

East Village Magazine

March 2023



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Commentary
MSU, Mass shootings, and guns.
Will anything change? What's next?

By Paul Rozycki

Two days. That's all it took for the horrific shooting at Michigan State University to become old news and be replaced by the newest shootings. In the two days following the Feb. 13 shooting that killed three MSU students, sent five to the hospital, and dominated the state and local news, the nation saw four more mass shootings --- three on Feb. 14 and one more on Feb. 15. By the end of the weekend there were ten more reported mass shootings.

were present and weren't physically injured will carry the trauma of the shootings for a long time.

What is the lasting impact on those students who regularly go through 'shooter drills' in their classrooms, knowing they could be the next target of a mass shooting? What is the impact on everyone else who goes to a shopping mall or any public event, wondering where the next mass shooting will take place?

It's changed a lot of routine behavior as well. A few weeks ago,



MSU's logo

(Photo source: MSU's website)

On the first day of 2023, New Year's Day, there were seven mass shootings, and by Feb. 20, there were at least 82 mass shootings in the U.S.

Internationally, the U.S. dramatically exceeds most other nations in mass shootings and suicides.

Like the sports and weather reports, it seems the daily mass shooting story has become a standard part of the nightly newscast.

Impact on students
(and everyone else)

The impact of this on all of us is overwhelming. Obviously those who have been shot or injured and their families will have their lives altered forever. But even those who

as I was entering the "Chrome and Ice" car show at the Dort Event Center, security asked if I was carrying a gun. (Since I hadn't planned on machine gunning a '69 Corvette, I answered no.)

What can be done?

In the past the typical public reaction to mass shootings has been predictable.

First, we hear of the shooting. Then, we offer 'thoughts and prayers' to those affected. Then, there is a brief discussion of 'doing something' --- perhaps stricter gun control legislation. Then, everything is forgotten as the next news story --- perhaps another shooting --- takes place, and

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Cover: "Star Pointer" sculpture by John R. Henry at Flint's cultural center



Photo of the Month: Arch above entrance to St. Matthew Church (Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

Education Beat Analysis

Flint Ed Board badly divided on two “safety” issues: clear backpacks, legal reimbursement

By Harold C. Ford

“Enhancing safety measures, such as a clear backpack policy, should not need debate, nor should it take months to implement.”

– Bruce Jordan, Michigan Education Association UniServ director, reacting to a Flint Board of Education vote rejecting a clear backpack policy

“I think we’re basing this on emotions and not evidence-based research.”

– Laura MacIntyre, Flint Board of Education trustee, during discussion of a clear backpack policy, Feb. 15, 2023

At its Feb. 15 regular meeting, the seven members of the Flint Board of Education (FBOE) found themselves badly divided on two issues of “safety” – one involving the district’s approximate 3,000 students, the other focused primarily on one member of the board.

On the very day tens of thousands rallied across the state and the nation mourning the victims of the Feb. 13 mass shooting at Michigan State University (MSU), Flint’s education board defeated a motion to require clear backpacks for the district’s approximate 3,000 students.

FBOE President Michael Clack

began the Feb. 15 meeting calling for a moment of silence for the MSU victims – three dead and five others fighting for their lives in Lansing-area hospitals.

Also at the Feb. 15 meeting, a second issue of “safety” was raised by FBOE Secretary Claudia Perkins near the meeting’s end. Perkins clearly referenced the safety of FBOE members, specifically that of Trustee Laura MacIntyre after an alleged assault on MacIntyre by former FBOE member Danielle Green on March 23, 2022.

Perkins and MacIntyre excoriated the decision one week earlier by four FBOE members – Clack, Vice President

Terae King, Treasurer Dylan Luna, and Trustee Melody Relerford – to reimburse Green’s legal fees. With raised voice, Perkins declared, in part:

“Safety . . . We have an obligation as a board to protect everybody up here [pointing to FBOE members on the auditorium stage at Accelerated Learning Academy] . . . I am an advocate for a victim over an abuser.”

“It’s a matter of safety . . . ethics . . . morality,” MacIntyre said in support of Perkins.

[A fuller accounting of comments by Perkins and MacIntyre is

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Education ...

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found online.]

Earlier in the same meeting, both Perkins and MacIntyre voted against the proposed clear backpack measure introduced as a safety measure for students; the proposal was supported by, among others, Flint Community Schools (FCS)

Superintendent Kevelin Jones and Bruce Jordan, Michigan Education Association UniServ Director representing the United Teachers of Flint (UTF).



Flint Board of Education meets in the Accelerated Learning Academy

(Photo by Tom Travis)

Safety Issue #1

A motion by Luna, supported by King, to require and provide clear backpacks for the district's approximate 3,000 students confirmed the emergence of voting blocs on Flint's newly-formed school board following the November, 2022 election. But this time, Relerford became a swing vote that led to the defeat of Luna's motion.

"We've been talking about this [backpack policy] for weeks," Luna said. "It's just one [step] to keep our schools, staff, and community members safe ... The unfortunate incidents at Michigan State highlight the need for us to be proactive."

"This is about safety," said Jones, himself a parent of a sixth-grader at Doyle/Ryder. "This is a concern for teachers and this is a concern for principals ... The teachers are saying to us, 'Yes, absolutely, we want this.'"

A statement provided *East Village Magazine (EVM)* by Michigan Education Association UniServ Director Bruce Jordan read, in part:

"I do not believe that this is merely a 'backpack' issue. Increasing safety measures, whether it be clear

backpacks, adding additional building-level security personnel, investing in more entryway metal detectors for all buildings, or providing districtwide bookbag scanners at all entrances, is the issue. The Flint Community Schools' central administration ... the United Teachers of Flint, and the building administrators are in lockstep with this issue."

Feedback

Critics of the clear backpack proposal cited lack of input by stakeholders, especially parents:

- Perkins: "We needed to hear something from them (parents)."
- Relerford: "I don't think we've heard from every teacher and every parent."

Luna said FBOE members had nearly a month to seek input from the community since the issue of backpacks came before the board on Jan. 19. Since then, Luna said, he'd met with parents, teachers, and principals on the matter.



FBOE Treasurer Dylan Luna

(Photo by Tom Travis)

"Get in the community, get in the schools, and ask these questions," said a frustrated Luna while rapping repeatedly on the table with his hand. "This is a clear example of

the board getting in the way of good policy."

Research

"I think we're basing this on emotions and not evidence-based research," MacIntyre claimed.

Research on the effectiveness of clear backpacks is scarce and endorse-

ments are less than ringing as suggested in a Nov. 6, 2019 piece by *Bloomberg News's* Sarah Holder:

"Since the 1990s, transparent plastic book bags have been promoted as a security solution after school shootings and terror

attacks. But their true effects are hazy ... Along with active-shooter drills, metal detectors, and visitor's badges, the transparent accessories are now familiar elements in the security theater that laces the American public education experience ... But what, if anything, do these (clear backpacks) accomplish to improve public safety?"

Cost

FCS Assistant Superintendent Keiona Murphy told board members the cost to provide backpacks to the district's approximate 3,000 students would be \$36,000 and that government funding was available to cover the cost.

Relerford and Perkins questioned that cost of providing 3,000 clear backpacks.

Luna estimated the cost at .00024 percent of the district's nearly \$150 million in COVID relief funds. "There's no price tag on keeping scholars safe," he said.

Before the clear backpack policy was voted down, Clack said, "I would hate to have to be the one to have to explain to one of the parents if something were to happen that, 'We just wanted to save money.'"

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Rozycki Commentary ...

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the process repeats. It's easy to be cynical about prospects for any meaningful change in our gun culture.



One of the several outdoor kiosks painted green by UM - Flint students to honor MSU's victims of the recent mass shooting

(Photo by Tom Travis)

It's possible that will be the story of the shooting at MSU. But there is a little hope that things just might be different this time. Students, faculty, and staff have organized protests at the capitol in Lansing, and they seem serious about keeping the pressure on. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has proposed several pieces of legislation on gun control. After the MSU shootings she said, "The time for thoughts and prayers is over" as she called for action on the gun issue.

Support for stricter gun laws was part of her reelection campaign last year and she is supporting what she calls "common sense" gun laws that would include universal background checks when buying a firearm, red flag laws that would remove guns from those who might harm themselves or others, and safe storage requirements for those who own guns.

With a slim Democratic majority in the state House and Senate, it's possible that those modest measures

might become law. But she can't afford to lose a single Democratic vote and Republicans and pro-gun lobbyists have already said they would initiate recall campaigns against anyone who votes for the gun control measures.

That could be a real threat for Democrats in marginal districts. Will some Republicans support her measures, particularly if they include some provisions for dealing with mental health issues? It's possible, but gun control has been a hard sell for many years.

Yet, even if all those measures become law, will they change the pattern of gun violence?

Guns in the United States, the 2nd Amendment, and the NRA

Except for a few nations in the midst of civil wars, the U.S. is unique in our gun culture. We have more guns in the country than people--- perhaps 400 million guns in a nation of 330 million. Every time there is a serious attempt at gun control sales of guns shoot up. We also have more gun deaths due to murder, suicide or accidents than most other nations.

The 2nd Amendment

The 2nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution says, "A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed."

In recent years, that amendment has been interpreted to guarantee a wide-ranging individual right to own firearms. But it wasn't always that way. For most of American history, the 2nd Amendment had been interpreted to give states the power to create armed militias for their own protection, not an individual guarantee.

But that all changed with two cases in recent years. In the cases of *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2009) and *McDonald v. Chicago* (2010) the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that there was an individual right to own arms and limited the ability of local, state,

or national governments to restrict or ban guns. Based on those two cases, many legal challenges have been filed against gun control laws in the last decade.

The National Rifle Association: NRA

One of the most powerful lobby groups opposing any gun control legislation has been the National Rifle Association. Composed of nearly five million members, it has been the most powerful lobbying group against gun control legislation. But it wasn't always that way. Founded in 1871, for many years it was a non-partisan hobby group of gun enthusiasts and hunters who simply wanted to improve their skills and share their interests.



The Michigan Capitol building in Lansing seen from the State Senate building. The flag is half-staff a day after the MSU shooting

(Photo by Tom Travis)

It even supported a number of gun control laws up through the 1960s. But beginning in 1975, it evolved into a major lobbying group on gun rights and became increasingly aligned with the Republican Party. It was listed by *Fortune* magazine as one of the nation's most influential lobbying organizations. The NRA's political committees spend tens of millions of dollars in most elections, supporting candidates who oppose gun control.

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Rozycki Commentary ...

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They have been a major factor in blocking significant gun control legislation. Today many critics see the NRA as a lobbyist for gun manufacturers as much as gun owners and hunters.

Beyond gun control

As difficult as it might be to pass any meaningful gun control legislation, it would be great if that would totally solve the problem. It's more complex than that.

Certainly more needs to be done in dealing with mental health. More than a few of the mass shooters have exhibited serious mental health issues. Some policies aimed at improving mental health services might find bipartisan support.

Passing laws doesn't always guarantee they will, or can be, enforced. A city can pass tough gun control measures (as Chicago has) but if someone can step over the city boundaries or cross a state line to buy a gun, it may mean little. With 400 million guns in the country, it's unlikely that any government can oversee every garage sale, flea market, or sale out of a car trunk.

Finally, it is worth remembering that, for all the attention mass shootings receive, they are a small portion of the gun deaths in the nation. In a typical year, in 2022, there were over 44,000 gun deaths, more than 24,000 were suicides and more than 20,000 were murders. Only about 750 of those were the result of a mass shooting incident.

We can only hope that the reaction to the Michigan State shootings can be a first step in dealing with the gun issue that sets the United States apart from all other industrialized nations.

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

Education ...

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Voting against the clear backpack proposal: Perkins; Ellis-McNeal; MacIntyre; and Relerford.

Voting for: Clack; King; and Luna.

Safety Issue #2

"We support criminality."

At the Feb. 15 FBOE meeting, Perkins, newly-elected FBOE treasurer, seemed incensed by the board's four-vote decision a week earlier to pay \$6,000 for the legal expenses taken on by former member Green following her alleged assault upon MacIntyre.

"I was not in favor of paying for someone that assaulted somebody," Perkins said. "If anyone of us are hurt in any way, shape, or form, we should



Claudia Perkins being sworn in as a Trustee of the Flint Board of Education.
(Photo by HC Ford)

be protected," she said, pointing to other board members. "I saw the previous board unanimously remove that lady [Green] from the presidency because they all witnessed the beatdown [of MacIntyre] ... The precedent was set that we support criminality."

Relerford, who made the motion at the board's Feb. 8 meeting to pay Green's fees, defended the move: "I wanted to get it off the district ... This district needs to move forward ... I'm just asking that we move on and stop rehashing the past."

Luna echoed Relerford's sentiment: "I'm going to focus ... on students and scholars and driving them forward and not rehashing old battles that we've already moved on."

"I'm going to vote my conscience

and I'm gonna move on," King added.
"Trust, transparency, I don't see it."

Perkins and Ellis-McNeal charged violations of policy and Michigan's Open Meetings Act from which Perkins, in part, recited:



FBOE Trustee Melody Relerford
(Photo by Tom Travis)

"A board may not meet informally in advance of a public meeting to determine what will be decided formally at the public meeting."

"Do you have proof that there's been a meeting you haven't been invited to?" Clack quickly asked.

"Obviously, something happened," Perkins shot back. "In my mind, someone met and talked."

King responded: "Terae King Jr., that was elected, did not meet informally. I was elected to be a person of integrity ... I make my own decision ... I'm disappointed I'm accused."

Perkins claimed a two-thirds vote of the board was needed to rescind the previous action of the board when it voted not to pay Green's fees. Ellis-McNeal additionally argued the board violated Robert's Rules of Order and FBOE Bylaws.

Referencing the vote to pay Green's legal fees on Feb. 8 without mentioning the amount, Perkins charged: "Trust, transparency -- I don't see it."

"How can you even look me in the eye?"

The critical comments by Perkins and Ellis-McNeal about payment of Green's legal fees preceded a verbal

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Village Life ...

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That Mayflower passenger was Gov. William Bradford, a Puritan separatist who came to the U.S. desiring to loose the grip of The Church of England. It is said that on the trip Bradford led prayer meetings for the 102 passengers. Eventually, he became the Governor of the Plymouth Colony. Another ancestor through my father's line landed on our shores a few years after the Mayflower.

So my family, my people, have been in the United States for a long time. An ancestor of my great-grandmother Helen, through my father's line, arrived on the Mayflower in 1623. An ancestor of my great-grandmother's side through my mother's line, Bertha, landed in Boston from England in 1637.

According to DNA testing, my family line is 79% from England, North-western Europe, Channel Island, Wales, Switzerland, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Isle of Man, Germany, France, Belgium, Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Russia, and Slovenia. Conclusion: I'm white!

More interesting to me, rather than which countries my people came from, are some of the unique and quirky names my ancestors had, like: my great-grandparents' names were Isaac Newton Smith and Bertha Alvaretta Hart, then in 1685 there's my eighth great-grandfather Sampson Mason who named his son Palatiah; he married Hapzibah and they had two daughters named Bethia in 1665 and Thankful (Travis) in 1672. Bertram Round, my fifth-great-grandfather, was born in 1741. More of my ancestors' names include Eliphalet, Philoathia, Jerusha, Content, Israel Dwinneel, Flavia, Submit Pineo, Return Babcock and my favorite, Freeloove Harrington.

There are roadblocks in doing genealogy research. Records are lost or destroyed in fires and floods. Court-houses, churches and family bibles are common places for important documents to be stored. If these key documents are destroyed linking the present to the past family's stories can

be gone forever.

It is powerful and deeply meaningful in knowing your roots, where you came from and who your people are. Genealogy has allowed me and my family to be connected to our past by learning the names of our ancestors who served in World Wars I and II, the Spanish American War, the Civil War, the American Revolution. We've learned which ancestors had religious affiliations and which ones had none. We learned about those who were prominent and helpful people in their times and others who were, well shall we say, not so helpful.

Activist Angela Davis' ancestors and mine came over on the Mayflower

My sister in her research is not alone. It seems that in recent years there has been a push calling for people to research their roots and build a family tree. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. has made discovering one's ancestry popular with his PBS show "Finding Your Roots." As the host, Gates invites a celebrity or public figure to sit with him at a table. The guest will discover what Gates has uncovered about their ancestors and family tree. Sometimes the revelations are intense and dumbfounding or even outright unbelievable. Like when it was revealed that Actor Larry David who has famously portrayed Senator Bernie Sanders on SNL and other venues that David and Sanders are actually related.

Recently, in a more poignant and sobering episode, famed civil rights activist Angela Davis was Gates' guest on the show. Davis has spent her life fighting for equality and against white supremacy. Davis was shocked to learn that some of her ancestors came to America on the Mayflower.

As Davis turned the pages of the book prepared by Gates she was shocked to learn that her ancestry included several White men who had enslaved people. One ancestor was a white attorney in the south. Speechless, Davis sat looking at the evidence that she had an ancestor that who was white -- and

a prominent attorney. Davis, looking at Gates said, "To be a white, educated southern attorney you had to belong to a group like the Ku-Klux-Klan or other white supremacy groups. Davis concluded, still looking shocked, "It's good to know my genealogy history. It's good to know my ancestry. Even though they're not necessarily my people."

I confess, as I look back on my family's lineage, I too don't know quite what to say as Davis struggled to find the words. While I don't know the thoughts and philosophies my ancestors operated from, one thing is almost certain, they were white.

The Mayflower arrived around the time the 1619 enslaved shipping trade routes were established. When I think about the Black Lives Matter protests that erupted in 2020, some that I marched in and others I reported on as a community journalist, it makes me cringe to think that my ancestors could have, and most likely did, play a part in the advancement of the evil of slavery.

Resources genealogy research

African-Americans often find roadblocks in following their ancestry because the records of enslaved people didn't survive over the years or weren't ever recorded. A helpful link for African-Americans to search for their family records is enslaved.org.

If you get the urge to discover your family tree which can be an often overwhelming and never ending task, my genealogist sister suggests to begin your journey at the Flint Public Library genealogy department. Also, the Flint Genealogical Society (FGS) has many resources for genealogy beginners such as flintgenealogy.org. The FGS meets regularly and invites beginners to attend to learn more about searching for ancestors. Another genealogy resource is familysearch.org which offers free resources.

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Sen. John Cherry hopeful about legislative agenda: “We can get that done”

By Jan Worth-Nelson and Tom Travis

When somebody texted John Cherry at home early in the morning after election night Nov. 8 to tell him the Democrats had taken the majority in the Michigan Legislature, he says he “literally started crying.”

The next morning, he hurried from Flint into his Lansing office as a state representative, a position he had held since 2018. On the wall, there was a white board listing all the bills he had been proposing and hoped to pass.

“I went down that list one by one and I said, “yeah, I can get that one done... We can do that... we’ll be able to do that” -- all the stuff I was working really, really hard to do, and the world of possibility opened up.”

It was a great moment after years in the minority for Cherry, 37, newly elected that same night to a four-year term as State Senator -- District 27 -- replacing his friend, neighbor and colleague James Ananich. Ananich had term-limited out and is now CEO of the Greater Flint Health Coalition.

The 27th District expands Cherry’s previous constituency as a state rep: it includes part of Burton and all of Clayton Township, Flint, Flint Township, Flushing, Flushing Township, Gaines Township, Grand Blanc, Grand Blanc Township, Mount Morris, Mount Morris Township, Mundy Township, and Swartz Creek.

In an interview in his new office in the State Senate office building in Lansing, surrounded by artifacts of his hometown and the multi-generational political family he comes from, Cherry said he’s embracing “a very full schedule” as things ramp up in the new legislative era.

That particular day, Valentine’s Day, was haunted -- the building and the seat of state government almost empty following the mass shooting at Michigan State the night before.

All of Cherry’s meetings that day were cancelled, but he came in from Flint anyway because, he said, “I can’t afford to lose a day” -- the raw tragedy of the night before, he asserted, sure to propel Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the newly empowered

languished in a house committee.

He’s expecting -- or at least working toward -- a repeal of the retirement tax; an expansion of the Working Families Tax Credit including earned income tax credit; inflation relief checks; and semi-per-

manent funding source for the Strategic Outreach and Attraction Reserve (SOAR) the state’s economic development fund.

Cherry’s devotion to public service has been nurtured through a firm and longstanding family tradition. He is John Cherry III. His father, John Cherry, Jr., was a state representative for decades and the state’s

lieutenant governor under Gov. Jennifer Granholm. His mother, Pam Faris, also was a state representative from 2013 -2018. And his aunt, Deb Cherry, is the Genesee County treasurer.

His grandfather, John Cherry, Sr., worked for Bell Telephone but also was elected as the Montrose Township supervisor decades ago. His grandson still has the clipboard the senior Cherry carried in campaigning door to door -- Sen. Cherry himself carried it with him while campaigning last year.

His family has always operated on three basic premises: work hard, be honest, and try to help the folks you represent.

“I think I’m very lucky in the sense that I was born into a family whose perspective on public service is as mature as it is: there are just a few basic things that you go by. It all boils down to those same three things, he said.

“There’s a lot of political scandals that pop up, but if you follow those three things, a lot of the silliness goes away -- you don’t get into problems when you hold onto those things.

Initially, Cherry came to politics reluctantly. As a University of Michigan



State Senator John Cherry talks to EVM from his office that overlooks Michigan’s capitol building. The capitol’s flag is half-staff ordered so by Gov. Whitmer to honor the victims in the mass shooting at MSU the previous day.

(Photo by Tom Travis)

Democratic majority even more definitively toward a slate of “common sense gun reform measures” which Cherry strongly supports.

As the new majority gets organized, Cherry is taking multiple committee assignments, reflecting his background, experience, and interests in both the policy and appropriations sides. He is chair of the Labor Committee, Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee, and the General Government Appropriations Subcommittee.

He’s also vice chair of the Natural Resource and Agriculture Committee.

“I’ve been fortunate in my committee appointments,” he said, “in that they align with a lot of the things that I’m concerned about.”

There are many bills pending with hopeful prospects. With other Democrats, he’s eager to see Senate Bill 4, amending the Elliot Larsen Civil Rights act to include LGBTQ citizens in civil rights protections. (Cherry’s staff said a vote is expected in the Senate any day.) He’s co-sponsoring bills establishing universal lead screening and furthering a Jim Ananich proposal requiring schools and day care centers to install lead filters -- that bill made it through the Senate but

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Sen. Cherry ...

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-- Ann Arbor student, he started out as a history/political science major but "hated it," he says with a smile, and switched to natural resources and the environment, getting his degree in natural resources. Eventually, he got a masters in public policy from Ann Arbor as well.

"I told myself I would never run for elected office," he says. He and his wife Teresa started a coffee business, Flint Coffee Company, importing from her family in her native Peru.

But then, with an evolving taste for policy matters, he got interested in the Flint City Charter revision process, and ran for election to the charter commission in 2015. He was the top vote-getter and as vice-chair of the commission helped steer the charter revision through to the voters, who approved it 2-1. It took effect in 2018, the first revisions of the charter in more than 40 years. "That was a generational thing, and it involved policy minutia," he said. "I like that."

Following that, he ran for state representative in a race that drew wide attention because his competition in the primary was Dayne Walling, Flint's former mayor, who after getting defeated during the water crisis was trying to edge back into politics. But Walling's painful and decisive defeat by the new kid wasn't the only way the water crisis propelled Cherry's further entry into politics.

The water crisis, after all, burst unwelcome into the scene while the charter revision was going on.

"Watching stuff, in a way I felt ashamed -- maybe that's the best term -- because that event was an event of government mismanagement.

"Because of the circumstances that fate dealt, I have the ability to be more impactful than other people -- because I understand politics. Even if I swore off of it, I understand government, I was surrounded by everything -- but I had decided to not involve myself in that."

Yet he couldn't escape the reality of what was happening. His own neighborhood was affected, and he knew people personally directly hurt by the water crisis damage. At the end of the day he felt compelled to take the next step in political

involvement.

He said, "If you have the ability to have an impact and you don't, then there is a degree of responsibility there."

In his new office, there isn't a white board yet. But he can tell you several things that were on it and which are of particular concern to him. One involves manufactured housing reform and another, a proposal to facilitate pension benefits for state corrections officers.

He described how, his first year in office as a state rep, during coffee hours at Swartz Creek senior center, he learned that a company out of Utah called Haven Park had purchased some mobile home communities and was "engaging in unsavory business practices and really jacking up rent."

At many manufactured home parks, the residents own their own homes, but not the land they're anchored on -- making them vulnerable to the property owners. Investigating further, he found that same company had purchased communities in Fenton area and his colleague, Republican State Rep. Mike Mueller, was hearing the same things.

Cherry and Mueller brainstormed possibilities and developed a bi-partisan bill package detailing "the most significant reform in manufactured housing regulation in decades. He and his colleague ended up getting consumer advocacy groups, industrial association supporting it, got it through the house overwhelmingly-- but it died last year in the Senate.

He said private equity firms have been buying up manufactured home communities, and "if you don't have regular oversight, very easy to exploit people...the name 'mobile home' implies more mobility than exists -- many have a compromised ability to move your house, and if you can't afford the rent on the land, you can be evicted.

The bi-partisan reform package, proposed last term (HB4296-HB4304) which Cherry expects to reintroduce and strengthen in a more comprehensive package, increases licensing requirements, weeds out bad actors, and would require fair market compensation to the owner if there's a title transfer.

Cherry said between 300,000

and 500,000 live in manufactured housing communities in the state, many fixed or low income people. They don't have high-powered lobbyists, or big PACs, but they are people who need help, he said.

He's also eager to get to work on legislation to arrange for state conservation and corrections officers to be on a "defined benefits" schedule -- a pension plan, in other words, instead of a 401K arrangement as most of them are now. The proposal would equalize benefits to those of state troopers.

Cherry says the reasoning is serious and sound: corrections officers in particular "have one of the hardest jobs in state government," and many have shortened life expectancies or retire early -- not giving them enough time through a 401K program to assure a secure retirement. Cherry's staff confirmed they plan to introduce these bills by the end of February.

And as he plunges with renewed hope into the life of a legislator, Cherry is firmly bonded to his hometown, where his family recently added a new member, baby Ben, who joins six-year-old Diana. Diana attended day care at Mott Community College and takes dance lessons at the Flint School of Performing Arts.

Cherry goes home every night to his house in Flint. He does all the family grocery shopping and might commonly be seen in blue jeans at the local Rite-Aid.

"It's true -- I genuinely live in my community," he says. And as a member of the new majority in state politics, he calls for an era of civility.

He concedes that being in the majority calls for somewhat different skills than those exercised by the minority. He recalls advice from his friend David LeGrand (D-Grand Rapids), narrowly defeated for a state senate seat in November, about perils of majority rule.

"When you get in the majority, you can get arrogant, you can abuse power... if we want to get stuff done, we're going to have to be humble, we're going to have to plead...we have to be better internally in the minority if we want to achieve what we want to achieve ... That has stuck with me. So, we're in the majority and we should do what we think are good for the people of the State of Michigan, but I don't want to be

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Sen. Cherry ...

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abjectly vindictive or bad to the folks on the other side of the aisle who may have good things that they want to do, and dismiss it because of the party that they're in.

"There are people in our community who have always been represented by Democrats, and because of it being so partisan, some of the issues that they faced were not addressed, and that's not right. If people in Lapeer have a major issue that needs to be addressed, I don't want to stop because they're being represented by a Republican."

But he's also prepared to keep his head on straight, unflustered and unmoved by cynical political manipulations.

"One of the things my dad told me when I got elected in 2018," Cherry recalls, "was, just remember, your real friends are the ones you had before, and who live at home -- not the ones in Lansing."

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UM - Flint ...

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In summarizing the presentations, Feist-Price continued, "We will become the destination of choice for today's students by offering degree programs that are in demand by business and industry. *We will.*"

"We will answer the call for a highly skilled workforce in health related disciplines, polytechnic fields, business and industry, teacher education and so much more. *We will.*"

"We will graduate students who are critical thinkers as a result of interdisciplinary dynamic programs using experiential learning, flexible delivery and stackable credentials

"We will help to transform the Flint community with the support of our faculty, our students, and our staff, and in doing so, "We will positively impact families, communities, and ultimately the State of Michigan," she promised, "*We will.*"

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Education ...

(Continued from Page 7)

broadside from MacIntyre directed at the top two FCS administrators and the four new board members who ran as a coalition in the November, 2022 election – Clack, King, Luna, and Relerford.



FBOE Trustee Laura MacIntyre.
(Photo by Tom Travis)

"Four of you voted for something that was not proper," MacIntyre alleged "How can you even look me in the eye and justify your support of this [payment of Green's legal fees]?"

"I'm at a loss why the assaulter [Green] ... is getting any legal consideration," MacIntyre continued. "You all saw what happened; it was completely one-sided."

"I'm ashamed of this district"

MacIntyre also charged Jones and Assistant Superintendent Keiona Murphy with being "silent and complicit."

MacIntyre continued: "We already have an atmosphere that's charged with violence and threats and harassment and to make [this] decision, whether explicitly or tacitly, is ... sending a horrible example to the district and to the students."

"I'm ashamed of this district," MacIntyre said. "Shame on all of you for sitting here and being complicit with this."

The Flint board then quickly voted to end the meeting.

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



SLOAN

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Sloan Museum of Discovery will be open March 27-April 2 with special hours and 3-day camps for reading and STEM exploration for fun, skill-building challenges!

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AGE: 1ST-3RD GRADES



Maker Camp-Recycle
March 27-29, 2023
9 a.m. - Noon
AGE: 4TH-6TH GRADES



Promise of a “bold, strategic, transformative” future laid out by deans at UM - Flint town hall

By Jan Worth-Nelson

“Here at the University of Michigan - Flint, we dare to dream big. With market analyses, stakeholder engagement, and program economics, we have envisioned a bold, strategic and transformative future that is like nothing this university has ever experienced before here at the University of Michigan - Flint. We will.”

With that determined affirmation, at a town hall Feb. 17 at Riverfront Center, University of Michigan - Flint Provost Sonja Feist-Price introduced presentations by all six of the university’s deans on plans for “Strategic Transformation” of the academic side of the downtown campus.

On a cold, snowy morning when many schools and businesses were closed, about 75 people, mostly UM - Flint faculty and staff, joined the town hall in person. Chancellor Debashish Dutta said an additional 213 were live streaming the event.

Noting that the next phase of the Strategic Transformation will address the students services side of the institution, Dutta exhorted the audience, “The landscape is changing rapidly -- higher education, the societal landscape, the needs of the state and businesses and the country -- we live in a fast-paced world.

“This strategic transformation process is a unique opportunity,” Dutta said, “A once-in-50-years, maybe, opportunity – for UM-Flint to transform itself for the future, such that we become programmatically competitive, aligned with the needs of the state and the community, and a vibrant institution no matter what the enrollment is.”

The work is happening in response to a campus-wide process kicked off last September by then-UM president Mary Sue Coleman, who asserted UM - Flint’s problems are urgent and require immediate change.

Those problems include a \$7.3 million budget deficit, plunging enrollment, a 35 percent six-year graduation rate deemed “unacceptable,” a struggle to fill some humanities courses, and urgent unmet workforce needs in education and nursing.

The process has been shaped around research conducted by the Huron Group, a huge national consulting firm based in Chicago but with global influence that specializes in higher education



SEHS Dean Beth Kubitskey, SON Dean Cynthia McCurren, CAS Interim Dean Douglas Knerr, SOM Dean Yener Kandogan, CIT Dean Chris Pearson

(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

analyses for universities and colleges -- most often, like the UM - Flint, those facing fiscal and institutional challenges.

For the town hall, Dutta said, instead of listing what he said faculty already would have heard from their deans and departments, his team decided to take “a higher level view... we want you to imagine what UM - Flint as an institution could be like after this transformation. In this transformation, you will see the contours of that institution, through the academic lens. Today, try to imagine what this institution looks like academically.”

In a brief “synthesis” of their work, two Huron representatives, Gena Flynn and Nick Bradley, said that in consulting with the university, they had combined community engagement with market analysis and course economics

built on “market-informed opportunities, UM - Flint’s unique strengths and synergies, and mission driven imperatives.”

More detail on the Huron approach, along with a YouTube video of the entire town hall are available at umflint.edu/strategic-transformation/.

While fears among some faculty on the campus have centered on predictions of program and faculty cuts, Friday’s town hall was all about what could be added to address the campus’s fiscal woes and stem declining enrollment. If program cuts are under consideration, there was no word of them.

Listening closely, one could almost hear the notoriously hard shell of academia’s silos cracking. Three things stood out.

First, university administrators clearly are calling for turns as quickly and strongly as possible to “alternate modalities,” creating flexible and hybrid accessibility options for their students. Second, almost everyone mentioned partnerships and interdisciplinary

approaches -- both within the university and outside. And third, as if to acknowledge repeated concerns from many that the humanities and liberal arts are being targeted in talk of cost cutting, almost everyone acknowledged the contributions of the liberal arts as stand alone elements of higher education, for the community, and to their disciplines.

Feist-Price said the academic plans produced by the six colleges and schools in the first six months of the campus-wide effort, what she labeled “proposed growth initiatives,” include “37 existing academic programs that have potential to realize enrollment growth and 54 new programs suggested to be considered, launched, or tailored to new audiences.”

She said those programs would

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UM - Flint ...

(Continued from Page 12)

be “candidates for prioritization for investment,” and that is how each dean concluded his or her pitch.

The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), which has been the UM - Flint’s largest, led the others in both existing programs targeted for growth (6) and new programs considered (20). The others, respectively, are College of Health Sciences, 8 and 10; School of Nursing, 5 and 9; School of Education and Human Services, 3 and 5; College of Innovation and Technology (CIT), 4 and 6.

College of Innovation and Technology (CIT)

Dean Chris Pearson of the UM - Flint’s newest college, opened 18 months ago, said the newness of the CIT is one of its advantages, allowing it to be “focus on the future” and nimble in aligning its “polytechnic” approach to the market and to offer career opportunities, as he explained, in cyber security, chip manufacturing, automation technology, workforce development through experiential learning, authentic industry partnerships. battery manufacturing, artificial intelligence.

He predicted the CIT could well attract 1,000 additional students into its six proposed programs. He also noted liberal arts elements in these programs such as attention to emotional intelligence, would necessarily be included.

School of Management (SOM)

Dean Yener Kandoğan reviewed how “we cannot turn our backs” on students who need online course delivery or those who prefer different modalities. He said the SOM is pursuing hybrid options so that students can choose the modality that fits their learning styles and preferences. He noted that within the growing market of adult learners, most are in need of flexible programs and an accelerated format. He said in light of the age-old question of whether a general or specialized degree

program is better, student demand is trending toward the specialized models.

Nonetheless, he said the SOM is designing programs emphasizing intersections between technology and business, health and business. and offering stackable credentials. Finally, he said SOM recognizes workforce demands for soft skills such as communication and presentation skills and general management skills, and that those needs are being addressed both through embedding them within existing programs or offering certificate options.

College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)

The longest list of specifics came from Interim Dean Douglas Knerr, who asserted, “Politics, science, culture, and society are thoroughly entangled. The liberal arts and sciences must be as well, threading like fine fabric through the disciplines.

“CAS will be the driver of an ecosystem where the benefits of the liberal arts and sciences proliferate across the institution and into our community,” he predicted.

To accomplish that, he said, his staff and faculty have proposed “more than 100 innovative ideas and proposals, clustering around creating new modalities, concepts and program designs to meet students not just where they are but where they want to be” and to graduate students who are “career ready and with career sustaining skills across their lifetimes.”

These would include programs fusing “liberal and professional learning,” in 3D digital design, arts and technology, computational media and design, green chemistry. He said fully online and hybrid programs are under consideration in psychology, economics, philosophy, communication, foreign language and others. He said CAS aims to create a “Center for Outreach with Data Science” to provide data analytics and essential data services to the campus and community.

He stated CAS is aiming to create “innovative, interdisciplinary collaborations in economics, political science, music and art therapy with cultural heritage and history and labor studies, and

he said the college will “fully engage with the digital humanities, creating a digital scholarship lab to expand the limits of traditional humanities and how it seeks answers to questions about human culture.

Finally, he noted CAS is pursuing a cultural justice and society major along with options for community justice in sociology, anthropology, criminal justice and women’s and gender studies, a pre-law pathway, graduate options in mental health services.

School of Education and Human Services

Dean Beth Kubitskey affirmed that SEHS’s vision is to advance social change, equity and social justice -- to increase righting inequalities and expanding the diversity of the student population.

She stated community partnerships are the linchpin both to recruit students and create strategic course offerings -- as well as informing course and program designs and courses usable in multiple majors, and multiple modalities.

Noting a huge need for teachers and social workers locally and state-wide -- and adding that the State of Michigan has dedicated a half billion dollars toward helping recruit and train teachers, she said SEHS is beefing up dual enrollment for high school students, teaching certificates for school employees -- both face to face and online. Those partnerships include arrangements with the Flint Community Schools and the Genesee Intermediate School district, including special education teacher programs, revised elementary programs, and new interdisciplinary programs with CIT and SOM.

Both locally and nationally, social work has been identified as a critical need, she said, adding that the SEHS is designing an MSW program and looking at concentrations and modalities to match student needs..

School of Nursing (SON)

Dean Cynthia McCurren said a

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THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

A selection of events available to our readers is highlighted — beginning after our publication date of March. 6. It's a sampling of opportunities in the city. To submit events for our April. issue, email info about your event to pisenber@gmail.com by March. 26.

Flint Institute of Arts

Through April 16 the FIA presents "Expressions," works on paper which can still be seen in the Graphics Gallery. Now through April 23 "Ways of Seeing: The Paul R. Jones Collection of American Art at The University of Alabama" continues in the Hodge and Henry galleries.

The FOMA film series for March features "Cor-sage" March 10-12, "The Banshees of Inisherin" March 17-19 and "Women Talking" March 24-26. Free blown 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
or call 810-234-1695.

MW Gallery (MW) Guided Tours

Weekly on Thur. Fri., and Sat., 12:00 p.m.
These are led by knowledgeable gallery staff. Learn general themes related to current works on display. Guided tours are limited to 10 people.
MW Gallery
111 E. Court St., Flint
For more info call 810-835-4900.

Deidre McCalla Concert

Sat., March 11, 7:30 pm.
"A dreadlocked singer-songwriter-guitarist for close to five decades Deidre McCalla, Black woman, mother, lesbian, feminist, has long been in the forefront of the growing number of Black musicians reconfiguring perceptions of how Black folk do folk."
Tickets are \$15 at the door.
Unitarian Universalist Church
2474 Ballenger Hwy., Flint
For more info call 810-232-4023.

Firebirds OHL Hockey at Dort Financial Center

Fri. March 17 the Firebirds battle the Hamilton Bulldogs and Sat. March 18 they will play the London Knights.
Games are Wed, Fri. and Sat. at 7 p.m., Sun. at 4 p.m.
Cost \$15, \$18, \$21 and \$26 per person.
Dort Financial Center
3501 Lapeer Rd., Flint
For more info visit ticketsmarter.com/pl/flint-firebirds-tickets or call 810-744-0580.

Leprechaun Hunt at For-Mar Nature Preserve & Arboretum

Sat., March 18, 10 - 1-3 p.m.
Search the grounds and try to discover who's stealing the cabbage from the garden!
Is it a Leprechaun or a critter?
Discover WHO DONE IT!
Dress to be outside the whole time.
For ages 7-12.
Pre-registration required by March 17.
Cost \$5 per student.
For-Mar Nature Preserve & Arboretum
2142 N. Genesee Rd., Burton
For more info visit exploreflintandgenesee.org or call 810-736-7100 for more info.

The Simon & Garfunkel Story at The Whiting

Fri., March 24, 8 p.m.
With huge projection photos, original film footage and a live band performing many of the duo's hits. Tickets are \$27 to \$58.50.
The Whiting
1241 E. Kearsley, Flint
For more info call 810-237-7333.
For tickets visit tickets.thewhiting.com.

Buckham Gallery's B.Y.O.C. or Build Your Own Collection Fundraiser and Party!

March 24, 6-9 p.m.
Food, drinks, live music, and on-site drawing wall.
Cost: \$15-\$25

Current exhibitions through March 18 are: "Tokens and Traces," Jeanne Ciravolo, "Between Here and There," Kimberly LaVonne, and "A Reckoning in Pink," Danielle Mužina
Buckham Gallery
121 W. 2nd St., downtown Flint
For more info call 810-239-6233 or visit buckhamgallery.org.



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

UM - Flint ...

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nursing workforce shortage crisis has been worsened by the pandemic and complicated by accelerated retirements of Baby Boomer nurses and increasing demands for nursing care by the nation's aging population. Nursing programs are in high demand, she said, but the market is extremely competitive.

"We must distinguish ourselves," she said. "It's not just about numbers, it's about who we are: creating a culture. Our vision is to create a culture in which every student can say, you believed in me." She said the SON is seeking aspiration solutions -- to improve equity and address systemic inequities in nursing education

She described a new holistic admissions model including a mentor program and pipelines to promote diversity. The SOM's admission emphasis shifts from determining how successful a candidate will be as a student, to looking at the contribution that applicant can make to the profession, she stated.

She called for intensive relationships with practice partners, reflecting the continuum of care and reciprocity. a

cultural shift in health care delivery.

She said nursing education has always started with a foundation in the liberal arts -- and will continue to ensure student learning and clinical experiences dovetail with the realities of what they encounter in the workforce.

She added the SON is pursuing innovative modalities to create a balance of inperson and remote delivery. with cognates and certificates built into the nursing degree programs or stand alone and allowing for specialization. The school plans to add certifications in rural health, school nursing, and others.

College of Health Sciences (CHS)

Dean Donna Fry noted that the CHS offers programs in public health, health care administration, radiation therapy, respiratory therapy, a health science pre-professional degree in public health, health care management, and a physicians assistant program,

It also offers doctoral programs in physical therapy, nurse anesthesia and occupational therapy.

She said the critical need for nursing services described by Dean McCurren expands across the whole spectrum

of the health professions. She said UM - Flint distinguishes itself as the regional comprehensive university created in this town to bring the quality Michigan degree to the residents of this region.

With that in mind, the college is designing "career laddering" to facilitate potential students' entry into UM - Flint's health professions. Those "ladders" include partnerships with the Genesee Career Institute and Mott Community College, for example, through which students transfer in with an associate degree and complete a health care degree. The CHS also is launching new programs in occupational and physical therapy graduate programs through which they apply in their junior year and can complete the full set of degrees in 6 years instead of 7.

Fry also touted an emerging partnership with the Greater Flint Health Coalition to help connect students with health care work experience as they're completing doing their health care degree and opening up job possibilities.

CHS is proposing new specialized programs at the intersection of health care and technology, and health care and business, Fry said.

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The advertisement for the Artwalk event features a logo for St. Paul's Episcopal Church and a photograph of the church's steeple and tower.

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Village Life

“Where am I from?” or “Who are my people?” are questions worth exploring

By Tom Travis

I'm writing this on the first anniversary of Russia's invasion into Ukraine. Soon after the unprovoked invasion last year I reached out to some local Ukrainians for their reactions. I soon found out they all wanted to talk. They all wanted to share their unique stories and emotions about the impending doom of their beloved Ukraine.

There was a deep emotional tie that emerged as I interviewed local Ukrainians about the connections they had to their “homeland.” The interviews were filled with tearful and anxious stories of feeling hopeless about their relatives so far away and under a cloud of doom. They told stories of frantically calling, emailing and messaging their friends and family members thousands of miles away. Their relatives in Ukraine were telling their American connections they were abandoning their homes and apartments to find safer places within the interior regions of the country.

A prayer vigil was held at the Ukrainian Church in early March on the northwest side of Flint. The vigil served as a time of prayer for local Ukrainians and it was a plea to the Flint and surrounding community for humanitarian aid. Personal supplies, clothing and cash flowed in from all over. The world has watched over the last year to see, even though Vladimir Putin's war rages on, the nation of Ukraine has become emboldened. The U.S. and many nations around the world are playing a delicate and careful game of supporting Ukraine while trying not to poke the “Bear” to the north that could unleash a global nuclear Armageddon.

Interviewing and spending time with the close-knit Ukraine community steeped in cultural traditions caused me

to ask myself, “Where am I from? What is my cultural heritage?”

much more about our family.

A family genealogist

That mystery of where my family came from all changed several years back when my sister took on the task of becoming our family's genealogist. She searched out local genealogical resources, traveled to cemeteries to gather tomb stone information with tracing paper in hand, she researched online and in-person birth, baptism, marriage and death records.

Over the years her research continued creating volumes of research on our own family, her husband's family and even the family histories of her friends and neighbors'. My sister started her search for our family's roots in the Flint Public Library's genealogy room (Now located in the basement of the newly remodeled FPL.).

As the research grew she revealed lists of ancestors and pages of family trees. At our annual family reunions held each August in Flushing Park, my sister rolls in with three-ring binders filled with her research. The binders include family documents, newspaper articles about ancestors and black and white photographs helping us to put a face to names we've heard about all our lives.

Rather than bore you with the long list of ancestors and litany of begats, I'll offer these highlights.

Both my mother's line and father's line of ancestors have been in this country since the early 1600s. In fact, through my great-grandmother Helen's line it was discovered that our first ancestor came to the U.S. from England on the famed Mayflower which arrived in 1621.

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My great-grandparents Isaac and Bertha Smith. The child is my grandfather, Clare Orville Smith born in 1895.

(Photo source: Travis family photo)

I've always been envious of friends who could tout their cultural or ethnic heritage by saying, “I'm an Italian-American. I'm African-American. I'm a proud Irish Catholic,” etc.

Aside from knowing that my dad was born and raised on a farm and attended a one-room schoolhouse in Flushing near Coldwater and Webster Roads, and that my mom grew up in the north end of Flint, attending Civic Park school and graduating from Northern High School, I didn't know