Flint’s I-475 freeway and race: A concrete barrier, or a road to reconciliation?

By Paul Rozycki

A therapist trying to analyze Flint’s attitude towards race might use the term bipolar.

On one hand, Flint was the first major city to choose an African-American mayor, Lloyd McCree. It passed one of the first open housing ordinances in the late 1960s, after a community sleep-in at City Hall. A Republican governor came to support the effort. It was the home of the United Auto Workers (UAW), historically one of the most progressive unions in the nation. In contrast to many cities, Flint avoided major conflicts during the Black Lives Matter movement, when the county sheriff responded to a request from civil rights activists to “walk with us” during the summer marches in Flint and Genesee County.

Yet, on the other hand, Flint has been categorized as one of the most segregated cities in the nation. In the early and mid-twentieth century, homes built for GM workers by the Modern Housing Corporation included restrictive covenants prohibiting sales to any but white residents. Many city parks were assumed to be open only to whites. Banks and finance companies commonly ‘redlined’ parts of the city to limit mortgages to whites only. While there were several options for minorities, Flint’s I-475 freeway and race: A concrete barrier, or a road to reconciliation?

Building I-475

Plans to run an expressway through the city of Flint began in the early 1960s, as General Motors and others sought to connect several GM plants, and divert the industrial traffic from city streets. While there were several options...
Education Beat

Linda Boose to fill vacant Flint Community School's Board seat

By Harold C. Ford

Linda Boose was selected March 15 by the Flint Board of Edu-

cation (FBOE) to fill a seat vacated a month ago by Adrian Walker. The decision capped two rounds of interviews lasting nearly 2.5 hours, with five members of the board – Danielle Green, president (Green was removed as president March 23 after an alleged assault against Treasurer Laura MacIntyre, with Joyce Ellis-McNeal installed as president. See EVM online for full
details). Joyce Ellis-McNeal, vice-pres-

ident; Laura MacIntyre, treasurer; Allen Gilbert and Chris Del Morone, trustees, voting unanimously for Boose. Trustee Carol McIntosh was absent. Walker, then-board treasurer, left to take a position in Michigan state government.

Candidates for the vacant board seat included Boose, Estella Simp-

kins, Ezekiel Harris, and Raymond Hall. Boose and Simpkins advanced from a first round of six questions to a second round of five questions.

Candidate profiles

Boose: Boose attended Flint Community Schools (FCS). She graduated from Mott Communi-

ty College and the University of Michigan-Flint where she majored in Health Care Administration. She taught briefly at Whittier Middle School. She graduated from Mott Community College (MCC), a local masonic organization. Harris: Harris was born in Flint and attended Flint schools until his middle school years when he trans-

itioned to Carman-Ainsworth. An executive director position with the nonprofit MACC Development drew him to Detroit. Ramifications of the COVID epidemic led him to return to Flint, “to the city that we love.” At 29 years, he told East Village Maga-

zine (EVM), “There aren’t too many people my age moving back.”

Selection process

Candidates’ responses were ranked on a scale of one to ten (the best) with the candidate(s) accumu-

lating the highest point total moving forward. Critics of the process have suggested that calculating the numbers can advance a candidate preferred by a minority of FBOE members.

Contrary to recent past practice, point totals awarded each candidate by FBOE members were not announced to the public. [Note: To achieve brevity, only the responses of the two finalists, Boose and Simpkins, to the second round of questions are represented below. The responses are edited for purposes of clarity and brevity.]

1st round questions

1. Working effectively with other school board members and the superintendent requires skills in communication and decision-making. How do you see yourself working with other members of the leadership team? What is your vision for education in this community?

2. Do you understand the term ‘community benefit agreement’? How could that benefit the school board?

3. What would you do to ameliorate the school-to-prison pipeline in the Flint School District?

4. How many FBOE meetings have you attended? When was the first? When was the last?

5. Identify a recent board deci-

sion you felt strongly about. Describe how you would balance community concerns against needs, state and Fed-

eral law, staff considerations, and your personal values and beliefs to determine how you would vote on the issue.

Booese’s responses

1. “I can work at a high capac-

ity … I respect each person’s opinion … I do not hold grudges … It takes a team … the superintendent, staff, …

(Continued on Page 5.)

Hiring Boose ... (Continued from Page 4.)

the board, students, and the parents … My vision is to have a holistic ap-

proach dealing with individual minds, body, and intellect … for the kids to have a complete understanding of how their skills and education will form their future.”

2. “To get all the community partners to make an agreement to support and serve … in partnership with the schools. It’s an agreement between the schools and the commu-

nity partners.”

3. “They (students) get lost in the system … drop out … and end up in the juvenile system. (Boose noted that most of her clients at the Depart-

ment of Health and Human Services had no more than 9th grade educa-

tion.) They (students) get lost in the system and drop out … The kids have nowhere to go … (The schools) have to make sure they have a curriculum in place … to instill in the kids how important it is to finish their education and what the benefits are … A lot are not getting parented at home … Some families have barriers … The schools are the first line of defense … They can even start at preschool …”

4. “I’ve only attended two but they were wide apart.” (“One was “two weeks ago” and the other “about 15 years ago.”)

5. “It was the building of this new school over in the culture district … I felt like many of our inner-city kids was not going to have an opportunity really to attend it because of where it was located and … only a certain number of kids could go there … they had to have a certain scholastic IQ … most of the children were going to be discriminated against … That school was for the ‘other kids’ and not the inner-city kids … Right now, we don’t have candidates in position that are in favor of the inner-city schools. It seems it always goes to the parochial schools … charter schools … private schools … and the inner-city kids seem to get the tail end of the stick.”) [The read-

er should know that Flint Cultural Center Academy is a public charter

community is affected by anything you would do so you want to have an agreement … with whomever you might contract with … The decision is threefold; you’ve got to have the community … the board … local contractor … on the same page.”

3. “I just hate the terms the pipeline thing … to eliminate it … It’s going to have to be something that’s very inclusive to include psycholo-

gists for students … physicians … a police force that would understand all children aren’t bad … We would have to have … special judges that could see through the exterior of that child to really get at the cause of what’s causing them to get into the situation that they’re in … We should be putting more money into schools, teachers, counselors … We have a lot of school-to-prison pipeline parents … parents acting out too …”

2. “I think it is very imperative that the school board be in contact with their local community, especially the parents … and to be part of the deci-

sion-making process when it comes to their curriculums, the health, and differ-

ent things that are concerns of the school board … The school board should also have a desire to move the students into the 21st century with their education … and bring in programs that will address their behavioral issues the kids have, like neurological assessments … free physicals. (Ms. Simpkins continued by addressing the impact of the water crisis and COVID pandemic on the educa-

tional achievement of FCS students.)”

Simpkins’ responses:

1. “I’m pretty much for the caravan. I think it is very imperative that the school board fit in contact with their local community, especially the parents … and to be part of the deci-

sion-making process when it comes to their curriculums, the health, and differ-

ent things that are concerns of the school board … The school board should also have a desire to move the students into the 21st century with their education … and bring in programs that will address their behavioral issues the kids have, like neurological assessments … free physicals. (Ms. Simpkins continued by addressing the impact of the water crisis and COVID pandemic on the educa-

tional achievement of FCS students.)”

2. “I have … it could really benefit the school board. (It’s) where the community would have some kind of contract or agreement … where they can work hand in hand … You want to have the community involvement in different things the school board is doing (such as) the need for demolition of some schools, the need for building of other schools, The
The I-475 project was delayed by federal budget cuts and rising costs of the Vietnam War in the mid-1960s. But since everyone knew that the St. John Street area was soon to be taken for the expressway, all but routine maintenance was deferred and home values declined. During this time, the Flint City Council passed an ordinance prohibiting anything but the most essential repairs and improvements to property in the area. As a result, residents’ property was purchased at low prices, and those forced out often lacked the funds to find good housing elsewhere.

The expectations of racial integration were also dashed. While Flint passed an open housing law that prevented formal segregation, when the residents did find new housing it was often in neighborhoods that were still informally segregated, or in public housing within the City of Flint.

The I-475 project was first proposed, in a 1963 report of the Michigan State Highway Department, titled “Freeways for the St. John Street area. While some considered the area to be in need of urban renewal, the freeway became a means of removal. In spite of any problems that existed in the St. John neighborhood, such as industrial pollution, some have labeled it “the Black Wall Street” for Flint. Because of discrimination elsewhere in Flint, the St. John Street neighborhood was where most African-Americans did their shopping, visited restaurants, and sought entertainment. In his book Demolition Means Progress Andrew Highsmith wrote that the I-475 project ultimately increased Black poverty and segregation. He said that the rate of Black home ownership fell from 50 percent to 15 percent after the highway was built.

Andrew Highsmith wrote that the I-475 project ultimately increased Black poverty and segregation. He said that the rate of Black home ownership fell from 50 percent to 15 percent after the highway was built.

There were several reasons for choosing the St. John Street route, all linked to race. From an economic point of view, a low income neighborhood was a less costly path than clearing out a more upscale area. Taxes were low, as were property values. From a political point of view, the push back from a minority neighborhood was likely to be less intense than from another middle class area. The reaction from residents of the Central Park area, west of the area to be in need of urban renewal, was quite different. As a result, residents’ property was purchased at low prices, and those forced out often lacked the funds to find good housing elsewhere.

The expectations of racial integration were also dashed. While Flint passed an open housing law that prevented formal segregation, when the residents did find new housing it was often in neighborhoods that were still informally segregated, or in public housing within the City of Flint.

The I-475 project was first proposed, in a 1963 report of the Michigan State Highway Department, titled “Freeways for the St. John Street area. While some considered the area to be in need of urban renewal, the freeway became a means of removal. In spite of any problems that existed in the St. John neighborhood, such as industrial pollution, some have labeled it “the Black Wall Street” for Flint. Because of discrimination elsewhere in Flint, the St. John Street neighborhood was where most African-Americans did their shopping, visited restaurants, and sought entertainment. In his book Demolition Means Progress Andrew Highsmith wrote that the I-475 project ultimately increased Black poverty and segregation. He said that the rate of Black home ownership fell from 50 percent to 15 percent after the highway was built.

Andrew Highsmith wrote that the I-475 project ultimately increased Black poverty and segregation. He said that the rate of Black home ownership fell from 50 percent to 15 percent after the highway was built.

There were several reasons for choosing the St. John Street route, all linked to race. From an economic point of view, a low income neighborhood was a less costly path than clearing out a more upscale area. Taxes were low, as were property values. From a political point of view, the push back from a minority neighborhood was likely to be less intense than from another middle class area. The reaction from residents of the Central Park area, west of the area to be in need of urban renewal, was quite different. As a result, residents’ property was purchased at low prices, and those forced out often lacked the funds to find good housing elsewhere.

The expectations of racial integration were also dashed. While Flint passed an open housing law that prevented formal segregation, when the residents did find new housing it was often in neighborhoods that were still informally segregated, or in public housing within the City of Flint.

The I-475 project was first proposed, in a 1963 report of the Michigan State Highway Department, titled “Freeways for the St. John Street area. While some considered the area to be in need of urban renewal, the freeway became a means of removal. In spite of any problems that existed in the St. John neighborhood, such as industrial pollution, some have labeled it “the Black Wall Street” for Flint. Because of discrimination elsewhere in Flint, the St. John Street neighborhood was where most African-Americans did their shopping, visited restaurants, and sought entertainment. In his book Demolition Means Progress Andrew Highsmith wrote that the I-475 project ultimately increased Black poverty and segregation. He said that the rate of Black home ownership fell from 50 percent to 15 percent after the highway was built.

Andrew Highsmith wrote that the I-475 project ultimately increased Black poverty and segregation. He said that the rate of Black home ownership fell from 50 percent to 15 percent after the highway was built.

There were several reasons for choosing the St. John Street route, all linked to race. From an economic point of view, a low income neighborhood was a less costly path than clearing out a more upscale area. Taxes were low, as were property values. From a political point of view, the push back from a minority neighborhood was likely to be less intense than from another middle class area. The reaction from residents of the Central Park area, west of the area to be in need of urban renewal, was quite different. As a result, residents’ property was purchased at low prices, and those forced out often lacked the funds to find good housing elsewhere.

The expectations of racial integration were also dashed. While Flint passed an open housing law that prevented formal segregation, when the residents did find new housing it was often in neighborhoods that were still informally segregated, or in public housing within the City of Flint.

The I-475 project was first proposed, in a 1963 report of the Michigan State Highway Department, titled “Freeways for the St. John Street area. While some considered the area to be in need of urban renewal, the freeway became a means of removal. In spite of any problems that existed in the St. John neighborhood, such as industrial pollution, some have labeled it “the Black Wall Street” for Flint. Because of discrimination elsewhere in Flint, the St. John Street neighborhood was where most African-Americans did their shopping, visited restaurants, and sought entertainment. In his book Demolition Means Progress Andrew Highsmith wrote that the I-475 project ultimately increased Black poverty and segregation. He said that the rate of Black home ownership fell from 50 percent to 15 percent after the highway was built.

Andrew Highsmith wrote that the I-475 project ultimately increased Black poverty and segregation. He said that the rate of Black home ownership fell from 50 percent to 15 percent after the highway was built.

There were several reasons for choosing the St. John Street route, all linked to race. From an economic point of view, a low income neighborhood was a less costly path than clearing out a more upscale area. Taxes were low, as were property values. From a political point of view, the push back from a minority neighborhood was likely to be less intense than from another middle class area. The reaction from residents of the Central Park area, west of the area to be in need of urban renewal, was quite different. As a result, residents’ property was purchased at low prices, and those forced out often lacked the funds to find good housing elsewhere.

The expectations of racial integration were also dashed. While Flint passed an open housing law that prevented formal segregation, when the residents did find new housing it was often in neighborhoods that were still informally segregated, or in public housing within the City of Flint.

The I-475 project was first proposed, in a 1963 report of the Michigan State Highway Department, titled “Freeways for the St. John Street area. While some considered the area to be in need of urban renewal, the freeway became a means of removal. In spite of any problems that existed in the St. John neighborhood, such as industrial pollution, some have labeled it “the Black Wall Street” for Flint. Because of discrimination elsewhere in Flint, the St. John Street neighborhood was where most African-Americans did their shopping, visited restaurants, and sought entertainment. In his book Demolition Means Progress Andrew Highsmith wrote that the I-475 project ultimately increased Black poverty and segregation. He said that the rate of Black home ownership fell from 50 percent to 15 percent after the highway was built.

Andrew Highsmith wrote that the I-475 project ultimately increased Black poverty and segregation. He said that the rate of Black home ownership fell from 50 percent to 15 percent after the highway was built.

There were several reasons for choosing the St. John Street route, all linked to race. From an economic point of view, a low income neighborhood was a less costly path than clearing out a more upscale area. Taxes were low, as were property values. From a political point of view, the push back from a minority neighborhood was likely to be less intense than from another middle class area. The reaction from residents of the Central Park area, west of the area to be in need of urban renewal, was quite different. As a result, residents’ property was purchased at low prices, and those forced out often lacked the funds to find good housing elsewhere.

The expectations of racial integration were also dashed. While Flint passed an open housing law that prevented formal segregation, when the residents did find new housing it was often in neighborhoods that were still informally segregated, or in public housing within the City of Flint.

The I-475 project was first proposed, in a 1963 report of the Michigan State Highway Department, titled “Freeways for the St. John Street area. While some considered the area to be in need of urban renewal, the freeway became a means of removal. In spite of any problems that existed in the St. John neighborhood, such as industrial pollution, some have labeled it “the Black Wall Street” for Flint. Because of discrimination elsewhere in Flint, the St. John Street neighborhood was where most African-Americans did their shopping, visited restaurants, and sought entertainment. In his book Demolition Means Progress Andrew Highsmith wrote that the I-475 project ultimately increased Black poverty and segregation. He said that the rate of Black home ownership fell from 50 percent to 15 percent after the highway was built.

Andrew Highsmith wrote that the I-475 project ultimately increased Black poverty and segregation. He said that the rate of Black home ownership fell from 50 percent to 15 percent after the highway was built.

There were several reasons for choosing the St. John Street route, all linked to race. From an economic point of view, a low income neighborhood was a less costly path than clearing out a more upscale area. Taxes were low, as were property values. From a political point of view, the push back from a minority neighborhood was likely to be less intense than from another middle class area. The reaction from residents of the Central Park area, west of the area to be in need of urban renewal, was quite different. As a result, residents’ property was purchased at low prices, and those forced out often lacked the funds to find good housing elsewhere.

The expectations of racial integration were also dashed. While Flint passed an open housing law that prevented formal segregation, when the residents did find new housing it was often in neighborhoods that were still informally segregated, or in public housing within the City of Flint.
Beecher and Grand Blanc nearly repeat as state champions

By Harold C. Ford

Genesee County comprises about four percent of the state’s population (roughly 400,000 of 10 million people), but two local school districts – Beecher on the north side of Flint, Grand Blanc on the south side – currently claim 50 percent of the boys state championship basketball teams. Both schools won state titles a year ago in March 2021.

And both teams were steam-rolling their way to possible repeat championships in the annual Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) boys basketball tournament before losses at Michigan State University’s Breslin Center in East Lansing.

In Division 3 (D3), Beecher (22 wins, 21 losses) was bounced from the tourney in the semifinals by Schoolcraft (23-2) on March 24 by a 55-39 score. Grand Blanc (21-5) lost to Warren De La Salle (19-7), 67-58, in the championship game on March 26.

Tickets for Pistons games at Detroit’s Little Caesars Arena, in contrast, run $24 to $576.

Steamroller statistics

Beecher and Grand Blanc collectively eliminated ten MHSAA opponents on their way to the state semifinal contests in East Lansing. Beecher outscored five opponents in the MHSAA tourney by a collective points margin of 376 to 183. That’s an average winning score of 75 to 37. In the first-round District competition, Beecher ousted Vassar (80-17) and Reese (72-41). In the second-round Regional contests Beecher beat Hemlock (76-47) and Marlette (72-30). The Buccaneers, or Bucs, bested New Haven (76-48) in a quarterfinal game to move on to the semifinal in East Lansing.

The MHSAA playoffs are one-and-done: losers go home, their season ended; winners move on. Grand Blanc outscored its five tourney opponents 356 to 253. That’s an average winning score of 71 to 51. The Bobcats put Lapeer (78-42) and Oxford (66-52) out of the tournament at the District level. They ousted Carman-Ainworth (65-58) and Petoskey (80-61) in Regional competition. In its quarterfinal contest, Grand Blanc eliminated Detroit Catholic Central (67-60) to get to the semifinal in East Lansing.

Losing and winning

The boys basketball programs at both Beecher and Grand Blanc each had to adjust to a significant loss – both named Williams – as they entered the 2021-22 season. Beecher’s most successful basketball coach ever, Mike Williams, took his coaching talents to a new position at Davison High School at the start of the 2021-22 school year. Last year, Williams coached the Bucs all season. Beecher coach Marquis Gray rallied his team during timeout. (Photo by HC Ford)

Beecher’s “David” vs. Grand Blanc’s “Goliath”

Prior to the state tourney, on March 3, D3 Beecher traveled to D1 Grand Blanc for a much-anticipated matchup of state champs witnessed by some 3,000 fans. Grand Blanc prevailed by a 68-57 score giving Beecher only its second loss of the regular season; the other had been administered by Detroit King, then the top-ranked team in the state.

In 2021, Beecher had its best season in years. In 1976, Bedore led the Bucs to its first state championship ever with a win over perennial powerhouse River Rouge (80-76), a program built by the legendary Lofton Greene. Eventually, Lacy took the helm and led the Bucs to two more championships in 1985 and 1987.

Three Beecher grads were asked by East Village Magazine to reflect on the reason(s) for the success of their alma mater:

- Marquise Gray, Beecher boys basketball coach: “All of us (basketball coaches and athletic director) are Beecher grads; so this program, the school, the community holds a special place in all our hearts … All of us are doing what was done for us and that’s giving back.”
- Lance Sumpter, Beecher High School principal: “Our kids have that fight in them. The legacy in the district is amazing, and the boys know that when they put that Beecher red on, they have to bring Buc pride, intensity, character, and determination onto the basketball court.”
- Tim Smith, class of 1983: “We’ve always had excellent basketball teams, somewhat of a dynasty … It’s our athleticism and our speed, our defense. Our press has always been our bread and butter.”

Mike Thomas, boys basketball head coach, is sowing similar seeds at Grand Blanc. He told ABC12 that he purposely created a difficult schedule at season’s start “to challenge our guys … to see what they were made of around the corner (however) … The guys stepped up to the challenge.”

Thomas said, “I’m a guy that doesn’t really care about the first 20 games … March is around the corner (however) and we wanted to make sure we created as much momentum as possible.”

EVM Sports Beat reporter Harold Ford can be reached at ford1183@gmail.com.

By Harold C. Ford
Mott Park Recreation Area.
(PhotobyTomTravis)

From inside the club house the windows overlook the beautiful 70-acres of parkland.
(PhotobyTomTravis)

“Hey, we can’t let this go.”

— MPRA member Tom Saxton

MPRA President Tom Saxton, a retired Women’s soccer coach at Michigan State University, recalled when the golf course closed and the club house was abandoned in 2009. He said the golf course lawn had gone to seed and it would have been a million dollar project to restore the grounds.

Saxton recalled a neighborhood meeting soon after the golf course closed. The city was under emergency management at the time. “We were all standing around here like, hey we can’t let this place go,” said Saxton.

That moment, Saxton said, planted the seed for folks to start meeting and form the non-profit Mott Park Recreation Association (MPRA).

“No lot of attention was given, initially, to the club house building. Some work was done to keep it from falling in disrepair. Chad and other residents have really been the catalyst in trying to get something bigger going over the last year;” Saxton said.

Break-ins, vandalism and arson motivate residents

A few things coincided that, “made it seem like it was just the right time. One of the things was the club house at Pierce Park burning down, another incident was a bunch of kids breaking into this building and breaking a bunch of windows. Those kinds of events help me to realize the building was either going to go downhill or be improved. It wasn’t going to just stay neutral;” Schlosser said.

Wiggins said she came forward about that time and suggested it be made into a community center and offered her help. A former program coordinator/director of the former Pierce Center, Wiggins has years of experience in working with senior citizens and youth.

She said she dreams of the club house becoming a place for the community to enjoy the atmosphere and relax — especially for inner-city children to be able to take advantage of the facility.

“I don’t want it to become a wasteland,” she said.

Wiggins recalled Forest Park now called Max Brandon Park, in Flint, that used to have “a craft house. It was a place for children to come year-round to learn and do crafts including potter with the kids that was located in the craft house. Wiggins said she hopes this club house in Mott Park can be the same thing for children in this neighborhood.

Schlosser said one of the first things he worked on was outside lighting. He worked with fellow Mott Park resident Denny Gardner to get the lighting surrounding the building and the grounds up and running. “We needed to brighten things up,” Saxton noted the group has been in “crisis mode the last year because we were afraid once the heat’s gone the pipes will freeze.”

The group has made many improvements in just the last year. A $25,000 grant from the The Community Foundation of Greater Flint paid for a new roof, two new furnaces and two new air conditioners. Kettering University donated $1,300 for a new garage door.

An anonymous donor gave $2,600 to replace 11 broken windows. Saxton added that about seven years ago the CFGF gave the MPRA a grant to for all new windows.

Schlosser estimated about $30,000 has been invested in the MPRA club house “and a whole lot of sweat equity by volunteers.” Not all the volunteers are Mott Park residents or even Flint residents. While EVM talked with the MPRA group a Grand Blanc resident, Jayne West was volunteering her time to paint a small utility room.

Schlosser, Wiggins and Saxton listed more than 20 residents, by name, from Mott Park and Glenendale Hills who have volunteered doing work around the facility including plumbing, painting, clean-up, including Kettering students and local fraternities have helped out.

Volunteers also maintain the maintenance building, the bridges, fencing, trash disposal and security system for the property, according to Saxton.

Saxton has been on the MPRA for the last decade. “Our mission is to maintain and enhance this space from a golf course to a multi-use recreation space for community use,” Saxton said.

Saxton listed more than 20 residents who have helped out.

An anonymous donor gave $2,600 to replace 11 broken windows. Saxton added that about seven years ago the CFGF gave the MPRA a grant to for all new windows.

Schlosser estimated about $30,000 has been invested in the MPRA club house “and a whole lot of sweat equity by volunteers.” Not all the volunteers are Mott Park residents or even Flint residents. While EVM talked with the MPRA group a Grand Blanc resident, Jayne West was volunteering her time to paint a small utility room.

Schlosser, Wiggins and Saxton listed more than 20 residents, by name, from Mott Park and Glenendale Hills who have volunteered doing work around the facility including plumbing, painting, clean-up, including Kettering students and local fraternities have helped out.

Volunteers also maintain the maintenance building, the bridges, fencing, trash disposal and security system for the property, according to Saxton.

Saxton has been on the MPRA for the last decade. “Our mission is attached to the whole property and we see this (the club house renovation) as a great addition,” he said.

“Our mission is to maintain and enhance this space from a golf course to a multi-use recreation space for community use,” Saxton said.

Saxton said the annual flotilla ends in Mott Park each year noting that the group members are “tied into the Flint River Watershed as well.”

Some of the “multi-uses” for the property and club house are the disc-golf course that goes on all year round, the designated Monarch Butterfly Waystation by the Monarch Joint Venture Association, bird identification classes for kids, sledding, residents walking their dogs, walkers and runners, trails in the woods. One neighbor wants to teach a Judo class.

The MPRA annually hosts the Turkey Trot, the oldest continuously run foot race in Michigan. “It’s not exclusively a disc-golf course, it’s more,” Saxton added.

“We plan on positive, construction activities where neighbors can meet each other and we can figure out how to work together to solve problems,” Schlosser said. “Having a physical space to do that will make a lot of difference. And maybe resolve some issues like when people only communicate through social media this will be a place and an opportunity for people to communicate face to face.”

Future neighborhood tool shed planned

In partnership with the Neighborhood Engagement Hub, a neighborhood tool shed is planned to be opened out of the basement. Neighbors will be able to borrow lawn mowers, rakes, shovels, wheelbarrows, things they need to take care of their yards.

“We’re trying to lower any barriers that people might have to be able to taking care of their property. We want it to flourish,” Schlosser said.

A big goal this year is to address a problem water flow issue, Schlosser said. The MPRA needs to get water flowing away from the club house and towards the creek, he explained.

Schlosser said while the building is close to being ready to open, the MPRA is waiting for City Council to approve a lease with the city. The resolution to approve that lease was on the council’s agenda in recent weeks. Last week the council voted to move the resolution back to committee where it’s now stalled until it can be moved back to a council meeting.

According to Schlosser the lease agreement will call for the MPRA to maintain and care for the former golf course property and club house. A rental facility fee schedule is in the works and the MPRA hopes to be able to rent the club house and the property for neighborhood meetings, open houses, weddings and other events.

EVM Managing Editor Tom Travis can be reached at tomtravis@gmail.com.
Support for a North Flint food cooperative, assistance for affordable housing and blighted property demolition, training for school nurses, criminal justice reform, funding for more critical care hospital beds, and creation of a science and technology student mentoring program are among Flint-area initiatives set to benefit from $9.6 million of federal funds approved this week.

The appropriations are part of a $1.5 trillion spending bill to keep the federal government operating through the end of 2022 fiscal year. U.S. Representative Dan Kildee announced in a press release that 10 Community Project Funding requests from his district will receive the additional funding. The community project funding requests are scattered throughout Kildee’s Fifth congressional district which includes the city of Flint, Genesee, Saginaw and Bay County.

The trillion dollar federal funding package also provides $13.6 billion to support Ukraine as it defends itself against Putin’s unprovoked war.

Why only 10 Flint-area projects?

According to the press release, the Congressional Appropriations Committee created a new opportunity for Members of Congress to direct federal resources for certain projects with demonstrated community support. Each member of Congress can submit up to 10 projects for consideration.

All 10 of Kildee’s community project funding requests passed the House yesterday.

The 10 projects that passed the House include:

- **$650,000** to the North Flint Reinvestment Corporation to help build the North Flint Food Market, a consumer-owned cooperative that will operate as a full-service grocery store. The new market aims to improve access to affordable, fresh and locally sourced produce for Flint residents.
- **$650,000** to the North Flint Reinvestment Corporation to help build the North Flint Food Market, a consumer-owned cooperative that will operate as a full-service grocery store. The new market aims to improve access to affordable, fresh and locally sourced produce for Flint residents.
- **$650,000** to the North Flint Reinvestment Corporation to help build the North Flint Food Market, a consumer-owned cooperative that will operate as a full-service grocery store. The new market aims to improve access to affordable, fresh and locally sourced produce for Flint residents.
- **$650,000** to support Ukraine as it defends itself against Putin’s unprovoked war.
- **$650,000** to Sylvester Broome Empowerment Village (SBEV) to create a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics education program for students at SBEV’s north Flint after school center. This will be done in coordination with Genesee Intermediate School District Superintendent.
- **$1.45 million** to Hurley Medical Center to purchase 46 new critical care beds. Hurley Medical Center, a public and non-profit teaching hospital, is delighted to receive $1.45 million to purchase 46 new critical care beds. Hurley Medical Center is an independent, 443-bed public safety-net hospital located in the city of Flint, Michigan, according to Kildee’s website.
- **$750,000** to the Greater Flint Health Coalition to establish and operate a Community Information Exchange, which would improve mental health crisis prevention and treatment for residents.
- **$5 million** to the Flint Registry, which continues to play a critical role in the city’s recovery, identifying individuals exposed to lead during the Flint water crisis and connecting them to critical health care and other resources to improve their health and development issues.
- **$1 million** to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to protect the Great Lakes from dangerous chemicals like PFAS, combat harmful algal blooms and protect against invasive species, such as Asian carp. “Continuing funding for the Great Lakes Regional Initiative (GLRI) is essential for our drinking water, our fish and wildlife, and our economy,” said Dr. Mike Shriberg, Great Lakes Executive Director of the National Wildlife Federation.
- **$1 million** to the Genesee Intermediate School District to create a school nurse training pilot program. “The pandemic has further highlighted the need for school-based health services. This funding will help fill important gaps in our community, bringing much needed support in the form of school nurses to Genesee County schools and leading to better health outcomes for students now and into the future,” said Dr. Steve Tunnicliff, Genesee Intermediate School District Superintendent.

(Continued from Page 12.)

Public Health Initiative

- **$1 million** to the Genesee Intermediate School District to create a school nurse training pilot program. “The pandemic has further highlighted the need for school-based health services. This funding will help fill important gaps in our community, bringing much needed support in the form of school nurses to Genesee County schools and leading to better health outcomes for students now and into the future,” said Dr. Steve Tunnicliff, Genesee Intermediate School District Superintendent.

“Blight is an environmental justice issue. Vacant and blighted structures attract dumping and other criminal activities, create health and safety risks to residents and depress the value of surrounding homes and businesses,” said Michael Freeman, Executive Director of the Genesee County Land Bank Authority.

“Eliminating hazards in neighborhood commercial corridors is the first step to restoring value to neighborhoods, creating opportunities for residents to build wealth through homeownership and creating new opportunities for equitable investment and improvements in areas that have experienced significant hardship over the past few decades.”

- **$768,000** to Genesee County, including the Office of Genesee County Sheriff and the Genesee County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, for a collaborative partnership to create the Genesee County Justice Partnership for Reform to help reduce criminal justice costs, reduce recidivism, and build a stronger local economy by helping formerly incarcerated individuals secure jobs.

(Continued from Page 13.)

- “When you’re serious about fixing a broken system, give the people hope and a sense of value and watch what happens!” said Chris Swanson, Sheriff of Genesee County.
- “This funding will allow us to provide reform to the local justice system through a restorative justice model which will help bring true justice to victims, reduce recidivism among offenders, address generational incarceration issues, and help offenders get on the right track in life and become productive citizens,” said David Leyton, Genesee County Prosecutor.

“Michigan’s annual $2.3 billion recreational fishery is an asset we can’t afford lose,” Trotter said. “This GLRI money will help us cross the finish line, which will give us clean lakes and a bumper crop of fish to make Michigan great again,” said Kyle Korah, Regional Director of Public Policy of Ducks Unlimited.

“Michigan’s annual $2.3 billion recreational fishery is an asset we can’t afford lose,” Trotter said. “This GLRI money will help us cross the finish line, which will give us clean lakes and a bumper crop of fish to make Michigan great again,” said Kyle Korah, Regional Director of Public Policy of Ducks Unlimited.

(Continued on Page 15.)

(Continued from Page 12.)

Public Health Initiative

- **$1 million** to the Genesee Intermediate School District to create a school nurse training pilot program. “The pandemic has further highlighted the need for school-based health services. This funding will help fill important gaps in our community, bringing much needed support in the form of school nurses to Genesee County schools and leading to better health outcomes for students now and into the future,” said Dr. Steve Tunnicliff, Genesee Intermediate School District Superintendent.

“Blight is an environmental justice issue. Vacant and blighted structures attract dumping and other criminal activities, create health and safety risks to residents and depress the value of surrounding homes and businesses,” said Michael Freeman, Executive Director of the Genesee County Land Bank Authority.

“Eliminating hazards in neighborhood commercial corridors is the first step to restoring value to neighborhoods, creating opportunities for residents to build wealth through homeownership and creating new opportunities for equitable investment and improvements in areas that have experienced significant hardship over the past few decades.”

- **$768,000** to Genesee County, including the Office of Genesee County Sheriff and the Genesee County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, for a collaborative partnership to create the Genesee County Justice Partnership for Reform to help reduce criminal justice costs, reduce recidivism, and build a stronger local economy by helping formerly incarcerated individuals secure jobs.

(Continued from Page 13.)

- “When you’re serious about fixing a broken system, give the people hope and a sense of value and watch what happens!” said Chris Swanson, Sheriff of Genesee County.
- “This funding will allow us to provide reform to the local justice system through a restorative justice model which will help bring true justice to victims, reduce recidivism among offenders, address generational incarceration issues, and help offenders get on the right track in life and become productive citizens,” said David Leyton, Genesee County Prosecutor.

“Michigan’s annual $2.3 billion recreational fishery is an asset we can’t afford lose,” Trotter said. “This GLRI money will help us cross the finish line, which will give us clean lakes and a bumper crop of fish to make Michigan great again,” said Kyle Korah, Regional Director of Public Policy of Ducks Unlimited.

“Michigan’s annual $2.3 billion recreational fishery is an asset we can’t afford lose,” Trotter said. “This GLRI money will help us cross the finish line, which will give us clean lakes and a bumper crop of fish to make Michigan great again,” said Kyle Korah, Regional Director of Public Policy of Ducks Unlimited.

(Continued on Page 15.)
A selection of events available to our readers is highlighted — beginning after our publication date of April 4. It’s a sampling of opportunities in the city. To submit events for our May issue, email info about your event to pisenber@gmail.com by April 26.

**Capitol Theatre Live Shows**
Saturday, April 9; 7:30 p.m.
From radio to live stage, Rickey Smiley will perform alongside comedian Corey Holcomb.
Tickets: $80 to $90
Wednesday, April 20; 8 p.m.
Yonder Mountain String Band, Colorado-based jam-grass quintet, will perform.
Tickets: $30 to $50
(30% discount for Genesee County residents)
For more info visit capitoltheatreflint.com.

**Easter Egg Hunt at For-Mar**
Saturday, April 16, 1 to 3 p.m.
For all ages and abilities this old-fashioned Easter egg hunt is a hunt for eggs as well as cabbage and onions for natural dyes.
Pre-registration is required by April 15.
Cost: $5 per person
For Mar Nature Preserve & Arboretum
2142 N. Genesee Rd., Burton
810-736-7100
For more info visit genesecountyparks.org.

**Stockton House Museum Tour**
Sunday, April 17, 1 to 4 p.m.
Tour the restored post Civil War Mansion built in 1872 and learn of its history.
Stockton House Museum
Cost: $5 adults, $3-6 1/2 yrs old, Free under 5
720 Ann Arbor, Flint
810-234-1695
For more info visit stocktonhousemuseum.com.

**Easter Egg Hunt at For-Mar**
Saturday, April 16, 1 to 3 p.m.
For all ages and abilities this old-fashioned Easter egg hunt is a hunt for eggs as well as cabbage and onions for natural dyes.
Pre-registration is required by April 15.
Cost: $5 per person
For Mar Nature Preserve & Arboretum
2142 N. Genesee Rd., Burton
810-736-7100
For more info visit genesecountyparks.org.

**Jazz Ensemble Concert**
Monday, April 18; 7:30 to 9 p.m.
UM-Flint Dept. of Fine and Performing Arts students will perform jazz style music.
Theater is at 327 E. Kearnsy St., Flint.
For more info including ticket prices contact Audrey
Beachcenter at 810-766-6723 or email abeuach@email.umflint.edu.
Ed Custer’s East Village Magazine logo is reimagined for each issue by Patsy Isenberg.

**April’s FOMA Film Series**
Fridays (7:00 to 9:30 p.m.)
Saturdays (7:00 to 9:30 p.m.)
Sundays (2:00 to 4:00 p.m.)
April 1; “Licorice Pizza”
April 8; “Paradise Mothers”
April 14-16; “Julia”
April 22-24; “C’mon C’mon”
Tickets: $7 General Admission, $6 FIA Members, $5 Film Society Members
Check ahead for mask requirements.
Flint Institute of Arts
1120 E. Kearnsy St., Flint
810-234-1695
For more info visit flintarts.eventive.org/films.
Residents in historic Mott Park neighborhood come together to rejuvenate clubhouse and grounds

By Tom Travis

“I t just takes one person to have that vision or to have that love for their community. And that one person must be brave to step out and take the bull by the horns. It just takes one person and then they’ll gravitate and get other people involved. Even in a bad neighborhood, it takes just one person,” said Mott Park Neighborhood resident, Gennois Wiggins.

“And I would add that it starts with one person,” added another Mott Park resident, Chad Schlosser who works in campus ministry at UM-Flint.

Mott Park Recreation Area (MPRA) residents are aiming for a Saturday, June 25 grand opening of the freshly painted and renovated Mott Park club house, located at 2701 Nolen Dr. Flint.

Schlosser, who’s been leading the renovation effort over the last year, said the grand opening will include live music, food trucks and lots of festivities.

The MPRA is a registered non-profit governed by a board which includes: President Tom Saxton, Treasurer Bob Knox, and members Cal Chase, Denny Gardner, Paul Grasso, Chris Monk, Schlosser and Jack Stock.

Mott Park neighborhood residents have worked on the historic golf course since 2010. Since the course’s closing in 2009, residents have been tending, mowing and caring for the former 9-hole, 70-acre parkland. According to the MPRA members, more than 200 hours of volunteer hours annually provide for the maintenance and upkeep of the property.

“Something that’s been amazing to me in the last year is how many people and organizations want to play a role once we had an idea and a plan towards doing something like this,” Schlosser said. “The Mayor’s office, the Parks and Recreation Department, Keep Genesee County Beautiful, Communities First, The Community Foundation of Greater Flint, Habitat for Humanity, Kettering University — so many different organizations have contributed.”

EVM sat down with a group of MPRA members to listen to their story of renovating the Mott Park club house.

Neighborhood projects “need to be driven by locals” – Schlosser

About a year ago, locals began thinking seriously about bringing the club house back to life. It had sat vacant and boarded up since 2009, according to Schlosser.

He suggested that projects like the Mott Park Recreation Association (MPRA) and the club house renovation “need to be driven by locals.”

Describing himself as a “community organizer,” Schlosser said he sees himself as connecting different organizations with the MPRA.

“These organizations want to know what neighbors want to do. They’re not going to come in and just do something. So when residents and neighbors want to do something, there is a lot of support out there.

That’s where people, I think, feel alone and these are insurmountable challenges. I can’t fund this and do this by myself. But we figured out who can help, who can play a role. It takes one person to start and be inspired,” Schlosser said.

Clubhouse renovation means “crime prevention”

Schlosser said he sees the MPRA and the club house activities as “crime prevention.” “We can’t go out and stop people from committing crimes. But we can help to create a healthier environment for all residents in our neighborhood and that helps to prevent people from making bad choices. You give them opportunities to do things that are constructive,” he explained.

The MPRA listed top crime concerns for Mott Park as break-ins, shootings, traffic and speeding issues.

“Once you have programs for children, in a building, they take ownership. So once a child believes this is theirs, they’ll look out for you, they’ll call the police,” Wiggins added.

(Continued on Page 10.)