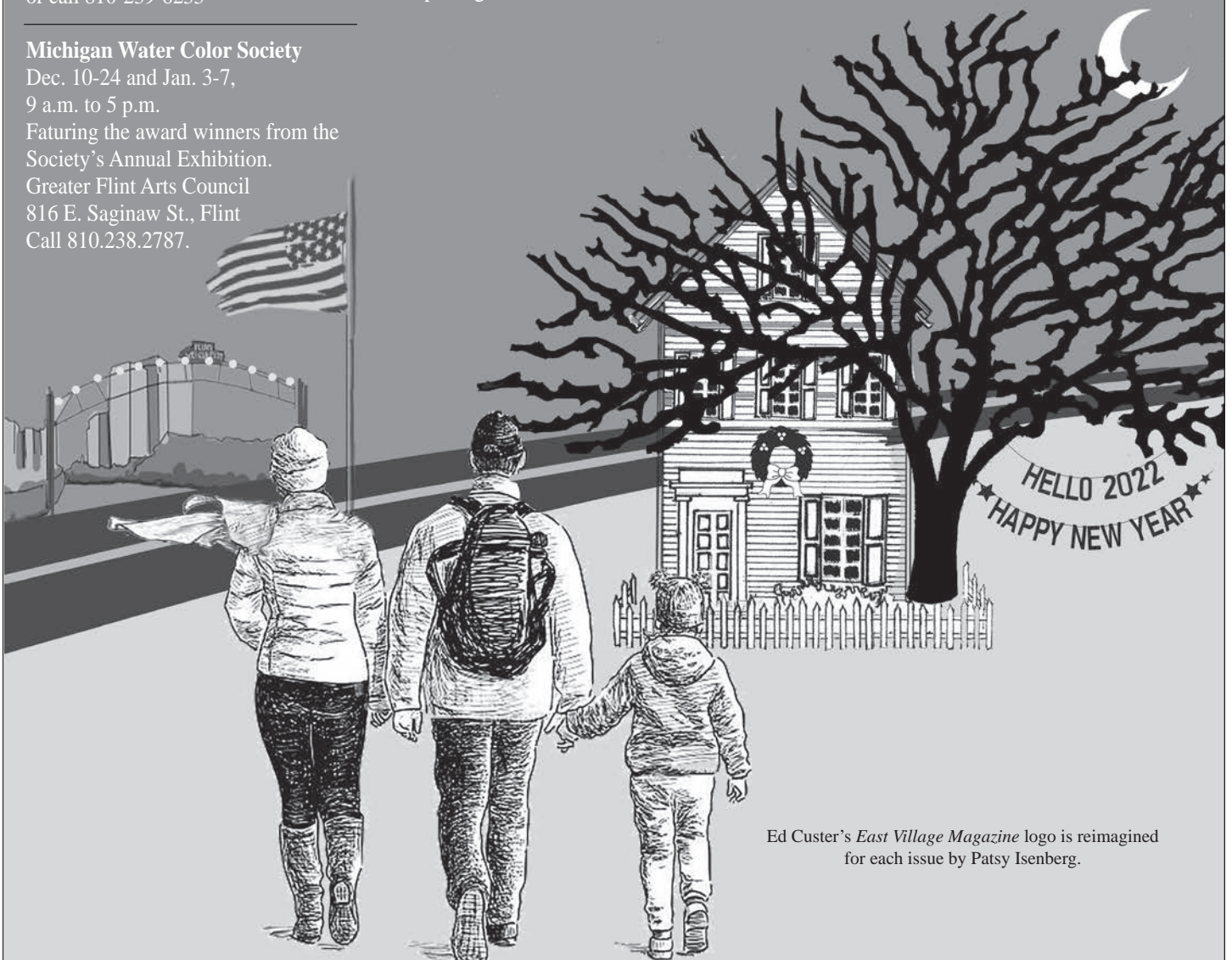
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Featuring the award winners from the Society's Annual Exhibition.

Greater Flint Arts Council

816 E. Saginaw St., Flint

Call 810.238.2787.



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

Schools ...

(Continued from Page 5.)

high school classes was initiated.

PSD officials minimized their differences and pooled their energies to gain passage of a \$147 million bond proposal to, in part, address the infrastructure needs of the district.

“Buildings were terrible,” Williams admitted. “The students didn’t really have a positive environment for learning,” Carrington added.

“Zen spaces” were created that addressed “the whole child,” Bowman said.

“The goal of the board of education is to make sure that we produce a product (such) that our kids ... have an opportunity to live a life that they so choose,” asserted Garrett,

Williams emphasized that the district is guided by “data-driven decisions.”

Partners help

Williams said PSD committed to enlist partners “that would help us get to where we (needed) to be.” She declared, “We would not have been able to make it without our partners because we did not have the money.”

Varied partnerships included Amazon, General Motors, the State of Michigan, Oakland Schools ISD, a local auto dealership, and others.

“They (partners) came in and wanted to help in the areas we needed help in,” recalled Williams. “They were soldiers.”

Parting comments

“You’re in such a beautiful position,” Williams said. “The

storm has cleared away a lot of things and all you have to do is come up with a plan. Get that EDEP done. Get those ESSER dollars spent.”

“Use this as an opportunity to help change your culture,” Garrett advised, “to help guide who you are. We’re not getting this moment back.”

Echoing the words of a former president, Garrett concluded: “Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change we seek.”

A recording of the PSD-FBOE meeting can be accessed at YouTube.

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

WHY DO YOU SERVE WITH AMERICORPS?

“I found the perfect opportunity to enrich myself and help others.”

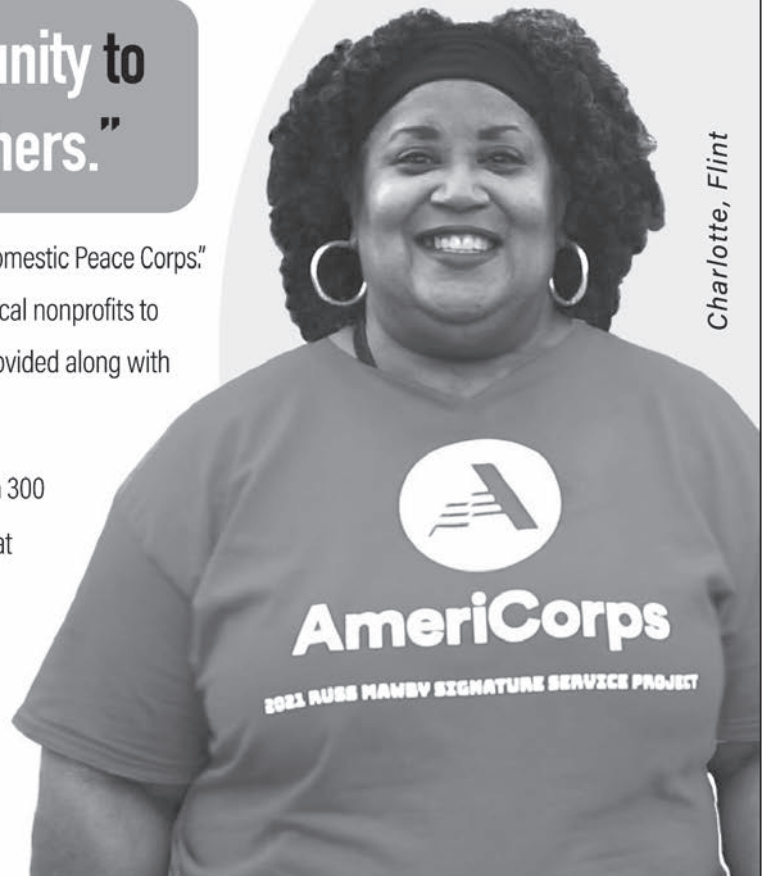
AmeriCorps is a national service program often referred to as the “Domestic Peace Corps.” Through AmeriCorps, you can make a difference by working with local nonprofits to tackle our area’s most pressing challenges. A living allowance is provided along with an education award that can be used for college.

Dedicate your time and talents to making a difference — along with 300 others in Genesee County with AmeriCorps. Learn more and apply at unitedwaygenesee.com/serve-now.



AmeriCorps

#ServeFlint



Charlotte, Flint

Community collaborates, rallies to restore Pierce Park

By Jan Worth-Nelson

An 80-acre park in Flint which had been overrun by neglect, arson and invasive species is getting a big dose of love and hoped-for restoration from a partnership between the College Cultural Neighborhood Association (CCNA), the Genesee Conservation District (GCD) and the City of Flint.

Pierce Park, owned by the city since the early 1960s, lies between I-69, Dort Highway, Gilkey Creek, and a residential swathe on the south side of the College Cultural Neighborhood.

According to a detailed five-year strategic plan produced by the collaborative team, three primary areas of focus for the project are habitats restoration, a one-and-a-half-acre dog park, and creation of an energy efficient building that could be used by the CCNA, the GCD, and other community partners. That would mean removing invasive species, expanding and maintaining walking and jogging trails, and, as the plan states, implementing “conservation practices to improve ecological health of the park’s natural assets: forest, meadow and creek.”

Named after the family that donated the land to the city, Pierce Park originally was an 18-hole public golf course which opened in 1964. It was designed by Arnold Trusdale and included a clubhouse. For a time, there was a golf pro on staff. A lawn bowling course adjoined the clubhouse and there were several tennis courts on the west side of the parking lot.

According to Gary Fisher from the Genesee County Histori-

cal Society, John Pierce was one of the developers of the Capitol Theater. He was a real estate mogul of the time who developed the College/Cultural neighborhood south of Court as well as Woodcroft Estates south of Miller Road.

Pierce Street and Pierce Elementary also were named for the family.



GCD Administrator Angela Warren surveying Pierce Park

(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

The park land has experienced hard times. Facing financial stresses, the city closed the golf course in 2011 and the property has sat mostly untended for ten years, the clubhouse gradually deteriorating and covered with graffiti. A series of proposals for the building emerged but nothing ever came of them.

Then in September 2020, arsonists torched the building, burning it to the ground. The scorched ruins remained fenced and untouched for eight months during the pandemic; finally demolition brought down the building’s remaining structure, including its distinctive stone

pillars. On thistle-choked hillocks, several hole markers poke up from the weeds, and golf balls can still be found in the turf and saddles of downed trees.

CCNA president Mike Keeler, a retired GM shopworker, UAW activist, and avid horticulturalist, had long recognized the park’s surviving assets, and saw opportunity in the overgrown parcel left behind.

So Keeler and his wife Sherry Hayden, the CCNA vice president, approached Angela Warren, administrator of the Conservation District, and she agreed the possibilities were promising. Together, along with a steering committee of CCNA residents and GCD staff, they worked out the five-year plan which kicked off in 2021-22 to transform the park, along with the sections of Gilkey Creek that wind around it, into a nature preserve that would restore the native ecosystem and open up the space to the community for recreation and education.

The GCD, which will be the fiduciary for the park project, is an entity of state government — one of 75 such conservation districts in the state.

The project has thus far been so positive in its early stages. Its partners say they hope it might provide a template for similar projects in city parks that could be used by others.

The formal mission statement for the five-year plan is “to improve the ecological health, education and recreation opportunities for the com-

(Continued on Page 10.)

Pierce Park ...

(Continued from Page 9.)

munity through responsible planning and natural resource management of Pierce Park.”

Many factors still need to come



Piles of buckthorn
(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

together to realize that mission for the park – funding being one essential, since all the mowing and other work so far have been covered out of the personal pockets of volunteers – but all those involved communicate delight at both the possibilities of the park and the pleasures of the collaborative effort.

But in the meantime, Keeler has nightmares about buckthorn bushes, not to mention Canadian thistles.

Those two invasive species are among the tough, resistant challenges facing the Pierce Park group.

In the years after the golf course closed, with only intermittent mowing, the original turf grew unimpeded into a thick carpet. The buckthorn, originally planted as landscaping around the perimeters of the course, spread by birds eating and dropping its berries, and overtook wide sections of the core of the property.

Energetic volunteers have been chopping away at the buckthorn, putting it into heaps and trying to figure out how to dispose of it. Keeler and CCN neighbor Larry Anderson have spent many days on the project, using bush hog cutters borrowed from Herb Pitts’ tool shed at the Neighborhood Engagement Hub.

As some of the thick buck-

thorn was cleared, other species became visible, to the delight of Keeler and Angela Warren, taking stock of the property in an October tour of the site with *EVM*.

“My jaw dropped when I saw the beautiful trees we had on the property,” Warren said.

There is a grove of walnut trees near Dort Highway; an immense chinkapin oak that takes three people to encircle it; there are numerous Austrian pines, white oaks, a bitternut hickory, a shagbark hickory, American lindens, a sycamore, a sugar maple.

Additionally, as Mother Nature



Chinkapin Oak on the south side of the park

(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

gradually reclaimed the land, wildlife has flourished, including deer, foxes, at least one coyote, rabbits, voles, hawks, screech owls, a multitude of other birds, and monarch butterflies, in the small patches of milkweed the buckthorn didn’t take over.

A significant step forward for the park team came with an August letter of agreement from the city’s Department of Planning and Development.

It authorizes the two partners – the CCNA and the GCD – to embark on their proposed series of ecological activities, including surveying and mapping the parcel; removing invasive species; planting trees, native meadow and other plants; engaging with the community through meetings, surveys and other activities; and to continue to design, plan, and develop their five-year plan.

While all the funds to support

the work haven’t been secured – requests are pending – some work in the first year has been accomplished. A pavilion remaining on the property got a new \$9,000 roof from a Habitat Flint BRAND grant, fencing is set to be installed pending grant support, species inventories are underway, and a design for a pollinator meadow is in the works.

And there is a 150-square-foot garden, originally called the Sanctuary Art Park, remaining that has been in process for several years which CCN resident and steering committee member Rebecca Pettengill hopes to continue developing.

In the letter of agreement, Suzanne Wilcox, director of the Department of Planning and Development, said her department is “especially interested in the success and collaborative nature of this work,” and indicated the city additionally would be interested in outreach activities and assisting in any other capacity that’s needed.

Even during the years of



The walking trail on the north side of the park along Gilkey Creek

(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

neglect, the acreage has attracted its neighbors. A trail around the perimeter has been regularly mowed by volunteers, and anybody walking through the park from Cadet on the east side to Brookside and Vernon on the north by Gilkey Creek is bound to see other neighbors, many with their dogs.

The steering committee for the project includes Warren, Keeler,

(Continued on Page 11.)

Pierce Park ...

(Continued from Page 10.)

Hayden, along with Micah Hutchison, a CCNA resident, GCD staff member, and a master gardener. Also in the group are Realtor Mark Fisher, and representing the City, Roy Lash, Parks and Recreation Director.

Additional volunteers include Robert Miner, Danielle Neiswender, Larry Anderson, Becky Pettengill, and Herb Pitts from the Neighborhood Engagement Hub tool shed.

The park team will be looking for additional support from the community in the coming months into next spring, Keeler said. There is more brush to clear, trees to plant, and donations sought to pay for mowing.

One neighbor who's got a long and affectionate connection to the land is Don Potter, 71, who grew up on Hills Street. He remembers a time when the woods that became Pierce Park were a wild place to explore, build forts, sneak cigarettes, and hunt pheasants and rabbits with his bow and arrow.

"It was great," recalls Potter,



Evidence of the golf course: The Sixth Hole marker

(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

who now lives on Blanchard just a few blocks from his childhood home. "It was wild – it was our own private woods."

In the early 60s, of course,

that changed when the golf course came in.

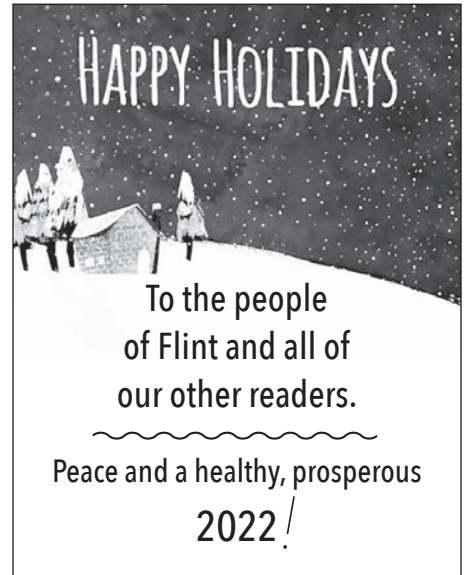
The kids were against it, recalled Potter, who recently retired from the music promotion company Wolverine Productions. He's got deep roots in the neighborhood. His father James owned Potter and Gage Insurance and was on the parks board back in the day — and his grandfather Ernest was president of Citizens Bank.

And Potter hopes the park gets a new lease on life. "It sounds great," he said when considering the five-year plan.

"If we can pull this off, it might be a blueprint of how other parks can work with neighborhoods to do something similar," Keeler said.

In the meantime, Potter might just get a little of that wild space back.

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



St. Paul's Episcopal Church
MUSIC IN THE HEART
OF THE CITY

JANUARY CONCERT

Sunday, Jan. 30, 4:00pm

Beautiful Piano Music

Presented by
Dr. Carl Angelo

Director of Music and Fine Arts
Organist at First Presbyterian
Church of Flint

FREE TO THE PUBLIC

"It is suggested that all patrons wear a mask."

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
711 South Saginaw Street
Flint, Michigan 48502
810-234-8637

Artistic Director: Holly Richardson

Unclassified Ads

Apartment for Lease

(1,200 sq. ft.) A unique, large, one-story space for a two-bedroom apartment. It's on E. Second St. in historic East Village. Walk 5 minutes or less to UM-Flint, Downtown, MCC, Library, Cultural Center, Farmers' Market, horticultural gardens, three parks, bike paths, with quick-expressway access, laundry, and off-street and gated parking. Can be partially furnished. No pets. \$675 per month includes water. References and credit check requested.

E-mail ecuster@sbcglobal.net or write:

Apartment
Box 24
502 Crapo St.
Flint MI 48503.

Studio Apartment for Rent

Clean, partially furnished. All bills paid except electricity. Walking distance from Mott C.C. and U of M-Flint.

Call:

810-625-3924.

Please leave a message.

Hostile Terrain 94 art exhibit displayed at Farmers' Market brings awareness to more than 3,200 immigrant deaths at U.S.-Mexico border

By Tom Travis

Hostile Terrain 94 is an art exhibit created by UCLA anthropologist Jason De Leon the exhibit aims to raise awareness about the realities of the U.S-Mexico border, focusing on the deaths that have been happening almost daily since 1994 as a direct result of the Border Patrol policy known as "Prevention Through Deterrence" (PTD), described in materials at the art exhibit.

The art exhibit, Hostile Terrain 94, was on display during November at Flint Farmer's Market but can still be viewed online at this link: www.hostile-terrain-flint.tk.

Public invited to "participate" in the Hostile Terrain 94 art exhibit

It is described as "participatory" in that the public can touch and read the names on the exhibit. Also, volunteers can participate by hand-writing a toe-tag themselves with the information of the deceased person that will be placed on the display board.

The public is invited to participate through the physical act of writing out the names and information for the dead invites participants to reflect, witness and stand in solidarity with those who have lost their lives in search of a better one. Several toe-tags on the display have QR codes that connect to online content regarding migrant issues along the southern U.S. border.

UM-Flint Anthropology students and professors assist in Hostile Terrain 94 exhibit

UM-Flint Anthropology professor Daniel Birchok explains that the area of the U.S./Mexico border

displayed in the exhibit is in the Sonoran Desert, in Arizona, south and south west of Phoenix and Tucson near the city of Nogales, Mexico.

The art exhibit is a series of red pins with a toe-tag hanging from each pin displayed on a 16-foot board with the cities of Phoenix, AZ and Tucson, AZ on it as well as a thick black line representing the U.S./Mexico border.

The toe-tag has the name of the person along with the precise longitude and latitude where the remains of the deceased immigrant were found. Orange colored toe-tags mark unidentified remains and manila colored toe-tags mark an identified person's remains.

the work of De Leon. De Leon does much of his anthropology work in this area of Arizona.

Birchok explains that this art exhibit gives awareness to "failed" U.S. Immigration policy, explaining, "This becomes a matter of a U.S. federal policy question. Back in the mid-1990s border patrol began to emphasize fortifying the border in urban areas to push people from crossing the border in the desert in hopes that the hostile terrain would prevent people from crossing. Instead it resulted in all this death. The policy wasn't successful," explained Birchok.

UM-Flint Associate Anthropology Professor Jennifer Alvey added, "Border patrol policy increased surveillance in control of the border in urban areas to kind of thwart immigrants from trying to cross. But what happened was that [the immigrants] didn't stop coming but they were forced into seemingly unpatrolled areas in this desert. "Policy makers thought because of the hostile terrain it would make the immigrants not want to come. But instead immigrants crossed there in large numbers, as before, but they died because of the conditions." Alvey added, "Surveillance techniques have gotten more sophisticated which kind of intensifies people's desire to travel through the desert rather than other areas. But because of U.S. policy immigrants are still being funneled through the desert."

Both Birchok and Alvey commented that a vast majority of the 3,200 markers representing immi-

Both Birchok and Alvey commented that a vast majority of the 3,200 markers representing immi-

(Continued on Page 14.)



Students and Professors volunteer to pin toe-tags onto the 16-foot art exhibit displayed in November

(Photo by Tom Travis)

There are over 3,200 toe-tags on the Hostile Terrain 94 art exhibit representing those remains of people who have died in this area since "roughly the mid-90s", explained Birchok. The 3,200 number could easily be "doubled" because bodies decompose so quickly in the desert, according to Birchok in referencing

“Please don’t divide our neighborhood up,” residents plead about redrawn Flint ward boundary maps

By Tom Travis

“Please don’t divide our neighborhood up. We are a strong neighborhood. Please don’t do it,” pleaded Seventh Ward and College-Cultural Neighborhood resident Chris Gardner. She was one of about 10 residents, mostly from the Seventh Ward College Cultural Neighborhood, who gathered Wednesday at Flint City Hall for an Elections Commission meeting to discuss the proposed redrawn ward map.

EVM previously reported that the Flint city council and community members have 90 days to discuss and review the city’s redrawn ward boundaries, according to City Attorney Angela Wheeler. The city council will give final approval to the new boundaries.

The city’s nine wards are being redrawn based on new Census 2020 data and as required by the city’s charter. At a Nov. 18 special city council meeting held in the Dome behind city hall, the public and city council members had an initial opportunity to view the map of the proposed redrawn ward boundaries and offer their input. City Attorney Angela Wheeler informed the council due to the pandemic, the redrawing had been delayed.

The public can share their comments and suggestions by mail or email. Comments can be mailed to City Clerk Inez Brown, Second Floor, 1101 South Saginaw Street, Flint MI 48502 or emailed to ibrown@cityofflint.com. No future meetings to cover this issue have been announced at this time.

9,028 is the target population for redrawn ward boundaries

Ken Koleda, director of the Genesee County Geographic Information System (GIS), has led the process of calculating and redrawing the ward boundaries based on 2020 Census data. The target population for each ward is 9,028, explained Koleda. According to a 54-page 2017 ward profile

report from UM-Flint, the ward populations ranged from 9,660 in Ward 3 as the lowest in population to 13,302 in Ward 8 as the highest in population.

However, to get each of the nine wards’ population within one per cent of 9,028, the boundaries must be redrawn. The recent 2020 Census reported that Flint lost 20,000 in population over the last ten years, plummeting to 81,000. This is a 21 per cent decrease and the lowest population for Flint since the 1910 census.

Flint’s Elections Commission is made up of City Clerk Inez Brown, City Assessor Stacey Kaake and Assistant City Attorney JoAnne Gurley. The Elections Commission along with Ken Koleda, director of the Genesee County Geographic Information System (GIS) was present at Wednesday’s meeting.

Koleda, once again, presented the proposed ward boundary map.

President of College-Cultural Neighborhood Association calls for the proposed map to be redrawn

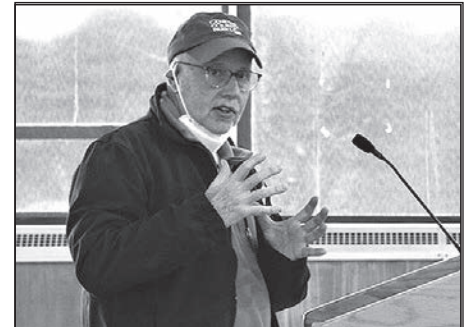
Mike Keeler, a Seventh Ward resident and president of the College-Cultural Neighborhood Association (CCNA), said, “The CCNA has 1,300 households and we are a strong neighborhood association. Based on phone calls and from viewing posts on Facebook, we are 100 per cent against this map. It basically splits our neighborhood in half.

“Our neighborhood is 103 years old,” Keeler said. “It’s never been split in half and we’re not going to stand for it now. It disenfranchises us and weakens us politically.”

Keeler called for the southern border of the Seventh Ward, I-69, to remain as it is now. In the redrawn map the seventh ward the southern border of the ward is extended below (south) of I-69. Keeler said the Independent Commission [Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission] recommends to cities when redrawing

ward boundaries that they should not split or divide neighborhoods.

Keeler suggested to the Elections Commission that the map be redrawn, pointing out that one of the standards of the MICRC in redistricting is to “not break up neighborhoods.”



CCNA President Mike Keeler
(Photo by Tom Travis)

“We’ve been working since 1992 gathering emails and phone numbers and building a community. Our neighborhood wants to remain whole,” Keeler pleaded. He mentioned there are a hundred different ways to draw the maps.

After the meeting, *EVM* asked Koleda if he was willing to redraw the map. He pointed out that he will take requests from the Elections Commission for redrawing the map.

City Clerk Inez Brown said that this is only the first draft map. Nothing on the map has been approved by city council yet, she emphasized.

Seventh Ward resident points to concept of “communities of interest”

Another Seventh Ward and CCN resident, Larry Anderson, prefaced his comments by saying his thoughts were more “philosophical.” Anderson said that the state MICRC uses “communities of interest” as one of their guiding principles.

He explained that “communities of interest” are geographical areas which share common interests and wish to be perceived as a voting block. And

(Continued on Page 15.)

Hostile Terrain ...

(Continued from Page 12.)

grant deaths that crossed this particular area of the border died from exposure to heat and cold. “This area has very “frigid temperatures at night.” Also some died because they had pre-existing conditions such as diabetes and they went into renal failure, Alvey added.

Birchok describes the exhibit as an example of “public anthropology.” “We often absolve ourselves of responsibility because people are dying in the desert and we think, “Oh that’s natural. That’s not our fault. But it’s actually, in part, [federal] policy. So again, anthropology lets us think about this arbitrary distinction between nature and the social so that’s how they are intertwined.”



UM-Flint anthropology professor Daniel Birchok (right) and student vice-president of the Anthropology Club, Brendon Nelson
(Photo by Tom Travis)

Volunteers are working on the exhibit pinning the tags to the precise location where the remains were found. Each eight-and-a-half by eleven piece of paper posted on the 16 foot display board represents a quadrant of land noting the location of found remains.

The volunteers transfer those locations on the paper to the display board with a red pin and toe-tag. Once a quadrant of land is fully marked the paper is removed and red pins and toe-tags remain creating the exhibit.

De Leon’s 2015 book, *Land of Open Graves* explains more fully

the federal policies that contribute this type of migration and deaths in crossing the border, Birchok said. More information about *Land of Open Graves* can be found at the following link: www.jasonpatrickdeleon.com/land-of-open-graves.



The Hostile Terrain 94 art exhibit was on display at the Flint Farmer’s Market. It’s was displayed on a board on the first floor in the food court near the large windows looking out on to First Street.

(Photo by Tom Travis)

Birchok said he is hopeful about the project, because it makes people aware and, “informs how we are thinking about immigration policies and how we treat immigrants. And also I think a big part of this is simply we often think of border crossings in the abstract or undocumented but we don’t really like think about their names or real people.

“This exhibit identifies real people who have died in the process of crossing the border. This exhibit allows us to remember these are real people, with real families and real concerns just trying to make a better life for themselves.”

Beverly Smith, who has been an archeologist and associate professor of anthropology at UM-Flint specializing in human remains analysis for over 30 years, worked along side student volunteers pinning red markers on the display board.

Reflecting on De Leon’s public art exhibit Smith said, “I think it’s a wonderful application of anthropology and integrates both cultural anthropology and our interest in human migrations and the suffering of people ... and all the things we should pay attention to.

“It helps us to remember that it’s very important to identify remains of people who have been skeletonized which is an extraordinarily difficult process.

“I think that one of things that this exhibit does is that it brings

together all the different forms of anthropology in a meaningful project like this.” Smith described the forms of anthropology as: archeology and biological-anthropology are

two types of forensic work to identify remains. And then there’s cultural anthropology and linguistic anthropology those are the four types of anthropology and disciplines, explained Smith.

Smith’s most recent archeology project was when she directed an anthropological team on the Stone Street Project in the historic Carriage Town Neighborhood. A Native burial was accidentally discovered on the west side of Stone Street just south of University Avenue when former foundations of homes were unearthed to make way for new housing. The area is now fenced off and is deeded to the Saginaw Chippewa tribe.

More information can be found here:

Twitter @HostileTerrain
Instagram @HostileTerrain94
Facebook: www.facebook.com/hostileterrain94
Hashtags: #hostileterrain94 and #ht94
www.hostileterrain94.org

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

Ward Boundaries ...

(Continued from Page 13.)

as much as possible those redrawing boundary maps respect the input they get from citizens as to how they identify their communities of interest.

Suggestion:

Wait eight years, adjust charter

Mark Baldwin, a Third Ward resident, suggested to take the next eight years and make adjustments to the charter, get zoning in place and “start to get Flint on a foundation that can be built on.” Baldwin said, “then at the next census [2030] we take a serious look at how to adjust the ward boundaries.”

Returning to his seat, Baldwin added that he thinks the charter should be adjusted to decrease the number of Flint wards from nine to seven. City Clerk Brown noted that it takes about a year to change any part of the charter because the State becomes involved.

Flint Neighborhood map available from Flint Neighborhoods United



Residents examine a large version of the proposed ward boundary map after the Elections Commission meeting

(Photo by Tom Travis)

Joel Arnold, Seventh Ward and Central Park Neighborhood resident and also the Planning and Advocacy

Coordinator at Communities First, Inc. acknowledged the difficulty of putting together the ward maps and knowing where the neighborhood boundaries are located. Arnold suggested the Elections Commission and GIS look at a neighborhood map that Flint Neighborhoods United has developed.

Councilpersons Herkenroder and Pfeiffer call for “listening to residents”

Two council members were present for the Elections Commission meeting: Councilpersons Dennis Pfeiffer (Ward 8) and Allie Herkenroder (Ward 7). Pfeiffer said he had examined the maps and realizes he will lose 20 per cent of his constituency with the present proposed map adding, “There’s no way around that.”

Pfeiffer told the commission he would “encourage this body to listen to residents. We are already a divided city, and it is important that these folks are heard and that communities stay together as much as possible.”

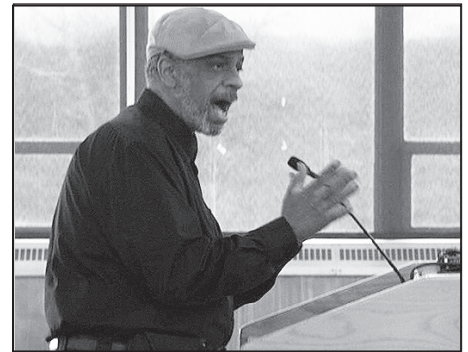
Councilperson Allie Herkenroder (Ward 7) acknowledged most of the residents attending the meeting were from her ward and the CCN. She noted her own house will remain in the Seventh Ward by only a few hundred feet, according to the proposed redrawn ward boundary map. Herkenroder called for the commission “to work in tandem with the residents to make sure our neighborhoods are not divided.”

Redrawing “an opportunity to start fresh”

Paul Herring, Fifth Ward and Carriage Town Historical Neighborhood resident, said, “I look at this differently. This is an opportunity to start fresh in Flint. We had nine wards when we had 200,000 people. We’re well under 100,000 now. We need to consolidate.”

Herring suggested an alternative way of drawing the ward boundaries

by “laying a coin on a map over the downtown area and from there drawing five pie wedges to draw the ward boundaries making each of the five ward councilpersons responsible for the downtown area.”



Paul Herring, Fifth Ward and Carriage Town resident

(Photo by Tom Travis)

Herring argued that he didn’t see the new ward boundaries affecting these organizations [the established Flint neighborhoods]. He added that the neighborhoods which are “historically strong will still exist. The lines on the map don’t have to stop them from doing what they do. Neighborhoods that are strong will stay together. Elections Commission member Stacey Kaake, who’s also The City of Flint assessor, raised the point that with the present ward map having the CCN split in half, “wouldn’t it be better to have two voices on council than one?”

CCNA President Keeler rose out of his seat to respond, “The way they drew the ward boundaries, the neighborhood would be in Ward Four and Ward Seven. I don’t think our current representative would have a shot at winning the Seventh Ward so we’d end up losing that.”

“Then we’d be such a fringe of the Fourth we probably wouldn’t be listened to anyway. It’d be much better to have all of us together so we can have one voice when there’s a problem rather than half of the neighborhood have a voice.”

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

Commentary ...

(Continued from Page 3.)

The Flint School Board

The Flint School Board paralleled the Flint City Council as they faced their own divisions and wrestled with declining enrollment, falling test scores, and empty buildings. By the end of the year, they appointed the eighth superintendent in the past 15 years in the midst of conflict and lawsuits.

Those we lost in 2021

In 2021 we also lost three major civic leaders in our community. Former Congressman Dale Kildee, former Councilman and state Rep. Jack Minore, and former Flint Ombudsman Terry Bankert all passed away during the year. On the state level, we lost former U.S. Senator Carl Levin as well.

Looking ahead

After a year of dashed optimism, what can we look forward to in 2022?

Political challenges

Politically it will be a challenging year. The 2022 midterm elections will be critical for several major reasons. First, in most midterm elections, the party in the White House typically loses seats in Congress. Since the 1930s, there have been only three times when the president's party gained seats in the U.S. House and Senate during a first midterm election, — 1934, 1998 and 2002. The average loss is about 30 seats.

When the president's popularity ratings are low, it's even worse. Today, the Democrats have only a 221 to 213 majority in the House, and are tied in the U.S. Senate. After the 2020 census, most of the states gaining seats were Republican leaning, and most of those losing seats supported Democrats. The odds of the

Democrats keeping their majority in Congress are not good.

That is one reason why most Republicans in Congress are trying to delay the investigation into the events of Jan. 6 when a mob invaded the Capitol, and threatened to hang the vice-president. There isn't likely to be much of an investigation of those events if the Republicans are in charge.

That's also the reason why President Biden and the Democrats are trying to pass the Build Back Better bill now. It will be much more difficult in the next year.

The U.S. Supreme Court is likely to hand down its decision on a major Mississippi abortion case by mid-year. There is speculation that it could overturn, or greatly limit, the abortion rights laid out in the landmark Roe v. Wade case in 1973. Whatever the court's ruling, it's going to make abortion a key issue in the 2022 election.



New election districts

After the 2020 census, 2022 is also the year when there will be new election districts created for the U.S. House, state Senate, state House and other local offices. In Michigan, a non-partisan commission is completing its work, and most districts are expected to be more competitive than in the past. Those maps are to be completed by the end of December. However, legal chal-

lenges could delay the final maps even longer, making for a confusing year for both voters and candidates.

One major change in our area, will be with Dan Kildee's district, which will expand into more Republican counties. It's likely to be much more competitive. With Flint's population loss of over 20,000, there will also be significant changes in the state Senate, state House, and County Commission districts within the city.

The governor's race

2022 will also be the year for Michigan's gubernatorial election. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer received both praise and criticism for her response to the COVID pandemic. Earlier she faced physical threats as one group attempted to kidnap her and put her on trial for her response to the pandemic, and a rally around the state Capitol seemed to be a rehearsal for the events of Jan. 6 in Washington.

There are at least 11 Republicans in the race for the nomination to run against her in November. Though Michigan usually gives its governors a second term, it may be a very competitive race in 2022.

The Flint City Council

After a contentious year of bickering and endless meetings, the voters elected six new members to the Flint City Council. During the campaign all of the candidates expressed a desire to work with others on the council in a more civil and effective manner. After a few meetings, the hope remains alive that with the new year, the new members will change the image of Flint's council, and begin to work together more productively.

The Flint School Board's challenges

After much conflict over the a Memo of Understanding put forward by the C.S. Mott Foundation, the Flint

(Continued on Page 17.)

Commentary ...

(Continued from Page 16.)

School Board has opened the door to discussing the wide-ranging proposal that would rebuild and revitalize the Flint schools with an investment of close to \$200 million and a partnership of 17 other organizations and institutions.

Whatever misgivings there are over the influence of the Mott Foundation and its allies, it may still be the best way to assure the survival of the Flint schools as they continue to lose students and face major financial challenges.

The COVID pandemic threat

Perhaps the biggest challenge may be the omicron variant of the COVID virus. There is a lot we don't know yet, but there are worries that it may be more infectious than the earlier variants, and possibly resistant to the



The Flint Public Library during renovations in 2020-21

(Photo by Tom Travis)

vaccines now in use. One additional worry is that, while many in the U.S. and Europe have been vaccinated, in third world counties very few have been, and the virus can continue to mutate and spread globally in the future.

This variant may not be the last one. More than anything else, getting the pandemic behind us is critical to returning to anything like 'normal'. Let's hope that the experience of the last two years will motivate more people to get vaccinated, and science will be able to respond quickly to any new challenges.

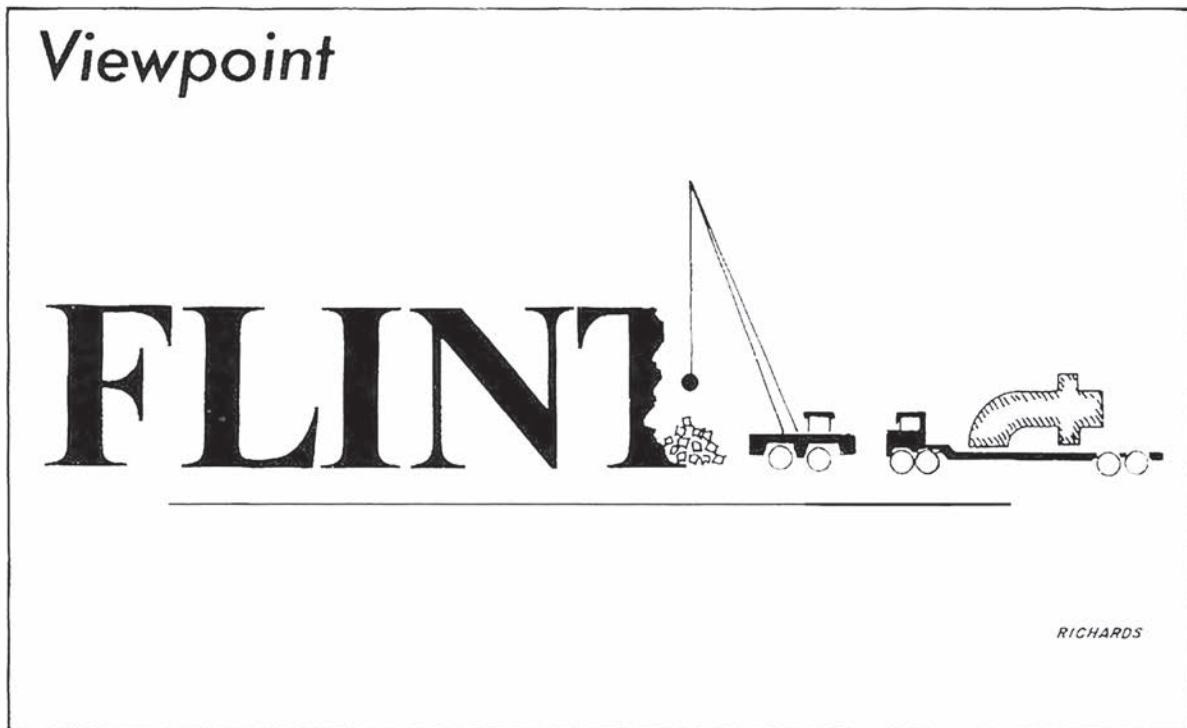
The Cultural Center revival

One very positive project that seems to be on track is the rebuilding of the Flint Cultural Center. After delays due to the pandemic, both the Flint Public Library and the Sloan Museum, which have been temporarily located at the Courtland Center Mall in Burton for two years, are scheduled to open with new facilities at their Cultural Center locations during the spring of next year.

Let's hope that the likely success of the new Cultural Center will be a sign of things to come for all of our areas of concern, and that it can be just one of the many positive things we can celebrate in 2022.

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

From the archives



This ink drawing was created by late Flint resident Don Richards, one of several he contributed to *East Village Magazine* in the 1980s. Richards was a land surveyor, a trade he learned in the Army. He loved local history, finding ways to tell his stories through surveying. This cartoon, much loved by two generations of *EVM* staff, has been on the wall of the *EVM* office for many years.

Village Life ...

(Continued from Page 20.)

helpful to think of the conservators as surgeons and the conservation scientists as the pathologists. Of course all of the conservators and conservation scientists work closely with the curators on the research and treatment,” according to an explanation on the Art Institute of Chicago’s website.

Jackson noted that “fortunately” the FIA has not had a lot of issues with works of art being damaged intentionally or accidentally by the public. A brown line on the floor in front of most the gallery’s paintings or signs on the floor and wall advise the public “do not touch” the works or art.

“There was a school group visiting years ago and a piece of a frame fell off but I don’t think it was because someone touched it. As I recall, the frame was already kind of loose and it was immediately repaired,” Jackson recalls.

Many of the frames are ornate, gold-gilded, and they need as much conservation as the paintings, Jackson says. On the particular frame pictured above, she points out that it’s plaster mold and will need to be replicated then gilded.

Gilding is “a pretty involved process,” Jackson says. The conservator that FIA uses to repair works of art does not personally repair frames, but he has someone on staff that can do it.

Jackson says she couldn’t comment on the prices associated with the art work in the FIA collections for insurance purposes, but explains that one of “the most appreciated and beloved pieces is the John Singer Sargent painting “Garden Study of the Vickers Children.”

“It is one of our jewels of the collection,” she exclaims.

Jackson explains she tries to regularly review works that are “staples” in the galleries, many

of which do not change what’s on display.

To those who might think Jackson’s job is boring, she responds, “My job to me is very interesting. It changes every day.”



Jackson stores a robe in the FIA’s textile collection with a special paper to absorb acidity and preserve the material

Photo source: FIA

“Today I’m doing condition reporting, tomorrow I may be in the print library, rehousing textiles and other collections, working with archival material, the next day I may be taking installation photographs of new gallery exhibitions. So my duties change fairly regularly. To me it’s very interesting.”

Jackson also conducts condition reports on works of art that are shipped to FIA for exhibit. She does a condition report at the beginning when the art work is unpacked and again when the art work is packaged and shipped out.

Jackson says she also does condition reporting on the vast glass collection housed in the new Sherwin and Shirley Glass gallery. “That was a learning process for me, learning about issues with glass. It’s been educational for me.”

Jackson, a Grand Blanc resident, has been at the FIA for 11 years and in the role as Collections Manager for two years. “I’ve been doing condition reporting since my second or third year here. But as I’ve been here longer, my responsibilities have changed towards collections management.” She has a B.A. in Art and Art History from

Wayne State University.

Jackson says she and FIA Registrar Peter Ott both regularly wax the bronze sculptures in the outdoor courtyard to protect them due to exposure to the elements.

The FIA website describes the process of a recent waxing of sculptures in the Hurand Sculpture Courtyard. “Heather Jackson, collections manager at the Flint Institute of Arts, recently completed waxing one of the FIA’s bronze sculptures that is currently displayed in the Hurand Sculpture Courtyard. Butcher’s wax, recommended by conservators, is used on the sculptures to preserve the condition of the work.

“Bronze can last indefinitely, but exposure to chemicals, temperatures, and human contact can cause deterioration. Oxidation refers to the chemical reaction of copper with the elements, which causes the color to change over time. Preventative measures are particularly important to slow down that process.



The Hurand Sculpture Garden at the Flint Institute of Arts

(Photo by Tom Travis)

“We wax our bronze sculptures approximately yearly,” Jackson said. “Exposure to the elements can cause our outdoor sculptures to oxidize. The waxing process helps prevent condition issues, such as bronze disease and keeps the appearance of the work as the artist intended.”

“Slowing down that process

(Continued on Page 19)

Village Life ...

(Continued from Page 18.)

is vital, because if oxidation gets out of the realm of a preventative measure, a conservator would have to come in and recommend a course of action for restoration, which typically has an expensive cost associated with it," according to the FIA website.

Additional information on conservation of tapestries and other art work at the FIA can be found at this link: The Rinaldo and Armida tapestries in the Viola Bray Renaissance Gallery underwent conservation treatment in 2019. The FIA website explains that conservation process at this link flintarts.org/art/conservation.

The FIA has approximately 160,000 visitors per year and about 1,700 students from preschool to adult who take classes each year, according to Patrick Hayes, the FIA's communication and marketing coordinator.

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

**COLLEGE CULTURAL
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION**
ccnaflint@sbcglobal.net

Stay home, stay safe!

Watch for meeting updates at
www.eastvillagemagazine.org



East Village Magazine

is updating coverage of water crisis recovery efforts.

Rather than track only the monthly number of lead service lines replaced, we will now report additional numbers related to ongoing work toward recovery from the Flint water crisis.

Number of Lead Water Service Lines as of July 16, 2021

Pipes Explored: **27,133** (27,092 in June)

Pipes Replaced: **10,059** (10,041 in June)

Copper Lines Installed: **17,074** (17,051 in June)

These numbers have not been updated on the City's website since July 2021

Between Oct. 21 and Nov. 15, 2021

6 of 268 homes tested above 15 parts per billion for lead
(in August it was 6 of 91 homes)

1 of 268 homes tested above 1,300 for copper

More statistics at www.michigan.gov/flintwater

As of Nov., 2021

17,700 enrollees in the Flint Registry,
which connects people affected by the water crisis to services
(in July it was 15,318)

24,500 referrals to service from the Flint Registry
(in July it was 22,332)

More statistics about Flint Registry at www.flintregistry.org

2018 was the last year

the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality reported on lead in water testing in Flint Schools

153 Lead Safe Home

program abatements completed in 2019

2.4% of children in Flint 6 and under with blood lead level above five micrograms per deciliter in 2018

————— **1 new grocery store** —————
opened in Flint in July, 2021



(Photo by Mike Naddeo)

Village Life

Caring for some of the world's finest art at the Flint Institute of Arts: magnifying glass, flashlight and tablet are tools of the trade

By Tom Travis

In the deafening silence of the dimly lit Johnson Gallery at the Flint Institute of Arts, Heather Jackson bends over a late-19th century painting, Albert-Emile "Artigue's Spring Flowers." She holds a magnifying glass in one hand and a flashlight in the other, closely peering at the painting.

She is conducting a "condition report," a ritual she completes annually on every piece of art in FIA's 175,000 square feet. That includes works in 25 galleries, a sculpture courtyard, and 15 art studio spaces.

As the FIA's Collections Manager, Jackson oversees the vast art collection to note any changes in an art piece's condition, including the frame, stand or pedestals attached to or supporting the art, and makes sure each one is reported and resolved.

"I take the job very seriously," she says, moving her hands with magnifying glass and flashlight in straight horizontal motions from right to left — a process she uses to examine each painting and work of art.

Jackson enters each condition report into a software program called Articheck

Standing ten feet back from the painting, the average art gallery patron might say the painting looks perfect, beautiful and all together lovely. But Jackson has a sharper eye.

"I'm looking for chipping, bumps, and flaking" among other types of damages that may not be visible in normal gallery lighting, she explains.



FIA's Collections Manager Heather Jackson peers over every piece of art in the collection

(Photo by Tom Travis)

Jackson, 42, says her role as collections manager is to "care for the collection."

Jackson says particularly with the works that are on view, she likes to do regular checks, looking for differences or major issues that might have come up.

"Even though we have a controlled environment..." she says, "I find that a preexisting condition may have slightly changed."

"That's not a huge issue, but when you start to see a change, like the paint begins to pucker, I would photograph it and consult with the conservator" who would then make the necessary fixes if needed.

FIA does not have a conserva-

tor on staff. They use Detroit-based conservator Kenneth B. Katz; his business is Conservation and Museum Services.

FIA follows "industry standards" for gallery climate control and "We keep everything within that realm," Jackson explains. A "micro-climate" can be created for some paintings and art work closed frames or glaze for added protection.

Jackson says oil paints are more durable than acrylic paints because they are water-soluble. She added it depends if a painting is on paper versus canvas. Jackson also conducts condition reporting on the sculpture work and glass work.

Standing in front of the acclaimed John Singer Sargent painting "Garden Study of the Vickers Children," Jackson said

that it is common, especially in paintings from the 18th and 19th centuries, while conducting a condition report to find things that need to be repaired or at least noted and for possible future repairs.

An art conservator examines, researches, and restores the works in a collection, and generally monitor the condition of the artworks in the museum's galleries and storage to ensure their long-term preservation. "The conservation scientists work across all the departments, and they study the materials, processes, and techniques used by artists, right down to the analysis of individual paint samples and particles. It's

(Continued on Page 18.)