



# East Village

Magazine  
July 2020

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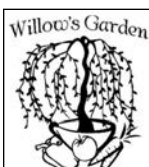


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# East Village Magazine

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# Commentary *An August primary primer: How it's different this year and why it's important*

By Paul Rozycki

In a time of the COVID-19 virus, economic shutdowns, Black Lives Matter protests, and 500-year floods, it's difficult to focus on something as routine as an August primary election. Even in "normal" times, the primary is often overshadowed by summer vacations, county fairs, and car cruises, and the turnout is usually low. But this August 4, voters will have opportunity to cast their ballots in what may be one of the most unusual and challenging elections that we have ever seen.

## How this primary will be different

Unlike elections in past years, voters will need to decide how to vote in this year's primary as they deal with face masks, social distancing, and the COVID-19 virus. Because of the COVID-19 threat, this year, all voters will have the opportunity to vote by mail, and applications for absentee ballots have been sent to all registered voters in the state. Voters can mail in or email the forms to receive an absentee ballot.

Most likely, we'll see a record number of voters casting their ballots from home, and far fewer going to the polls. We are likely to see fewer polling places, and those that remain will likely be taking health precautions for both the workers and the voters. With the absentee vote, voters can cast their ballots early. Those who are not registered can register by mail before July 20, or can register in person on election day. The details are available on the Vote411 website or the Michigan Secretary of State website.

## The primary is the "real" election

With all the other events capturing the headlines, it's easy to forget how important a primary election is. In most years, the turnout for Michigan's August primary is rather low, around 20 percent, and many

voters skip the chance to vote because "it's only a primary," on the assumption that the real election is in November. Yet, in reality, for most offices, the primary is the "real" election.

While the main purpose of a primary is to nominate candidates for your party, in most parts of Michigan (and the nation), one party tends to be dominant — due to both gerrymandering and the places we choose to live. In most of Genesee County, if you win the Democratic primary, you are usually assured victory in November. In other areas, like Lapeer County, the same thing is true for Republicans.

So if you care who wins, you should turn out for the primary — it's often the most important election.

## Who's on the ballot?

In Genesee County, the August primary will give voters a chance to choose their party candidates for a number of offices. Voters will choose candidates for the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House, and the Michigan House of Representatives. In addition, they will also nominate for a long list of county offices, township offices, ballot proposals, and several city council races in Genesee County. For all of Genesee County, the list of candidates and offices is long — much too long to list every office and candidate here.

A complete list of the candidates and background information is available at the Genesee County Clerk's website, or the League of Women Voter's website, *Vote411.org*. At the League's website, voters can type in their addresses and see a sample ballot. Similar information is available at the Michigan *ivoterguide.com* website. The Tom Sumner Program has interviewed most of the candidates, and the interviews are available on his website at

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Cover: A summer porch on Thomson Street



Photo of the Month: If you're lucky, you have a lakeside getaway

## *Police Oversight Commission a key step for those seeking change, Black Lives Matter leader DeWaun Robinson says*

*By Tom Travis*

"We have an opportunity to change the course of history. This is for everyone that believes in the heart of humanity that wants to see change," Black Lives Matter Flint leader DeWaun Robinson told *East Village Magazine (EVM)* in a phone interview.

"We're not talking about changes just for appeal, change like you see at election time," he said. "We're talking about real, transformational change. Our goal will be to implement policy change locally and in the legislature."

President of the Black Lives Matter Flint chapter, Robinson, 33, said the chapter plans to establish a police oversight commission, and that it is "still in the beginning stages of planning."

The oversight commission will be involved in the "evaluation of officers that are protecting our streets, addressing the policies between the police and the police union," he said. A Flint Central High School graduate,

Robinson is owner and CEO of a video production company, Artistic Visions Enterprise. He has two children — who have sometimes joined him in the protests of recent weeks.

Robinson said he and Genesee County Sheriff Chris Swanson, had a "heart to heart" conversation at one of the protests, exchanged numbers, and planned to continue talking.

Robinson told *EVM*, "Ultimately it's going to take the police force to do it (to end police brutality)."

"We're putting pressure on the outside from the community," he said. "But internally, the police department has to take their blinders off and make some transformational change: how they train the police officers. How

they view soft and hard criminals. We want to make sure we look at this totally different. Make us feel like we're part of the community and to cultivate better rela-



**DeWaun Robinson and Sheriff Chris Swanson**  
(Photo by Tom Travis)

tionships. You'll see less crime and less negative perception."

"We're trying to get on the front end of this problem in providing

(Continued on Page 5.)



## ... Police

(Continued from Page 4.)

opportunities for training and education,” he said. “Then we can minimize criminal activity.”



**Black Lives Matter Flint leader DeWaun Robinson at protest**  
(Photo by Tom Travis)

Robinson noted issues within the county jail, too, will be addressed by the oversight commission.

He said the oversight commission will address issues in the jail he called “residential transitions.” Robinson said the commission aims to advocate for those who are locked down and to look at complaints against law enforcement officers that occur within the jail.

Asked if this new police oversight commission is what Black Lives Matter Flint is seeing as part of that “transformational change,” Robinson replied, “Absolutely.”

### **Police oversight organizations around the nation and Detroit**

Robinson said Flint’s Police Oversight Commission will likely eventually be a part of an organization like the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE). Their website explains, “NACOLE is dedicated to promoting greater police accountability through the establishment or improvement of citizen oversight.” The closest city to Flint that

has police oversight is Detroit. Since 1974, Detroit has had what they call a civilian oversight organization made up of 11 members of the Detroit Police.

### **Leyton: oversight commission will be “more formalized”**

In an interview, Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton said, “The Detroit oversight commission is more police-centered. He explained Genesee County’s oversight commission would involve the entire criminal justice system: prosecutor, sheriff, police chiefs, and the courts. Leyton said, “That way, it’s going to allow individuals to have input into the entire system as opposed to just police oversight.”

Asked how the process of oversight would be carried out, Leyton responded, “It’s still in the formation stage.” But he added, “We would meet periodically and we would have discussions about current and upcoming cases. We would discuss the types of investigative techniques that are being used.”

Leyton said about the Genesee County oversight commission, “We’re looking to reach out and involve the community as we move forward in making policy in the criminal justice community. I think that it’s important that folks from every corner of the community be involved, have input and be able to communicate with the policy makers.”

Leyton said the oversight commission gives the community input into the criminal justice system. “We have tried to involve the community before but this would be a more formalized approach.”

### **Commission composition: law enforcement, residents**

The Genesee County Police Oversight Commission will be made up of members of law enforcement, including

local Michigan State Police lieutenant Yvonne Brantly, Genesee County Sheriff Chris Swanson, Flint Police Chief Phil Hart, members of the Flint Township Police Department and the Genesee County Prosecutor’s office. In addition, there will be nine members of the public from each of Flint’s nine wards.

Robinson said Black Lives Matter Flint is going to take the next three to four weeks off so they can plan more extensively for the oversight commission. When they reconvene they expect to establish an application process for members of the public to apply for a place on the commission. The regular meetings of the oversight commission will be open to the public.

### **Police brutality cases in Genesee County**

EVM asked Prosecutor Leyton about the number of police brutality cases in Genesee County. Leyton responded he doesn’t believe there have been many cases in Genesee County.

“Over the years we haven’t had very many at all,” he said. “We have had some incidents and there have been some things in the jail that have occurred as well.”

Leyton continued, “I think over the years we’ve had very good relationships with the various groups in the community. We’ve had very good communication. Whenever we have had an issue, we’ve reached out to the pastors in the community. But this approach (a Police

(Continued on Page 15.)



**Flint Black Lives Matter protestors**  
(Photo by Tom Travis)

# Education Beat

## *Flint Community Schools board moves on budget; junior high fate uncertain*

*By Harold C. Ford*

As an eventful 2019-2020 educational year came to an official close June 18 for Flint Community School (FCS) students, the district's board of education met a total of 10 times in the months of May and June.

**(See p. 14 for updated FCS news)**

On June 17, Casey Lester, FCS board president, figuratively and remotely banged the final gavel on a tumultuous year marked by:

- a global pandemic that shut brick-and-mortar schools;
- dramatic and sudden changes in the district's administrative lineup;
- continuing efforts to provide its student population with a safe supply of water;
- proposed school closure/consolidation plans that riled the community;
- voter approval of a millage proposal that took a giant step toward restoring some financial stability;
- negotiation of employee contracts that brought all three FCS bargaining units into settlement with the district;
- adoption of a revised 2019-2020 budget (Fiscal Year/FY20) and an initial 2020-2021 (FY21) budget; and
- the continuing attrition of staff and students.

### **Revised FY20 budget adopted**

The revised and final FY20 budget that ended June 30 was adopted by the FCS board on a 5-0 vote. The budget included total revenues of \$109,068,177 and total expenditures of \$94,978,796. After adjustments, Carrie Sekelsky, FCS executive director of finance, expected to end FY20 with a fund balance of \$10.7 million.

Revenue sources for FY20

included: "local sources" (nearly \$9 million); "state sources" (\$35.2 million); "federal sources" (\$26.3 million); "interdistrict and other sources" (\$38.7 million).

"Other sources" included the initial sale of fiscal stability bonds afforded by voter approval of a March 10 millage proposal. Passage of the proposal by a 69 percent to 28 percent margin allowed the district to restructure 4 mills for the purpose of paying off the district's massive, accumulated debt in an estimated seven years.

The debt burden on the district is illustrated by a line item amount of \$24 million for "debt service" in the FY20 budget.

"I'm very happy to report it (bonds) went out today (June 17) for investors to place orders. We are selling \$30,620,000," said Sekelsky. "Within a few hours we had orders almost totaling \$60 million ... that was wonderful news today."

FY20 expenditures included: "instruction" (\$30.1 million); "support services" (\$40.9 million); and the aforementioned "debt service" (\$24 million).

Sekelsky highlighted the district's financial burden for providing special education services. "We're overspending in special education by \$5.6 million dollars for the year," she said.

### **Initial FY21 budget**

The initial, projected FY21 budget was adopted by the FCS board on a 6-0 vote. The budget anticipated total revenues of \$60.3 million and total expenditures of \$73.1 million.

After adjustments, Sekelsky projected that FY21 would end June 30, 2021, with a nearly \$13 million deficit.

Revenue sources for FY21 include: "local sources" (\$9.2 million); "state sources" (\$32.3 million); "federal sources" (\$18.6 million); and "interdistrict

and other sources" (\$240,867).

Sekelsky noted that "other sources" of revenue from FY20 to FY21 are significantly less "because next year we won't have the fiscal stability bond. ..."

FY21 expenditures include: "instruction" (\$31.5 million); "support services" (\$40.6 million); and "debt service" (about \$1 million).

Again, Sekelsky highlighted for board members and the public the district's challenge of funding special education. She expects overspending that line item by \$8.2 million in FY21.

"Most all of the areas we're spending less," said Sekelsky. That's due primarily to the aforementioned loss of cash infusion provided by the FY20 sale of fiscal stability bonds and the anticipated decline of state aid caused by the pandemic and a resultant poor economy.

"The first major assumption (for the FY21 budget) is the reduction in foundation allowance (state aid) per pupil. ..." said Sekelsky. "There still is a \$1.2 billion (statewide) anticipated loss in the school aid fund, which (represents) a reduction of between \$650 and \$700 per pupil."

Each enrolled student currently brings about \$8,000 of state aid into Michigan school districts.

### **FY20 and FY21 bottom line**

The bottom line for the FY20 and FY21 budget cycle, according to Sekelsky, is an anticipated fund balance deficit of \$2.1 million.

An amended Enhanced Deficit Elimination Plan (EDEP) will now be forwarded to the Michigan Department of Treasury for its review.

The FCS board previously sent an amended EDEP to the state in April, following the successful millage vote in March. Recent fiscal realities prompted further amendments of the EDEP and

*(Continued on Page 7.)*

## ... Education

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FCS budgets.

### Tax requests for next fiscal year

Sekelsky reported three streams of revenue for Flint schools provided by millage assessments on local properties.

“We will be levying the 18 mills of our operating school mills on non-homestead (properties),” said Sekelsky. Non-homesteaded property is property that is not a person’s primary residence and is not protected by a homestead exemption. Non-homesteaded property can include, but is not limited to, commercial property, rental property, and second homes.

“We will also be levying 1.18 mills for our sinking fund,” she added. The sinking fund levy is applied to business/commercial properties only and provides revenue for FCS infrastructure such as boilers and technology.

Sekelsky concluded: “We’re going to levy 2.82 mills for our debt fund and that’s to cover the fiscal stability bond that was voted in March.”

Revenue generated by the 2.82 mills is expected to reduce the number of years to retire the district’s debt from 16 to 7 years.

### Quick passage of student activities fund budget

In separate — but related — actions, the FCS board quickly approved the final FY20 and FY21 budgets for the Student Activities Fund on 6-0 votes. The fund is projected to have a fund balance of nearly \$2 million at the end of the budget cycle(s).

### Food service fund — not so fast

The FY20 final budget for the Food Service Fund was approved by a 6-0 vote of the board. Sekelsky projected a fund balance of \$484,671.

The board’s review of budgets got bogged down, however, when it arrived at the initial FY21 budget for the

Food Service Fund. Trustee Vera Perry doubted the wisdom of passing the budget for a food service program located at a facility, the Northwestern campus, whose future was very uncertain.

Perry worried that “some other things would have to be added that would throw (the food service budget) out of whack.”

Trustee Blake Strozier agreed. “We don’t know how long we’ll be there ... so we don’t want to add additional monies to the district to have to do something that we don’t need,” he warned.

### Johnson Controls estimate triggers alarm

Board concern about the Northwestern campus was stoked by an approximate two-hour presentation to the FCS board by Johnson Controls on June 9. Johnson Controls estimated a minimum \$4 million cost to bring the campus up to speed in terms of heating, ventilation, air conditioning, plumbing, and other needed upgrades.

Sekelsky agreed with reservations expressed by FCS board members. “The conversation about what’s happening at Northwestern needs to be addressed before we can really determine what the Food Service budget is,” she said. “Building repairs at Northwestern will determine the status of Food Service.”

After nearly 30 minutes of discussion, the FCS board, by general agreement, tabled the FY21 Food Service budget.

And with that, the 2020-2021 location of the district’s central kitchen services operated by Sodexo MAGIC — as well as the location of Flint’s 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders — became uncertain.

**(Editor’s note: A report on the current status of the Flint Northwestern campus can be found online at [eastvillagemagazine.org](http://eastvillagemagazine.org))**

### Contract with administrators approved

By a 5-0 vote at its June 10 meeting, the FCS board approved a new contract with the Congress of Flint School Administrators. Administrators had been working without a contract since June 2015.

Administrators approved the two-year agreement on May 29 by a 95 percent margin.

“It is a positive example of a move forward for the district,” said Cassandra Washington, FCS executive director of human resources. “This contract would be a growth model for our school leaders to actually leverage their talents so that they may be those instructional leaders that we seek to cultivate throughout the district.”

The contract includes: a 3 percent raise for all Congress members; paid time off days; attendance bonuses; paid time off upon retirement; new hire signing bonuses; and a stipend for administrators who sub for teachers.

The contract also includes an increase in the starting rate for entry-level administrators by approximately \$4,000.

(Continued on Page 15.)

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# *Crim races cancelled for 2020; virtual “10 Days of Crim” offered instead*

*By Zach Neithercut*

For the first time in its 44-year history, thousands of runners will not pound down the bricks of Saginaw Street this August in the HAP Crim Festival of Races.

An official statement from the Crim Fitness Foundation has announced that the Foundation’s board voted to cancel the annual 2020 HAP Crim Festival of Races due to the State of Michigan’s restriction of large gatherings as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The 44th Crim race, which would have taken place this year, has been postponed until Aug. 27-28, 2021, with the first-ever HAP Virtual Crim occurring from Aug. 14-23 of 2020 instead.

With the Crim Foundation being a major purveyor of public health in the Greater Flint community, the health of the Crim’s participants, volunteers, sponsors, and others within the Greater Flint community was the primary concern behind the cancellation, according to the statement.

According to the foundation’s website, as part of the Virtual Crim, “10 Days of Crim” will occur between Aug. 14 and Aug. 23, when race participants can complete their individual events at any point during the 10 days using any route, with the exception of official Crim routes with blue lines, as requested by the foundation. The reason for requesting runners not to use any official Crim route is to avoid over-congestion of participants without any support, Crim materials explained. However, the fact sheet notes that several 10-mile, 5-mile and 5-K suggested routes throughout Genesee County and Michigan will be available for download.

Participants can then log their time and photos into the HAP Virtual Crim finisher results page and receive a digital certification for completion.

Prices for the virtual participation will be reduced to the lowest offered for the year for each event, according to the website, as follows:

- 10-Mile: \$45
- 5-Mile Half Crim: \$40



- 5K: \$35
- Michigan Mile: \$25
- Teddy Bear Trot: \$15

Anyone who paid prices above these for their event will be automatically reimbursed, according to the site.

Current Interim CEO of the foundation, Lauren Holaly-Zembo, said the following regarding the decision:

“As staff our key role is to make sure we can provide as much information to our board to make an informed decision. We looked at trends in the race industry, guidance from health officials, and talked with our community.

“With such an important decision it was critical to have a board perspective that has multi-sector representation. Staff is there to be able to answer questions and provide perspective during these discussions and decisions.”

Holaly-Zembo also stated, “The HAP Crim Festival of Races is such a historic celebration in our community. While it’s certainly disappointing that we won’t be able to gather in person this year, we knew we had to do something to keep inspiring people. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our Crim Community of runners and walkers have still been able to keep up with their training, so we are happy to be able to offer the virtual race option.”

While there will be no official assistance of any kind from the foundation at any point during the 10 days, race participants are encouraged to form teams of friends, as long as the groups

abide by the Governor’s social distancing guidelines of no more than 10 individuals per group.

The foundation will not provide traffic support, water and nutrition assistance, medical support, restrooms, finish line support, or celebration.

Holaly-Zembo also noted how the cancellation may affect the foundation financially. “The financial impacts of the cancellation have yet to be determined, as much of it depends on ongoing support from our sponsors and participation in the virtual race. The funding raised from the race helps us fund the other key programs and it may have an impact on our ability to deliver those.”

The CrimFit Training Program will continue leading up to the HAP Virtual Crim while following the state’s social distancing guidelines. Training Program participants can either stay in the program and complete the Virtual Crim, drop out of this year’s program and receive a partial registration credit for the 2021 program, or drop out of this year’s program and receive a partial refund, as explained by the fact sheet.

Further details regarding the Virtual Crim can be found on a fact sheet on the foundation’s website, [crim.org](http://crim.org).

The non-profit Crim Fitness Foundation began as a 10-mile race in 1977 organized by past Michigan House Speaker Bobby Crim, now 88, and his late assistant, Lois Craig. Crim, still an active member of the foundation board, ran the 10-mile race last year and plans to run the HAP Virtual Crim this year.

A panoply of races available from year to year, which have grown to attract up to 50,000 to downtown Flint, have included the classic 10-mile, a five-mile, a five-kilometer, a one-mile, also known as the “Michigan Mile” through the UM-Flint on Friday night of the race festival weekend, and a Teddy Bear Trot.

*EVM staff writer Zach Neithercut can be reached at [zneithercut@gmail.com](mailto:zneithercut@gmail.com).*



# Last segment of Flint River Genesee Valley trail acquired; links Flint to statewide Iron Belle trail

A new three-mile-long paved trail in the City of Flint is one step closer to completion, thanks to an upcoming property acquisition announced by the city of Flint in June.



er to completion, thanks to an upcoming property acquisition announced by the city of Flint in June.

Called the Grand Traverse Greenway, it will complete an 18-mile path connecting the Flint River and Genesee Valley trails.

And it is the final piece to complete Flint's portion of the Iron Belle Trail, which will extend from Belle Isle in Detroit to Ironwood in the Upper Peninsula.

"Completion of this trail helps to celebrate the beauty of Flint. Walking and biking trails are building blocks for a happy, healthy community — plus this project will be a major asset for other ongoing economic development efforts," Mayor Sheldon Neeley said in a press release.

The \$3 million project is being developed through the City of Flint Department of Planning and Development with funding from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Choice Neighborhoods and other fundraising efforts that are underway.

## City Council approves the purchase of property for new trail

The Flint city council approved the purchase of a piece of property in the southern half of the city limits known as the Grand Traverse Greenway Trail Project. According to the City's Planning and Development Director, Suzanne Wilcox, this property is the last link

in the Flint area connecting the Iron Belle Trail. The property for the new trail runs from the area of Pengelly and Hemphill roads to Kearsley and Grand Traverse streets.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) website explains, "The Iron Belle Trail is Michigan's showcase trail that touches hundreds of municipalities and crosses through 48 different Michigan counties. Using existing trails, networks and new connections, the trail extends more than 2,000 miles from the far western tip of the Upper Peninsula to Belle Isle in Detroit, with a route of bicycling, and a route of hiking."

Progress on the Grand Traverse Greenway is a significant achievement for this administration. The City of Flint received funding for this project in 2009, but had failed to make significant progress until now.

Construction is anticipated to begin in 2021 with completion estimated for 2023.

More information about the trail can be found on the City of Flint website.

There, on the banks of the Flint River, this new portion of trail will link with the existing Flint River and Genesee Valley trails and lead cyclists and walkers to a variety of community assets including Chevy Commons, downtown Flint, the Flint Cultural Center as well as Genesee Valley Mall, Stepping Stones Falls, Bluebell Beach, and more.

The trail also is a key component for ongoing neighborhood improvement, especially the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, a \$30 million effort funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to create a new and better housing alternative for residents of Atherton East.

## Critical community improvements set to revitalize neighborhoods

Included in that funding is \$4.5 million for critical community improvements, which is being used to leverage an additional \$21 million in support from other City of Flint partners. This funding will allow for extensive neighborhood revitalization including commercial and residential demolition, commercial facade improvement, housing rehabilitation, vacant lot reuse, placemaking, and park improvements, as well as the construction of the Grand Traverse Greenway Trail.

Near the start of the trail, the City and Flint Housing Commission with Housing development partner



**Recently acquired property**  
(From City of Flint)

Norstar will develop new, mixed-income housing around Windiate playground and along South Saginaw Street.

"This project has been 10-plus years in the making. We are ecstatic to have reached an agreement with CSX [the railroad]. The trail, once completed, will leverage more than \$50 million of neighborhood improvements and development. This offers a non-motorized option for residents and visitors to explore our city and see all Flint has to offer," said Suzanne Wilcox, director of the Department of Planning and Development at the City of Flint.

*EVM staff lightly edited and added content to an email from City of Flint Administration for this article.*

# Undeterred by COVID, Flint Youth Festival goes on; will “make magic” online

By Patsy Isenberg

Faced with an unexpected pandemic shutdown and COVID-19 restrictions, those in charge of planning the 2020 Flint Youth Film Festival found a logical solution to getting the films out to the public: they'll be shown on the festival's YouTube channel.

Films from the 5th annual festival, for Michigan young people 13-25, will be screened on YouTube July 1-18 at [youtube.com/flintyouthfilmfestival](https://youtube.com/flintyouthfilmfestival). The awards ceremony will be streamed online July 23.

Festival Director Justin Brown says, “I think a lot of us are feeling weird that we’re not taking the time usually meant to plan our screening at Mott (Community College) or our awards ceremony at the Flint Institute of Arts, but, at the same time, we’re glad we can still make things happen. “It’s different,” he said, “but like a lot of others, we’ve had to adapt to the current times. We look forward to the day we can do this all safely in public but, for now, we’re going to do our best to still make some magic.”

Brown said the festival received 32 entries from 27 artists, most from Michigan, but two from out of state. Festival officials are notifying the filmmakers they'll be part of the festival and getting the films ready to be judged by professionals from around the country.

The festival entrants are divided into three age groups, 13-15, 16-19, and 20-25 years of age. The two older groups' films are divided into fiction and nonfiction. The younger group is strictly judged by achievement so as not to make it difficult for kids that young that are just getting started in this creative pursuit. Brown said they've added a category for PSAs (Public Service Announcements) this year.

Craft awards also are presented for writing, directing, and cinematography for the two older

groups. And there are other awards given that are determined by judges, for example, The Heart Award, which is for a film that shows passion from the entrant(s) that outshine all others. And, of course, there's the Audience Choice Award.

The 13-15 group must limit

their film to five minutes. The 16-19 age group limit is 10 minutes and the 20-25 group's limit is 20 minutes. For the audience, one good thing about watching the films on YouTube, Brown noted, is that the films can be watched more than once.

(Continued on Page 11.)



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## ... Festival

(Continued from Page 10.)

The festival expects to award a total of between \$2,000 and \$4,000, Brown said.

### Workshops also available

“No matter what story they chose to tell or how they chose to tell it, we hope participants will take a closer look at their surroundings in the process,” Brown said, “and document



**Festival Director Justin Brown at last year's award ceremony**  
(Photo from Flint Youth Festival)

the stories and events that speak to them.”

Workshops for the filmmakers are planned to launch online by July 6 for two weeks. They'll be held 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday. The first hour will be about the different areas of filmmaking, taught by Michigan film professionals.

This will be followed in the second hour by learning about video editing from Emmy award-winning Michigan filmmaker Rodney Brown. The workshops will culminate with each participant submitting a three-to-five-minute documentary on the choice of “Black Lives Matter” or “Life During COVID-19.” These workshops will encourage budding

filmmakers to enter future Flint Youth Film Festivals, Brown said.

Rodney Brown is the president of iMichigan Productions, a film production company based in Flint.

An informative website at [flintyouthfestival.com](http://flintyouthfestival.com) includes a run-down of all the rules for the submissions, other year's winning films and pictures of awardees with their cash awards. The dates for all events are there as well.

The site also explains how to vote for an “Audience Award.” It says on the home page to “... please stay tuned for details on that [the Awards Ceremony] and join us from the comfort and safety of your own home and support the young filmmakers of Michigan in these uncertain times.”

The Flint Youth Film Festival is sponsored by Mott Community College, Flint Institute of Arts, iMichigan Productions, UM-Flint, Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs, James A. Welch Foundation, the A.G. Bishop Charitable Trust, and EMAGINE.

As described in its press release, “The festival seeks to engage young people in media production to stimulate their creativity and develop their literacy and social skills while also developing their related science and technology skills. It is a member of the Flint and Genesee Literacy Network.”

EVM Staff Writer *Patsy Isenberg* can be reached at [pisenber@gmail.com](mailto:pisenber@gmail.com).

### **Lead/galvanized tainted pipes replaced so far in Flint: 9,593**

**Because of the governor's order, no pipeline replacements were conducted in April or May. But work has resumed. Totals as of June 19 were 9,593 lead or galvanized pipes replaced, 25,604 pipes excavated. A total of 16,011 pipes have been discovered to be copper service lines.**

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## Unclassified ads

### • **Three-bedroom Townhouse:**

Available Aug.30, partially furnished, hardwood floors, refrigerator, range, 1½ baths, laundry, off-street parking. In the center of it all on cul-de-sac Avon near Kearsley streets. Walk three blocks or less to UM-F, MCC, Cultural Center, downtown. References and credit check requested. No pets. On-site management. \$650 a month plus utilities. E-mail: [ecuster@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ecuster@sbcglobal.net). Or write: Apartment Box 9, 720 E. Second St., Flint MI 48503.

• **Tools Needed:** We are mentoring a student enrolled in auto class at Mott. We are in need of tools. Please check grandpa's, dad's, or mom's toolbox for donation or sale of wrenches, pliers, screwdriver sockets compression gauges, etc; Thank you! IT TAKES A VILLAGE and there's none better than East Village. Call Jerry at 714-342-7531.

• **One-bedroom Apartment for Rent:** Clean, partially furnished, upstairs. Walking distance to UM-Flint and Mott College. Call 810-625-3924 for appointment. Please leave a message.

### • **Apartment for Lease:**

Large(1600 sq. ft.) two-bedroom, second-floor apartment on Crapo St. just off Kearsley St. available early August. Extra bedroom and study on finished third floor. Featuring central air conditioning, newer appliances, sunroom, smokeless fireplace, hardwood floors, pantry, laundry, garage with auto-door and other off-street parking. \$745 per month includes water. Enjoy concerts, dance, art galleries, theaters, planetarium, library, museum, horticultural gardens and art classes, K-8 charter school all across the street. Five-minute-or-less walk to UM-Flint, MCC, downtown, Cultural Center, Farmers' Market. References and credit check requested. No pets. E-mail: [ecuster@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ecuster@sbcglobal.net)

or write Apartment 16, 720 E. Second St. Flint, MI 48503.

## ... Primer

(Continued from Page 3.)

[tomsumnerprogram.com](http://tomsumnerprogram.com).

For the Flint area, some of the most significant races you will see on your ballot are as follows.

**U.S. Senate:** Democratic Senator Gary Peters is unopposed for his party nomination and Republican John James is unopposed for the Republican nomination. After James' strong showing against Debbie Stabenow two years ago, this is expected to be a competitive race.

**U.S. House of Representatives: 5th District** (Genesee to Iosco County): Democratic incumbent Dan Kildee is unopposed for his party's nomination, and Republicans Tim Kelly and Eric Lackie are competing to take him on in November.

### State House of Representatives:

• **48th District** (northern and north-eastern Genesee County): Incumbent Democrat Sheryl Kennedy is in her first term and is facing a challenge from Andalib Odulate for the nomination. Republicans Sheri Cross and David Martin are competing for the Republican nomination. The winners will face each other in November in what is expected to be a competitive contest.

• **34th District** (northern and eastern city of Flint): Incumbent Democrat Cynthia Neeley, who just won her seat in March, succeeding her husband Sheldon Neeley, who was elected mayor of Flint, is facing four challengers for her party nomination. Opposing her are DelTonya Burns, Claudia Perkins-Milton, Diana Phillips, and Arthur Woodson. Republican James Miraglia is unopposed.

• **50th District** (Burton and Grand Blanc area): In one of the more unusual races in the area, Democratic incumbent Tim Sneller is facing Raymond Freiburger for their party's nomination. Competing to oppose the Democratic nominee are three Republicans, Christina Fichett-Hickson, Lynne Freiburger, and

Lynn Huckee. In what may be a first for Genesee County, Raymond and Lynne Freiburger are husband and wife, running in opposing parties for the same office. Politics may indeed "make strange bed-fellows."

• **49th District** (Flint and Flushing townships and south central Flint city): Incumbent Democrat John Cherry is unopposed. Republican Bryan Lutz is also unopposed for his party's nomination.

• **51st District** (west and southwest Genesee County): Incumbent Mike Mueller is unopposed for the Republican nomination. Two Democrats, Brad May and Conner Wallace, are competing to run against Mueller in November.

**County Sheriff:** Incumbent Sheriff Chris Swanson faces two opponents for the Democratic nomination, Flint police chief Phil Hart, and Tim Johnson, who previously served as Flint police chief. Swanson was appointed sheriff when Robert Pickell retired earlier in the year. Stephen Sanford is unopposed for the Republican nomination.

**County Prosecutor:** Democrat incumbent David Leyton is facing a challenge from Trachelle Young. No Republican has filed to run.

**County Clerk/Register of Deeds:** Incumbent Democrat John Gleason is facing a challenge from Renee Watson. Republican Jesse Couch is unopposed, and will run against the Democratic winner in November.

**County Treasurer:** Both incumbent Democrat Deborah Cherry and Republican Deborah Hoss are unopposed and will face off in November.

**Drain Commissioner:** Incumbent Democrat Jeff Wright is facing a challenge from Travis Wines for their party's nomination. No Republican has filed to run.

**County Surveyor:** Democrat incumbent Kim Carlson is unopposed for the nomination and no Republican has filed.

**County Commissioners:** All nine county commissioners are up this year. Of the nine, several include Flint-area

neighborhoods.

In the **1st District** (Mount Morris Township and north Flint), Democrat incumbent Bryant Nolden is unopposed and there is no Republican opponent.

The **2nd District** (central and east Flint) has three Democrats running to replace Brenda Clack. They are Michael Clack, Corey Lockett, and Charles Winfrey. No Republican has filed.

In the **3rd District** (Burton, east Flint, and parts of Genesee Township), incumbent Democrat Ellen Ellenburg and Republican Gary Goetzinger are both unopposed and will face off in the general election.

In the **4th District** (southwest Flint and parts of Flint Township), Democrats Domonique Clemons and Donald Wright are running for their party's nomination. No Republicans have filed.

**Township officials:** All Genesee County townships are electing officials in the August election. Candidate details are available at the [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org) website.

**Circuit Court Judge** (7th District, non-incumbent): Three candidates are competing for the non-partisan judicial position. They are Chris Christianson, Herman Marable, and Stephanie Witucki

**District Court Judge** (76th District, non-incumbent): Four candidates are competing for a six-year term. They are Heather Burnash, Glenn Cotton, Torchio Feaster, and Tabitha Marsh.

**City Council:** The city of Flushing will also be electing city council members.

**Ballot Proposals:** There are two county-wide proposals on the August ballot. Voters will decide on a millage replacement pro-

(Continued on Page 15.)

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[www.eastvillagemagazine.org](http://www.eastvillagemagazine.org)

# THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

*"This Month" highlights a selection of events available to our readers — beginning after our publication date of July 5. It is not an exhaustive list, rather a sampling of opportunities in the city which, due to the pandemic, is currently very limited. To submit events for our August issue, email your event to [pisenber@gmail.com](mailto:pisenber@gmail.com).*

## Flint Institute of Arts

The FIA is providing several places you can click on from the home page of their website. There are nine in all. Two of these feature kid's activities for two age groups. Plus, there are tours of the galleries, lectures, and videos to be found.

FIA reopening TBD.

Go to [flintarts.org](http://flintarts.org).

Free (but there's a place to donate)

## Sloan/Longway

Several virtual activities are available from The Sloan Museum, including Longway Planetarium's "sky guide" that can be downloaded. The Sloan Museum of Discovery is currently under renovation and is hoped to be completed by late 2021. Summer camps & workshops are still possible and registration is open. Full refunds provided upon cancellation.

Go to [sloanlongway.org](http://sloanlongway.org) to find out more.

Free virtual activities.

## Flint Youth Film Festival

Screenings on July 1-18

This year will be different than previous years due to safety concerns from COVID-19.

The films will be shown online on YouTube. Just search Flint Youth Film Festival and the site should be the first thing to come up.

Viewers will be able to vote for the Audience Choice Awards. An Awards Ceremony can also be seen online on July 23.

For further info visit

[flintyouthfilmfestival.com](http://flintyouthfilmfestival.com).

Free

## Learn Origami

The projects here look pretty easy. Who knows, it may be just the thing to fill your days and become a lifelong hobby.

Go to: [origamiway.com/easy-origami.shtml](http://origamiway.com/easy-origami.shtml)

Free

## Play Chess

Play chess with a family member, a friend online, or against a computer.

Go to: [chess.com/play/computer](http://chess.com/play/computer)

Free

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Get access to over 80 well-known experts in areas such as film, cooking, writing, music, sports, business, photography, and fashion through Masterclass.

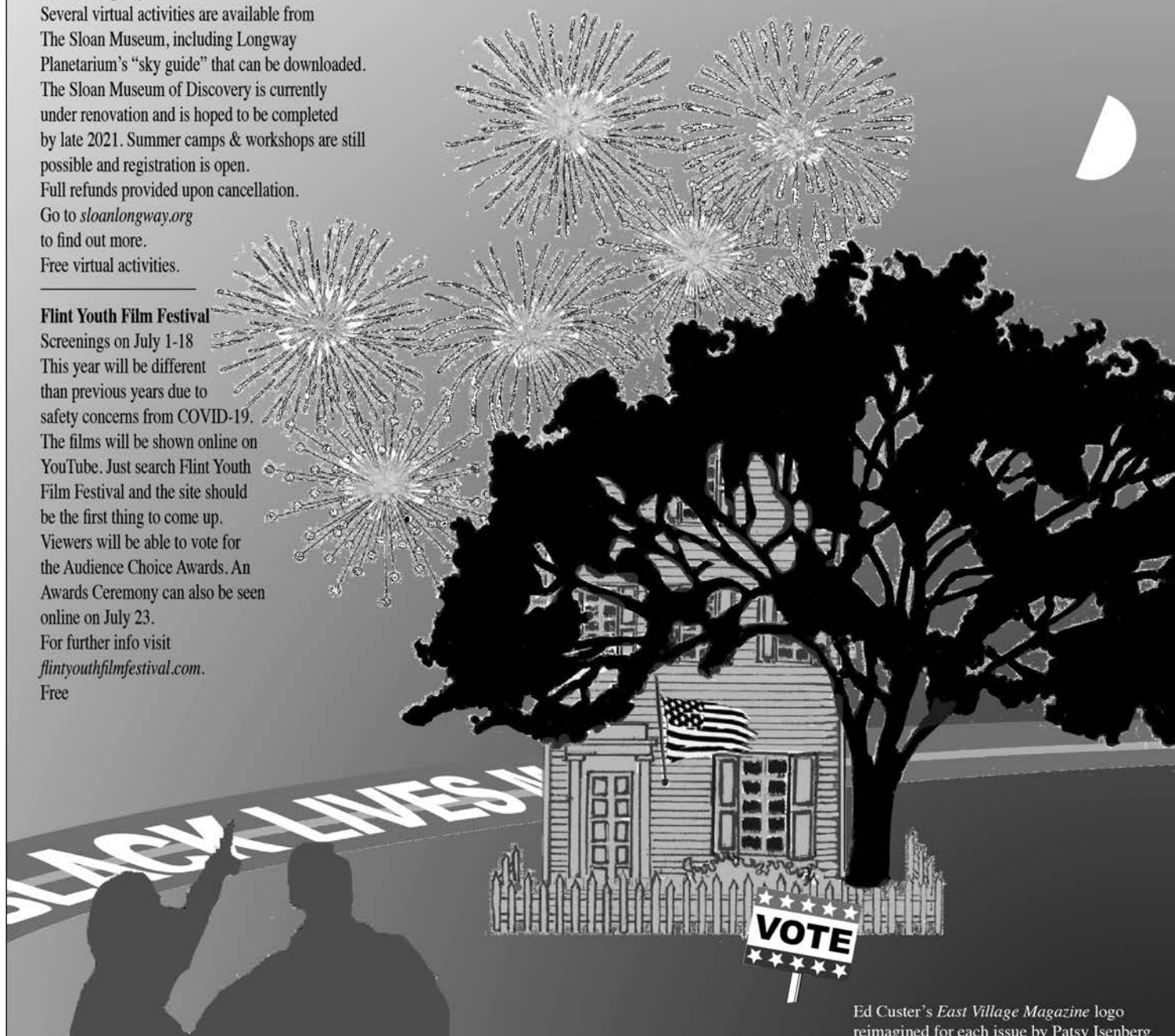
Visit [masterclass.com](http://masterclass.com).

Fee: \$15 month (billed annually)

## Go Bicycling

There's a group of individuals in Flint that hosts social bike rides. For more info visit:

[facebook.com/groups/SocialCyclingFlint](https://facebook.com/groups/SocialCyclingFlint)



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



# Flint School board fires Lopez, hires Steward

By Harold C. Ford

***“I’m just overwhelmed how we were left in March and she stepped up.”***

—Vera Perry, board trustee, Flint Community Schools, June 25, 2020

At a special meeting of the board of education of Flint Community Schools (FCS) June 25, Derrick Lopez was terminated as FCS superintendent “without cause” in a 4-1 vote of those present.

Those voting to terminate Lopez’ contract were: Diana Wright, vice president; Danielle Green, treasurer; Blake Strozier, trustee; and Vera Perry, trustee. The motion to terminate was made by Green; it was seconded by Perry.

The same board members then voted 5-0 to offer the superintendent position to Anita Steward who had been elevated from her assistant superintendent position to assistant/interim superintendent one month earlier on May 20.

Members absent were board officers Casey Lester and Betty Ramsdell, president and secretary respectively. Ramsdell, present at the start of the meeting, absented herself when the board returned from a lengthy closed session.

Carol McIntosh, trustee, was the only member of the board to vote against the motion to terminate Lopez. Moments later, McIntosh ironically seconded the motion to offer Steward the just-vacated position.

## **“We were left”**

Lopez lasted less than two years after assuming duties as Flint’s superintendent in August 2018. Lopez was suddenly suspended by the Flint board on April 15, 2020 “pending investigation”. No public explanation was given for Lopez’ suspension or termination.

A successful Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request by MLive uncovered a memo with for the March suspension of Lopez:

- “Lack of plan while reopening the district’s Northwestern school building as a junior high school.”
- “Lack of documentation on the relationship between the district and the McCree Theater.”
- “Lack of documentation on the relationship between the district and the Sylvester Broome Center.”

- “Issues with the termination of a former district director of operations and ancillary services.”

- “Failing to develop relationships with local partners to help amend an agreement with the Michigan Department of Education.”

Absent FOIA requests, regular board watchers sift the panel’s “tea leaves” seeking unstated explanations for the sudden dismissals of Flint’s last



**New Supt. Anita Steward**  
(Photo by Education Foundation)

two full-time superintendents.

With no public explanation from the Flint board, Bilal Tawwab was suspended from the top post in March 2018. A subsequent FOIA request by MLive revealed an “ineffective” by the board.

“I’m just overwhelmed how we were left in March and she (Steward) stepped up,” said Perry shortly after voting to terminate Lopez. No further explanation was offered by Perry.

In May of 2019, Lopez was one of seven candidates who interviewed for the superintendent’s job at just nine months after his appointment as Flint’s superintendent.

## **“Home-grown girl”**

“I’m just so happy we got the home-grown girl,” said McIntosh shortly after the vote to appoint Steward. “I think this is going to be beneficial for our district.”

“Steward graduated from FCS in 1993 and began her career in the district in

1998 as a sixth-grade teacher at Martin Elementary School,” according to a press release issued by the district’s public relations firm, Grand Rapids-based Lambert & Co. “She was promoted to the role of assistant principal in 2010 and principal in 2011. Steward also served as a part-time English teacher at Baker College from 2006-2010.”

“As principal of Freeman Elementary School at FCS, Steward increased state assessment M-STEP scores by 67%. Previously, as a teacher and curriculum coach, Steward helped with the implementation of standards-based lesson plans, evaluation tools, instruction and curriculum implementation...”

“Steward received her first master’s degree in the art of teaching from Marygrove College in Detroit, and her second master’s degree in K-12 administration from Eastern Michigan University. She holds a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and language arts, with a minor in social science from University of Michigan-Flint. She also holds a Michigan School Administrator Certificate for K-12 and a Michigan Education Certificate for K-5 in all subjects.”

“She (Steward) made sure the students got what they needed,” observed Perry at the June 25 board meeting. “I believe she’s going to be a collaborative type of superintendent. We have gotten more emails from her in three months than we got in two years from the other person,” continued Perry with an obvious reference to Lopez.

“I have confidence she will do a great job with our support,” added Wright.

## **Seven superintendents in 15 years**

Thus, Steward becomes at least the seventh Flint superintendent in the past 15 years. They include: Walter Milton (2005-2007); Linda Thompson (2008-2012); Lawrence Watkins (2013-2015); Bilal Tawwab (2015-2018); Gregory Weatherspoon (2018); Derrick Lopez (2018-2020); Anita Steward (2020-?).

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

## ... Education

(Continued from Page 7.)

"We have had challenges recruiting administrators to the district because our salaries were not competitive," said Washington.

The contract with administrators brings all three employee bargaining units into settlement with the district. United Teachers of Flint ratified a new contract with the district in August 2019 by a 96 percent margin. Paraprofessionals — members of Local 517 of Service Employees International Union — inked a new contract at the end of 2019.

## Steward settles in as FCS interim superintendent:

At its meeting on May 20, the FCS board elevated Anita Steward to an assistant superintendent/interim superintendent appointment from her assistant superintendent position. The move included a hike in base pay from \$111,034 to \$150,188.

Public comments by board of education members during the May and June meetings have indicated satisfaction with Steward's performance since she took over central office duties after the sudden suspension of then-Superintendent

Derrick Lopez on April 15.

"I am so proud of this administration, especially the way you guys have kicked in, in the middle of not only a pandemic, but within an emergency in the district itself," proclaimed Trustee Carol McIntosh. "You guys are doing a great job. My hat goes off to you."

The next scheduled meeting of the Flint Board of Education is a July 8 meeting of the Committee of the Whole.

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

## ... Primer

(Continued from Page 12.)

posal for the MTA, and millage renewal for Genesee County Animal Control.

In addition, Davison, Flint, and Montrose townships all have proposals on the ballot. The school districts of Atherton, Clio, Durand, Goodrich, and Lake Fenton

also have proposals for the voters.

### Take the time to vote

While there are many distractions this year, and it's easy to dismiss the August election as "just a primary," it is a very important election. This year, one of the advantages of easier absentee voting is

that voters can receive ballots at home, take the time to study them, and check out the candidates and proposals as they keep social distance from the polling places.

Take the time to vote this August. It's important and easier than ever.

*Political columnist Paul Rozycki can be reached at [paul.rozycki@mcc.edu](mailto:paul.rozycki@mcc.edu)*

## ... Police

(Continued from Page 5.)

Oversight Commission) would formalize it a little bit. So we would have regular meetings rather than just meet when there's an issue. This way we'll be having

meetings even when there isn't an issue."

The Black Lives Matter Flint chapter led by Robinson is separate and different than the Black Lives Matter Advisory Council formed by Mayor Sheldon Neeley at the beginning of June.

Robinson clarified that the

Black Lives Matter Flint Chapter that he is the president of "is in no way, shape or form connected with" Mayor Neeley's Black Lives Matter group.

*EVM Assistant Editor Tom Travis can*

## ... Journalists

(Continued from Page 16.)

Byrd Johnson, who met him at the door and delivered a hearty thank you, he said.

What will they write about next?

"I don't know," Paxon says, "A lot of fun things, maybe a story about Saturn. We each have our own ways of writing, and what we're interested in."

The first edition was free, Paxon pointed out, but the staff plan to charge 50 cents for the next edition. They hope that would cover print costs and then possibly raise money to donate to worthy COVID-related causes, like masks, food or clothes for Flint kids who need them.

"We made a deal with everyone's parents that they pay for the first edition, and then if we make enough money we will pay them back," Paxon

said.

His mother, Heather Laube, gently chimed in, "It's possible the parents are just donating. But that's a decision the kids have come to on their own."

As for their futures in journalism, neither is ready to commit — for now, it's just a fun way to get through the pandemic. But Paxon, an aspiring science guy, knows writing is important.

"Maybe, eventually I'll do it,"

Paxon said, pointing out that "A lot of scientists are always writing stuff down, a lot of scientists write a lot of books." For more information about Flint's newest journalists and their project, email [flintnewskids@gmail.com](mailto:flintnewskids@gmail.com).

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



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# Village Life

## Flint's newest journalists are eight years old and raring to write

By Jan Worth-Nelson

Paxon Laube-Clary's head hurt. Stuck at home in pandemic shut-down, he was spending three to four hours a day of screen time keeping up with his classes at the Perry Innovation Center in Grand Blanc.

His friend since preschool, Julian Pauli, home from the Flint Cultural Center Academy, was in the same condition. They thought it might be fun to do something different — something off the screen.

So they started a newspaper.

Hard copy, paper, ink, printed downtown and delivered to their neighbors — just like, well, the 20th century.

They are eight years old.

Their new publication, *Flint City Newspaper: Kids' Edition*, recently rolled off the presses — or, actually, slid from copiers at Flint Prints — for its first edition of what the young journalists plan to be a monthly production.

"The pandemic had a lot to do with it," Julian said. "That's what started the newspaper, because we didn't have to go to school, so we were having trouble knowing what to do — so we thought of the newspaper. We thought it would be cool."

They enlisted three other co-conspirators of the Fourth Estate, Oliver Mason, Carter Palmer and Ada Osman. All had been in the Montessori classes at Durant Tuuri Mott elementary school, but have since moved to different schools. A fourth, Taya Miller, Paxon's cousin from Wisconsin, has been recruited to chip in a puzzle for the next edition.

Julian, Paxon, Oliver and Carter all live within walking distance of each other in the College Cultural Neighborhood; Ada lives in Mott Park.

"During these COVID-19 times, our pint-sized reporters have been confined to the doldrums of their

homes," Julian's mother, Vivian Kao, and the grown-up editor and advisor to the project, wrote in a "Note from the Parent's Desk" of the first edition.

They may be pint-sized, but their interests range wide: the front page tackles "murder hornets" and black holes. There's a recipe for "Blondie Bites" and an elegy for the canceled Summer Olympics.

The crew somehow managed to get the publication together even with pandemic restrictions — social distancing and masks when they got together, Julian said, which was rare, and doing most of their communication online.

Kao explained the stories were adapted from the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, kids' cookbooks and other sources.

Four of the five distributed the first run — 100 copies — door to door on their bikes. They're also designing puzzles and researching articles.

while Paxon said, "I'm not really a sports guy." He's interested in space, having visited NASA and met two astronauts. He expects to write more about those topics.

They're already learning a lot.

To be a newspaper reporter, Julian said, means, "You have to pay attention to the basics, like why and where and when."

Proving he's already joined the tribe of anxious wordsmiths, Julian said the hardest part has been "writing the stories for people" and "finding the right descriptive words."

And Paxon already has joined a noble reportorial tradition — getting into tussles with the editor.

He said his first story got edited — partly by Julian and partly by Vivian Kao. Among other issues, "Julian said it was too short," and asked for more.

"And I said, *seriously?*" Paxon recalled, "wait... that's my work and it has my name on it!"

But he went back to the drawing board and added more information, and in the end, "it was entirely my own." The story, adapted from a report he did in school and from research, ended up on page one and everybody was happy.

The most fun part so far, Julian said, has been delivering the paper to his neighbors door-to-door.

"I liked when we dropped them off — I was thinking what people would think when there was a newspaper there." He and

Paxon agree that they're giving people relief in the pandemic — "a break from the screen" as Paxon put it.

One of the neighbors on Beard Street is Julian's music teacher Alesia

(Continued on Page 15.)



Julian and Paxon both know their work can't be copied directly from their sources — so they had to work hard to write the pieces in their own words. "We described the words differently," Julian said.

Julian is interested in sports,