

East Village

Magazine

March 2018



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Commentary Time to jump-start the new city charter?

By Paul Rozycki

Last August Flint voters set the city on a new course when they approved the city's new charter — the first since 1974. In the turmoil over the Flint water crisis, successive emergency managers, and recall elections, the charter sometimes seemed lost in the shuffle. Yet, the Charter Commission produced a significant and important document.

Over a period of many months the Commission met with community groups on at least eight separate occasions, gathering citizen responses and incorporating them into the final document. However, for as significant as the 83-page charter is, it remained a surprisingly low-level issue. In the end, the voters did approve the new charter by a nearly two-to-one vote. Today, as the city moves beyond emergency managers and the Receivership Transition Advisory Board (RTAB), the importance of the new charter looms larger than ever.

After an attempted mayoral recall, and the election of five new members to the city council, the city is returning to genuine self-governance. But even as the city is getting back to running its own affairs, and the council seems to be (hopefully) more focused on real city problems, the charter, which took effect the first of the year, appears to be left in the background.

What hasn't changed with the new charter?

There were some major changes, and some major things that stayed the same with the new charter.

Two things didn't change.

Unlike some predictions, Flint kept the strong-mayor form of government. Some expected that there would be a proposal for a city manager, as had been recommended by a "blue ribbon" committee, as it was before 1974.

The new charter also kept a nine-member, ward-based council. Because of the city's declining population, some advocated a smaller council or electing some council members at-large.

What did change?

But there were also major changes in the new charter.

Briefly, some of the major provisions of the new charter are:

1. Creating a new ethics board, and stronger enforcement powers.
2. A strengthening of the Office of the Ombudsperson.
3. Elimination of the ability to raid the water and sewer fund for other purposes.
4. Creation of minimum qualifications for department heads, established by ordinance.
5. Improved access to information for both the public and the city council.
6. A change in the election cycle for city officials, to the same year as governor's elections.

To be sure, there are many other changes in the new document, and there is much detail to the major changes listed above. Some of those will take some time — such as the election changes for local officials. Instead of taking place in the "off year" cycle, elections for city officials would take place in the same year the governor is elected. In 2019, officials would be elected for a three-year term and then fall in line with the governor's election cycle in 2022.

But other aspects could have, and should have, taken place as soon as the charter became law in January of this year.

Creation of Ethics and Accountability Board

Perhaps most important of these is the creation of an Ethics and Accountability Board, whose most important duty would be to choose an ombudsperson.

The Office of the Ombudsperson would have the authority to enforce the charter, apply ethics requirements, investigate complaints, and conduct performance audits. To assure its independence, the office would have a minimum budget of \$250,000 from the city's general fund, and not rely on appropriations from the council.

In choosing the ombudsperson, the board would be key to the implementation and enforcement of the new charter. The board would consist of 11 members — two chosen, at large, by the mayor, and one chosen from each of the city's nine wards, by the council member. The council must approve all appointments after a public hearing. The members are eligible to serve two six-year terms, which are staggered so not all of the board is up at the same time.

So far, there have been no members appointed.
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Photograph by Edwin D. Custer

Photo of the Month: Northbank lion

Flint's Board of Education votes to close Northwestern High School

By Harold C. Ford

Northwestern High School (NHS) will close at the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year. The decision came as the Flint Community Schools (FCS) Board of Education voted unanimously to adopt a "Consolidation of School Buildings" plan at its Feb. 21 regular meeting.

FCS Superintendent Bilal Tawaab, who has announced he will not seek an extension of his contract beyond the 2018-2019 school year, said components of the consolidation plan include:

- Shutting Northwestern HS and repurposing the building at G-2138 W. Carpenter Rd. as a centralized kitchen and for other purposes to be determined.
- Consolidation of students in grades 9 through 12 at Southwestern Classical Academy (SCA) at 1420 W. 12th St.
- Movement of the Accelerated Learning Academy, currently housed at the NHS campus, to the SCA building.
- Shrinking Durant-Tuuri-Mott Elementary School from a kindergarten to seventh grade facility to kindergarten to sixth grade "to increase early childhood education options including Alpha Montessori."
- Reopening the former Scott Elementary School building at 1602 S. Averill Ave. and repurposing it as a seventh-eighth grade mid-

dle school facility "with enhanced support for middle school learners."

The football and track facilities at the Guy V. Houston Stadium on the NHS campus will be used by FCS athletic teams until the anticipated opening of a new FCS high school campus in 2020. The Houston track facility was recently upgraded at a cost of \$100,000 with funds donated by the Magic Johnson Foundation.

Tawaab told *East Village Magazine* in March 2017 that 2020 is the target date for opening a new, consolidated Flint high school at the location of the now-abandoned Flint Central High School campus. "All high schoolers are going to end up in one building," he predicted. "We would like to bring the kids together ... into a new building."

FCS student population continues to shrink. From an enrollment that topped 40,000 students in the 1960s and 1970s, the most recently reported enrollment by FCS was 4,613 students as of Nov. 30, 2017. Flint is now the fourth largest school district in Genesee County behind Grand Blanc, Davison, and Carman-Ainsworth. FCS students, who once filled 54 school buildings, now inhabit some 13 buildings — including the newly reopened Cummings Community School and the new Educare Flint, both under

the aegis of collaborative leaderships.

"There's a total of 15,000 school-age kids in the city of Flint," Tawaab told *EVM* in March. "We have a third of the market share." Approximately two-thirds of Flint's school-age children attend other schools, including private schools, charter schools, and other public schools via the State School Aid Act for Schools of Choice option.

The only dissent voiced at the FCS board meeting about the closing of another Flint high school came from community activist and board critic Arthur Woodson. "I got reassurance from people on this board that Northwestern is not closing down," he told the board. "Even the superintendent said that ... I think we need for you to resign, now."

Thus, by the 2018-2019 school year, FCS will have closed three of its iconic high schools with some 269 years of aggregate history. That includes Flint Central (1875-2009: 134 years), Flint Northern (1929-2013: 84 years), and Flint Northwestern (1967-2018: 51 years).

According to announced plans, Southwestern High School (now Southwestern Classical Academy), built in 1959, is soon to follow.

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

Researchers confirm water crisis link to Legionnaires'

By Jan Worth-Nelson

A fatal chain of events simultaneous with the Flint water crisis — an outbreak of Legionella's disease which killed 12 and sickened scores of others during a 2014-15 outbreak — has now been scientifically correlated to low levels of chlorine in the city's water system during the crisis.

The outbreak can be associated with the change in the city of Flint's drinking water supply to the Flint River beginning in 2014, according to two scientific papers published this month in top-tier peer-reviewed academic journals.

Put simply, the trigger in the scientific whodunit were interactions involving chlorine, routinely added to inhibit the growth of pathogenic (disease-causing) bacteria. When Flint's water supply was switched from treated Lake Huron water to Flint River water, circumstances resulting from improper treatment and associated corrosion of the pipes resulted in conditions that reduced the level of chlorine such that Legionella bacteria could thrive, the scientists explained.

One of the papers specifically looked at chlorine levels in residents' homes, called "premise plumbing," in the report. Researchers found that the lower residents' chlorine levels at the tap, the more likely would be their chance of contracting the disease.

When the city switched to the Flint River from Lake Huron in April 2014 it was being run by state-appointed emergency manager Darnell Earley.

The scientists responsible for the research are a multi-disciplinary consortium called the Flint Area Community Health and Environment Partnership (FACHEP) who have been intensely collecting and analyzing data in Flint since the Legionella outbreak drew the community's attention, suspicions, and alarm in 2016.

Four members of the consortium presented their findings in February to the FACT Community Partners, a group of community representatives who meets monthly under the dome in City Hall to share information, resources and concerns around the water crisis and the city's attempted recovery.

The lead presenter was Michele Swanson, professor of microbiology and immunology from the University of Michigan.

She was joined by Shawn McElmurry, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering from Wayne State University; Paul Kilgore, an M.D. and associate professor with a specialization

in infectious diseases and epidemiology, also at Wayne State; and Ben Pauli, assistant professor of social sciences at Kettering University.

"Changes in the drinking water source and treatment-altered water quality," the scientists wrote, "as measured by a reduced chlorine residual, increased residents' risk of Legionnaires' disease, likely by enhancing legionellae growth in the water distribution system."

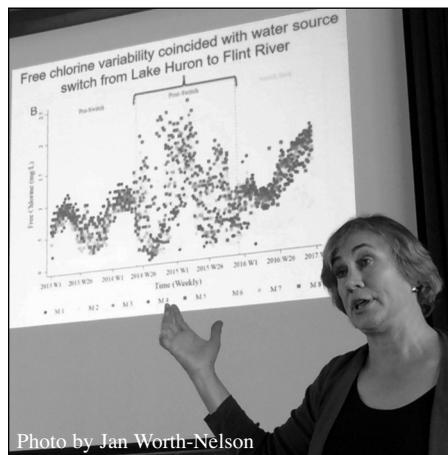


Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson

Michele Swanson presenting on Legionnaires' link to chlorine

Chlorine is routinely added to keep bacterial concentrations down, Swanson explained, but there was a catch: there were heavy metals and organic material in the river water which have the effect of binding up chlorine, reducing its concentration. Legionella, a bacteria normally present in manageable proportions in nature, thus was given a boost by the change.

The story of the FACHEP's response to the outbreak is a real life application of the scientific method propelled by a perplexing and deadly spike in the occurrence of the disease during a 17-month period after the change in the water source. It centered in detailed studies tracking chlorine levels around the city and the existence of two "serogroups" of the Legionnaire's bacteria.

It was difficult to accurately determine how many people actually contracted Legionella, the scientists said, because the symptoms are very similar to pneumonia, and some health providers did not know to test for it. Also, there are different tests for the two serogroups detected in Flint — one requiring a urine test, the other, quite rare, requiring a "sputum" test.

In previous years, the typical number of Legionella cases in Genesee County were

between six and 13. In 2014-2015, the total jumped to an estimated 91 — with some diagnoses increasing the total as the situation became clearer.

Key elements of the findings — the evidence leading to the research conclusions — included the following:

- The odds of a Flint neighborhood reporting a case of Legionnaires' increased seven-fold after the switch to the Flint River.
- After boil-water advisories, the odds of a case decreased by 40 percent.
- The risk of the disease returned to pre-Flint water crisis levels after the switch back to Lake Huron water.
- 80 percent of the Legionnaires' cases in Flint could be attributed to the change in water source and treatment.
- When all cases associated with McLaren Hospital — where a number of patients were diagnosed and treated, and which had been speculated as a source of the outbreak — were omitted from the analysis, the switch to the Flint River still increased by six-fold the odds of Flint residents contracting the disease.
- The lower the residual chlorine was at the tap, the greater the likelihood that someone would contract Legionnaires' disease.

For months, state officials resisted the suggestion that there was any link between the Legionnaire's occurrences and the water crisis and declined to investigate it directly.

Asked by *East Village Magazine* if there had been a moral failure in the Legionnaires' aspect of the water crisis, Swanson, McElmurry, and Kilgore emphasized their job is to provide scientific data, hoping that "the free press" would get out information allowing the public to decide.

However, Pauli, a social scientist, stated, "We all know that there were some folks who were well aware that there was something weird going on with Legionella all the way back to the summer of 2014.

"Let's suppose hypothetically there had been a careful investigation of what was happening at that time — we may very well have learned a lot that would be useful to us now in terms of understanding why people got sick and why people died.

"Unfortunately because we are only just now starting to take this issue seriously, there is a real paucity of useful data when you're trying to do that careful detailed retrospective analysis. You can do the big bird's eye statistical view. You can see patterns that you wish had been detected ear-

(Continued on Page 9.)

City's most vulnerable still need help, survey suggests

By Jan Worth-Nelson

The city of Flint is far from assuring adequate coverage and information on the water crisis recovery needs of its most vulnerable citizens, many of whom remain deeply distrustful of tap water, have not tested their water for lead, are not confident in their use of filters or don't have one, and yet still are attempting to follow guidelines for protecting their children and the elderly.

Those are among conclusions released last week from a survey collected in December from more than 2,000 Flint residents. It was created and distributed out of "total fear" for the community, its organizers say, as the State of Michigan officials consider reducing or withdrawing water crisis support.

Survey spokeswoman Rev. Monica Villarreal, pastor of Salem Lutheran Church, an activist throughout the water crisis and organizer of the survey project, reviewed results from the 2,029 surveys last week to local media in a report, "From Crisis to Recovery — Household Resources: A Flint Community Survey."

While testing according to most official reports indicates lead in the city's water has dropped below federal action levels, many activists insist the crisis is not yet over and warn that pipeline replacement activity and reported difficulties with lead testing in the community indicate the need for continued watchfulness and ongoing state services.

How survey came to be

Villarreal led the survey process conducted by the communications workgroup of FACT Community Partners. FACT (Flint Action Coordination Team) — also sometimes called Flint Cares — is a coalition of community leaders, activists, and residents who came together around the water crisis in late 2015 as the gravity of the situation emerged.

Last Dec. 6, Mayor Karen Weaver released a statement that in a meeting that evening state

officials said they were ending bottled water distribution in January, rather than March as had been previously suggested. Villarreal said the statement triggered a series of questions for the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) at the communications group meeting Dec. 7 which subsequently galvanized the community's response to move forward quickly with the survey.

State officials contend comments made at the meeting with city officials did not represent a decision. Nonetheless, Villarreal said the need to respond to the possibility galvanized her and others to gather information about whether, in fact, the community was moving toward recovery. Ultimately, the January cut-off, which

ident at every household in the city of Flint with a water account except roughly 85 households — and CORE workers had gone back repeatedly — an average of over 50 times, she said — to try to connect with that group of 85.

"We can't force people to get their water tested, or use a filter, but we can educate them. We are continuing our coordinated efforts to get people's water tested," Brown said. "I understand that trust has been impacted. I respect the work that the community is doing, but we have to work together to better serve residents and to make sure residents can properly test their water and install filters."

Regarding the bottled water supply issue,

"There has never been a formal announcement that bottled water would stop in January or March," Brown said. "The state's position was that we had not made a decision."

Further, she objected to the suggestion of a perceived withdrawal or threatened withdrawal of state services.

In terms of the state's ongoing support for water crisis recovery, she said, many services are in place. "The state still is providing health care, nutrition programs — many services are continuing," she said. In a separate email, she wrote, "We remain committed to supporting the city of Flint."

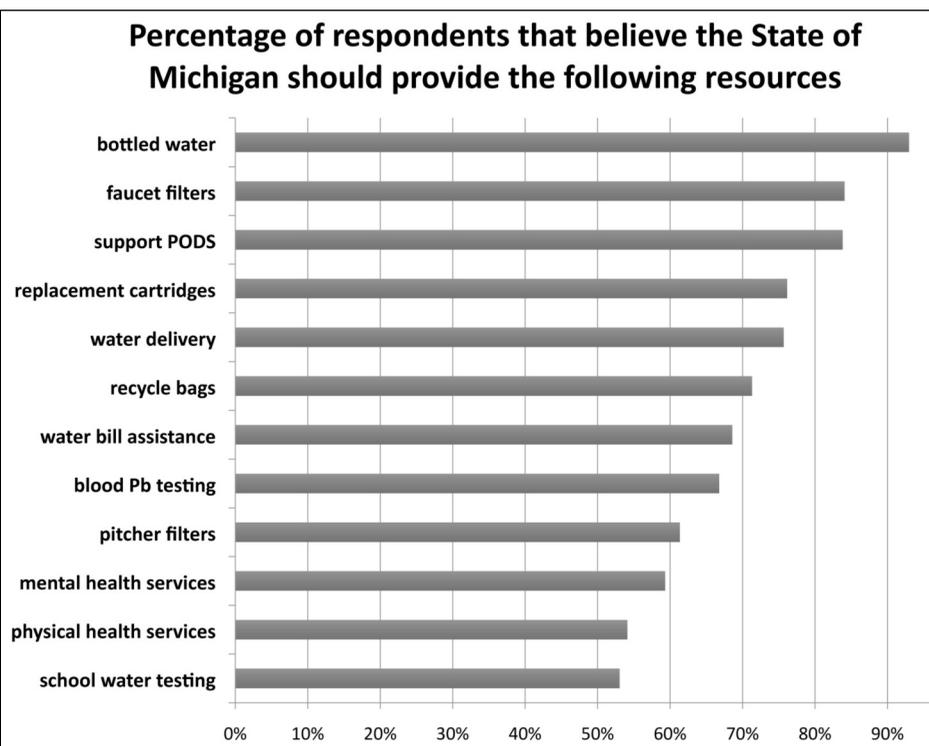
"I don't know what the future holds," Brown said, "but I can only say that at this point the state has not made an announcement about the availability of bottled water."

Survey background

Villarreal was joined in the presentation by Carma Lewis, community outreach coordinator of FACT Community Partners; Jane Richardson, special projects facilitator of the Neighborhood Engagement Hub; and Laura Sullivan, Kettering University professor, a deeply involved water activist.

The one-page, 16-item questionnaire went

(Continued on Page 7.)



state officials say was not an actual plan, did not occur.

MDEQ responds to survey results

In a phone interview after the release of the survey data, Tiffany Brown, public information officer from the MDEQ said she believed there are some misunderstandings about the state's intentions and in specific, the role of the Community Outreach and Education (CORE) program — an element of the state's services mandated by the 2017 settlement of a lawsuit brought by the Concerned Pastors for Social Action and Flint resident Melissa Mays.

She said the state can document that CORE teams had made contact with a res-

... Survey

(Continued from Page 6.)

out during two weeks in late December — with extra days added following a snow-storm.

The questionnaire was targeted to residents likely to be in the most vulnerable categories — those making use of three state-supported programs. Those programs were the four remaining PODs, or point of distribution water supply stations; three Help Centers — venues for water, food, and other assistance supported by the State of Michigan and private funding at three area churches; and the Access and Functional Needs (AFN) programs — those designed for senior citizens, the disabled, and the homebound — basically the most vulnerable dependent families.

Many of the services for residents covered in the survey are outcomes ordered in the March 2017 U.S. District Court settlement of a lawsuit against the MDEQ by plaintiffs the Concerned Pastors for Social Action and Flint resident Melissa Mays. The plaintiffs were represented by the ACLU and the National Resources Defense Council.

The MDEQ has been implicated in decisions leading to the water crisis, which was triggered by the city's switch from Lake Huron water to Flint River water when the city was under state-appointed emergency financial manager Darnell Earley in April 2014. What followed the switch was a trail of improper water treatment, doctored data, the leaching of lead into the city's water, and the consequent lead poisoning of children and the elderly. So far 15 state and local officials have been indicted in the after effects.

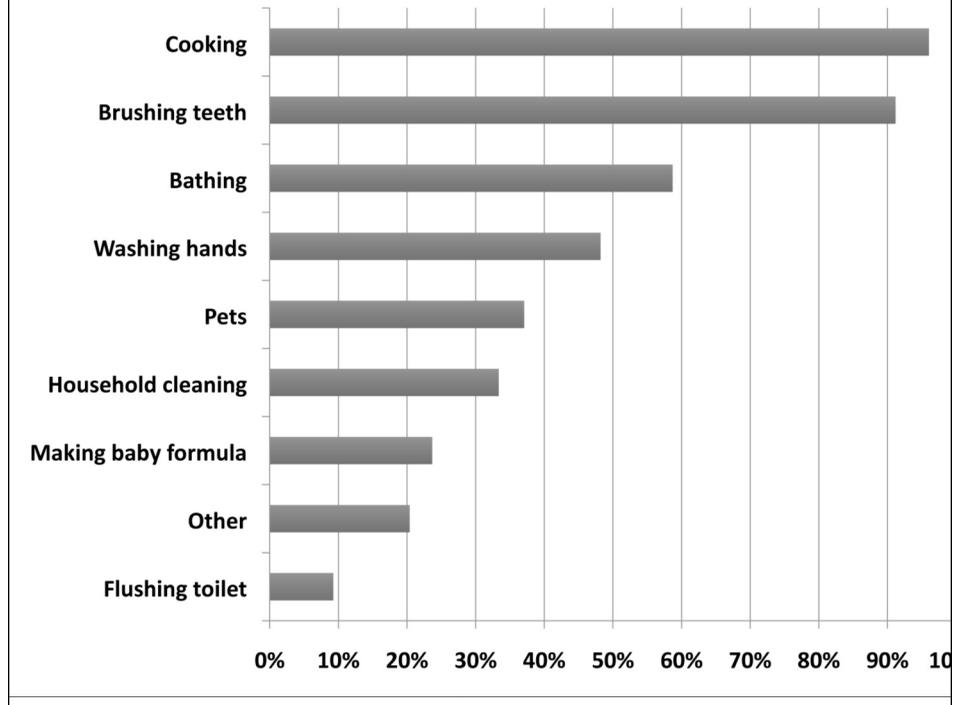
Survey demography

Respondents to the survey came from all nine wards of the city.

One-third had at least one child under the age of six, one-third had a household member over the age of 60. This matters because the medical community has indicated these two populations should be the most careful regarding exposure to lead, recommending that until the risk of lead exposure is fully resolved in Flint, bottled water is likely the safest choice.

In addition to typical demographic information, the survey asked residents about their quantity and uses of bottled water, lead testing, service lines, their use of filters, and what services from the state they believe should be provided.

Percentage of households using bottled water for each activity



Key findings:

State support

Large majorities of the respondents believe the State of Michigan should continue providing bottled water (93 percent), faucet filters (84 percent), support for the PODs (84 percent), replacement cartridges (76 percent) water delivery (75 percent), water bill assistance (69 percent), and mental and physical health services (59 and 54 percent, respectively).

Bottled water use continues

- 96 percent still use bottled water for cooking, 91 percent for brushing teeth.
- Close to 60 percent use bottled water for bathing, 48 percent for washing hands, 35 percent for pets, 23 percent for baby formula (much higher — 48 percent in homes with babies, obviously), 9 percent for flushing toilets.
- The average household in the survey group uses 14.7 cases of water per week.

Filter use

A significant percentage of respondents (51 percent) either don't have a water filter installed in their home, or report low confidence in filter use. These answers provide insight, the FACT team asserts, into the effectiveness of the Community Outreach and Education (CORE) program to educate residents on filter use.

Lead testing deficits

About 40 percent of participants reported never having had their water tested for lead. For more than half the participants, household water had not been tested for lead in the past year. About 39 percent said they did not know how to test their water for lead, and 70 percent said they did not know the composition of their service lines.

“The extent to which residents have their water tested and the frequency of water testing, raise concerns about resident understanding of the importance of water quality monitoring and access to water testing kits,” the report writers concluded. “Lack of knowledge regarding the composition of their own service line is also indicative that residents who participated in the survey have not benefited from programs that would help them understand their level of risk.”

CORE workers, mostly Flint residents hired as part of the lawsuit settlement, have been going door-to-door in the last year with filters, replacement cartridges, and water crisis resource information. If invited in, they are trained to check and install faucet filters.

The data about CORE services should not be interpreted as a failure of the ground-level CORE workers, Villarreal said.

“This is a critique of the program, not the worker. MDEQ failures are systemic,” she said.

“The CORE program is greatly needed,” Villarreal added in an email after the presentation. “With more community input and collabora-

(Continued on Page 9.)

Flint awarded \$2.9 million for economic development

By Meghan Christian

A \$2,957,800 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation has been awarded to the City of Flint to support economic development.

The grant, announced by Mayor Karen Weaver at a Feb. 19 press conference, will be dispersed over four years to help city officials rebuild and aid Flint's economic development. Weaver said the grant had been in the works for a year.

"Funds will be used to hire experienced and qualified individuals to help design and implement economic development strategies, leading to living-wage employment in a post-industrial community," Weaver said. City administration expects to hire four to five people, she said, but the hiring process is just beginning.

"It has been years since the City of Flint has had its own team focused on economic development," Weaver said, noting the city has faced years of shrinking departments and "skeleton crews" under state-



Mayor Weaver announcing Kellogg grant with Chief Financial Officer Hughey Newsome

appointed emergency managers.

"We had a small component here at the City and at the Chamber, but now we've got added resources to really focus our time, effort, and energy on economic development," Weaver said.

The Flint water crisis played a role in delaying the economic development of the city, Weaver said, but she predicted residents can now expect the current administration to work on other needs as

issues with the water are being addressed.

"It's nice to be in that spot now, to be able to focus there, because that's how a city comes back. We need a plan in place to retain and attract more people and businesses to Flint, businesses that offer good-paying-jobs for our residents," Weaver added.

Weaver thanked the C.S. Mott Foundation and the Flint and Genesee Chamber of Commerce for their support of the administration in securing the Kellogg grant and in the economic development of the city in general.

The nearly \$3 million grant will give city administration a head start as it looks into how to make economic development efforts self-sustaining after the four-year grant period is over, Weaver said. She added that the administration expects the department to bring in funds for the city.

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"StepAfrika!" Broadway show to brighten weeklong spring break for Flint students

By Patsy Isenberg

Thanks to an NBA basketball star and Flint native, spring break for Flint students this year could feature a first-time chance to participate in a visit by a New York City dance troupe, Step Afrika!, and a Broadway-style show at the newly-reopened Capitol Theatre.

The program, offered for Flint students ages 4 to 17, is set for April 2-6. It was announced at a press conference in February.

The Morris Peterson Jr. Foundation (MPJF), started by 11-year NBA veteran and Flint Northwestern High School alum Morris Peterson, is partnering on the program with United Way of Genesee County, the Boys and Girls Club of Flint, and Mott Community College.

The newly renovated theatre will host the culminating performance by the Step Afrika! dance troupe on Friday, April 6, the last day of the program.

Sponsors said throughout the week activities will be offered to encourage and develop leadership and teamwork skills and new experiences for Flint kids.

Spring break participants and their parents will be invited to the Step Afrika! performance, and tickets to the show will also be available to the general public.

Applications for the spring break program are available at the Boys and Girls Club, 3701 N. Averill Ave., Flint. More information is available at 810-249-3413 or via email at info@bgclubflint.org. Information can also be found about the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Flint at www.bgclubflint.org

The Morris Peterson Foundation has provided dental services, Thanksgiving dinners and backpacks filled with school supplies for disadvantaged Flint-area youths, as well as basketball camps. The founder of the organization, Peterson was raised in Flint by parents who were both educators, and he still lives in the city.

He received a degree in child development from Michigan State University on an athletic scholarship.

At Michigan State, Peterson was an All-American, first-team All Big Ten and Most Outstanding Player during the 2000 National Championship game that the Spartans won. He played for the Toronto Raptors, the New Orleans Hornets, and the Oklahoma City Thunder. Michigan State retired his #42 jersey in 2009. He lives in Flint and owns a transportation company and clothing line, World Artist Refuge.

Venturing into this first annual spring break program is a natural progression for MPJF, its spokespersons said, and they hope to repeat it each year.

Tonda Peterson-Bryant, Morris Peterson's sister and executive director, described "reaching out" to other Flint organizations and noting how much more can be done when several groups work together.

Peterson said she had seen the off-Broadway production of the troupe's show at The New Victory Theater in New York and dreamed of bringing them to Flint. Jarret Haynes, the Capitol Theatre's executive director, said that the restoration of the Capitol Theatre has created a perfect venue for a live show like StepAfrika.

Peterson-Bryant said she spoke to members of StepAfrika! in New York and remarked that "They want to help. They just know that something happened here and ... they feel this is their opportunity to help."

The activities will take place at both the Boys and Girls Club and Mott Community College.

EVM staff writer Patsy Isenberg can be reached at pisenber@gmail.com.

... Charter

(Continued from Page 3.)

ed to the board and only one nomination.

According to local attorney and community activist, Terry Bankert, “I am concerned that the mayor and the City Council do not intend to recognize the 2017 charter and its differences from the 1974 charter.”

He expressed concern that the mayor or her supporters might offer amendments to the charter that might delay or modify its implementation. He said, “There are multiple issues the public should focus on. The Ethics and Accountability Board . . . is just one category.”

He plans to meet with several attorneys with the intent of taking legal action in court if no progress is made on implementing the charter, particularly the creation of the Ethics and Accountability Board. Bankert served as city clerk in 1983, was appointed ombudsman in 1987, and was a candidate for the 7th Ward council seat in 2005.

Restoring trust

The implementation is important not only because the voters approved it last year, and not only because the city is a very different city than it was in 1974. It’s important because of one major issue that cuts across all levels of government — trust, or the lack of it. So many things have undermined our trust in government, not the least of which is the Flint water crisis.

No single document will solve all the problems of Flint, and no single action will restore the trust in government. But the voters chose a new charter as a good faith effort to solve some of those problems. A good first step to rebuild that trust is for the elected city officials to carry out the wishes of the voters, and begin to apply the new city charter without delay.

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



... Survey

(Continued from Page 7.)

ration, it is hoped that the State of Michigan will create a more effective program design and evaluation process that will improve the outcomes of the CORE Program and ultimately better meet the needs of Flint residents. Until there is no longer any public health risk, the availability of State funded bottled water is necessary.”

Tiffany Brown, the MDEQ public information officer, acknowledged she had seen the report and been present for a discussion of it. She said she had invited Villarreal to meet with her and CORE leadership to learn more about the survey and how to respond.

Villarreal confirmed the MDEQ invitation to meet and said the invite has been accepted.

“Overall, we are very pleased with the work being done by the CORE, water quality improvements and progress happening in the city,” Brown stated.

Presented with that statement, Laura Sullivan replied, “Are we to gather that the criteria by which we judge the efficacy of the CORE program is whether or not MDEQ is very pleased with the work? Seriously? Do they not recall the trouble that occurred in 2014 when they responded to resident concerns by saying they were pleased with the situation in Flint?”

“We hope for public momentum around it — this is a big deal,” she added. “We hope that our state government officials, among others, will use this to better inform programs moving forward,” Sullivan said.

“One reason for the numbers and for the pace and for the request to have this published is to demonstrate to the people of Flint somebody’s listening, somebody’s using the information they provided to try to help them, and isn’t being quiet about it,” she continued. “It’s being as transparent and as open and putting it in as many places as we can.”

“Maybe this is a way of trying to build trust in a little piece of Flint,” Sullivan said.

The full report is available at flintneighborhoodsunity.org/flint-water-crisis through Flint Neighborhoods United.

Among the total of 2,029 usable surveys returned, a “massive number,” according to Villarreal, many were handwritten, and 56 percent included their names — a poignant sign, Villarreal and others assert, of residents’ strong wish to be known and heard.

“The effects of the water crisis continue to impact the daily lives of Flint residents,” the report states in its conclusion.

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... Legionnaires’

(Continued from Page 5.)

lier on and should have been detected early on.

“As far as the deep digging goes, we’re able to do it now that people are taking it seriously. But we missed our opportunity to do that back in 2014 and 2015.

“I absolutely think that you could make a moral critique of the conditions that led to the neglect of that issue during those two years,” Pauli said.

Two top state officials, Nick Lyon, director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and Chief Medical Executive Eden Wells have been indicted on manslaughter charges in the Legionnaires’ outbreak by State Attorney General Bill Schuette. Both have vehemently denied the charges and the cases are working their way through the courts.

Darnell Earley, the emergency manager when the city made the switch, also has been indicted. The three are among 15 state and local officials indicted so far in connection with the crisis.

As to culpability, Swanson offered an observation about systemic conditions.

“A fair question is, who’s responsible for monitoring the chlorine levels and does that trigger an action that should follow from data,” she said. “Do we have sufficient funding and expertise in our water utilities and our public agencies?”

Swanson emphasized, following a presentation by Rebecca Fedewa from the Flint River Watershed Coalition celebrating the river, that the river water itself was not the culprit — and that residents should not be afraid of enjoying it.

The papers published were “Assessment of the Legionnaires’ disease outbreak in Flint Michigan,” in the February 2018 *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, and “Prevalence of Infection-Competent Serogroup 6 Legionella Pneumophila with Premise Plumbing in Southeast Michigan,” published in the February issue of *mBio*, the journal of the American Society for Microbiology.

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

COLLEGE CULTURAL NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
 ccnaflint@sbcglobal.net
Members meet Thurs., Mar. 15, 2018
7-9 pm in MCC’s RTC Auditorium
Neighborhood Watch meets Thurs.,
Apr. 19, 7-9 pm, MCC’s RTC Auditorium

THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

“This Month” highlights a selection of interesting events available to our readers – beginning after our publication date of March 1. It is not an exhaustive list, rather a sampling of opportunities in the city. To submit events for our April issue, email your event to Managing Editor Meghan Christian at meghan.christian22@gmail.com by March 27.

Space School

All Month
Mon. - Thurs. 4 p.m.
Thurs. - Sat. 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.
Sun. 4 p.m.
Longway Planetarium,
1310 E. Kearsley St.
810-237-3400
Admission: \$4-\$6

Explore how astronauts prepare for space in their underwater training habitat.

Queen Light Show: “From Mercury with Love”

March 1 - 3, 8 - 10, 15 - 17, 22 - 24, 29 - 31
8 p.m.
Longway Planetarium,
1310 E. Kearsley St.
810-237-3400
Admission: \$4-\$6

A dazzling light show featuring 10 of Queen’s greatest hits.

Little Orphan Annie

March 1 6:30 p.m.
March 2 7 p.m.
March 3 2 and 7 p.m.
March 4 2 p.m.
UM-Flint Theater,
303 E. Kearsley St.
855-222-2849
Admission: Call or check tututix.com/ypbt

Watch a ballet based on the classic story of Annie. Tickets are available at tututix.com/ypbt.

William C. Byrd Young Artist Competition

March 3
7 p.m.
Flint Institute of Music, 1025 E. Kearsley St.
810-964-9399
Admission: Free

The 47th annual classical voice competition. Auditions are during the day. Five finalists will perform and two winners will be selected by judges.

Creating Confident Caregivers

March 8, 15, 22, and 29
2 p.m.
Central Church of the Nazarene,
1261 W. Bristol Rd.
810-235-5671
Admission: Free, \$10 for booklet suggested

A program for families providing in-home care for a loved one with dementia. Information, skills training, and a booklet will be taught.

Flint Youth Film Festival Free Filmmaking Workshops

March 8, 15, 22, and 29
4:30 p.m.
Flint Public Library,
1026 E. Kearsley St.
810-730-1590
Admission: Free

Intended for middle school and high school students who are planning on entering films into the July 2018 Flint Youth Film Festival.

Rain: A Tribute to The Beatles

March 11
3 p.m.
The Whiting, 1241 E. Kearsley St.
810-237-7333
Admission: \$38 - \$68

Experience an incredible performance celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club band.

A Honey Pot of Pooh Stories

March 13-15 10 a.m. and noon
March 16 10 a.m., noon, and 7 p.m.
March 17 2 p.m.
Flint Cultural Center,
1310 E. Kearsley St.
810-238-1350
Admission: \$10

A Wild Swan Theater production of everyone’s favorite childhood bear, Winnie the Pooh. Enjoy watching Pooh’s adventures, great for all ages.

Flint Symphony Orchestra Classical Concert

March 17
7:30 p.m.
Flint Institute of Music,
1025 E. Kearsley St.
810-237-7333
Admission: Tickets available at thewhiting.com

Enjoy an evening of classical music from Beethoven, Respighi, and more.

Cabaret

March 22
8 p.m.
The Whiting, 1241 E. Kearsley St.
810-237-7333
Admission: \$38-\$68

Set in pre-WWII Germany, this musical follows members of the infamous Kit Kat Club as they try to cope during dark times in Berlin.

... Civic Park

(Continued from Page 12.)

because they've lost their structural integrity."

"Integrity was the (key) word," recalled McCathern. The National Register Bulletin defines integrity as "the ability of a property to convey its significance." A 2013 report by the consulting firm ICF International concluded that 54 percent of the properties in the Civic Park historic district lacked integrity.

Teardown

Thus, the teardown and boarding up of dilapidated and abandoned buildings in the Civic Park neighborhood began in earnest. "We recently did \$5 million of demolition in this area," said McCathern.

Joy Tabernacle partnered with West Flint Nazarene Church and nonprofit Flint Forward to board up vacant structures. "We boarded together over 1,000 homes," said McCathern.

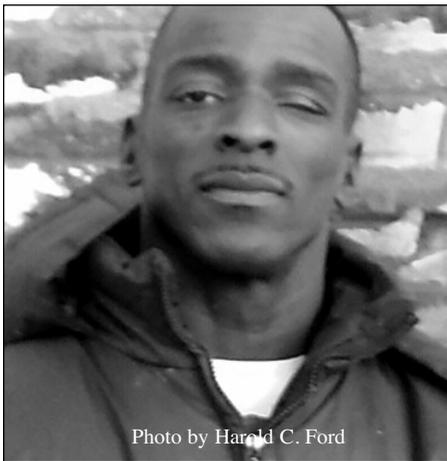


Photo by Harold C. Ford

Muralist Cardine Humes

Buildup

Rebuilding the Civic Park neighborhood includes partners such as the Genesee County Land Bank, Habitat for Humanity, the University of Michigan-Flint, and the Ruth Mott Foundation (RMF).

URC was one of the initial grantees following RMF's adoption of a 2016-2020 strategic plan that focuses on north Flint. RMF's grant-giving priorities, informed by a series of community forums, are youth, safety, economic opportunity, and neighborhoods.

"The University of Michigan-Flint has agreed to walk alongside the Urban Renaissance Center for the next ten years bringing every one of their disciplines

from the school to bear on what would happen," said McCathern. "One of the projects was how we're going to get a mural capturing Civic Park before transition and what we perceive it to be."

Mural

Humes' mural likely touches on all four of RMF's strategic plan priorities and is intended to convey a message of hope. A file cabinet at the center of the mural is filled with plans for a better future. Community leaders are gathered around a conference table discussing ideas for a better neighborhood. One leader points in the direction of an envisioned new park for children.

"The message is dawn of a new day, children gonna' come out and play," said Humes. "The clock says it's time for the kids to be able to come out and play in the neighborhoods safely."

Humes estimated that he's spent hundreds of hours on the project. Some paints and financial support have been provided by URC whose mission is "to support the socioeconomic empowerment, civic engagement, and holistic wellness of urban children, youth, and families."

Rebound

The mural symbolically represents a rebound for the Civic Park neighborhood and artist alike. Five months ago Humes transplanted himself from the south. "I moved up here for my 12-year-old daughter," he said. Simultaneously, he is building lapsed relationships with his mother, brothers, and sisters.

Humes fully intends to set down roots, make Flint his new home, become a renaissance man that contributes to the renaissance of his newly adopted community.

"I'm gonna' set a life, build this house, squat if I have to, take care of the plumbing, get the doors on now, start a studio, clear the hallways, and polish the floors, and open the doors," he exclaimed without taking a breath. "I'm just going to clean it up, I'm going to make it where I can just draw."

The love for his family and Joy Tabernacle, his adopted church, is obvious, as is his passion for art. "She taught me art," Humes said of his grandmother.

"I've been doing this all my life; it's inbred in me," he said when asked what motivates him. "Excitement," he added, "the adrenaline rush to want to see it finished. I just can't wait to see the end outcome. I just wanted to do something for you guys."

"And we've got to get ourselves back to the garden ..."

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

Unclassified ads

For Rent. Studio apartment. Clean, partially furnished, all bills paid except electricity. Walking distance to UM-F & MCC. Call 810-235-0021. Leave message.

Studio Apartment for Lease. Spacious (540 sq. ft.) apartment on cul-de-sac Avon near Kearsley St. Walk three blocks or less to UM-Flint, MCC, Cultural Center, Downtown, Farmer's Market, five parks. Quiet, set back, one-story semi-detached studio, airy with many windows, well insulated, hardwood floors, can be partially furnished, built in washer and dryer, deck onto large back yard, garden plot, off street parking. On site management. References and credit report requested. \$515 per month plus electricity. Heat and water included. No pets. (write Box 7C, 720 E. Second St., Flint MI 48503. E-mail: ecuster@sbcglobal.net)

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Baroque



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Village Life

Encountering a “child of God” in revitalizing Civic Park

By Harold C. Ford

*Well I came upon a child of God ...
And I asked him, Tell me where are you going
This he told me ...
We are stardust, we are golden*
—Woodstock by Crosby, Stills & Nash

Returning from an *East Village Magazine* assignment, I came upon a “child of God” in the personage of Cardine Humes. He was

TO ENDURE by Grayce Scholt

To endure,
to withstand
to hold onto,
to have
faith in,
to bear,
to accept
accept,
accept

all the words
in the dictionary
cannot
begin
to define
the feeling
the sentience
the sense
that overtakes
overwhelms
overpowers
the trust
the belief
the credence,
the pure
assurance
in the smile
of a child.



Grayce Scholt is a retired English professor from Mott Community College who wrote art reviews for the Flint Journal and has authored several poetry collections and memoirs. Her newest collection is East of Everywhere, drawn in part from work published in East Village Magazine. The book is available from Friesen Press, www.friesenpress.com and Amazon.

painting an outdoor wall mural in cold winter weather. His modest collection of paint supplies were contained in a brown paper sack; his ladder was a well-used folding chair.

Humes, 47, is an aspiring artist commissioned by the Urban Renaissance Center (URC) to paint a scene that depicts renewal initiatives in Flint’s Civic Park neighborhood. His mural-in-progress graces the exterior wall of the Dort Meats Co. at 2414 Dupont St. Company co-owner Michael Howay said he welcomes the project as a symbol of neighborhood renovation.

“For years we’ve been trying to get someone to do a mural capturing the Civic Park

Civic Park was a thriving neighborhood from its creation through the 1970s. However, the disappearance of GM jobs, economic recession, and depopulation led to the deterioration and abandonment of hundreds of homes.

Blighted homes, historic site

When McCathern’s fledgling congregation found a permanent home at 2505 N. Chevrolet Ave. in 2009, a gothic structure formerly occupied by Community Presbyterian Church for 85 years, he lobbied government officials to tear down dilapidated and abandoned homes. His



Photo by Harold C. Ford

Cardine Humes with his Civic Park mural

scene,” said Sherman McCathern, URC executive director and pastor of the nearby Joy Tabernacle. “The mural is capturing the transition from what happened in decline and now the resurgence and rebirth.”

Civic park centennial

Civic Park will celebrate its centennial in 2019. “We’re getting ready and building up to that centennial,” said McCathern. “This was a prominent neighborhood back in the day. This is one of the oldest neighborhoods, if not the first planned subdivision in America.”

Civic Park’s original boundaries were first laid out by a Boston landscape architect in 1917. Significant development of the neighborhood occurred in the first two decades of the 20th century aided by the Modern Housing Corporation (General Motors Corporation) and the DuPont Company. A New York architectural firm, Davis, McGrath, and Kiesling designed most of the original buildings. Civic Park provided housing for GM employees working at nearby factories. Construction was completed in 1919-1920.

campaign was hindered by Civic Park’s historic site designation.

Civic Park was designated a Historic Residential District in 1979. “It is one of the largest historic sites in America,” said McCathern.

The historic district boundaries correspond to the original Civic Park development as first laid out in 1917. According to McCathern, Civic Park boundaries are currently: Pasadena Avenue on the north to Welch Boulevard on the south; Dupont Street on the east to Brownell Boulevard on the west.

Houses within a historic site cannot be torn down willy-nilly as they are protected by federal law. Nonetheless, McCathern and others argued that, “A lot of these homes have lost their historical significance.” The government eventually agreed.

“We will allow for one of the first times in American history,” McCathern said he was informed by government officials, “to go into a federal protected area and take some of the homes off of the historic site

(Continued on Page 11.)

LVI: 3 (658 issues, 6,619 pages)