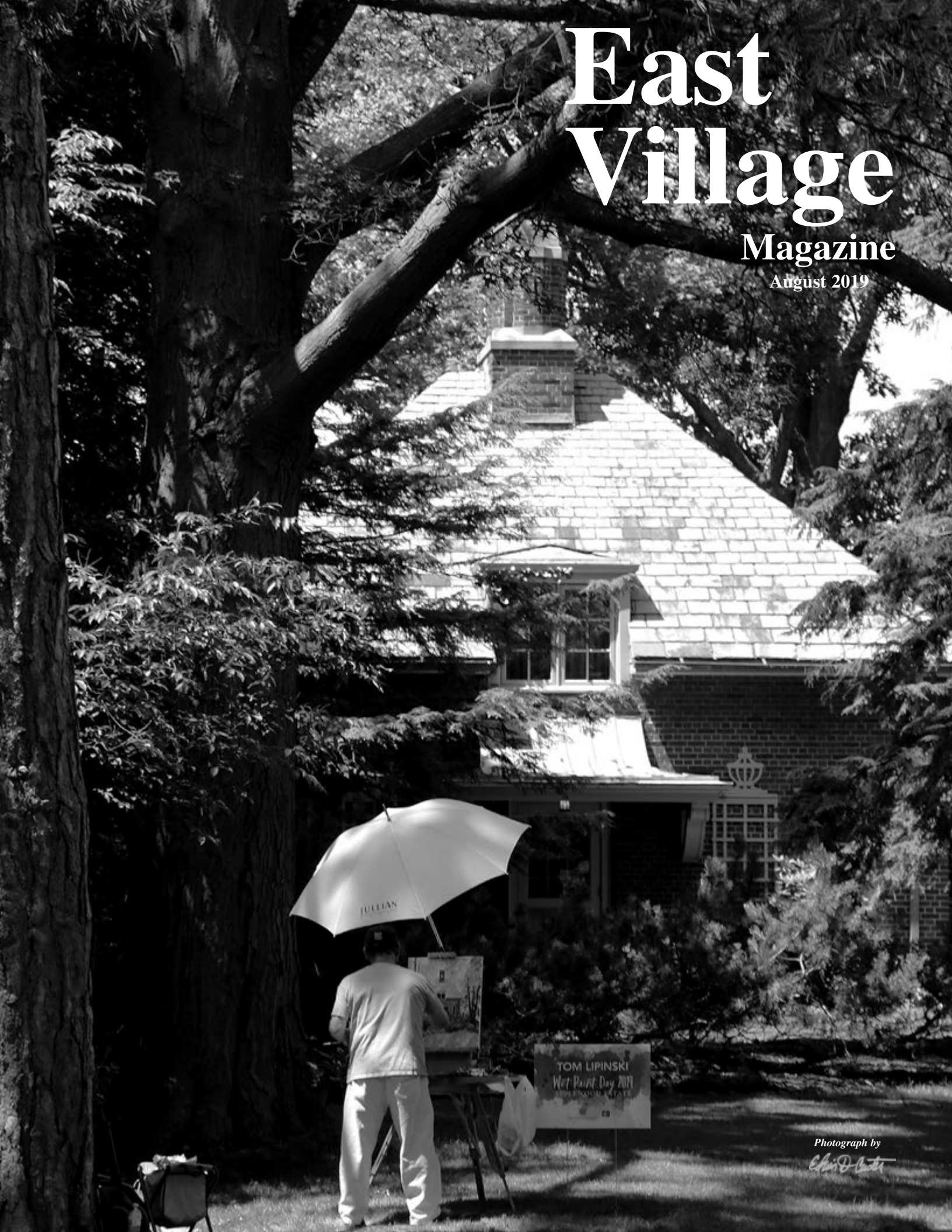


# East Village

Magazine

August 2019



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720 E. Second St.

Flint, Mich. 48503

(810) 233-7459

**Website:**  
eastvillagemagazine.org

**E-mail:**

eastvillagemagazineflint@gmail.com

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# Commentary Flint City Council meetings: A long day's journey into night

By Paul Rozycki

On a recent Monday evening, of the approximately 96,448 residents in the city of Flint, 96,423 were most likely spending their time doing worthwhile, rewarding, or satisfying activities.

The other 25 were at the Flint City Council meeting.

To be sure, some of them had to be there. Nine were elected from their wards as members of the council. Perhaps another half dozen were city employees who were expected to be there. A few reporters attended, also out of a sense of duty, as did some who planned to report on one topic or another. There were a few perennial attendees, who are at every meeting. And there were a few others who had nothing better to do that evening.

That number diminished as the meeting went on, as it usually does, well into the late evening. As the meeting dragged on toward midnight, only a few seats were occupied in the audience, the chamber was nearly empty, and several council members had already left, out of either exhaustion or frustration. One felt sorry for the last person who stayed, to turn out the lights, as the remaining council members shuffled out into the darkness.

With slight variation, that has been the scenario for the Flint City Council meetings for some time. Because earlier committee meetings often ran long, council meetings start late, run well into the night (or early morning), and they seem to accomplish little besides bickering with each other and objecting to each other's motions.

#### Covering the council

That presents a problem for those of us who are trying to cover the news and give the public a report on what is taking place in the city government. For the *East Village Magazine (EVM)*, with its small, semi-volunteer staff, getting reporters to attend and cover the Flint City Council meetings has been a challenge. The

council obviously plays a major role in shaping and leading the city, and it deserves solid news coverage.

The *EVM* is putting together a team to cover the council, with the hope that no one reporter will have to carry the full burden of attending all the numerous and endless meetings. Other news outlets face the same problem. Few reporters can afford to sit through five- or six-hour meetings when they have deadlines to meet and other stories to cover.

Thankfully, Paul Herring and his team at Spectacle Productions broadcast and record the meetings on YouTube for those who are not able, or willing, to endure the marathon meetings. For both the media and the public, his recordings are a valuable resource.

#### Flint's negative image

But the frustration that *EVM* faces is only a very small part of the picture. The image of a dysfunctional, divided city reaches far beyond the concerns of one publication. On more than one occasion, a video of Flint's council, and its members' outbursts, has gone viral, reminding the nation, one more time, of the many problems we face in the "city with the poisoned water."

One has to wonder how many prospective businesses look at the Flint City Council and decide that there are other, more welcoming and rewarding places to invest.

How many potential home buyers decide that there might be a better place to live? How many parents decide that other cities are better places to raise their kids, and send them to school? How many future political leaders, who may have real ability, decide that the council is no place to begin a successful career in government, and look elsewhere? How many foundations avoid working with the council while they develop their plans and goals for Flint's future?

(Continued on Page 14.)

Cover: Gardener's house at Applewood



Photograph by  
*Chris D. Smith*

Photo of the Month: Mayapples in woodland

## Education Beat

# *Flint schools move into second year of state partnership and Lopez leadership with balanced calendar, staff training, student enrichment*

**By Harold C. Ford**

Flint Community Schools (FCS) has just concluded the first year of a critical three-year partnership imposed by the State of Michigan. FCS will move into the 2019-20 school year with a “balanced calendar” that has school starting for students Aug. 7. Several hundred of those students participated in enrichment programs during June and July.

2019-20 will also be the second year in the superintendent’s office for Derrick Lopez, who signed a three-year contract with the school district in August 2018. At the district’s Board of Education meeting on July 15, Lopez announced commitment to several programs of professional development for FCS staff.

### **State partnership**

FCS starts the second year of the three-year mandated state partnership facing continuing requirements for improvement

in three areas: increase attendance to 90 percent; improve test scores by 10 percent; and reduce suspensions by 10 percent.

If the efforts fail, the district could face three possible consequences: being absorbed by another district; being reconstituted; or being shut down.

Little is known publicly so far about how Flint fared in meeting these goals in 2018-2019. However, information gleaned from various sources helps illustrate the challenges:

- **Attendance:** In 2017-18, the percent of all students “chronically absent” (10 percent, or more, of school days) in Flint schools was 48 percent. For all 21 school districts in the Genesee Intermediate School District, the number of students “chronically absent” was 21.9 percent. For all districts in the state of Michigan, that number was 19.9 percent. (Sources: Michigan Department of Education/MDE; Genesee

Intermediate School District/GISD; Ruth Mott Foundation/RMF.)

- **Test scores in reading:** In 2017-18, 11.5 percent of Flint students demonstrated “reading proficiency.” In all GISD school districts, 38.9 percent demonstrated proficiency in reading. For all districts in Michigan, that number was 44.4 percent. (Sources: MDE; GISD; RMF.)

- **Test scores in math:** In 2017-18, 12.4 percent of Flint students demonstrated “math proficiency.” In all GISD school districts, 39 percent demonstrated proficiency in math. For all districts in Michigan, that number was 45 percent. (Sources: MDE; GISD; RMF.)

- **Suspensions:** No recent suspension or expulsion data has been made available to the public by Flint schools. In 2018-19, FCS budgeted \$651,566 for building/classroom management and security.



## ... Schools

(Continued from Page 4.)

### Balanced calendar

A balanced calendar for Flint schools means students start the school year earlier (Aug. 7), end the school year later (June 18), and have more intersessions (breaks) in addition to traditional holiday breaks. Intersessions in the 2019-20 school year are scheduled for Sept. 16-20; Nov. 4-8; Feb. 18-21; April 6-9; and May 26-29.

As more and more school systems opt for balanced calendars, the jury is still out with regard to the advantages, disadvantages, and overall impact of a modified calendar such as the one Flint has adopted. A balanced 11-page report by the Vancouver Board of Education arrived at the following conclusions, among others:

- Pros: Advocates feel that “many aspects of learning improve in a year-round schedule, including student attendance, attitude, and academic achievement, and that teachers have greater job satisfaction ... the balanced calendar can be highly effective in reducing school operating costs.”

- Cons: Opponents argue “there is no substantial increase in academic student achievement ... students, parents, and caretakers must deal with schedule challenges and adaptation to change ... cost-saving claims are unsubstantiated.”

### Staff training:

At the July 15 regular meeting of the board of education, Lopez announced commitments to five programs of professional development for FCS staff and partners. They included:

- The Algebra Project: Inspired by civil rights activist Robert Moses, “It is about educating the children who are in the lowest quartile of mathematics,” Lopez reported.

- Project Lead The Way (PLTW): According to its website, PLTW “develops STEM (Science Technology Engineering Math) curricula for use by US elementary, middle and high schools.”

- Success For All: Its website describes Success for All as a “standards-based Comprehensive School Reform curricula for early childhood through middle school.”

(Continued on Page 13.)



**Students from Holmes STEM Academy at the Flint Institute of Music learn how to hold the violin at Summer Scholars Program**  
(Photo by Bridgett Jones, FCS)

## “Summer Scholars” learn, have fun with music, cooking, robotics, math

**By Harold C. Ford**

A strategy to help prevent “summer learning loss” through music, cooking, robotics and algebra produced “amazing” results in a set of five-week Summer Scholars Camps, June 24-July 25, according to Flint Community Schools Assistant Superintendent Anita Steward, whose office coordinated the program. While willing high school students could attend, the bulk of the summer programming was targeted toward “at-risk” students in kindergarten through eighth grade, selected by building principals.

“We looked for some students who had some behavior issues as well as academic issues,” Steward said. Federal Title I funds financed the camps.

Fifty students in nine buildings, grades K-5, were targeted; 60 students each in grades 6, 7, and 8 were also targeted, for a total of 630. According to Steward, FCS had a waiting list for the program at every grade level.

“Normally, our summer programming is held at the buildings,” said Steward. “This year we wanted to do something different. We wanted to make it fun while incorporating learning.”

Students rotated each week among four sites for the following activities:

- Flint Institute of Music: Students received instruction in dance and music, vocal and instrumental.

- Mott Community College Culinary Arts Institute: “They were engaged in culinary arts in the morning and graphic arts in the afternoon,” Steward said.

- Kettering University (KU): Camp Invention at KU focused on engineering projects, such as building a device that would retrieve an object from a water-filled pool.

- Baker College: Students participated in The Algebra Project combining “hands-on learning with math,” Steward said.

The short July 4 week facilitated scheduling of field trips. Campers in grades 6-8 traveled to Oakland University in Rochester, the Charles Wright African American Museum in Detroit, and the Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi where they participated in an academic scavenger hunt. Those in grades K-5 went to the Ann Arbor Hands-On Science Museum, the Ligon Outdoor Center in Clio, and the Potter Park Zoo in Lansing.

“What I experienced in my weekly visits to these sites was absolutely amazing,” Steward said. “The kids were engaged and learning.”

EVM Staff Writer Harold C. Ford can be reached at [hcford1185@gmail.com](mailto:hcford1185@gmail.com).

# Farmers' Market thriving at five, despite challenges

By Jan Worth-Nelson

You can get almost every element of the good life at the Flint Farmers' Market: fresh asparagus, triple cream-cream brie, Michigan strawberries and tomatoes in season, premier pinot noir, flaky croissants. You can pick up locally-made honey, sauerkraut for your upset gut, Lake Superior stones to dangle from your wrists or ears. You can get endless varieties of soothing oils, or in another aisle, colorful African dresses, witty "Mitten" t-shirts, ball caps and onesies.

What you might not be able to get is a parking place. But Karianne Martus, manager of the booming market, celebrating its fifth year since its controversial move downtown from a long-time locale along the Flint River, says, "We've got a plan for that."

Since opening at the airy, high-ceilinged former *Flint Journal* building in June 2014, the Flint Farmers' Market has more than doubled its number of visitors, added vendors, installed two "incubator" kitchens, hosted more than 250 community events, drawn the surprise and awe of countless out-of-towners, and garnered national accolades.

"It has been an amazing five years," Martus says.

At a June birthday party, market officials cut a ribbon to a newly remodeled demonstration kitchen sponsored by ELGA Credit Union, and unveiled a new summer gathering spot, the "Pavilion Patio," at the west end of the market.

The expanded facility, privately owned by the nonprofit Uptown Reinvestment Corporation, took over and redesigned the former *Flint Journal's* press building, its high ceiling, balconies and tall windows offering dramatic settings for everything, from roaming the aisles to meeting up with friends and colleagues.

Martus is in a second floor suite, the phones ringing repeatedly and people coming and going into the office, on a Tuesday afternoon.

She sits under a portrait of the late Paige Curran, much-loved owner of the Damascus Boutique located upstairs at the old market — an independent and flamboyant woman who loved the market and whom Martus says she remembers with fondness.

It boasts 45 year-round indoor vendors, up from 30 at the old site, and give-or-take 35 seasonal outdoor vendors May

said. On Tuesdays and Thursdays this summer, only about 10 farmers fill stalls outside, 11 produce vendors on Saturdays outside, with about 70 percent of them growing the bulk of what they're selling. Two inside vendors, Steady Eddy's Veggies and Bushel and a Peck, are not farmers, getting their produce as fresh as possible from middleman producers like Detroit's Eastern Market.

"They do as much Michigan as they can," she says, but they also have bananas and other items not grown in Michigan.

The Local Grocer and Simply Salads also offer fresh produce indoors. Simply Salads, out of Peck, Michigan, a two-hour drive each way, is one of Martus' favorite success stories.

It's a student/parent/Future Farmers of America administered program, and they've been coming in on Saturdays

for 10 years.

"They have grown their business in more ways than one and they've established an excellent customer base she says — offering fresh greens year-round in student-managed hoop houses.

"We're called the Farmers' Market, but we're really a 'public market,'" Martus admits. "I'd like it if the whole thing was local. It's not for lack of trying.

"It's a matter of how can it be a viable income for people — let's say, for young people getting started? What we keep seeing is people get very excited, they've got some land, they're going to plant things and bring them in, and they'll come down a few times and then we never see them again, because they didn't sell enough.

"So many of the family farms are gone or the newest generation does not want to continue," she says. At the old market, she says, "we used to have six family farms with three stalls each." Several didn't join in the move, some retired, some left the business.

"Farming is really hard work and it's



Farmers' Market entrance: five years and counting  
(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

through December.

It offers three venues accommodating up to 150 each and two smaller venues for 25; among them, venue rentals have been the market's biggest financial success so far.

This summer, the market has two regular food trucks on the west patio — Northern Smoke BBQ and Mr. Prince's Tacos. There's an ice cream cafe in a repurposed trolley car and a mini-marketplace set up by Flint Handmade.

Live music, always popular at the main entrance of the market, also is being added in the new west patio.

And while things are booming, Martus readily asserts the market faces ongoing challenges — the greatest being maintaining its cadre of local farmers — and complaints, the greatest being the ongoing headache of parking at the popular destination. But she strongly contends the market is up to meeting the needs and reels off plans and strategies for both.

Fulfilling expectations that the market is, indeed, a "farmers' market" requires constant recruiting and support, Martus

(Continued on Page 7.)

## ... Market

(Continued from Page 6.)

expensive,” she said. Noting that some customers complain the market’s locally-grown produce costs more, she says, “The smaller, truly local stuff is more but that’s because it’s truly local and they’re out there on their hands and knees in the early morning harvesting it, and they simply don’t have the volume of the bigger producers.”

Outside vendors are offered daily and monthly rate, \$200 per table per month, \$45 a day on Saturdays, \$35 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. “Some vendors, if they’re small farmers, simply can’t afford the time to come and stand by their produce all day when they should be actually farming it,” she says.

Inside vendors are charged \$1.70/square foot, along with a flat surcharge for advertising, water, gas, telephone and WiFi.

So, this summer the market developed a program, suggested by former market manager Dick Ramsdell with Stony Creek Organics, to try to make it easier. Through the new arrangement, farmers bring their produce in early in the morning, Stony Creek buys it from them on the spot, and then offers it for sale so that the farmers don’t have to stay all day.



**Indoor produce vendors at Steady Eddy's Veggies are not farmers, but get produce from distributors in Detroit**

(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

On a recent Saturday, only three vendors had brought produce and fresh flowers in — picked that morning — but Stony Creek vendor LeAnn Luke of Mayville says she hopes the idea will catch on and expand. “My goal is to help build up people’s businesses so they can have their own stall,” she says.

“There used to be more greenhouses,” Martus notes, “but we’ve had a hard time with fresh flowers — the big box stores have bought them all up and are importing

them or putting them out of business.”

Despite all that, Martus says the market runs a pretty continual waiting list and has been full since it opened downtown.

A crucial part of the market’s mission has been its outreach to customers using EBT cards and taking advantage of the Double-Up Bucks program. Martus says it has been a “fantastic success.”

Martus says the response has been incredible — with the in-house-run reimbursement, a program funded to vendors averaging more than \$120,000 a year.

### About that parking ...

As for the parking, the thorny situation has been a consequence in part of the market’s success and its commitment to keep parking free.

The market has the same number of parking spaces as at the old market, Martus notes — originally 250 to 300 — but hardly enough, as it turns out, for more than twice the number of visitors. The opening of the MSU Medical School next door and Hurley offices on the second floor also have brought in more vehicles. And because the lot is free, it has been hijacked from time to time by UM-Flint students and others on nearby downtown business taking advantage of the market’s “no charge” approach. The market turns over spaces about every 45 minutes, Martus says, so cars staying longer than that can readily be spotted.

Market official were tagging and towing a lot of cars, a public relations nightmare.



**Farmers' Market Manager Karianne Martus under a portrait of the late Paige Curran**

(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

(Continued on Page 13.)

# Ombudsperson search process moves forward: Ethics Accountability Board to set interviews soon

By Melodee Mabbitt

Flint residents could meet their new ombudsperson as soon as September.

This was announced by the Ethics and Accountability Board at a press conference in city council chambers July 23 to reveal the hiring process for the position. Applications closed July 12 and interviews will begin in August. Board members said they continue to struggle to work closely with the city's Human Resources and Labor Relations Department during the hiring process.

*EVM* and Channel 25 were the only press present at the conference. Former charter commissioner Quincy Murphy was the only member of the public in attendance.

"We're keeping our crosshairs on that target of the ombudsman," board member Allen Gilbert said. The board has struggled to perform basic functions since funding for their work was withheld by the City until after the ombudsman position is filled, he said.

Though the new city charter approved by voters in August 2017, and a corresponding ordinance provide \$250,000 for the ombudsperson work, a decision by City Attorney Angela Wheeler interpreted that this funding should be withheld from the Ethics and Accountability Board until an ombudsperson is in office.

Charter commissioner Jim Richardson explained in an interview with *EVM* that in drafting the charter, commissioners intended the \$250,000 designated by the

charter be used by the board toward the process of hiring an ombudsperson.

"The board could have hired an attorney or other help in developing policies and procedures and avoided a lot of the drama that has resulted," Richardson said.

Though the city charter states that the primary responsibility of the Ethics and Accountability Board is to appoint an ombudsperson, the city administration put responsibility for the hiring under the purview of the city's human relations department.

At its June 9 meeting, members of the Ethics and Accountability Board members lamented their lack of inclusion in the ombudsperson hiring process, including

Sec. 3-506 APPOINT AN OMBUDSPERSON  
A. The Ethics and Accountability Board shall appoint an Ombudsperson who shall serve at the will of the Ethics and Accountability Board.

not being notified when the position was posted on the website, how many applications were received, or where the ombudsperson's office will be located once hired. It is also unclear to them whether members of the public will be allowed to attend interviews.

Board member Nicholas D'Aigle clarified to the board that though a representative from human relations had attended a previous meeting and assured the board that they would work closely on the hiring process, no one from human relations

was present at the meeting.

Instead, board chair Loyce Driskell shared a memo at the July 9 board meeting from city administration that argued that the hiring of the ombudsperson is strictly in the purview of the human resources department because members of the Ethics and Accountability Board are volunteers. The memo points to Section 4-401 B of the Flint City Charter, which outlines the duties of the human resources department

"When it is convenient to follow the charter, it is being followed. Let's just put it like that," Driskell said. "We were told that there were some positions that were

Sec. 4-401 HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT  
B. This system shall provide means to recruit, select, develop and maintain an effective workforce and responsive workforce, and shall include policies and procedures for volunteers or others acting on behalf of the City of Flint, employee hiring and advancement, training and career development, job classification, salary administration, retirement, fringe benefits, discipline, discharge, and other related activities."

hired here and that didn't even go through HR. So we thought we had some leeway in this. But when you want to follow the charter, you can follow the charter and they have decided for this position specifically to follow the charter."

Gilbert indicated at the press conference that human relations has informed the board that they will be included in the application review process after an initial



**Ethics Accountability Board: (left to right) Joseph King, Nicholas D'Aigle, Linda Boose, Bob Gallagher, and Carol McIntosh, with Allen Gilbert at the podium.**

(Photo by Melodee Mabbitt)

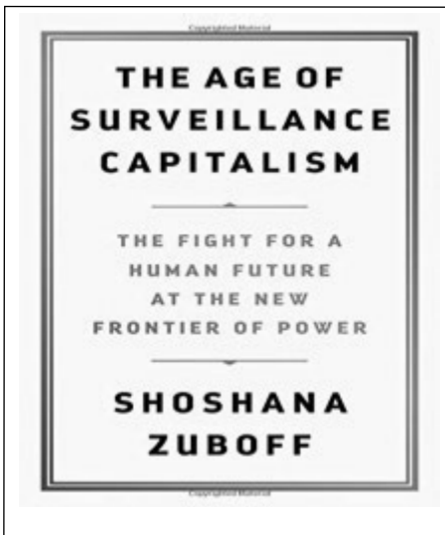


## Book Review

# *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*

By Robert R. Thomas

When entering foreign territories, orientation is the key to survival. Who is in charge? What are the rules? In her masterful analysis of the current state of global capitalism, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, Shoshana Zuboff, the Charles Edward Wilson Professor emerita at Harvard Business School, puts it like this: “Who knows? Who decides? Who decides who decides?”



Like all ideologies, economic theories and systems reside on the shifting sands of change in a relative world and loads of general gibberish. Deified by Reagan and Thatcher back in the late 1970s, our system has been termed neoliberal, or “free” market, capitalism.

Around the turn of this century capitalism became “late-stage” neoliberal capitalism. In attempting to run to ground this addended version of our economic system, I fell upon Zuboff’s book to guide me through the history and the galumphing of our current economic state, which the author calls “surveillance capitalism.”

The first page defines the term in eight shadings of meaning stemming from the first meaning: a new economic order that claims human experience as free raw material for hidden commercial practices

of extraction, prediction, and sales. The book is all about fleshing out this definition in eightfold facets.

The introductory chapter asks whether we will be at home or in exile in the digital future. When the smart phone runs the operator, who is the bot and who is smart?

“Surveillance capitalism unilaterally claims human experience as free raw material for translation into behavior data,” Zuboff claims. “Although some of these data are applied to product or service improvement, the rest are declared as a proprietary behavioral surplus, fed into advanced manufacturing processes known as “machine intelligence,” and fabricated into prediction products that anticipate what you will do now, soon, and later.

“Finally, these prediction products are traded in a new marketplace for behavioral predictions that I call behavioral futures markets. Surveillance capitalists have grown immensely wealthy from these trading operations, for many companies are eager to lay bets on our future behaviour.”

Zuboff considers surveillance capitalism “a rogue force driven by novel economic imperatives that disregard social norms and nullify the elemental rights associated with individual autonomy that are essential to the very possibility of a democratic society.”

### Threats to our humanity

As if those statements were not provocative enough, Zuboff doubles down: “Just as industrial civilization flourished at the expense of nature and now threatens to cost us the Earth, an information civilization shaped by surveillance capitalism and its new instrumentation power will thrive at the expense of human nature and will threaten to cost us our humanity.”

The first part of her book addresses surveillance capitalism’s foundational framework and early elaborations by exploring the social conditions that summoned the digital into our everyday lives, which

enabled surveillance capitalism to root and flourish.

“Google invented and perfected surveillance capitalism,” asserts the author, “in much the same way that a century ago General Motors invented and perfected managerial capitalism.” In both systems, technology was a factor; but Zuboff firmly holds that “surveillance capitalism is not technology; it is a logic that involves technology and commands it into action.”

Zuboff’s scholarly diversity comes into full flower as she humanizes economics as a science and a reality by blending many diverse disciplines and historical periods in her narrative. Instead of presenting economic theory, she narrates what is happening in real time and its potential effects on humanity. She adeptly rocks and rolls, economically and historically, through the theory and practice of neoliberal economics; predictive behavioral modification; Googlenomics and its secrecy factor; austerity economics; the most massive transfer of wealth to the top in history; and computer-mediated transaction, to name but a few.

### The new, intrusive “reality business”

Part II, *The Advance of Surveillance Capitalism*, looks at what Zuboff describes as this new “reality business,” in which surveillance capitalism migrates from the virtuality of the online experience to reality world. It is not simply passive data mining of the entire human experience; it is intrusively manipulative as well.

This section of the book concludes with insights into two questions. How did they get away with it? And, if industrial capitalism dangerously disrupted nature, what havoc might surveillance capitalism wreak on human nature?

Part III examines the rise of instrumental power of surveillance capitalism defined as the “instrumentation and instrumentalization of human behavior

(Continued on Page 10.)

## ... Review

(Continued from Page 9.)

for the purposes of modification, prediction, monetization, and control.” Here again, Zuboff’s scholarly diversity shines as she introduces “Totalitarianism” and the “Big Other” to her big picture of surveillance capitalism’s reach and sheer power.

“Totalitarianism was a transformation of the state into a project of total possession,” defines Zuboff. “Instrumentarianism and its materialization in Big Other signal the transformation of the market into a project of total possession.” She explores the origins of instrumentation power by analyz-

ing its intellectual origins in theoretical physics and later B.F. Skinner, the radical behaviorist.

From the first migration from the virtual to the real world, Zuboff sees the second phase change of surveillance capitalism “as a shift of focus from the real world to the social world, as a society itself becomes the new object of extraction and control.”

“Instrumentarian power aims to organize, herd, and tune society to achieve a similar social confluence,” states Zuboff, “in which group pressure and computational certainty replace politics and democracy, extinguishing the felt reality and social function of an individualized existence.”

## An overthrow of human sovereignty

The book’s final chapter is an enlightening examination of the differences between surveillance capitalism and market capitalism. Along with demanding unimpeded freedom and total knowledge, “surveillance capitalism,” states Zuboff, “and its rapidly accumulating instrumentation power exceed the historical norms of capitalist ambitions, claiming dominion over human, societal, and political territories that range far beyond the conventional institutional terrain of the private firm or the market. As a result, surveillance capitalism is best described as a coup from above, not an overthrow of the state but rather an over-

(Continued on Page 11.)

## Flint Festival of Writers to feature “Dreams Like Mine” author LaTashia Perry

It has a new name, a new date, a new location, new talent and a fresh lineup of programs.

The Flint Festival of Writers — formerly the Flint Literary Festival — will be held Sept. 13-14 in The Ferris Wheel, 615 Saginaw St. in downtown Flint.

As a part of the festival’s ongoing mission to create accessible, engaging opportunities for writers of all ages, abilities, and levels of experience, this year’s event will feature many of the same events attendees have come to love as well as a few new surprises.

Co-sponsored by the University of Michigan-Flint English Department, Gothic Funk Press and *East Village Magazine*, the free event will be headlined by LaTashia M. Perry, the Flint-born author of successful children’s books including *Hair Like Mine*, *Skin Like Mine* and, most recently, *Dreams Like Mine*. Perry will read from her work at 5 p.m. Sept. 14. A time to meet the author and purchase books will follow.

The event will kick off on Friday evening, Sept. 13, during the Flint Art Walk at the Ferris Wheel.

Saturday, the festival will continue with a full slate of workshops and panels, including opportunities to learn from notable Flint authors Kelsey Ronan, whose essay on the Flint Water Crisis, “Blood and Water,” was honored as a notable essay in Best American Essays 2017, and Jonah

young writers’ workshop.

A book fair on the first floor of The Ferris Wheel will also take place between 12 p.m. and 4 p.m. Saturday, and a write-in space will provide a place for visitors to get their creative juices flowing in the company of other creatives. Totem Books will co-host an after-party and open mic starting at 7 p.m.

The festival’s mission, according to Flint writer and festival co-founder Connor Coyne, is to “support the literary tradition and writing done in and about Flint and cultivate dynamic resources and experiences for Flint writers and readers.”

Others on the organizing committee are local writers Bob Campbell and Katie Curnow; UM-Flint English Department Chair James Schirmer; Buick City poet Sarah Carson; and *East*

*Village Magazine* editor Jan Worth-Nelson.

To learn more about this year’s event, visit [www.flintwriters.org](http://www.flintwriters.org).

*From the Flint Festival of Writers committee, including EVM Editor Jan Worth-Nelson.*



**LaTashia M. Perry**  
(Photo by 770 Photography)

Mixon-Webster, author of the poetry collection *Stereo(TYPE)*, which won Ahsahta Press’s Sawtooth Prize. Mixon-Webster also was recently awarded the 2019 PEN/Joyce Osterweil Award for Poetry.

Also featured will be a performance of work by teens from a Flint Public Library

## ... Ombudsperson

(Continued from Page 8.)

sorting for qualified applicants.

After the July 9 Ethics and Accountability Board meeting, First Ward Councilman Eric Mays took the initiative to propose a resolution to the council providing \$50,000 to the board.

Though it was not on the agenda, the resolution unanimously passed a vote by city council in a special meeting on July 10. However, the resolution had not obtained the necessary signatures from the administrative, legal, or finance departments and had not been publicly available for the five days required by the city charter. It now awaits the mayor's signature. If signed, the resolution requires a final vote by city council.

The city continues to not provide Ethics and Accountability Board members with any point of contact through the City's website and information infrastructure.

Gilbert told *EVM* that board chair Driskell has contacted the city IT department to attempt to have a web page on the city web-

site created for the board and an electronic complaint form included on the website. Gilbert also raised this issue during public comment at the July 22 city council meeting. No action by the city has taken place.

(Editor's note: *EVM* has chosen to use the term "ombudsperson" for the position, but will use "ombudsman" when quoting official sources that use the term ombudsman)

*EVM Staff Writer Melodee Mabbitt can be reached at [melodee.mabbitt@gmail.com](mailto:melodee.mabbitt@gmail.com).*

### Lead/galvanized tainted pipes replaced so far in Flint: 8,921

Numbers provided by pipeline contractor ROWE Engineering are now posted at [cityofflint.com](http://cityofflint.com) under the Fast Start Replacement Program. Totals as of July 19 were **22,353 pipes excavated and 8,921 lead or galvanized replaced.**

**The city aims to have all of Flint's lead-tainted service lines replaced by 2020.**

## ...Review

(Continued from Page 10.)

throw of the people's sovereignty and a prominent force in the perilous drift toward democratic deconsolidation that now threatens Western liberal democracies."

Zuboff throws down the ultimate challenge to this unprecedented economic theory and practice: "If the digital future is to be our home, then it is we who must make it so." Accepting her challenge warrants a mindful study of her analysis, which, in effect, addresses the three big questions that opened this review: "Who knows? Who decides? Who decides who decides?"

For the timid reader who fears scholarly tomes and an interdisciplinary narrative, take a walk on the wild side with Shoshana Zuboff. Her insights into the three questions are well worth a little longer walk because her analysis is a wily tale engagingly told and well referenced with facts rather than ethereal ideological theory.

*EVM reviewer and board member Robert R. Thomas can be reached at*



EXCLUSIVELY AT THE FLINT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

# FROM THE FLAME

through 10.6.19

From goblets to pipes, from sculpture to jewelry, this juried exhibition demonstrates the ways contemporary flamework artists are exploring and expanding a centuries-old approach to glassmaking.

Prizes courtesy of  **Security Credit Union**  
The People Who Know

Genesee County residents receive  
**FREE museum admission every day at the FIA.**

1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint  
810.234.1695, [flintarts.org](http://flintarts.org)

Elliott Todd, *Pyramid* (detail), 2016, Borosilicate glass, 24 x 24 x 24 inches, Courtesy of the artist.  
Photography: Zachary Kracht.

# THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

*"This Month" highlights a selection of events available to our readers—beginning after our publication date of Aug 2. It is not an exhaustive list, rather a sampling of opportunities in the city. To submit events for our August issue, email your event to us by July 28 to [eastvillagemagazine@gmail.com](mailto:eastvillagemagazine@gmail.com).*

## **Flint City Bucks USL League Two Pre-Professional Soccer Game**

Aug. 3

Flint City Bucks will continue in playoff action at home. Opponent TBD.

Atwood Stadium at Kettering University

701 University Ave., Flint 48503

Visit [flintcitybucks.com](http://flintcitybucks.com) or call 810-666-2515 for more information including time of this game.

## **Happy Feet Running Club**

Thursdays, Aug. 1, Aug. 8, and Aug. 15

4-5 p.m.

Meet at Flint Children's Museum on the campus of Kettering University, 1602 W. University Ave., Flint, MI 48504.

For youth ages 5-17 from Genesee County and surrounding areas.

Admission: \$5.00 per participant includes the running club program, t-shirt and one entry into the Kids Invitational Race

For more info call 810-767-5437.

## **Nature Discovery: Under The Sea**

Aug. 3

10:30 A.M.-Noon Saturday

For-Mar Nature Preserve, 2142 N. Genesee Rd., Burton, MI 48509

This program teaches about the creatures that call the sea home. Recommended for people with cognitive disabilities.

Admission: \$2 and pre-registration by Aug. 1 is required.

Visit [geneseecountyparks.org](http://geneseecountyparks.org) for more info.

## **School Starts!**

Aug. 7

Beginning this school year, kids will report one month earlier so that Flint School District can operate on a "balanced calendar" schedule.

Each 45 days there will be a break of between four to 10 days, which are called "intersessions."

This might eliminate "brain drain" that sometimes occurs during the long summer break

Visit [flintschools.org](http://flintschools.org) for more info.

## **Flint Theatre Guild production of "Painting Churches"**

Aug. 8-10 and 16-18, 7 p.m.

University of Michigan-Flint Theatre, 373-599 East Kearsley St., Flint, MI 48502

Playwright Tina Howe's portrayal of a family in flux coming to grips with its new reality.

For more info visit

[www.facebook.com/flinttheatreguild/](http://www.facebook.com/flinttheatreguild/)

Admission: \$15

## **Flint Second Friday ARTWALK**

Aug. 9

6-9 p.m. Friday

University of Michigan - Flint Theatre

Various locations on and around Saginaw St.

Visit Greater Flint Arts Council at

816 S. Saginaw St. for the walking tour.

For more info visit [geneseefun.com](http://geneseefun.com)

Free admission

## **2019 Movies Under the Stars**

Aug. 9 and 23

7:30 p.m.

The movies begin at dusk but there's a pre-party at 7:30 p.m. on the back lawn behind Flint City Hall

Aug 9 movie will be "The Incredibles" and the pre-party includes lawn games and popcorn, candy and water. Dress up as a friendly super hero if you want! There will also be prize drawings.

Aug. 23 movie will be "Peter Rabbit" and the pre-party includes lawn games, a petting zoo, a ninja warrior course and dance party and popcorn, candy and water.

There will also be prize drawings on this night.

Free admission with donations accepted.

For more info go to

[info@communitiesfirstinc.org](mailto:info@communitiesfirstinc.org)

or call 810-422-5358.

## **Tunes at Noon Festival**

Through Aug. 16

11:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m. Monday-Friday

At Willson Park across from U of M-Flint,

549 Wallenberg St., Flint 48502

(Rain Location at Greater Flint Arts Council,

816 S. Saginaw St., Flint 48502)

Bring your lunch and enjoy different

musicians each week.

Free admission.

For more info email

[greg@greaterflintartscouncil.org](mailto:greg@greaterflintartscouncil.org)

or call 810-238-2787.

## **Small Worlds**

Aug. 3 through 9

Noon-5 p.m. weekdays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sat.

and 1-5 p.m. Sun.

This is a survey of glass paperweights from the 19th century to present showing different techniques, styles and various types.

Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint, MI 48503

Free admission for FIA members and children 12 and under, adults \$7, students with ID \$5, and senior citizens \$5. Huntington Free Saturdays  
For more info email [info@flintarts.org](mailto:info@flintarts.org) or call 810-223-1573.

## **Back to the Bricks Cruise and Car Show**

Tuesday Aug. 13 through Saturday Aug. 17

Downtown Flint, Saginaw St., Flint, MI 48502

Five days of car events starting with an evening at US-23 Drive-In Theater. On Wednesday through Friday people line up along Saginaw St. from downtown Flint to Grand Blanc to watch the cruise. There's a Motown concert Friday evening in downtown Flint with dancing and a car show. On Saturday stroll Saginaw St. to admire the cars.

## **Friday Craftynoon**

Aug. 16

11 a.m.-1:00 p.m., held the third Friday of every month.

Totem Books, 620 W. Court St., Flint, MI 48502

Bring your non-messy crafts to work on with other creatives and have lunch.

No admission, just the cost of lunch.

For more info call 810-407-6402.

## **Crim Festival of Races**

Friday Aug. 23 and Saturday Aug. 24

Races begin Saturday at 7:30 a.m.

Flint's Downtown Entertainment District, Saginaw St., Flint, MI 48502

Flint welcomes over 15,000 runners, walkers and fitness enthusiasts who'll participate in various races and enjoy food, entertainment and more.

For more info visit [crim.org](http://crim.org).







**Dennis Stevens of Flushing says his barbecue truck business is “going great” on west end of market**  
(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

## ... Market

(Continued from Page 7.)

So the market has paired up with partners Downtown Development Authority, the UM-Flint and the nearby Mass Transportation Authority (MTA) to set up free trolley transport from the monitored and secured parking lot of UM - Flint's White Building. The trolley operates 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. every 15 minutes on market days — Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday — and 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

The trolley makes eight stops on market days: UM-Flint's "S" lot at the far north corner of Saginaw Street and Robert T. Longway/Fifth Street; the Northbank Center, Churchill's, the Farmers' Market, Third and Wallenberg, Saginaw and Second Street northbound, UM-Flint Pavilion, and Soggy Bottom Bar.

Martus says the trip from the UM-Flint lot to the market takes about seven minutes.

### Financial challenges continue

The new space has presented financial challenges, too.

"It's a fantastic facility but it's expensive to run," Martus says. Electricity alone is about \$19,000/month in the summer, not including gas, water, and phone.

"No one's making money," she says, noting that Uptown Reinvestment is a non-profit operation. "We run a deficit every year. The attractions of the market bring in more people, and more people mean more expenses for upkeep, heating, and light."

"If we tried to run this place with only the vendor fees, we'd have to close up," she says.

"It would be nice if someday we'd be self-supporting," she says, but so far community support — sponsors like ELGA Credit Union and HAP, along with booming event rentals — have made all the difference. That combination has kept Martus, the vendors, and the customers motivated and happy to be coming back again and again to a facility crucial, she says, to downtown's health and revitalization.

The market, which fills a block between First and Second streets, is open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays.

*EVM Editor Jan Worth-Nelson can be reached at [janworth1118@gmail.com](mailto:janworth1118@gmail.com)*

### Support community journalism!

**Donations to East Village Magazine are tax deductible. For easy giving, go to: [eastvillagemagazine.org](http://eastvillagemagazine.org)**



## ... Schools

(Continued from Page 5.)

- **Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE):** According to its website, ACE programming focuses on “traumatic events and experiences that occur early in life (that) have an impact on the health and social-emotional well-being throughout the lifespan (such as) death, abandonment, incarceration or divorce, and exposure to violence and substance use.”

- **Capturing Kids' Hearts:** Its website describes this program as “an immersive, participatory experience [where] teachers, staff, and administrators learn and practice skills they will use and model in their classrooms and districts.”

### “Deep clean” of buildings

FCS contracts for custodial and maintenance services that generated heated conversation at the board's June meetings found further resolution at its July 15 meeting. Several board members balked at the prospect that all district buildings would not receive a “deep clean” prior to the start of school.

“We did hear the board loud and clear with respect to getting our buildings ready for the kids,” said Lopez. He announced “full cleanings” of all buildings before the start date of Aug. 7. “Our buildings have to be worthy of the kids.”

*EVM Staff Writer Harold C. Ford can be reached at [hcford1185@gmail.com](mailto:hcford1185@gmail.com).*

## Unclassified ads

### One-bedroom Apartment for Lease.

Spacious one-bedroom apartment in historic Central Park on cul-de-sac Avon St. near Kearsley St. Walk four blocks or less to UM-Flint & MCC campuses, Cultural Center, Downtown, Farmers Market, four parks, bike paths, Applewood horticultural gardens. Easy freeway access. Deck onto large back yard, laundry, off-street parking. References and credit check requested. On-site management. \$595 per month plus electricity. Heat and water included. No pets. (E-mail: [ecuster@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ecuster@sbcglobal.net) or write: Apartment Box 1A, 720 E. Second St., Flint, MI 48503.

**WANTED: Garage Space, approx. 10'X10'** to store display shelves for FIA student Art Fair ceramics. Access needed only once or twice per year. Email John at: [applegroveclayworks@gmail.com](mailto:applegroveclayworks@gmail.com).



**The City Council chamber was designed for a large number of citizen participants and observers. In 2019, fewer than 25 routinely appear. This photo was from the Monday, July 22 meeting. (Photo by Paul Rozycki)**

## ... Council

*(Continued from Page 3.)*

As if the Flint water crisis weren't enough to tarnish the city's reputation, one recent source listed Flint as one of the worst governed cities in a recent survey of major cities in the U.S. The council isn't totally to blame for that dubious distinction, but it sure doesn't help.

### **Somehow, things do get done ... sometimes**

Yet, in the midst of all the turmoil and endless meetings, things do get done — budgets are approved, appointments are made, and routine business is taken care of. Given the major problems that Flint faces, that's no small accomplishment.

The frequent chaos and conflict in the council make it easy to forget that many on the council go well beyond the call of duty to respond to constituents, and learn the intricacies of budgets, contracts, grants, and personnel policies. It's doubtful that many other city councils put in as much time, or face as much personal frustration as Flint's does.

But much of that frustration is self-inflicted. In the midst of a mayoral campaign, members of the council are still trying to recall other councilmembers; the hiring of an ombudsperson, as required by the new charter, is still incomplete; and a dispute over who should get a contract to clean up the

lawns and sidewalks drags on as agreements change and residents wait.

While there have been some meetings where the members of the council showed an ability to work toward a common goal, all too often that is the exception. Few meetings take place without personal attacks and conflict between council members.

The situation with the Flint City Council didn't happen in a vacuum. Flint has a long history of divisive politics. We have a history of bitter conflict between management and labor, racial division, and city versus suburban friction. The council may simply mirror those divisions and conflicts.

### **It's not just Flint**

And while the council may be a prime example of those divisions and problems, they aren't unique. While not as dramatic, similar frictions and clashes have marked the Flint School Board, the Genesee County Commission, and other local governments.

It's also no surprise that we live in divisive times. Our last governor spent as much time fighting with his own party as much as he did with the opposing Democrats. Our current governor is trying to bridge a deep division between the Democratic governor's office and the Republican legislature. And in Washington, the clash between the Trump White House, the Democratic House of Representatives, and other parts of the government grows more intense by the day, and

only fuels the divisions in the nation.

Unfortunately, Flint's City Council may be both a reflection of our times, and our own local history.

One of the harshest critiques of democracy is that sometimes you get the government you deserve. In the final analysis it's up to us, the voters, to not only elect those who are competent, but those who are willing, and able, to work with others and abide by the common

### Charter Clock

**Aug. 1: 579 Days  
Without An  
Ombudsperson**

behavior of a civil society.

If we do, maybe more than just a tiny handful of us (.00026 percent) will be willing to show up at Flint City Council meetings.

Maybe, just maybe, that might make a difference.

*EVM Staff Writer Paul Rozycki can be reached at [paul.rozycki@mcc.edu](mailto:paul.rozycki@mcc.edu)*

**COLLEGE CULTURAL  
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION**  
[ccnaflint@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ccnaflint@sbcglobal.net)

**Neighborhood Watch meets Thurs.,  
Aug. 15, 7-9 pm, MCC's RTC Auditorium  
Members meet Thurs., Sept. 19, 2019  
7-9 pm in MCC's RTC Auditorium**

## ... MTA Ride

(Continued from Page 16.)

demand service, and the goal is to provide transportation within 30 minutes of the call, Benning said. An individual can call the same day and get service.

Rides to Wellness today is not open to the general public, though in September, Rides to Wellness will be available to seniors. Later, the goal is to offer it to the general public.

When the Rides to Wellness began in September of 2016, the service provided 160 rides its first month. Now it has 100 vehicles providing between 11,000 and 12,000 rides a month.

Currently work-related transit services are being explored, and generating a new system to deal with work is being considered.

In addition to taxpayer support for MTA services through the millage, the MTA's funding includes \$310,040 from the Federal Transit Administration for Rides to Wellness; \$40,000 from the Flint Jewish Federation for Rides to Wellness; and \$734,752 just approved in May from the United States Department of Transportation.

Recently, MTA purchased a new computer system that will allow individuals to schedule the Rides to Wellness through an app. The MTA aims to deploy that new software this month, with the goal to be able to schedule the ride online.

People's ability to get to the doctor is critical; prior to Rides to Wellness, 40 to 60 percent of medical appointments were no shows. Rides to Wellness' successes in attempting to reduce that number have made it a model for the nation.

### A national model, MTA won 2019 award

As a result, Benning has been asked to speak around the country. The MTA was just recognized as the 2019 Outstanding Urban System of the Year by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) at its annual expo — specifically because of the Rides to

Wellness program.

The citation noted the "Flint MTA has created a national model for non-emergency medical transportation service in urban areas through its Rides to Wellness program."

Recently, \$100,000 was approved for the MTA to enter into a one-year agreement with Kevadiya, Inc., of Pontiac, for licensing and maintenance services for a web-based Rides to Wellness scheduling software solution based on current usage. The software is not only a maintenance program, but an upgrade, Benning said.

MTA bought the old Baker T



ransportation Technology Center on Dort Highway and that is where the vehicles for Rides to Wellness are stored.

"We have radio communication in all of our vehicles, with the majority being done with automobiles," Benning said. Drivers use notebooks that show pick-up trips and close trips, allowing for the rides to be captured electronically.

### High levels of satisfaction

Rides to Wellness conducts daily surveys to measure the quality of the drivers, and the data typically shows 96 % to 98% customer satisfaction, Benning said. Construction seasons makes it a little more difficult, he noted, but overall they do very well.

Providing services that meet the changes is necessary — including transporting families — Benning said, noting Rides to Wellness vehicles have car seats for the babies.

He said Flint MTA officials are helping Saginaw develop a Rides to Wellness program and have identified over 2000 rides a month coming under the umbrella.

### Vets to Wellness

Vets to Wellness, sponsored through Veterans Services, primarily provides rides to grocery stores and medical visits. Vets to Wellness provides free transportation for vets and their spouses up to four rides per month to Detroit, Ann Arbor and Saginaw.

A Michigan Mobility grant for \$603,500 was awarded last October from the Michigan Department of Transportation for the Vets for Wellness.

"Vets Ride to Wellness is a god-send," stated Vietnam veteran Fred Cobb. "I wouldn't have any other way to go to doctors' appointments and the

grocery store and with special permission take me to Ann Arbor. I have trouble walking, so I can't walk to the bus stop."

"They pick me up on time every time from home and get me to

my appointments on time. My return pick-ups are on time every time. All the drivers and dispatchers are friendly and helpful (whether) I am taking a cane or a walker," Cobb said.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) card is good for all specialized services. An individual can use the card locally as well as nationally. The individual must have needs that preclude them from using the fixed routes. MTA's Customer Service unit provides assistance to review an application and help acquire the ADA card.

For more information on the MTA or any of its services, go to [mtaflint.org](http://mtaflint.org).

For the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) application process, call (810)767-6950.

For Your Ride information specifically, go to [www.mtaflint.org/yourride](http://www.mtaflint.org/yourride) or call (810)780-8946.

For veterans to sign up, call (810)257-3068.

*New EVM Staff Writer Madeleine Graham can be reached at [madeleine4841@gmail.com](mailto:madeleine4841@gmail.com).*

*EVM Editor Jan Worth-Nelson contributed to this report. She can be reached at [janworth1118@gmail.com](mailto:janworth1118@gmail.com).*

# Village Life

## MTA specialized services “a blessing”

By Madeleine Graham

My life changed when my car broke down and I did not have the funds to repair it. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) started when I missed a flight, and then I boarded a wrong bus in Washington State. Fortunately, with a lot of friends and family support, I made it back to Michigan.

As a person with both PTSD and bipolar disorder, I depend on two services of the Mass Transportation Authority (MTA): Your Ride and Rides to Wellness. I am also a companion rider with Vets to Wellness.

With Your Ride, I am pretty much assured that I will get to where I am going and arrive safely back home. The door-to-door service is a blessing to me.

And I’m not the only one. Michael Brown, another Your Ride user, said, “I go to church, movies, grocery store — pretty much everything with Your Ride and MTA.”

“The staff are pretty cordial ... the drivers are always polite,” Brown said. Sometimes scheduling is messed up, but the staff “are very studious about getting things rectified. I have had to wait for rides over an hour to get another ride, but they’re pretty decent about getting another ride,” he said.

Ed Benning, general manager and CEO of the MTA, founded in 1971, not only understands the need for the services — used by thousands in the county — but is attempting to meet and improve them.

“We are going through what I think is a transformation in public transportation,” Benning said. “We are going through a time when people are aging in place, and the need for specialized services is very important — we are stepping up to fill those gaps.”

“In our community, we have many stores that have closed so we have food deserts. We need to address

those food deserts so people have access to groceries. We have to provide gap services,” he added.

In addition to its 13 fixed bus routes around Flint, the MTA offers several specialized programs including Your Ride, Rides to Wellness, and Veterans to Wellness.

### Your Ride

Your Ride is a non-profit personalized public transit service, formerly known as Dial-A-Ride, which provides access to work, grocery stores, or doctor visits. Benning, who has been with the MTA for almost 40 years, says Dial-A-Ride/Your Ride started with five vehicles in the early 1980s, averaging about 50 trips a day.

Now, Your Ride provides about 4,500 one-way trips a day with 125 vehicles. Night runs for those who work or need a night ride are increasing up to 3,000 a month, he said.

Your Ride has an extensive scheduling program where individuals can call in and plan their own schedule or talk to a coordinator who can take their information, Benning said. It costs the general public \$3.50 each way. Seniors and those with disabilities pay \$2.25 each way.

The hours of operation are Monday through Saturday 6:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. Sunday operation is from 8:30 a.m. to

7:30 p.m.

Planning is key to taking Your Ride. As I have personally learned, one must be ready within a half-hour window for Your Ride, for both a trip to a destination and a return ride. Sometimes, depending on the number of riders, the trip to a destination or a trip home can be an hour ride. Your Ride can be a bit of a challenge, as sometimes I am subject to the weather when waiting to be picked up.

Twenty-four hour notice is requested when scheduling a Your Ride. If someone needs kidney dialysis, the individual can be placed on a set schedule, and placed in a subscription service where they do not need to call each day. If the individual has an Americans with Disabilities (ADA) card, Your Ride can be scheduled up until 5 p.m. for the next day, stated Benning.

Employees of MTA have extensive training with wheelchairs, scooters and walkers for individuals with mobility issues and attend to safety issues, including making sure the passenger is buckled in.

Your Ride is funded through a countywide millage — approved for an additional five years of taxpayer support in the August 2018 election. The first year is expected to generate about \$3.3 million.

### Rides to Wellness

Another service is Rides to Wellness. “Rides to Wellness started in 2015, partnering with three agencies: Valley Area Agency on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services and Genesys (Health System),” Benning explained. It assists individuals who are pre-certified, meaning there is money provided on their behalf. Individuals can use the Rides to Wellness to go to the grocery store, pharmacy or doctor, up to four rides a month.

Rides to Wellness is an on-

(Continued on Page 15.)

LVII: 8 (676 issues, 6,900 pages)



Madeleine Graham with her Ride to Wellness driver Andre  
(Photo by Fred Cobb)