Commentary

The legal road to Roe v. Wade and back: It's more than just a court case

By Paul Rozycki

Perhaps nothing illustrates both the legal and personal sides of the abortion issue better than two unrelated recent events. A few weeks ago, we learned that the U.S. Supreme Court is likely to overturn a half century of protection for abortion rights, and, in the same week, we learned that the lack of baby formula is reaching a crisis level.

Based upon a leaked court opinion, (Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, 2022) it appears that the U.S. Supreme Court is on track to overturn the 1973 Roe v. Wade case that provided a constitutional guarantee for a woman’s right to an abortion.

While the Roe v. Wade case was a landmark case, the legal basis for it wasn’t created in 1973. Some of the key principles in the case were laid down years earlier, and have important implications for what might follow an overturn of the Roe case.

Earlier abortion laws and restrictions

Prior to late 19th century abortion was legal in most states, at least until “the quickening”, when the mother could feel the movement of the fetus. There were a few laws on the books, aimed a prohibiting the

Protestors at a Defend Roe March in downtown Flint on Saturday, May 14

(Phot0 by Tom Travis)

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Cover: Flint Public Library after renovations Grand Opening

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- “This (COVID relief funding) gives us the appearance that we are not operating in a deficit. I want to stress … we are still in a deficit.” – Annahma Doenrech, then-FCS director of finances, February, 2022.

ESSER funds provide temporary solvency

Jones said dismissal of the EDEP “is due to the work … done as it pertains to our ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Relief/COVID relief) funds and having a fund balance. We are in a position that our fund balance is in a space where we need to be at the time.”

The positive ECS “fund balance” is achieved, temporarily, by ESSER funds from the federal government that total $144 million, an amount confirmed by Keiona Murphy, FCS assistant superintendent, in a recent interview with East Village Magazine (EVM).

“We still need board members to eliminate some debt,” Jones warned. “We still need to make sure we are fiscally responsible.”

Representatives of Plante Moran advised the FBOE in December 2021 that unless affirmative measures were undertaken to address systemic shortcomings – particularly declining student enrollment – by 2024 FCS would likely circle back to a familiar bleak financial profile that has existed for nearly two decades.

A more complete overview of the FCS financial profile can be found in a May 16 online posting by EVM.

“To close or not to close?”

“To close or not to close?” asked a Pierce teacher during a time for public comment, “That is the question tonight.”

Jones had said “two of our schools (are) in consideration of closure.” He was referencing reports and rumors about the possible closures of the district’s Pierce and Ala buildings.

One day prior to the FBOE meeting, on May 10, WNEM Channel 5 and ABC12 News reported on the possible closure of Pierce. Rumors had Ala’s non-traditional students being relocated within the Southwestern building alongside traditional students as a school within a school.

“No decisions have been made about any or which schools will be closed,” advised Chris Del Morone, FBOE assistant secretary-treasurer. Nonetheless, 30 speakers paraded to the microphone expressing concern about the possible closures. Pierce is located on Flint’s near east side in the so-called College Cultural Neighborhood close to the city’s college and cultural center. Ala, an alternative school serving students in grades 7-12, is also located on Flint’s east side at 1602 S. Averill Ave., across from Dort Federal Event Center, near the Evergreen Estate community.

At the conclusion of its May meetings no building closures or accompanying staff layoffs were announced.

[Excerpted comments from most of the speakers opposing the school closures can be read in a May 16 online posting by EVM.]

“All of our buildings gotta be renovated.”

Danielle Green, then-FBOE treasurer, reflecting on the condition of Flint’s aging school infrastructure, said in August 2021, “All our buildings gotta be renovated.” Her statement has proved prophetic.

New reports of crumbling infrastructure – literal and figurative – were brought to the board’s attention at their May meetings.

Doyle-Ryder

According to Pete Medor, FCS director of operations, the masonry – mortar and bricks – of four roof chimneys on the 121-year-old Doyle-Ryder building need repair. The needed repairs were expected and not included in the previously-approved budget for black mold remediation and roof repair – would amount to just more than $31,000.

“I worked in that school for several years,” recalled Joyce Ellis-McNeal, FBOE president. “Everything is falling apart there.”

Due to the presence of black mold, Doyle-Ryder has been closed to students most of the 2021-22 school year; its students are currently attending Potter.

FBOE approved the funding request by a 6-0 vote margin.

Education Beat

May Flint School Board meetings: EDEP dismissed; no school closings or staff layoffs; infrastructure woes continue; intra-board tensions ongoing

By Harold C. Ford

The May 11 and 18 meetings of the Flint Board of Education (FBOE) – together lasting nearly 12 hours – began with purported good news that Flint Community Schools (FCS) had been released from the imposition of an enhanced deficit elimination plan (EDEP) by the Michigan Department of Treasury.

Any euphoria elicited by the EDEP-dismissal announcement soon evolved into a parade of FCS constituents anxiously and unanimously urging the district not to close schools – specifically Pierce Elementary and the Accelerated Learning Academy.

Ongoing infrastructure woes at its aging buildings continued to plague the district with reports of crumbling masonry at Doyle-Ryder and an inability to start up newly-installed air conditioning units at Pierce and Freeman due to electrical grid shortcomings. The May meetings revisited an all-too-familiar theme of board disunity.

EDEP disappears, not so indebtedness

“I received a call from Treasury (Michigan Department of Treasury) yesterday,” said Kevelin Jones, FCS superintendent, at the start of the May 11 meeting. “In that call, Treasury let me know that our district will no longer have a deficit,” Jones cautioned.

“The district has been under the watchful eye of Michigan’s state government – specifically its Department of Treasury – for many years. Most recently, two amended EDEPs were sent to Treasury by FCS in calendar year 2020.

“This doesn’t mean Flint doesn’t have a deficit,” Jones cautioned. “Jones’ caution has often been expressed by others:


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Pierce, Potter, Freeman

For some two years, Johnson Controls has been attempting to upgrade HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) systems in six of Flint’s school buildings at a price tag that exceeds $15 million. The electrical infrastructure in three of those buildings – Pierce, Potter, and Freeman – did not pass a recent electrical inspection that would permit operation of newly-installed HVAC infrastructure.

According to Medor, the problem at 70-year-old Pierce was “non-renewable” and would require no additional funding to resolve.

The electrical problems at 70-year-old Potter and 71-year-old Freeman were deemed “major” and would require significant additional funding to repair: $62,104 at Freeman; $75,295 at Potter.

“The service that comes into these buildings is not adequate,” Medor said. Johnson Controls told FCS administration that service on both buildings needed replacement; they would deliver a so-called change order (cost adjustment) to the district.

Installation, when started, would take three weeks. Hot spring temperatures – already reaching the 70s and 80s – are heating up FCS buildings.

A motion petitioning Johnson Controls to “honor the contract … without the change order” was passed by a 6-0 margin. Additionally, the board will seek legal counsel on the matter.

Intra-board tensions

Tensions between and among its members have been a constant in the nearly six years this reporter has covered FBOE meetings. The most dramatic instance, in March 2022, was an alleged breach of FBOE Treasurer Laura MacIntyre by Green, then-FBOE president, who has been barred from board attendance for several months via issuance of a Personal Protection Order requested by MacIntyre.

The nearly 12 hours of May meetings offered more evidence of FBOE tensions:

• May 11: The board’s president and vice president, McNiel and McIntosh respectively, engaged in a nearly hour-long brouhaha that featured tense verbal exchanges, name-calling, raised voices, constant interruptions, and accusations of dishonesty. These behaviors can be witnessed in the final hour of a YouTube recording of that meeting or in a shorter, excerpted version that was published online in May by EVM.

• May 18: Board members sparred over board policies. And Trustee Allen Gilbert, a pastor at Bethel A是我国的公共场所，但并不一定在任何情况下都适合使用。特别是对于那些经常需要长时间等待的人，如教师或学生，可能会感到不适。此外，在某些情况下，阅读可能会被其他活动所打断，如儿童玩耍或音量过大的音乐。因此，在选择使用公共图书馆时，需要考虑其便利性、舒适性和专属性。

FPL architect says “Libraries are the greatest act of love you can give your community” as area residents pour in

By Jan Worth-Nelson

When Kay Schwartz and her crew of 31 staff and the library’s board of trustees began the planning process seven years ago for the Flint Public Library’s major renovation which culminated with a three-day opening celebration May 19-21, one value “seemed to shine over all others.”

“We wanted it to be a welcoming community space above everything else,” Schwartz said, walking around the capacious new layout the day before the public opening of the dramatically made-over 60-year-old Kearsley Street structure.

“We’re providing space, and people can decide what they want to do with it,” Schwartz said. “We have opportunities for people that they never had, different types of seating, different types of meeting space — we hope they’ll do something with it.”

Among many “welcoming” moves, the library added automatic doors and a filtered water system; new seating of different “postures” has been added so that people of any size or shape can find a comfortable place to sit.

The staff have added art by local artists, including the new mural by Kevin “Scraps” Burdick visible through huge windows on both sides of the main floors.

To facilitate family uses, every restroom has a changing table. The children’s section has been expanded, a first-time storytelling room has been added, with a “child scale” restroom attached. There is even a snack area now — a big departure for library management.

From the start, all these changes and more fell to the project’s architects, OPN of Cedar Rapids IA, to listen and translate that value into brick and mortar that would communicate openness, accessibility, and even pleasure. The result, according to Toby Olsen, associate principal of OPN and major architectural domo of the Flint project, reflects a commitment to democracy and love.

That philosophy is most evident in the library’s exhilarating use of light — both a physical joy to move around in and a metaphor for a public library’s role.

“One of our big goals was to open the space up, there are so many windows, and we made even more, adding especially to the east side of the building,” Schwartz noted.

And in addition, library designers lowered the bookshelves so people can see over them, making spaces feel bigger and airier. They have added “face forward” shelving so that patrons can see the cover of a book as they browse.

“Whenever there is a window, there is either a meeting room, or seating. The designers pulled the collections in away from the windows, to give the windows to the public,” Schwartz said.

Olsen said he and his team strongly connected with the FPL’s aims, both philosophically and architecturally. It’s a specialty of the company: OPN has designed more than 40 libraries across the country.

Working on a library is “a project we love,” Olsen said after the ribbon cutting, surveying the shiny new look he had played a major role in.

“A library is one of the most democratizing of all spaces,” he said. “Libraries are some of the last few spaces where you go where there’s no expectation to spend money.”

In a library, “Whoever walks through the doors is treated the same way, and that is truly amazing.” Olsen said.

Libraries are safeguards to democracy, he said, “safeguards to making sure we aren’t devoid of free thinking, free thought. In a library we make sure we have access to ideas, and you can come and immerse yourself.

Those ethics go hand in hand with the mission of libraries that intrigue us, and then you pepper in the community gathering aspect, the ability to have discussions freely and openly — it’s worthy of thinking and hard work.

“We firmly believe libraries are the greatest act of love you can give your community. They’re a space where everybody is welcome, no matter your (Continued on Page 12)

Handmade sign held by parents and students at the Flint Board of Education meeting

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Toby Olsen, associate principal of OPN and FPL Director Kay Schwartz

(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)
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The right to privacy and the Roe v. Wade case

In the 20th century, a few states went further and banned the sale and use of contraceptives. In 1965 in the case of Griswold v. Connecticut the Supreme Court found Connecticut’s ban on contraceptives unconstitutional, as a violation of the “right to privacy” implied in the 14th Amendment.

The ruling establishing a right to privacy set the stage for the Roe v. Wade case in 1973, which overturned the existing abortion laws in the country. In their ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court divided pregnancy into three trimesters. In the first three months of pregnancy, the decision on having an abortion was totally up to the woman.

In the second trimester, the state could regulate, but could not forbid abortion, and in the third trimester a state could forbid an abortion for a fetus that could survive on its own, except to protect the life of the mother.

The 7-2 ruling was written by Justice Harry Blackmun, was based in part on the right to privacy. Blackmun was chosen to write the opinion, in part, because of his legal background working in the medical field.

He wrote: “This right of privacy, whether it be founded in the Fourteenth Amendment’s concept of personal liberty and restrictions upon state action, as we feel it is, or ... in the Ninth Amendment’s reservation of rights to the people, is broad enough to encompass a woman’s decision whether to terminate her pregnancy.”

Reaction to Roe

In short order, the pro and con reaction to the Supreme Court’s ruling broke down generally along partisan lines. With some exceptions, Democrats supported the ruling, and, with some exceptions, Republicans opposed it. By the late 1980s those divisions became hardened in both camps, and the abortion issue became a major cultural issue dividing the two parties.

In the decade following the Roe v. Wade case, a number of states attempted to pass laws prohibiting or limiting abortion, and most of those were overturned based on the rulings in the Roe case.

However, two cases in the late 1980s and early 1990s opened the door to more restrictions on abortion. In 1989 in the case of Webster v. Reproductive Health Services, and in 1992 Planned Parenthood v. Casey, the court upheld the Roe decision, but did away with the trimester distinctions, and said restrictions on abortion could be upheld if they did not place an “undue burden” on a woman obtaining an abortion.

While the Roe decision stood, it opened the door to many restrictions from the states. In the years that followed, many states began to require waiting periods, various medical tests, specific requirements for doctors, particular physical requirements for clinics, and other restrictions that made abortions more difficult to obtain. In light of the Casey and Webster opinions, more than a few of those barriers were upheld. Those cases encouraged many states to pass “trigger laws” that would ban abortions, if and when, the Roe case was overturned. Today at least 24 states (including Michigan) have laws that would effectively ban abortions if the court overturns Roe.

The impact in Michigan

In Michigan, overturning the Roe v. Wade case would reinstate a 1931 law that bans abortions in all cases, except to protect the life of the woman. It reads in part, “Any person who shall willfully administer to any pregnant woman any medicine, drug, substance or thing whatever, or shall employ any instrument or other means whatever, with intent thereby to procure the miscarriage of any such woman, unless the same shall have been necessary to preserve the life of such woman, shall be guilty of felony, and in case of the death of such pregnant woman be thereby produced, the offense shall be deemed manslaughter.”

Even under that restrictive law one key question remains, What is meant by “preserve the life of the woman”? Can an abortion be performed only if the woman is certain to die with a pregnancy? If there is a one in 10 chance of dying? A one in 100 chance? What if a woman needs to end a pregnancy to take chemotherapy? It’s obviously not clear, and few doctors would take the chance of facing criminal charges.

Michigan’s response: A ballot proposal, a lawsuit, and limits on prosecuting

In Michigan there have been several responses to the expected Supreme Court ruling.

There is a ballot proposal supported by the ACLU and Planned Parenthood that would amend the Michigan Constitution to guarantee the reproductive rights in the Roe v. Wade case.

Gov. Whitmer has filed a legal challenge to the Michigan Supreme Court ruling that could overturn the Roe v. Wade decision that protects a woman’s right under the U.S. Constitution. Her lawsuit argues that the right to abortion should be protected by the Michigan state Constitution rather than the U.S. Constitution.

If the suit is successful it would block the 1931 law. Based on a similar Planned Parenthood lawsuit, the Michigan Court of Claims has issued a preliminary injunction that blocks the immediate implementation of the law, but further legal action is likely.

A third response has come from Michigan’s Attorney General Dana Nessel, who has said that she would not prosecute anyone under the 1931 law. At least seven county prosecutors, including Genesee County Prosecutors...
It’s been a long and winding road, but the sculptured busts of the six women honored as “Heroines and Humanitarians” have now found their way to a permanent home in the Flint City Hall.

Yet, even as the clay models were made three years ago, it would take some time, energy, and money to convert those models to the final bronze sculptures and find a home for them. The COVID pandemic added more delays.

Over the last three years, before the Flint City Hall was chosen for the display of the six busts, suggestions were made that they be placed in the new Flint Public Library, or with the Chamber of Commerce, or among several potential locations in downtown Flint. In the end the goal was to keep all six together and the lobby of the Flint City Hall was chosen as their permanent home.

Mayor Sheldon Neeley welcomed those attending by saying that the women richly deserved to be honored, and that even though April wasn’t Women’s History Month, that “every month is Women’s History Month.”

In a well-attended ceremony at Flint City Hall April 28, the statues of Clarissa Shields, Edith Prunty Spencer, Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, Sybyl McPeake Atwood, Frances Willson Thompson and Olive Beasley were formally installed as a central part of the front lobby.

The project began more than three years ago, under the direction of Flint sculptor and Flint Art Institute instructor, Jane Trotter. Nearly 15 years ago, Trotter sculpted a bust of the late Flint community powerhouse Sybyl Atwood, and in the years that followed realized that Atwood would be the only bust to be completed.

In their community. It was Jane Trotter who described her as an inspiration to many. The Flint boxer is a two-time Olympic gold medal winner and holds 12 professional titles and the only boxer is history to be an undefeated two division champion. She has become a model for many young people in Flint and Genesee County. Sculptor Dee Moreno created Shields’ sculpture.

Edith Prunty Spencer was introduced by Flint Public Library Director Kay Schwartz who spoke of Spencer’s many years of commitment to the library. Spencer has been a leader and active member of the Flint NAACP for more than 60 years. Her plaque describes her as an advocate for justice, equal opportunity and voting rights. She had served on at least 14 civil and charitable organizations that promoted education. Jane Trotter completed the bust of Edith Spencer.

Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, M.D. was introduced by Ingrid Halling. Dr. Hanna-Attisha became one of the first voices for those harmed by the Flint water crisis. By challenging her critics both within and outside of the city, she became a leader in the campaign to deal with the Flint water crisis. She advanced efforts to mitigate the effects of lead on the children of Flint. Artist Jan Hanson did the statue of Dr. Hanna-Attisha.

Clararessa Shields, Edith Prunty Spencer, Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, Sybyl McPeake Atwood, Frances Willson Thompson and Olive Beasley were made three years ago, under the direction of sculptor Jane Trotter and her students, one of the other active forces behind the “Heroines and Humanitarians” project was the Court Street Village Nonprofit, led by Doris and Norma Sain, who described the history of the project and some of the barriers and challenges it faced over the last three years.

Each of the “Heroines and Humanitarians” was introduced by a colleague or friend, and most had a chance to respond to the honor.

Clarissa Shields, was introduced by Pastor Robert McCathern, who described her as an inspiration to many. The Flint boxer is a two-time Olympic gold medal winner and holds 12 professional titles and the only boxer is history to be an undefeated two division champion. She has become a model for many young people in Flint and Genesee County. Sculptor Dee Moreno created Shields’ sculpture.

Dale Weighill, Associate Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Mott Community College introduced the Sybyl McPeake Atwood bust.

Dale Weighill, Associate Vice President of Institutional Advancement at Mott Community College, described his relationship with the late Sybyl McPeake Atwood, at the Resource Center.

Atwood worked for more than 40 years to advocate for the poor, the sick, and the elderly. In her role with the Resource Center she motivated and organized countless volunteers for causes and projects that improved life in Genesee County. She is remembered with the SYBYL Award given to those who make a difference in their community. It was Jane Trotter’s completion of the Atwood’s bust that began the project.

Karima Amiliani was scheduled for the introduction of Frances Willson Thompson, but Sue Peters, vice president of the Community Foundation of Greater Flint, filled in. Frances Willson Thompson was a donor and philanthropist for many causes and projects in Flint, particularly those with the University of Michigan-Flint. She had been the major motivating factor behind the Frances Willson Thompson Library, and the Critical Issues Forum at the UM-Flint. As her bust was completed, her granddaughter Susie said of her, “She loved Flint so much and was so thankful for all that Flint had given to her family and her that she wanted to give back.” Trotter sculpted the Thompson bust.

Olive Rankin Beasley was described by Erenelle Taylor, who (Continued on Page 11)
Libraries ...
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Claire Marshall was entranced by the Bubbleman show at the FPL opening. Her favorite part: “When he made a bubble bear.”
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Nathan, Susan, Amir, Aiden watch the entrance lobby and circulation desk area opened up access and added new, brighter lighting.
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Flint Rep reinvigorates the classic musical. With a fresh new rewrite by book writer and lyricist Tom Jones, in collaboration with director Michael Luberdes, the young lovers at the center of the story are re-imagined as two young men. The Fantasticks is a funny and beautiful allegory about falling in love and growing up. We couldn’t be more excited to share this new interpretation of the longest-running musical in history.

JUNE 3 - 19
INFO & SHOW TIMES
FlintRep.org/pta-fantasticks
TICKETS 810.237.7533 or FlintRep.org/tickets

They have stayed in local hotels and eaten in local restaurants. Cork on Saginaw and the new Sauce at the Hilton Gardens among their favorites. And the Cultural Center, including the library, is “incredibly unique” for a city the size of Flint: many U.S. cities have nothing comparable, he observed. Architecturally, this added an additional plus to the library design — the building has “parks” on two sides.

“This is a community where totally citizen goodness happening.” As of May 21, the official opening day, the library, at 1026 E. Kearsley St., will be open five days a week: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. More information is available at 810-249-2038, www.fpl.info.

EVM consulting editor Jan Worth-Nelson can be reached at janworth1118@gmail.com.
This Month in the Village

A selection of events available to our readers is highlighted — beginning after our publication date of June 2. It's a sampling of opportunities in the city. To submit events for our July issue, email info about your event to pisenber@gmail.com by June 26.

Flint Institute of Arts
May 14 through Aug. 28
“Being Human: Contemporary Art from the Rubell Museum” Photography, painting, and sculpture depicting themes that make us human.
Admission free for FIA members Genesee County residents, children under 12.
Admission is $10, students, and all visitors on Saturdays.
Regular admission is adults $10, seniors, and students $8.
Flint Institute of Art
1120 E. Kearney St., Flint
810-234-1695 or visit flintaarts.org.

The Fantasticks
June 3 through June 19
Performances Fridays (8 p.m.), Saturdays (2 and 8 p.m.), and Sundays (2 p.m. June 5 and 19 or 7 p.m. on June 12)
The longest-running musical in history rewritten Michael Lluberes in collaboration with the play's original author Tom Jones, featuring many locals.
Tickets: adults $25, senior 60+, and seniors $8.
Flint Institute of Arts
1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint
810-234-1695 or visit flintaarts.org.

To submit events for our July issue, email info about your event to pisenber@gmail.com by June 26.

Unclassified Ad
Apartment for Lease
Two-bedroom second story apartment for lease on Avon near Kearney St. Available in July. Can be partially furnished. Has a large upper deck, off-street parking, water heater/stove. Walk three blocks to less than U of M-Flint. MCC, Cultural Center, library, downtown. Universities - Market, three parks, and bike paths. Easy freeway access. References and credit check requested. $650 per month plus utilities.
E-mail easter09@icloud.com or write: Apartment Box 11 721 E. Second St. Flint MI 48503.

College Cultural Neighborhood Association
Sign up to get notices of meetings at ccnaflint@gmail.com

The Flint Institute of Arts presents
Family Fun Day Celebrating Juneteenth
Sat. June 18, 5-10 p.m.
This will be a fun-filled celebration with food, live music, DJs, and kids activities throughout the day. RL & Q will host

Seniors and the disabled will learn and experience mindfulness, a form of meditation, while kayaking. Equipment and staff support provided. Pre-registration required online at kayakflint.org. For questions call The Disability Network at 810-742-1000.
For more info on these outdoor activities visit geneseecountyparks.org/calendar.

Genesee Parks Events
Tues. June 7, 10 to 11:30 a.m.
Ready, Grow! Seed Bombs
This is held at the mud kitchen in the Dewaters Building at For-Mar Nature Preserve & Arboretum. The objective is adding color to flower gardens. It’s for ages 6 and older. Dress for a mess. Pre-registration by June 6.

Sat. June 18, 9 to 10:30 a.m.
Nature Photography Hike at Bluegill Boat Launch
This is a leisurely hike along a paved accessible trail at the shores of Mott Lake. Bring your digital cameras or phones. For ages 12 and older. Pre-registration required by June 17. Participants will meet in the parking lot.
Cost: $5 per person.
Tues. June 21, 6 to 8 p.m.
Mindfulness Paddle
Seniors and the disabled will learn and experience mindfulness, a form of meditation, while kayaking. Equipment and staff support provided. Pre-registration required online at kayakflint.org. For questions call The Disability Network at 810-742-1000.
For more info on these outdoor activities visit geneseecountyparks.org/calendar.

Capitol Theatre
Fri., June 24, 7 p.m.
“Pulp Fiction,” R rated
Tickets: Adults $10
(50% discount for Genesee Cty. residents)
The Capitol Theatre
140 E. 2nd St., Flint
810-237-7333
For more info visit capitoltheatreflint.com.

Mott Park Recreation Area
Grand Opening of the renovated Mott Park Clubhouse
Sat., June 25, 4 to 8 p.m.
Residents are invited to the grand opening of the freshly painted and renovated clubhouse.
Mott Park Clubhouse
2701 Nolan Dr., Flint
For more info visit facebook.com/pages/Mott-Park-Recreation-Area.

For-Mar Nature Preserve & Arboretum
Mindfulness Paddle
Seniors and the disabled will learn and experience mindfulness, a form of meditation, while kayaking. Equipment and staff support provided. Pre-registration required online at kayakflint.org. For questions call The Disability Network at 810-742-1000.
For more info on these outdoor activities visit geneseecountyparks.org/calendar.

CAPITOL THEATER

To submit events for our July issue, email info about your event to pisenber@gmail.com by June 26.
After the joyful ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Flint Public Library May 19, Flint Community Schools Superintendent Kevelin Jones slipped away alone across the parking lot from the glossy new building to the empty wreck that is the former Flint Central High School, closed in 2009 and now crumbling, tagged, vandalized and boarded up just a few dozen yards away.

The contrast could not have been more pointed.

“Today was emotional,” Jones said. “As I walked through the library and I looked over at Flint Central, well, I took the walk on purpose, I took the walk because I’m imagining our scholars being able to take that walk.”

Jones picked up a piece of brick fallen from the vacant high school, which stands starkly abandoned and far removed from its one-time bustling and vigorous life at the hub of Flint’s public education. Several proposals for its disposition have been floated, none acted upon.

For Jones, who grew up in Flint and attended Flint public schools all the way through, the grand re-opening of the $30 million library — its hundreds of cubic yards of windows, people-friendly new furniture, renovated infrastructure systems from the ground up — came with an intense vein of exasperation and sadness for his beleaguered district.

“I took a piece of the brick,” he said, wiping his eyes. “This brick is going to be on my desk to remind me that this is my job. I’m sorry for my tears,” he said, while gathering his thoughts.

“This brick is a reminder of what I’m supposed to do.”

In his remarks under the tent at the ribbon cutting, Jones congratulated the library for its accomplishments, and then said, referring to his beleaguered public schools, “We got next.”

The public library has been able to remake itself, with $16 million in support from the C.S. Mott Foundation and other major donors, along with another $12 million from a bond approved by 68 percent of voters in 2019.

But the Flint School District has floundered, enrollment down to barely 3,000 students and its buildings in increasingly dire disrepair. The Flint Board of Education has so far declined to act on a $200 million “Memo of Understanding” offered by the Mott Foundation to build new schools, a plan detailed in 2021 by EVM education reporter Harold Ford.

Even with $32 million in federal COVID funds landing in its coffers, the FCS faces serious financial problems. Without the one-time COVID boost, the district faces a $21.5 million annual deficit, according to FCS officials.

But the FCS board has struggled to come up with a plan to cover the deficit or deal with what experts both internal and outside, have termed urgent needs for infrastructure repair.

“I’m encouraged today to keep fighting,” Jones said, cupping the Flint Central brick in his right hand. “I’m gonna fight for our scholars to have new schools, to have the best education possible, and to ensure that the time I spend in the FCS is going to be spent doing that.

“Our scholars need to be able to take this walk. They need to be able to look back and say, that is my school. Right now, they can’t say that. With all this greatness around us, we need to be a part of it.

“The Mott Foundation has been adamant about a relationship with the Flint Community Schools,” Jones noted, despite the board’s reluctance to move forward on the proposed partnership, tabbed the Flint Education Continuum.

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