



# East Village Magazine

December/January 2022-23

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Commentary

Looking back and looking ahead -- Will 2022 set the stage for 2023?

By Paul Rozycki

The combined December/January issue of the East Village Magazine marks the end of one year and the beginning of another, and gives us the opportunity to take a look back at what mattered in 2022 -- and to look forward to what might matter in 2023.

Looking back: The national level

Politically, the year 2022 was a year of surprises. The first midterm election after a presidential election is almost always

as many as 30 or more seats in the U.S. House, gain a majority in the U.S. Senate, and do equally well in other races around the country.

That wasn't the case. Democrats surprised almost everyone by hanging on to the Senate, losing the House narrowly, and winning the Michigan governorship, secretary of state, attorney general and winning a majority in both the state House and the state Senate for the first time in nearly 40 years.

It seems to have happened for two major reasons. When the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the Roe v. Wade decision earlier in the year, potentially denying women the right to an abortion, it energized many voters who often sit out mid-term elections. The Democrats made abortion a major campaign issue and it was key to mobilizing independent, suburban women -- who often give Republicans an advantage in midterms.

The second reason why Democrats did well was the division within the Republican Party -- between traditional Republicans and the Trump wing of the party. Trump's endorsement won the nomination for many of his election-denying candidates, but many of the Trump-backed candidates proved unable to reach beyond their own Trump base and mobilize a larger part of the Republican Party, much less in-

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President-elect Joe Biden outside Berston Field House in Flint during a 2020 Campaign stop (Photo by Paul Rozycki)

bad news for the party in the White House, and most observers expected that to be the case in the past year. Nearly everyone expected the Republicans to gain

Cover: Holiday contrasts in black and white



**Photo of the Month: Wreath for the New Year (Photo by Edwin D. Custer)**

## Education Beat Analysis ***New leadership team likely to take shape on Flint Ed Board following sweep of four incumbents***

*By Harold C. Ford*

*“You don’t get to be disciplined; you get to be voted out.”*

—Karen Christian, president, United Teachers of Flint, admonishing the behaviors of Flint school board members, Sept. 21, 2022

And so, it came to be in the Nov. 8 general election that four incumbents running for re-election to the Flint Board of Education (FBOE) were swept from their positions -- “voted out,” by Flint voters. It was a clean sweep of four board incumbents that may be unprecedented in local elector-

al politics.

Longtime political analyst and *East Village Magazine (EVM)* columnist, Paul Rozycki, could not remember a similar sweep. “I don’t recall any other one (election) where all the incumbents lost.”

Incumbents losing their bid for

reelection to the Flint panel included: Carol McIntosh, current FBOE president; Chris Del Morone, current FBOE vice president; Linda Boose, current FBOE secretary; and Allen Gilbert, trustee.

McIntosh was the longest-serv-

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**FBOE meeting from May 2022.  
(Photo by Tom Travis)**

# Education ...

(Continued from Page 4)

ing FBOE member. She began a six-year term in Jan. 2017. She returned to the president’s position when Danielle Green relinquished the position in Aug. 2022 following an alleged assault upon then-FBOE treasurer Laura MacIntyre.

Green subsequently left the school board in Sept. 2022 as a condition imposed by 67th District Court Judge Herman Marable in return for dismissal of assault charges.

McIntosh has served as board president throughout most of calendar years 2021 and 2022. It was a period marked by a pandemic, declining student enrollment, low standardized test score performances by students, unprecedented staff departures, board-administration tensions, multiple lawsuits, and strained relationships with one long-serving legal counsel and then another.

Public board meetings have been characterized by tensions between board members, sloppy parliamentary procedure, and meetings routinely lasting three to five hours. On Sept. 20, for example, during a meeting lasting 3:38, 87 points of information and 61 points of order were declared by FBOE members; that’s 148 parliamentary interjections during 218 minutes.

The dysfunction did not go unnoticed by employees, members of the public, and, apparently, voters.

Felicia Naimark, a speech pathologist at Flint Community Schools, excoriated the board at its Sept. 21 meeting: “I have never seen a board or meetings run as horribly as these are. The time that it takes to get nothing done is unbelievable ... board members walking out, infighting, arguing between people, points of order, points of information improperly used.”

The FBOE has made little apparent progress on the demolition or sale of approximately two dozen abandoned properties of Flint Community

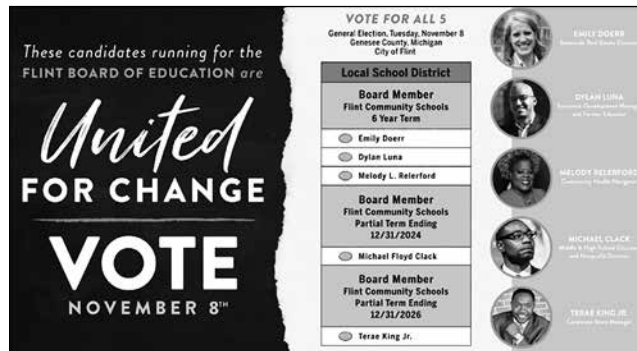
Schools (FCS). None of the district’s eleven school buildings currently in use have been closed despite a student count – less than 3,000 – that would fit into about half that number.

Minimal progress has been made in the refurbishment of existing buildings that are among the oldest in the nation. The district has had access to nearly \$150 million in COVID relief funds – more than the City of Flint – that can be used to upgrade existing structures.

COVID funds cannot be used to build new structures or upgrade buildings that do not contain students.

Additionally, an offer by Flint’s C. S. Mott Foundation to upgrade or rebuild all Flint school buildings at a cost of approximately \$200 million has largely disappeared from public view, mostly due to the opposition of a few FBOE members.

A statement currently posted at the foundation’s website by CEO Ridgway White reads in part: “Unfortunately, there are some in the community who are promoting false narratives regarding how and why Mott has been involved in conversations about providing resources that could enable the district to make transformational change.”



### Electoral slate to comprise a new majority

Four members of a five-candidate slate – Melody Relerford, Dylan Luna, Terae King, and Michael Clack – will all take their seats by Jan. 2023. The only slate member not to win election was Emily Doerr. Four votes comprise a majority on the seven-member

panel.

The only non-slate member to win election to the board was Claudia Perkins.

By virtue of being the top vote-getter among six candidates vying for a full six-year term, the Genesee Intermediate School District Board of Education will appoint Melody Relerford to fill the position vacated by Green on Nov. 28. Relerford will fill the vacancy for about a month when she will begin her duties as a newly elected six-year member.

Thus, beginning in Jan 2023, the new lineup for the Flint board will look like this based on the Nov. 8 election results (vote totals and percentages in parentheses):

Six-year terms beginning in Jan. 2023, ending in Dec. 2028

- Melody Relerford (6,578; 12.98%)
- Claudia Perkins (6,350; 13.5%)
- Dylan Luna (6,212, 12.21%)

[Incumbents losing their bid for reelection: Linda Boose (5,779, 12.28%); Carol McIntosh (4,168, 8.86%); Chris DeMorone (2,746, 5.84%).]

Partial term ending Dec. 2026:

- Terae King (9,563, 53.29%)

Partial term ending Dec. 2024:

- Michael Clack (10,986, 59.52%); Clack was the only candidate to receive at least 10,000 votes.

Incumbents returning to the board are Laura MacIntyre and Joyce Ellis-McNeal. Their terms began in Jan. 2021 and end Dec. 2026.

### Election of officers

The election of board officers takes place each January at an organizational meeting. Following the voters’ blanket dismissal of all four FBOE incumbents seeking reelection, a new leadership team is predictable.

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

## Commentary

# A tribute to “Master of the State Senate” Jim Ananich

By Michigan State Representative Jasper R. Martus

“Thank God for Michigan,” President Lincoln proclaimed when troops arrived to join Union forces in the early stages of the Civil War.

Pundits and politicians from across the country offered similar sentiments on Nov. 8 when election returns pointed to Democratic wins up and down the ballot in Michigan. The state’s first Democratic trifecta in over 40 years, a woman’s right to choose codified into law, and the bucking of a century of precedents all happened in one night.

While so many Michigan Democrats who won will take office or return to office, one of the main architects of this electoral success will not be returning to Lansing. State Senator Jim Ananich, the Democratic leader in the Michigan Senate, will be leaving office because of term limits at the end of this year.

Like Moses nearly reaching the Promised Land, Senator Ananich may not cross into the destination he worked so hard to reach, but every person who flourishes there will be forever indebted to him.

Long before he was a fixture in Michigan politics, Jim Ananich was just a kid from Flint, a description that has never changed. In a political world that was still dominated by who you know, waiting your turn, and often deferring to special interests, rising through the ranks would be difficult. Ananich did not come from a political family or wealth, two of the easiest ways to skip to the

front of the line in politics. Instead, he became a student of politics in the abstract, devouring biographies of Lyndon Johnson, Abraham Lincoln, and others. He became a student of politics at the local level, learning to navigate organized labor, churches, and business. As he methodically rose through the ranks, he brought with him an entire generation of young people who were similarly ambitious but like him lacked the initial tools and resources to make a

was able to achieve a good working relationship with the Republican majority which made for committee hearings and bills reaching the House floor while also strategizing how to bring Democrats back to power.

When a state Senate seat opened, Jim Ananich made the jump. He took on Woodrow Stanley, a fellow state representative and popular former Mayor of Flint. Stanley had been in politics since Ananich was seven years old and had several

prominent supporters. Despite the obstacles, Ananich ran for the senate seat. As soon as the House session was adjourned, he would race back to Genesee County to knock on doors. It was a special election which meant campaigning had to be done in the dead of winter. He would often wear his thermal wear under his suit and tie so that he could make a quick change once he

reached the neighborhood where he was knocking on doors. The average temperature that winter was a low 20° with some days well below 0°. Ananich kept knocking, making calls, and writing letters, each day dropping more weight. In the end, he was victorious.

Senator Ananich moved chambers but faced a similar problem: a party in disarray. Democrats had been crushed in the Michigan Senate too and the Republican trifecta did little to include them. Ananich knew that they needed a seat at the table

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Senator James Ananich (at podium) speaking with then-State Representatives John Cherry (left), Sheldon Neeley and Sheryl Kennedy (right)

(Photo by Paul Rozycki)

difference. This created a network of folks thankful for his mentorship and always willing to help him succeed.

While residents of Flint City Hall can often get bogged down in scandals or low approval ratings, Ananich was able to transition successfully from a Flint City councilman to a state representative in 2011. During his time in the state House, he took the lead on rebuilding the state party in the aftermath of the 2010 red wave. Democrats lost control of the State House, which meant it would be incredibly difficult for him to pass legislation. Nonetheless, Ananich

## Jim Ananich ...

(Continued from Page 6)

to both deliver for their constituents and appear as a united front if they wanted to appear as a legitimate alternative to Republicans. Less than two years into his time in the senate and four years into his total time in Lansing, he was elected Democratic Leader in 2015. With Republicans controlling all levels of government, Jim Ananich became the most important Democrat in the Michigan government.

Ananich instilled party discipline in his caucus, going to great lengths to understand each of his colleagues and the communities they represented. Presenting a unified front, cobbled together through hours of private studies and discussions, his efforts made it harder for Republicans to cut Democrats out of discussions. Ananich would take a lead in dealing with chaos and controversies within the caucus behind closed doors so that the Senate Democrats would always appear disciplined and focused on the people's work. While Republicans threw up roadblocks, Ananich was able to deliver wins for the people of Michigan. Investments in education and infrastructure, making Michigan more friendly to businesses, and righting the wrong done to his hometown during the Flint Water Crisis all have Ananich's fingerprints. He demurred headlines and assigned credit to his colleagues and his party.

Eventually, the strategies Ananich developed early on in his tenure began to bear fruit. In 2018,

his friend and former colleague Gretchen Whitmer was elected governor. Democrats in Washington D.C. won control of the U.S. House of Representatives by flipping seats in Michigan with talented candidates like Elissa Slotkin and Haley Stevens. Perhaps most importantly for Ananich, he elected more Democrats to the Michigan Senate than any Leader had done in decades. While Democrats were still in the minority, they narrowed the partisan divide and gave Democrats their best showing in a generation.

When Governor Whitmer took office, Senator Ananich became



State Senator Jim Ananich  
(Photo by ?)

a critical governing partner and they worked together to pass major reforms in education, public safety, and infrastructure. While Ananich was able to accomplish more legislatively than he had in his entire career, he continued to keep his eye on his ultimate goal: a Democratic state senate. He started early fundraising, recruiting top-tier candidates, and building a solid ground game that would do the impossible. Democrats could point to victories in a divided government, successes only made possible because of his work, while also making the case to voters that

Lansing needed change. A war room full of maps, out-of-state consultants, and complicated computer algorithms could chart a path to the majority, but only Jim Ananich could lead his party there.

On Nov. 8, 2022, the decade-long plan finally came to fruition. Governor Whitmer was reelected by double digits. The Michigan House of Representatives flipped to Democrats. At 5 a.m. the following morning, Jim Ananich watched as news networks called the Michigan Senate for Democrats. A Democratic trifecta, the first in over 40 years and only the 5th in 130 years finally happened.

Mr. Ananich went to Lansing as a member of a party on the decline. He will leave Lansing as the longest-serving senate party leader in 30 years, the most electorally successful leader in as much time, and one of the most important state leaders in half a century.

Michigan Democrats have many people to thank for their success, but perhaps no one more than

Jim Ananich. He rebuilt the Michigan Democratic Party in the aftermath of a historic Republican wave and laid the foundation for its historic success this past November. During that time, he took part in record investments in infrastructure, historic expansions of health care, guiding a state through a pandemic and multiple recessions, and holding perpetrators of the Flint Water Crisis accountable.

At 47 years old, practically a kid in today's politics, Jim Ananich will have a bright career wherever he goes next. Whether his path is

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## Rozycki Commentary ...

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dependents and Democrats. Many traditional Republican fundraisers and donors decided to stay on the sidelines for this election.

### Looking ahead: The national level

In the year ahead, will the Republican Party become the party of Trump, or will it find a way to break his hold on the party and return to its traditional roots? Trump has already announced he is running for president in 2024, and more than a few challengers are already on the horizon. Will his latest nutty claim to suspend the Constitution cost him any of his supporters? Will his lunch dates with anti-Semites and white supremacists? If it's Trump against one or two other Republican candidates, he will likely lose, but if it's Trump against a dozen other candidates he could still emerge on top as he did in 2016.

The other question is, will Joe Biden run again? There have been doubts voiced by some in his own party, but his recent move to make South Carolina and Michigan among the first primary states suggests he might be a candidate in 2024. Will Biden face a serious challenge if he runs?

What role will the new Republican House play? Will they be willing to work with President Biden and the Democratic Senate, or will they pursue investigations of the 2020 election, Hunter Biden's laptop, or launch attempts to impeach Democratic officials. Will anything more be heard about the Jan. 6 committee hearings?

### Looking back: The state

It wasn't a huge surprise that Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, and Attorney General Dana Nessel won their contests. Most polls gave them a significant lead and their Trump-backed opponents were underfunded and tied to various election-denying conspiracies. What was significant was the Democrats taking the majority in the state House and the state Senate for the first time in decades. In addition to the issues mentioned earlier, the non-partisan districts created by Michigan's independent commission played a role, giving the Democrats a chance to take the majority in the legislature.



Michigan State Capitol building in Lansing. (Photo source: Michigan State Capitol  
(Photo: Facebook))

### Looking ahead: The state

Now that they will hold the majority in the state government, will the Democrats be able to deliver on their promises of economic growth, abortion protection, and working across the aisle? It

may work, but more than a few governors have faced conflicts from their own parties when they had the majority in the legislature.

### Looking back: The proposals

In 2022 voters in Michigan approved three amendments to the state Constitution by substantial margins. Proposal 1 changed the term limits for state lawmakers. Proposal 2 reformed and changed our voting process, assuring easier access to voting. Proposal 3 guaranteed a women's right to an abortion and repealed a 1931 law that criminalized the procedure.



Roe v. Wade protest, Genesee County Court House  
(Photo by Tom Travis)

### Looking ahead: The proposals

Proposal 1: In the next year we will likely see lawmakers change their career plans as they adapt to the new term limits, allowing them to stay in either the state Senate or the state House for up to 12 years. Will it mean more experienced lawmakers in Lansing?

Proposal 2: We will see local election officials make attempts to allow for nine days of early voting and they may need to find additional funds to adapt to those

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## Rozycki Commentary ...

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changes. Legislation may be needed to smooth the process of several of the new voting rules.

Proposal 3: There may be lawsuits over the full reach and extent of Proposal 3, particularly which laws are repealed and which are not.

### Looking back and looking ahead: The local level

In 2022 three major issues set the stage for next year on the local level—the Flint mayoral race, the Flint Community School Board election, and the future of the U of M-Flint.



**Mayor Neeley taking the oath of office for the second time**

(Photo by Tom Travis)

### The Flint mayoral race

Mayor Sheldon Neeley won his second term over former Mayor Karen Weaver, with a larger margin than the 205 votes he had the last time they ran against each other.

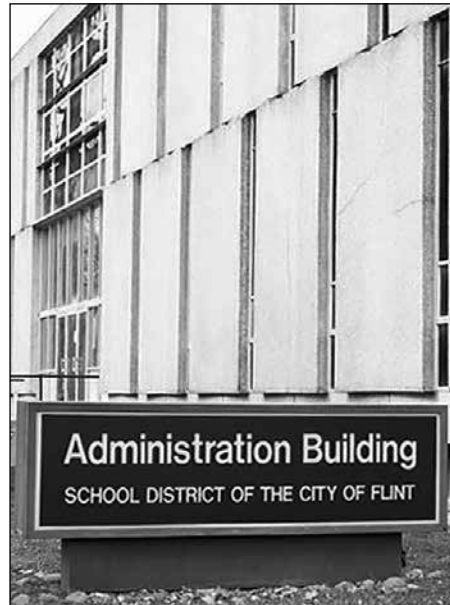
Looking forward, will that victory make it easier for him to work with a city council that has often been an adversary to the mayor's office? Will the mayor and council produce a workable budget for the city? Will the personnel changes in City Hall make

for less conflict? It remains to be seen, but *East Village Magazine* and Tom Travis will be there, covering the story.

### The Flint Board of Education

Perhaps the biggest change locally was the election of five new members to the Flint Board of Education. Over the past year, the Flint board had been consumed with conflict and contention as they tried to rebuild a school system that was once the pride of the nation and now faces plummeting enrollments, decaying buildings, and loss of staff.

Looking forward, the hope



**Flint Community School administration building in the Flint Cultural Center**

(Photo by Tom Travis)

is that the five new members will bring stability and teamwork to a board that needs all the support it can get as it aims to restore and rebuild the Flint Community Schools. As he has covered the conflict in the Flint School Board, Harold Ford and *East Village Magazine* will cover the new

board as it tries to restore some sense of harmony to the body and rebuild the Flint Board of Education.

### The future of the UM-Flint

Looking back, the year 2022 also brought an ominous threat to another major educational institution—the University of Michigan-Flint. In a series of meetings and declarations the Ann Arbor Board of Regents said that the University of Michigan-Flint would need to make major changes in its curriculum and its outreach to students if it is to survive, improve enrollment, and be financially viable. Protests and demonstrations were held on campus. The reactions ranged from the threat of closing the Flint university altogether, to fear that the traditional liberal arts curriculum would be replaced by occupational STEM-based programs.

Looking forward, there are many meetings and hearings scheduled on the future of the UM-Flint, and it is certain to be a major topic in 2023 and a major story for *East Village Magazine*. Jan Worth-Nelson and Harold Ford will cover the developing changes. At stake is the future of the UM-Flint campus, the nature of its curriculum, and its impact on Flint.

In the end, if 2023 is anything like 2022, it will be a year of surprises.

*EVM political writer and commentator Paul Rozycki can be reached at paul.rozycki@mcc.edu.*

# “Just wait and see” -- UM-Flint Chancellor says campus “Strategic Transformation” will bring fiscal stability, vibrancy to Flint community

By Jan Worth-Nelson with Tom Travis

East Village Magazine Consulting Editor Jan Worth-Nelson and Managing Editor Tom Travis interviewed UM - Flint Chancellor Deba Dutta in his office Nov. 30. For the full interview, please go to the *EVM* website at [www.eastvillagemagazine.org](http://www.eastvillagemagazine.org).

The primary thrust of the interview was the so-called “Strategic Transformation” process underway at the downtown campus -- a systematic undertaking to try to find a path forward in the face of a myriad of severe challenges at the downtown campus -- some of them existential.

Those include a 30 percent drop in enrollment since 2014, an “unacceptable” graduation rate of 35 percent, a deficit of \$7.3 million in the last fiscal year, and losses or declines in demand for programs in liberal arts such as English and Spanish..

Here are some key excerpts:

“Let’s be honest here,” he said. “I’m trying to turn this place around. I didn’t create this mess...I did not. I came in August of ‘19, opened the books found a mess, and said, oh my God, let’s try to fix it...”

## On the UM-Flint fiscal crisis:

“It took me a month and a half after I arrived to realize the financial situation, ... whoa, whoa, what’s going on here? No one seems to care, everyone is just moving along but ... wait, this is serious. At the October, 2019, Regents meeting I shared it with the Regents... I said, this is a very serious situation. They were hearing it for the first time.”

“As you know, the way we balance the budget is to control expenses where possible, cut expenses, and we have done that. Do we have to continue? I hope not. I think we are down to the bones, I really think so,” he said.

## About the Strategic Transformation process:

Attempting to answer some of the critiques surfacing in recent weeks, Dutta flatly stated “No -- nothing” has been pre-decided by the Ann Arbor administration; no, the controversial consultant hired to research the



UM-Flint Chancellor Debasish Dutta, PhD.

(Photos by Tom Travis)

process is not calling the shots; and no, the liberal arts are absolutely needed and will not disappear from UM - Flint’s program options.

He said he regards the process as “at the end of Phase One,” -- the time when the consultants’ work would be done and the campus would

consider its findings -- and predicted if not completed by the end of the year it would continue into early 2023.

Asked what he wanted the Flint community to know about the process, which has generated many fears, rumors and concerns -- including parallels to Flint’s AutoWorld debacle and even the water crisis, Dutta replied, “The Strategic Transformation process is essential to the longterm viability, financial and programmatic viability of UM - Flint.

“UMF is a beacon of hope for the community, and I am committed to doing everything I can do to make UMF strong, financially strong, programmatically strong, and relevant to the region, its employers, and so forth.

## About Huron Consultants, hired by UM to assist in the ‘Strategic Transformation’

Of the Huron critics, Dutta asserted, “They are being unfair, let me say this. What Huron did with New School, or Stevens Point [University of Wisconsin], those were different institutions, within a different context. They did what they did. They are a top notch firm. There’s no question about that.”

And he strongly objected to, warnings from some faculty that Huron would be telling UM - Flint what to do.

“If Huron were to give us, to take their strategy at the New School and apply it to us, and we didn’t understand it, shame on us. Whenever you hire a consultant, you have a role. You don’t let the consultant do whatever they want. That’s a very important thing to understand. The consultant works for you. The consultant doesn’t make the decisions. They give you options, you make the decisions. So what happened at those institutions, I

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## Chancellor ...

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don't know. I can see, given the stress level and uncertainty and apprehension, [that people might be fearful] but NO, that is not the case.'

### About the liberal arts:

Dutta defended the need for the liberal arts to remain -- as a part of the mix of courses in which the high-growth programs help subsidize the low-growth but important offerings.

"Think of it as a mutual fund," he said. "In a mutual fund, you hold stocks of multiple companies..some are performing very well, doing well, some are not, but collectively, they yield good.

"Any institutions, any organization — GM, Ford — they have some lines that are very, very profitable, and some lines that are not. This institution is no different. There will be a few that will not be profitable, but still be essential to the core of this institution.

"We would want to protect that. I will protect that. But in order for me to protect that, I still need a few, or more than a few, that are profitable. If it comes to a point where I have one or two that are profitable, but 15 that are not, it's not going to work.

"The liberal arts will never go away from UM - Flint. Whoever is saying this is perpetrating misinformation, a falsehood. Even in the professions, they still have to have the core of the liberal arts. They're not going away."

### About the relationship with Ann Arbor:

"We are lucky to be part of the UM system that somebody is willing to invest millions of dollars, millions," he said. "Any institutional transformation requires funds -- because any Strategic Transformation means, doing things a different way. That requires investment.

"We are lucky we have the flagship in Ann Arbor that is willing to invest in us. No other institution in the

state has that kind of underwriter -- it's the 'ace in the hole' that Ann Arbor is willing to underwrite this thing. It's a very good situation to be in: We find ourselves in a serious and urgent need of change, and and there is an organization 50 miles south that is willing to help us.

"Now it is our job to determine that course, that trajectory of which way we will go, collectively, faculty, students, staff, community, alums. No one can predict, no one has a crystal ball...we do the best we can, we keep our minds open, then change is needed.



(Graphic source: www.umflint.edu)

### About the relationship with the Flint community:

"To synthesize: they [Flint community members] want the University of Michigan - Flint to be successful. They are fully behind us, they want us to be wildly successful.



French Hall on the UM-Flint campus in downtown Flint

(Photo by Tom Travis)

"They understand that UMF provides a very good education, which we do, and regrettably, we are not known for that.

"We're the 'best kept secret' -- and that is not going to work. We have to communicate broadly not only in the region, across the state -- that we have the third lowest tuition, small classes, high-quality education -- why aren't people banging down our doors

to get in? I'm asking myself since my first days here."

"What do I see as the connection? What do I want UMF to do for Flint? Our futures are intricately tied. What does that mean? I'll tell you this: jobs. Flint is hurting today after GM went away, after everything else that happened...its economy is down, it is losing people -- in the 2020 census, we lost 20,000 people. Come 2030 census, it might be the village of Flint.

"What can UMF do to help attract companies, businesses, jobs? That is how I view UMF, its role today -- you're taxpayer funded -- you have an obligation to create jobs in this community, and you've got to keep that front and center."

### On the relationship with the Mott Foundation:

The C.S. Mott Foundation contributed \$10 million to the renovation and expansion of the Murchie Science Building.

As for future investments, "They want to see a plan -- they want to see metrics, and milestones -- that's exactly how it works. The point is, the Mott Foundation has to also see that the institution, its leadership, its rank and file, they are committed to the change.

"And when they see that, they will fund initiatives. I have tremendous respect for the Mott Foundation -- where would this city be without them? God bless them.

"But also, I don't like to go to places with hat in hand. Once in awhile, each of us need help, because we fall into bad times, 'but ... what I'm saying is this: I find myself as UM -- Flint in a serious serious situation. At this point, I'm willing to take help. I will accept help."

### In summary about the Strategic Transformation process and beyond:

"We are getting hundreds of ideas. We are doing the best we

(Continued on Page 15)

# “We have to make the city of Flint a better place” – Mayor Neeley calls for unity, strength and hope in second swearing-in ceremony

By Tom Travis

Themes of love, unity, strength and hope flowed through the remarks at Mayor Sheldon Neeley’s second swearing-in ceremony Monday with familiar faces of politicians, community leaders, city officials, activists and city residents. Longtime local news anchor and friend of Neeley, Bill Harris, was emcee for the ceremony that lasted just under an hour.

After taking the oath of office, Mayor Neeley said, “I look forward to the opportunity to do wonderful work for this wonderful city.”

The Flint city council sat in their seats immediately behind the Mayor as he spoke from a podium. Naming each council member, Neeley pledged to work with the city council. Throughout Neeley’s administration and two different city councils, their relationship has been contentious at times. Noticeably absent from his council seat was Eric Mays (Ward 1). *EVM* spoke with Mays after the ceremony and Mays said that his not being in the room was a kind of “silent protest” to Neeley and his administration.

**“This is much more than I or me -- it’s about us moving together for a greater goal”**

Neeley noted as mayor he aims to continue “critical partnerships” with city, county, state, federal and philanthropic partners.

“History teaches us that unity is strength and cautions us to not fall victim to divide,” he said. “If you understand who benefits from divide you



**Mayor Sheldon Neeley delivers remarks at his second swearing in ceremony as Mayor. Sign language interpreter Bethany James**

(Photo by Tom Travis)



**Master of Ceremonies and local media figure Bill Harris**

(Photo by Tom Travis)

understand your true enemy.”

Neeley described his last three years of service as mayor as working towards unity at all levels.

“This is much more than **I or me** -- it’s about **us** moving together for a greater goal. Twenty or thirty years from now we’re going to look back at the work we have accomplished today and understand the rebirth of the city of Flint happened here: the idea of unity, standing together, fighting together and winning together.”

**“We’re more than victims we are victors”**

“When we travel all across the country and tell people we’re from Flint, Michigan they respond, ‘Oh my god.’ But we are much more than victims,” Neeley said. “We are victors. Each one of you have to be an ambassador of hope and strength and rebranding and the reworking of our community. The way that the nation

looks at us is important to attract new families, businesses and corporations.”

Neeley thanked Flint Police Chief Terrence Green, who was seated with several other officers including Detective Sgt. Tyrone Booth. Neeley noted the ongoing partnerships between the Flint Police Department and local law enforcement agencies including the Genesee County Sheriff’s department and the Michigan State Police touting that homicides are down 40 per cent.

Also in the audience was former Mayor Dayne Walling. Neeley thanked Walling for being in the audience and for his partnership and advice.

“We have to plant the seeds of hope further down with our children, letting them understand about how to de-escalate issues, we have to do so in our faith-based communities, education communities and in our common areas of influence. Wherever you are, we need your strength,” Neeley said.

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## Neeley ...

(Continued from Page 12)

**“The first challenge to overcome is working together and we will overcome that” - Neeley to City Council**

“To my council colleagues in a co-equal branch of government,” Neeley said, “We will work together using our American Recuse Plan dollars, \$94.7 million.” He pointed out that 32 per cent has already been allocated for demolition, law enforcement and economic development.

“I sat as a council person for nine years so I understand the challenges of that job,” Neeley recalled. “The first challenge to overcome is working together and we will overcome that. I will make sure that I will fulfill the needs of them so they can fulfill the needs of our community.

### **Judge Guinn, recording artist, godmother, and local pastors participate in ceremony**

The oath of office was administered by 67th District Court Judge David Guinn. Guinn had administered the oath at the Mayor’s first swearing-in as well. The U.S. Flag was carried in by a Flint Police officer. Wearing white gloves, he placed the flag in a stand and the audience was invited to recite in unison the Pledge of Allegiance. Following that, Mayor Neeley, his wife (State Representative) Cynthia Neeley, a family friend and godmother Sharon Riley



**Mayor Neeley and wife, State Representative Cynthia Neeley**  
(Photo by Tom Travis)



**Flint Police officers listen to mayor’s remarks with Police Chief Terrence Green second from right**

(Photo by Tom Travis)



**Flint firefighters lined up across the back of council chambers during the ceremony**

(Photo by Tom Travis)

and the Neeleys’ daughter, Taylor, walked up the center aisle. The audience stood and applauded as the mayor and family took their seats.

Rhonda Clark, R&B recording artist, sang the hymn “His Eye Is on the Sparrow.” Words of Encouragement” were shared by family friend and Mayor Neeley’s godmother Sharon Riley. At least two times Mayor Neeley was choked up with emotion while recalling that this past year was “a tough year.” Neeley’s mother passed away this year and the mayor mentioned that this was the first

election in his long political career without his mother being present.

Riley’s ‘words of encouragement’ included: “The world is lacking love. God is love and he is the encourager. We need unity. The Bible says that if we’re not unified there is destruction. Love is caring, kind, giving, genuine. If you have not love you profit God nothing. The real test is that we love the unlovable not just love ourselves.”

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



**Singer and recording artist Rhonda Clark**  
(Photo by Tom Travis)



**Neeley’s daughter Grace Taylor with son Jaylen Taylor**  
(Photo by Tom Travis)

## Ananich ...

(Continued from Page 7)

in the private sector or continued involvement in politics at the state or federal level, he remains one of the most popular and important figures



State Senator Jim Ananich with his son at a 2020 Biden/Harris political event in Flint

(Photo by Tom Travis)

in both Lansing and Genesee County. After 40 years in the wilderness, Democrats will be able to deliver for Michigan because of his tireless work.

Jim Ananich may be entering his own time in the wilderness, but whenever or however he returns, Genesee County will be there to support him.

EVM Guest writer Jasper R. Martus is state representative for the 69th district which consists of northwest Genesee County. Jasper currently serves as vice chair of the Michigan House Democratic Caucus and is one of the youngest state representatives in Michigan history. Jasper is a graduate of Powers Catholic High School class of 2018 and Michigan State University's James Madison College with a bachelor's degree in International Relations class of 2021.

## Village Life ...

(Continued from Page 7)

going through. I graduated in 2011 but changed my path in 2010."

Harris explained even though she's not working in her original field of study, chemical engineering, she sees that she uses some of the skills she learned from it, like problem solving, figuring out how things work, logistics and being systematic. "In engineering you don't have to memorize things -- you have to figure it out, use your resources; for the studying of medicine it involves a lot of memorizing. But I got beyond the memorizing part of studying



medicine," explained Harris.

"I'm very nervous. In medicine they don't really train us to go out on our own," Harris confessed. "Our health care systems are moving farther away from patient centered care and I want to get back to that."

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

A large advertisement for the Sloan Museum of Discovery. The top half features the text 'SLOAN MUSEUM OF DISCOVERY' in a bold, sans-serif font. Below this, the phrase 'After Hours @ the SLOAN!' is written in a large, white, cursive script. To the right of the script, it says 'EVERY FIRST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH FROM 5:30-8 P.M.' in a bold, sans-serif font. The bottom half of the ad is a dark grey box containing white text: 'Join us After Hours for drinks and an evening of kid-free fun in the new Sloan Museum!', 'Adults 21+ ONLY (valid ID required)', 'Beer and Wine available for purchase!', 'The Coffee Beanery and the Museum Store will be open.', and '1221 E. KEARSLEY ST. FLINT, MI 48503'. On the right side of this box is a black and white photograph of two women smiling and talking. At the bottom of the ad, it says 'Tickets at [www.SloanLongway.org/AfterHours](http://www.SloanLongway.org/AfterHours)' in a bold, sans-serif font.

## Schwartz ...

(Continued from Page 17)

before our wise elders passed, like the conversation between Dolores Ennis and Gloria Coles,” Schwartz recalled. “We have excerpts of these interviews posted online at: <https://soundcloud.com/flintpubliclibrary>.”

“And the best memory is opening day, May 19, 2022, when we finally welcomed the public into the newly renovated building,” Schwartz said. “There was so much joy from everyone in celebrating this much-loved building that now has a new life and a new future! What a privilege for me to have had a career that allowed me to participate in this incredible project,” she recalled.

Schwartz added, “The focus is always on me when people ask about the library, but there were four of us who acted completely as a team – literally in every meeting, in on every decision, reaching consensus and carrying out what seemed like crazy ideas. These people are rarely mentioned but I could not have arrived at this place without them: Leslie Acevedo, Connie Palmer and Rick Dunning. We were a team of four, not one person, who brought the library through its tough economic times and into a future in this beautiful building.”

Kay is a charter member of the Rotary Club of Greater Flint Sunrise. She is a board member of the Library of Michigan, serves on the Steering Committee of the Flint and Genesee Literacy Network, co-chairs the Rotary Area 7 Literacy Committee and is Treasurer of the Flint Cultural Center Academy Board of Education.

Her official retirement date is June 30, 2023, and the library will soon begin a formal search for her replacement.

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

## Chancellor ...

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can. Each side has to cut some slack to the other. That’s why I’m saying, at the end of the day, is the institution important to you at this point, or is it your personal preference. This is the time — when it’s the institution that comes first.

“I tell it like it is. I am here not to hurt the institution, not to hurt any faculty here. I am here to save this institution, to make this institutionally fi-

nancially viable, academically strong, for generations of students to come.

“If we can do this transformation, the future is really, really bright — just wait and see. It will really be good for the institution, for the students. It will really be good for Flint.”


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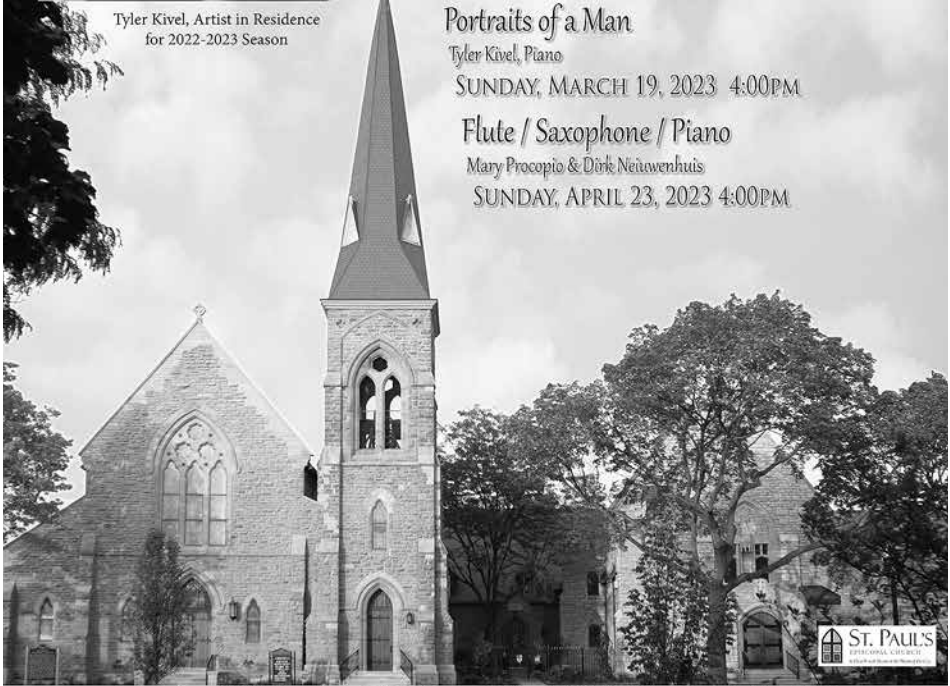
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# Kay Schwartz has retirement plans: time with grandchildren and time “to sit and read” in the library she transformed

By Tom Travis

After 24 years at the Flint Public Library and playing a major role in its dramatic renovation, Kay Schwartz has plans for her retirement: spending time with her growing number of grandchildren and going to that library, as a patron this time, to simply “sit and read.”



**Flint Public Library Director  
Kay Schwartz**

(Photo source: FPL website)

For the past seven years, Schwartz led the library’s team of staff, board and community members on a quest to transform that library into a 21st century learning center, with a vision “to be Flint’s go-to place to learn for live,” as she described it. In a press release, FPL’s Board of Trustees and President Reta Stanley wrote, “We have been blessed with strong, courageous, dedicated directors who have led and shaped this institution into a community jewel. Kay Schwartz has been one such leader. And now, as is true for all longstanding organizations, we will be saying farewell as Kay looks ahead to retirement and we begin the process of searching for the

next Director who will lead us into the future.

“Kay has guided this organization through extraordinary challenges as well as triumphs. She will leave the library in solid financial shape, with a strong staff, a fully renovated building, and a foundation upon which to build for the future.

“The Board has retained Bradbury Miller Associates of Canton, OH to identify potential candidates for the position of Executive Director. Our current schedule will have the new Director hired and ready for a leadership transition by June of 2023. You can stay up to date on the search process through news posts on our website or by following the Library on Facebook.

“We are grateful for Kay’s dedicated service and active involvement in seeking a successor. We wish her nothing but the best as she moves toward a new phase of life.”

to become a department head in Technical Services which encompasses IT (Information Technology), materials purchasing and cataloging. So she already had been part of the library administration for five years when she came on board as interim director.

“In 2009 the previous FPL Director [Mondowney] was head-hunted away from us by the Detroit Public Library,” Schwartz said. “The board asked me to serve as interim director starting in September 2009 while they did a search. I did not apply for the job – I was happy where I was!

“After a year as interim, the board had not found a director and I had settled into the job, including passing a millage renewal with an increase. So in September 2010, the board asked me to stay on as library director and I agreed,” she said.

Schwartz holds a Masters of Li-



**Flint Public Library’s Grand Opening May 2022**

(Photo source: The FPL website)

## **Schwartz’ path to become FPL Director**

In 2004 when Gloria Coles retired and Jo Anne Mondowney became director, Schwartz was asked

library and Information Science (MILS) from The University of Michigan School of Information. She calls her time at FPL as her “second career” — because for almost 20 years before her

(Continued on Page 17)



## Schwartz ...

(Continued from Page 16)

career at the FPL she worked as a CPA (Certified Public Accountant) mostly with Dupuis & Ryden in Flint (now Plante Moran).

“As the economic downturn hit Flint in the 2010s, following the worldwide economic crisis, I used every skill I had in accounting and budgeting to find ways we could move the library forward with a steep decline in millage revenue (due to the property value decline in Flint),” Schwartz explained.

**“At 72, I’m ready to be retired.” – Schwartz**

“Since this is my second career, I started late. I’ll turn 72 in January and am ready to be retired. My husband Mark and I have three grandchildren, all under age 7, and one on the way. So I’m eager to spend more time with them. I also have a huge family history project – boxes and boxes of letters, photos, family genealogy, that I want to digitize and post on Ancestry to share with other family members,” Schwartz said.

“This is our home. We have been 42 years in the same house in Flushing and my husband was born and raised in Flint. My husband Mark owns Mark Schwartz Violins and has no plans to retire! Everyone in the family is really pleased. They know how hard our team has worked over the past five years to make the renovated building happen and everyone agrees it’s time for me to kick back,” Schwartz said.

**The best of times, the worst of times – Schwartz reflects on years at FPL**

“There were some really tough times in 2013 and 2014 when tax values in Flint were crashing and so was our millage revenue. We had to lay off staff, cut library hours,

close branches and plan for a very uncertain future with expert library consultants. When I look back at that time, I am so moved by the trust and teamwork it required to push through,” Schwartz recalled.

“Our staff, the library board, our funders, and the public were incredibly supportive of our management team doing what we had to do. We asked the public for and received millage increases and also a bond issue to fund the renovation. This public support cannot be credited only to me or my team but rather to

meaningful to her:

- MLK Day Celebrations with John Rhymes’ group of young men performing and giving the “I have a Dream” speech. “The floor used to shake when the boys step-danced, which is one reason they welded 500 steel beams to support the floors in our renovation!” she said.

- Jim Abbott bringing his book tour for *Imperfect: An Improbable Life* to the library and staying several hours to sign books for all 200 people who not only wanted their books signed but also to remi-



Flint Public Library’s temporary location in Burton during the massive renovation (Photo by Tom Travis)



FPL Director Kay Schwartz talks with a patron in the lobby of the new library (Photo by Tom Travis)

decades of service to this community from our staff as well as leadership from the directors who preceded me, particularly Gloria Coles who was director for 20 years,” Schwartz said.

Schwartz recounted some specific memories that are especially

nise with him.

- The StoryCorps Project that recorded 40-minute conversations between family and friends that will be saved at the Library of Congress. “Many of these were captured just

(Continued on Page 14)

# THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

A selection of events available to our readers is highlighted — beginning after our publication date of Dec. 12. It's a sampling of opportunities in the city. To submit events for our Feb. issue, email info about your event to [pisenber@gmail.com](mailto:pisenber@gmail.com) by Jan. 26.

## Flint Institute of Arts

The FOMA film series continues with "A Man of Integrity" Dec. 16, 17 and 18. Also featured at the FIA is "Enchanted: A History of Fantasy Illustration" on exhibit in the Hodge and Henry Galleries through Jan. 8. Free glass demonstrations can also be seen on Saturdays and Sundays.

Flint Institute of Arts

1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint

For more info visit [flintarts.org](http://flintarts.org) or call 810-234-1695.

## MW Gallery (MW) Guided Tours

Weekly on Thurs. Fri., and Sat., 12:00 p.m.

These are led by knowledgeable gallery staff.

Discuss and learn general themes related to current works on display.

Limited to 10 people.

MW Gallery

111 E. Court St., Flint

For more info call 810-835-4900.

## Christmas at Crossroads Holiday Magic 2022

Dec. 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, and 30, 4-9 p.m.

Ride the Huckleberry Railroad, see the extensive lights displayed, watch Village artisans make crafts, and enjoy a Christmas Dinner Buffet (separate from ticket prices) Dinner reservations suggested but walk-ins are accepted based on availability.

Crossroads Village

6140 Bray Rd., Flint

Call 810-736-7100 x6 to make dinner reservations or visit [geneseecountyparks.org/crossroads-village](http://geneseecountyparks.org/crossroads-village) for more info.

## Firebirds OHL Hockey at Dort Financial Center

Dec. 16, 28, and 30, and Jan. 6, 7, 21, 22, and 28.

Games are Wed, Fri. and Sat. at 7 p.m., Sun. at 4 p.m.

Come cheer the Flint Firebirds on.

Cost \$15, \$18, \$21 and \$26 per person.

Dort Financial Center

3501 Lapeer Rd., Flint

For more info visit [geneseecountyparks.org](http://geneseecountyparks.org) or call 810-744-0580.

## Holiday Pops at The Whiting

Dec. 17, 7 p.m.

The Flint Symphony Orchestra, conducted by guest artist Abdiel Vázquez, presents a variety of Christmas music, a time-honored favorite during the holiday season.

Cost: \$15-\$40.

The Whiting

1241 Kearsley St., Flint

Call 810-237-3443 or visit [thewhiting.com/events/detail/holiday-pops-2](http://thewhiting.com/events/detail/holiday-pops-2)

## Snowshoeing 101 at For-Mar Nature Preserve & Arboretum

Fri., Dec. 28, 2 - 4 p.m.

Learn the history of snowshoeing and how to use them, then hit the trail to try it. Snowshoes are provided. It won't be canceled if there's no snow, the curriculum will just switch to hiking and tracking. For ages 5 and older. Pre-registration required by Dec. 27.

Cost \$5 per person.

For-Mar Nature Preserve & Arboretum

2142 N. Genesee Rd., Burton

For more info visit [geneseecountyparks.org](http://geneseecountyparks.org) or call 810-736-7100 for more info.

## Flint Community Players presents "The Spitfire Grill"

Jan. 12, 13, 14, 20, 21 at 7:30 p.m.,

and Jan. 15 and 22 at 2:30 p.m.

This musical tale is about a woman who works at a restaurant in a town in Wisconsin which is not selling. She begins an essay contest to raffle it off but it brings way more entries than she anticipated.

Cost: \$20

Flint Community Players

2462 Ballenger Highway, Flint

For more info call 810-441-9302 or visit [flintcommunityplayers.com](http://flintcommunityplayers.com).

## Dr. Martin Luther King Inspiration Breakfast

Jan. 16., registration starts at 9 a.m.

This program, "Navigating New Norms" features speaker, DeAndra Larking, chief of Staff at Mott Community College, is brought by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flint & Genesee County.

Cost: \$20.

Call 810-235-0617 or visit

[give.classy.org/newnorm](http://give.classy.org/newnorm)

for more info.



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

## Village Life ...

(Continued from Page 20)

a resource for the community and provide people with an alternative to the frustrating health system.”



**Dr. Harris' seventh floor office in the Northbank Center downtown Flint**

(Photo submitted by Dr. Harris)

Health care is becoming less accessible for many residents of Flint and Genesee County, with 60 per cent of Genesee County residents reporting difficulty getting appointments. Additionally, the high cost of medical care is pricing people out with one in two people worrying about their deductible and one in four people not picking up medications because of cost.

Overall, medical debt is the leading cause of bankruptcy in the United States, and each year more and more people opt to avoid the

health system and not address health problems because of concern for medical debt, poor health access, or lack of trust in the health system. Patients can enroll today by visiting [harrisfamilyhealth.com](http://harrisfamilyhealth.com) and all are welcome to come to the Grand Opening in January, according to Harris.

**“I always knew I wanted to come back to Michigan”  
- Dr. Aisha Harris**

While working in the traditional health care system, Harris described an “ah-ha” moment: “While I was in Chicago and doing my residency I was observing. I always knew I wanted to come back to Michigan. When I began to practice medicine at Flint’s Hamilton Health Clinic I became more and more aware of the barriers my patients were facing. That’s when I began to think about going out on my own to practice medicine. I began to research Direct Primary Care last year and had learned about it a little bit in medical school but didn’t fully understand it, yet. The direct primary care idea is exciting to me.”

**“I want to talk to people and understand what they’re going through”**

Harris’ initially began as an chemical engineering student at UM-Flint but switched to pre- med in her junior year. She explained that her interest in science began at a young age. She participated in programs at Kettering during high school.

She said when she was 17 she had decided to major in Chemical Engineering in college. “When I was 17, the idea of four years of college then going to medical school, just wasn’t in my planned trajectory.” Harris admits she didn’t really know anyone else headed to medical school, so planning for it just wasn’t in her head.

“I spent the summer before my senior year of college in New Orleans and volunteered at an HIV/AIDS house,” she recalled. “From that experience I felt like I wanted to do more direct care with patients. I don’t want to be in the background somewhere making the equipment or making the drugs. I want to talk to people and understand what they’re

(Continued on Page 14)

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Magazine**

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Box 7  
720 E. Second St.  
Flint MI, 48503.



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## Village Life

# A new type of health care coming to Flint in January

By Tom Travis

**H**arris Family Health, Flint's first direct primary care clinic, is opening in downtown Flint in January, 2023. It is a membership-based primary care clinic started by Flint native, Dr Aisha [pronounced eh-sha] Harris MD, aimed at offering members more time and access to their doctor so they can prioritize their health and get the care they deserve with no surprise bills. A Grand Opening will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 10, 2023 from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Northbank Center, 432 N Saginaw St, Suite 401A, Flint, MI 48502.

Since graduating from medical school, completing a physician's residency in Chicago, and working the last two years at Hamilton Community Health Clinic in Flint, Harris saw barriers to quality healthcare with many of her patients. Some of those barriers include: financial, high deductibles; patients finding it difficult to afford co-pays; difficulty getting to a doctor; difficulty scheduling appointments because so many doctors are over-booked; and patients who are uninsured.

"The pandemic changed access in health care by people doing telephone or video calls to medical professionals more," Harris said. "That closed some of the gap but it is still a challenge for many to get to a doctor." She said she plans to utilize telephone and video calls for appointments.

Harris explained, "People let their health problems build up ... I kept hearing these challenges that people were having and I felt that we [the medical community] ... weren't doing the community justice as far as

the best care they could get."

After years of experience in the traditional health system, Harris decided she wanted to provide an innovative and affordable way to access primary care and decrease the hassle and barriers to quality health



**Dr. Aisha Harris, MD**  
(Photo submitted by Dr. Harris)

care. Harris Family Health is an affordable membership-based primary care service that does not involve health insurance and provides comprehensive care starting at a monthly membership fee is \$30/month for children (ages 4-17), \$60/month for adults under 40 years of age and \$80/month for adults over age 40.

Harris will see patients in her

seventh floor office in the Northbank Center Building on Saginaw Street just north of the Flint river. Harris is a Family Practice physician and can see patients from infancy to the elderly. Harris explains there will be discounted wholesale prices for labs and medications to save patients money. Harris adds that Direct Primary Care is an alternative to health coverage for the community, especially those with no insurance, high deductible health plans, or small businesses that want to provide health benefits to employees, according to a press release from Harris Family Health.

The Direct Primary Care model is about 20 years old, explained Harris. "As the health care system has changed and expanded into large health systems and became less personalized. Direct Primary Care has grown nationally," Harris added.

Harris said she hopes her clinic helps patients feel empowered to make the best decisions they want and make them more affordable. "Direct Pay Care is new to Flint but it is a great opportunity to feel like they can improve their health outcomes, to feel like they have someone in their corner advocating for them and feel like they have strong doctor/patient relationship," according to Harris.

A 2011 UM-Flint graduate, Harris returned to Flint in 2020 after her training in Chicago at the University of Illinois and medical school in Washington, DC at Georgetown University. Harris is a board certified family medicine physician whose goal is to improve health access and outcomes in the Flint and Genesee County community. She wants to "be

*(Continued on Page 19)*