

East Village Magazine

July 2022



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East Village Magazine

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Commentary
Good government isn't easy.
It's up to all of us to make it work
By Paul Rozycki

When Flint School Board President Danielle Greene (allegedly) assaulted board Treasurer Laura McIntyre during a Flint Community School Board meeting last March, the school board accomplished something that few thought humanly possible. If even for a short time, they replaced the Flint City Council as the most dysfunctional government in the county.

That's no small accomplishment. Not to be outdone in the race for dysfunctional government, Genesee County recently saw County Clerk John Gleason arrested, and Flint Township election clerk Kathy Funk criminally charged with election fraud.

It's easy to shake our heads and say "there they go again," or "it's just politics," as we learn of the latest antics of the City Council, the Flint School Board, or Genesee County officeholders. But we have a right to expect more from our elected officials. The damage done by incompetent and chaotic government goes well beyond the boundaries of Flint and Genesee County, and impacts more than just our local tax bill, school classrooms, garbage pickup, or road repair.

As Genesee County and the City of Flint face a declining tax base, shrinking population, and a public school system that is floundering, we need a competent, effective government more than ever.

Not all of the problems we face are the result of dysfunctional government, but a dysfunctional government makes any solution much more difficult. It's hard to convince a prospective business to locate in Flint when they confront eight- or ten-hour council meetings that do little but bicker, and council members are led out in handcuffs or leave early from exhaustion.

It's difficult to convince parents that Flint Community Schools are the best place for their children when board members are arrested for assaulting each other as the aging school buildings crumble around them.

How did we get here?

While the Flint City Council and the Flint School Board may be prime examples of dysfunctional government, they are hardly alone. Both the national and state governments share the same problems.

Even as we promote ourselves as a beacon of democracy, as a nation we have a long-standing distrust of government. It was Mark Twain, in the 1880s, who said, "Suppose you are an idiot, and suppose you were a member of Congress; but I repeat myself." In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan said "Government is not the solution to our problem. Government is the problem."

Those attitudes may create their own reality where those in government, all too often, live up to, or down to, expectations. They may discourage those with the most ability from getting involved.

Declining trust

Over the decades trust in government has declined dramatically. In 1964 more than 77 percent of the American public said they would "trust the government to do the right thing always or most of the time." By 2022 only 20 percent would agree with that statement. It hasn't been above 50 percent since the Watergate scandal in 1972.

In Flint, our recent history has

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Cover: Genesee County Courthouse



Photo of the Month: Federal Building in downtown Flint

(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

Education Beat Analysis/Commentary **Monumental challenges for Flint Schools; progress slowed by instability**

By Harold C. Ford

[Editor's note: For this special "good governance" issue of East Village Magazine, we have invited Education Beat writer Harold C. Ford, who's been covering the Flint Board of Education for more than five years, to submit not just a factual report about the state of the beleaguered district, but an analysis, with recommendations, from his expertise as a lifelong educator -- thus combining two roles -- reporter and education expert. Ford has spent most of his life in and around education. He graduated from Kearsley High School, Mott Community College (AA), the University of Michigan-Flint (BA), and the University of Michigan (MA). He was a public educator for 44 years in four different capacities; 43 of those years were spent in the Beecher School District.]

"There's no greater challenge and there is no greater honor than to be in public service."
—Condoleezza Rice

"When parents are looking at where to send their kids (to school), there's an awful lot of faith involved in the sense that, you may not have any money, but you're investing your kid in a school district. It's the job of the school district, the challenge of the school district, to be worthy of that faith."

—Paul Jordan, member, Flint Board of Education, 2005-2009

Based on student enrollment, most Flint parents have not found Flint Community Schools (FCS) worthy of the investment of their youngsters as they have opted to not send their children to its schools. Instead, a substantial

majority have chosen charter schools, private schools, home-based schooling, and neighboring school districts via the Schools of Choice option.

FCS student enrollment, not regularly reported to the public, hovers

near the 3,000 mark in a district with an estimated 12,000+ school-age youngsters. The exact number was not reported by Superintendent Kevelin Jones — normally a straight shooter with most all

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Education ...

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the answers — when directly quizzed by Chris Del Morone, assistant secretary/treasurer of the Flint Board of Education (FBOE), at the panel's June 9 meeting. Each and every student who fails to show at the schoolhouse door of a Flint public school drains the district of \$8,000-\$9,000 in aid from the State of Michigan. That figure, during these pandemic times with increased state aid, is closer to \$9,000. Thus, simple math shows a loss of, say 9,000 students, would mean a whopping commensurate loss of state aid approaching \$81,000,000 annually.

Theories about why Flint families have abandoned its public school system might be as plentiful as the number of Flint parents. From this writer's journalistic perch, the chief cause is FCS instability from top to bottom, beginning with the board of education and central administration reaching down through the hierarchical structure to building administrators, teachers, and support staff.

An accompanying malaise of dispirit punctuated by lack of academic and athletic success in and on deteriorated school buildings and facilities contribute to continuing abandonment of the district.

Flint students' scores on standardized tests (M-STEP, PSAT, SAT) are among the lowest in Genesee County.

Glory days for FCS athletic teams are in the rearview mirror. FCS won its last state championship in 1995 — 27 years ago, as detailed in a June 2017 piece in EVM.

In February, Dan Mack, account executive at Johnson Controls, told the FBOE: "The state of disrepair was significant at most of the (FCS) buildings."

Instability

However, instability that begins with its board of education may be the chief reason that FCS is struggling to survive. Even FBOE members, with regularity, publicly recognize their dysfunctional nature:

- "We are at a very fragile state in this district." — Carol McIntosh, then-FBOE president, Sept. 2021

- "It's been going on for years and years — hostile work environment, hostile board environment." — Joyce Ellis-McNeal, president, FBOE, June 2022

The ascension of Kevelin Jones to the FCS superintendent's office on Nov. 17, 2021 made him Flint's eighth superintendent in 16 years. And each new superintendent brings with him/her a significant slate of administrative changes at the central and building administrative levels.

Most recently, *East Village Magazine* reported in a June 10 post that three more members of the FCS central administration team were resigning their positions "due to the hostility, indecisiveness, leadership turnover, and inconsistency of members of the Board of Education." At the board's June 15 meeting, it was confirmed that Monaca Elston, the district's long-time executive assistant, is one of those who would be stepping down.

In recent years, educators have abandoned the district in droves via resignations and retirements, taking with them more than a thousand years of experience in Flint schools. In 2019 alone, FCS lost 60 educators with 833 years of experience.

Classroom teacher shortages have been so pronounced that "provisional" teachers without full certification have been hired to fill classroom positions while other school personnel, such as teacher aides, have had their contracts restructured allowing them to substitute for absent teachers.

Infrastructure shortcomings — failing HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) systems, malfunctioning electrical grids, potholed parking lots, deteriorated athletic facilities — frequently appear on FBOE agendas and bog the district down. Eleven FCS buildings average 71 years old.

As recently as June 15, Mona Monroe-Younis, representing the Environmental Transformation Movement of Flint, told the board of her group's recent study: "One of the overall findings was

that the roofs have needed repairs for so long ... The buildings (are) at risk of not being able to be sustainable over time."

Legal machinations — multiple lawsuits, unsettled issues with two law firms, and legal actions involving two FBOE members — sap the district's energy and resources. "There's so much to deal with [in] lawsuits," Ellis-McNeal said on June 9. "We're sidetracked." About 78 minutes of the 171-minute meeting on that date — 46 percent — was spent on legal matters.

For better board candidates

The uninterrupted arrival of challenges facing public school systems beg for exceptional public servants to meet them. Currently, the requirements to run for a local education board in Michigan are simple and straightforward. A candidate must be: 18 years of age; a U.S. citizen; a Michigan resident for at least 30 days; a resident of the school district 30 days prior to the election; and a registered voter in the school district where s/he is a candidate.

But the requirements listed immediately above are woefully inadequate when the well-being of precious schoolchildren is at stake. In terms of pedagogy and economics, the challenge of overseeing modern-day educational institutions has become much more complicated. Here's a 10-question quiz this Education Beat writer would administer to help determine the readiness of school board candidates:

- Compare/contrast: public schools; public charter schools; private charter schools; private schools.

- Describe Title I and Title IX.

- Describe the Schools of Choice program in Michigan.

- Describe the educational responsibilities of the following: Michigan governor; Michigan Department of Education; Michigan Department of Treasury.

- Describe restorative justice as it applies to the discipline of students.

- Describe the ideas of the following as they relate to education:

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Editor's Commentary

Good governing betrayed by “knuckleheads”-- the public urgently needs better

By Tom Travis

This is not the usual city council article. No “news” here, just observations and commentary from a local city government beat community journalist. As editor, and supported by the board of East Village Magazine, this entire issue is dedicated to governance.

Specifically, this entire issue of *East Village Magazine (EVM)* is dedicated to good local governance. Our local city council has at times resorted to name calling, including calling each other “knuckleheads,” endless bickering and excruciatingly long meetings.

One of my elective courses in high school was Civics and Current Events. That class drew me into a more keen interest in politics and government. As a young person I was fascinated by the goings on of government and elected officials.

One of my first political memories was sitting beside my dad while he sat in his chair in the living room reading the *Flint Journal*. On the front page were two large side-by-side photos of the resigning President Nixon and the in-coming President Ford, the only person to serve as president without being elected by the voters.

I would ask my parents questions about politicians and world events as we watched the news together. My mother suggested, probably out of exhaustion after fielding my questions, “Why don’t you write a letter to the President and ask him?” I wrote letters to almost every president from Jimmy Carter to Barack Obama (I skipped writing to Trump.)

Out of all those letters to presidents, Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush were the only ones who responded. When I was about 13, early on in his first-term, Reagan sent a letter and

a photo of him sitting on his horse. Bush responded by sending me a White House Christmas card two or three times. Hardly the types of responses I was hoping for but still, nonetheless, it was exciting for a kid (and my parents too) to receive mail from The White House, Washington D.C.



In these days of peril, we the struggling citizenry are longing for answers and solutions from our political leaders -- not fancy embossed stationery.

Words matter

In high school my public speaking class assigned us to analyze speeches by presidential candidates. I chose the speeches of Geraldine Ferraro. I became fascinated with the crafting of sentences and phrases to forcefully get a point across. In those moments of reading, then watching, candidates fire off stump speeches I realized the power of the spoken word. Minds and opinions can be swayed by the spoken word.

Words matter. Whether those words come from the mouth of the leader of the free world or a newly elected councilmember of a rustbelt, economically failing and crime-riddled city in Michigan, words matter.

Mired in discord and dysfunction

Our own city council has gained a record of ill-repute, often mired in discord and dysfunction. The council has moments of good governance: where there is rigorous debate, ideas shared, compromises navigated, and decisions made -- decisions that directly effect the residents’ lives.

Unfortunately, however, the council has had many moments of bad governance: exhibiting chaos, rancor, yelling, disrespect, name calling, even threats of violence and sometimes police involvement. Council members have been cuffed and/or escorted out of meetings after being ruled out of order. There are videos and memes of these events floating around the internet that have gone viral.

My Civics class instilled in my mind an idyllic vision of how government should work. It’s an ideal each American theoretically has in mind as we go into the ballot box and make our choices for who will represent us on city council, in Lansing and in Washington D.C.

The ideal is partly that what the candidate has said on the campaign trail will become a lived reality as the politicians carries out their promises once in office.

Political fatigue and loss of interest in the process of government

I’ve been voting in elections for about 30 years now. My first presidential election I cast a vote for Michael Dukakis. I’ve seen again and again campaign promises become watered down or not even lived out.

We watch both federal and state congresses clog up the mechanism

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“knuckleheads” ...

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of government with political trickery and focus on dirty politics to the point citizens have voting fatigue. Voters lose interest in the process of government.

Two things my Civics class informed me about was the significance of local government and how our government, at all levels, is a representative government.

At a local level, politics can be viewed from a closer vantage point. At a local level, it’s more likely the politicians could be friends, old school buddies, neighbors, co-workers or even relatives. This can be direct and even inspiring, but also wearing when it gets nasty.

As the dysfunction of the city council, the highest governing body in the city, staggers on and on, the citizens of Flint have grown weary. Political fatigue has set in. Some watch the meetings on YouTube for entertainment. The moderator of the city’s YouTube channel will often be forced to warn people of not to make rude, derogatory, or racist comments in the chat.

At times the moderator has disabled the chat all together so banter disappears. But the banter doesn’t disappear. Often members of the community will open a page on Facebook for citizens to comment and chat as they watch the city council proceedings.

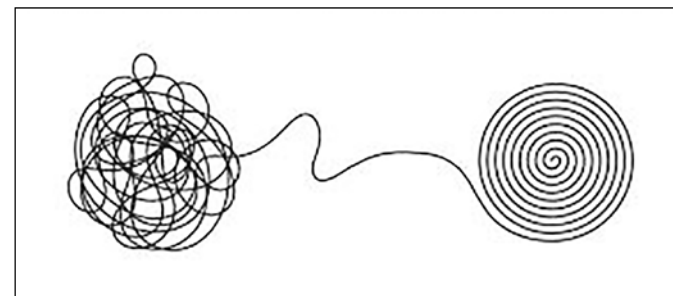
While many Flint residents may have political fatigue, there is sincere concern -- especially from home owners; tax paying citizens who want the city to succeed.

One councilmember often reminds his colleagues and the public, “We [the city council] hold the purse strings of the city.” Millions upon millions of dollars are approved and denied by Flint’s highest governing body. The council members represent about 10,000 people each in their respective wards. They are tasked with listening to those people, learning about their concerns, needs and desires for their section of Flint.

The councilmembers then come

together in a council meeting to fight, debate, and tackle the issues of the city and make decisions largely based on what they’ve heard from their constituents. This is representative government.

The public’s fatigue grows because they observe meeting after meeting where precious chunks of time—sometimes hours—are wasted in seemingly pointless debate. The rules that govern the council meetings are designed to allow for debate over procedural issues for the sake of good governance and orderly procedure. But often the council will find itself bogged down in appeals to the ruling of whoever is chairing the meeting.



One instance happened at the last meeting. A councilmember appealed the ruling of the vice-president who was chairing the meeting. The appeal was seconded by another councilmember. A debate over the chair’s ruling ensued for nearly ONE HOUR. Within the debate, valid comments were made about each other’s behavior and choices of ruling a meeting.

However, nothing was done for the residents of the city of Flint. No resolution was passed, no legislative discussion took place about anything that would directly affect the residents of Flint. The public grows frustrated about moments like this.

To the present council’s credit they often encourage the public to come to council and speak during public speaking. Some council members implore the public’s input. At the heart of representative government is the voice of the people being heard.

“In his commentary this month, retired Mott Community College political science professor and *EVM* columnist, writes in his political commentary this month “The combination

of financial crisis, a series of emergency managers, and the Flint water crisis have led many to doubt the ability of governments to solve major problems.

As a result, it’s not uncommon to have an election turnout of 20 percent of the voters or less. Those who don’t vote are the real majority in most elections. In the end it’s our responsibility to elect those who can govern effectively. The old Pogo quote rings true, “We have met the enemy and he is us.”

I never, and still don’t, aspire to be an elected official or politician. I have always enjoyed “the sidelines” view of observing government. I have attended Flint City Council meetings for about five or six years and have reported on the meetings since 2019. I have come to understand time after time the cost of bad behavior by elected officials, as well as what it takes to govern well.

At all levels -- nationally, at the state level, and right in the Flint City Council chambers and Flint School Board meetings, citizens are facing challenges to democracy -- and in real terms, actual threats to our safety and the safety of our children.

At the national level this week, the U.S. Supreme Court peeled back restrictions to make it easier for Americans to carry concealed guns into places where we, as a society, have traditionally said guns have no place: churches, day cares, funeral homes, etc. At the same time, the U.S. Congress passed, for the first time in 30 years, gun safety legislation.

On these, as well as so many other crucial aspects of our lives together as Americans, we need to be vigilant, to participate, to vote. And we need to remind our governing bodies to get their acts together and do their jobs. They need to remember their reason to exist is to serve the public interest.

As Rozycki concludes, and I affirm, for good government to exist it’s up to “all of us.”

EVM Editor Tom Travis can be reached at tomtravis@gmail.com.

Commentary ...

(Continued from Page 3)

done little to boost our trust in government. The combination of financial crisis, a series of emergency managers, and the Flint water crisis have led many to doubt the ability of governments to solve major problems.

As a result, it's not uncommon to have an election turnout of 20 percent of the voters or less. Those who don't vote are the real majority in most elections. In the end it's our responsibility to elect those who can govern effectively. The old Pogo quote rings true, "We have met the enemy and he is us."

In the last few weeks, the Jan. 6 committee has uncovered more facts about the planned insurrection following the 2020 election. We've heard of potential plans to overturn an election, invoke martial law, [and] murder a vice-president, and learned that democracy can be a very fragile thing.

A dysfunctional or chaotic government that can't deliver on the most basic promises to its citizens makes that democracy even more fragile. That inability of government effectively respond to public needs may have laid the groundwork for Trump, his followers, and his conspiracy theories.

What can we do?

It's up to us, as citizens and voters, to become informed, and elect those who can effectively deliver what we expect from government. The media needs to be an honest watchdog over government activity.

We need to realize that the best government isn't always the most exciting government. The loudest voices are not always the wisest. The biggest egos may not be the best leaders. It's probably a lot more entertaining to see a story about Marjorie Taylor Greene babbling on about Jewish space lasers, or Eric Mays being led out of a council meeting in handcuffs, than to sit through a subcommittee meeting on capital gains tax policy, a new zoning law, or a line-by-line review of Flint's city budget.

But those are more significant.

One of the greatest enemies of good government is apathy. Among democratic nations, the United States ranks fairly low on voter turnout. In Flint, the numbers are even more discouraging. For the upcoming Aug. 2 primary we'll be lucky to have a 20 percent turnout. We will be voting on candidates for governor, the U.S. House, the state House, the state Senate, Flint mayor, the Genesee County Commission, several township offices, a judicial election, as well as two county-wide millage renewals. For many offices the primary will be the real election.

Learn about the candidates

Most people are not political junkies who watch all the news programs and read up on all the candidates and issues, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That's understandable. People have lives to live beyond the ballot box, and all too many voters, if they turn out at all, will find a free hour on election day, go to the polls, and quickly mark the ballot for their favorite party, or some name they recognize from last night's 30-second commercial, or a yard sign they saw on the way to the polls.

Michigan's new election procedures can change that. With Michigan's vote by mail or absentee ballot it is easier for voters to get the ballot early, and learn about the candidates and issues.

Take the time to get your ballot early and learn about the candidates and the proposals. In particular, take the time to review the real qualifications the candidates bring to the position they seek.

Most candidates have websites, and groups such as the League of Women Voters usually post responses from the candidates on the major issues. The Tom Sumner Program (WFOV, 92.1) has interviews with many of the candidates and they are available on his website. Many interest groups also publish candidate interviews and endorsements.,

Important questions to ask

Do the candidates understand how their level of government works and how it is funded? Are they willing to learn about the challenges facing the city, county or school district? And perhaps most importantly do they have the personal ability to work with others in a meaningful way? Democracy can be a frustrating and messy process, and it may involve conflict, but compromise is the main currency of any democratic body. In the end, any governing body must produce results.

There is some good news

The good news is that, for all the criticism directed at the Flint City Council, the Flint Community School Board, and Genesee County officials, there are individuals in each of those bodies who understand the issues, are committed to work with others, and produce positive results. They deserve our thanks for putting up with conflict, chaos, and enduring endless meetings. They need all the support they can get from their voters and constituents.

Get involved

We need to encourage others who are willing to work together to get involved and run for office. As local governments become more dysfunctional, those with ability are discouraged from running and getting involved with the conflict they see every day.

A government that shows it can genuinely work together to solve problems can change that. A good government can bring out the best of those who are often lost in the chaos of a dysfunctional governing body.

A good government and a functioning democracy isn't easy. It takes the work and effort of all citizens. It's up to us to make sure it does work.

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

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On the Ballot

What's on the Aug. 2 primary ballot?

Here's a preview from state to city

By Paul Rozycki

The upcoming Aug. 2 primary election is only weeks away and, if this year is like most, we will have a light turnout for our summer election as voters are otherwise occupied with travel plans, cookouts, and staying cool.

Yet this primary may be more important than most. With the redistricting of the past year completed, many voters may be in new districts, and many candidates will be appealing to a new set of voters. With term limits there will also be a number of new faces on the ballot. As the pandemic eases, we will see what kind of role the absentee voters will play this time around.

In spite of the traditional low turnout, the primary election is often the most important one. In those areas that lean solidly Democratic, like Flint, winning the Democratic primary in August is an all but certain road to victory in November. The reverse is true in strong Republican areas such as Lapeer County or the Thumb.

For most of the ballot, voters will be nominating candidates for either the Democratic or Republican parties. Unlike most states, Michigan does not require voters to register as a Republican or Democrat. But they can vote in only one party primary. There will also be a few non-partisan offices and millage issues on the ballot as well.

Voters can register to vote, view sample ballots, locate their polling place, and find more information with Voter Information Center at the Michigan Secretary of State's website www.Michigan.gov/sos/resources.

Here's what will be on the ballot this Aug. 2.

Flint mayoral race

One of the major contests in the City of Flint is the race for mayor. The Flint mayor is elected to a four-year

term. In the non-partisan section of the ballot, incumbent Mayor Sheldon Neeley is facing former Mayor Karen Weaver, and City Councilperson Eric Mays. The top two candidates will compete in the November election.

Governor

Though Michigan has not failed to give a governor a second term for more than 40 years, the partisanship of our times and the turmoil over the governor's response to the pandemic could still make this a competitive race.

Democrats: Incumbent Gov. Gretchen Whitmer is running unopposed for the Democratic Party nomination.



Republicans: The road to the Republican nomination for governor has been more complex. At one time there were 10 candidates who planned to run for the nomination. However five of them, including several leading candidates, failed to gather enough valid signatures and were excluded from the ballot. Today there are five candidates on the ballot. They are: Tudor Dixon, Ryan Kelley, Ralph Rebandt, Kevin Rinke, and Garrett Soldano. Two of the candidates who were removed from the ballot are looking at write-in campaigns. James Craig,

once a leading candidate, is planning a write-in campaign, and Perry Johnson, who invested heavily in an early media campaign, is said to be considering a possible write-in move.

U.S. Representative in Congress

The newly created 8th Congressional District runs from Genesee County up to Bay County and includes parts of Midland County.

Based on past voting results, it leans more Republican than the old 5th District that was Dan Kildee's base for most of the last decade, and it may be a more competitive race.

Democrats: Incumbent Dan Kildee is unopposed for the nomination and is running for his sixth term in the U.S. House.

Republicans: Three candidates are running for the Republican Party's nomination to oppose Kildee in the November general election. They are Paul Junge, Candice Miller, and Matthew Seely.

Michigan State Senate

There are 38 members of the Michigan State Senate. They serve four-year terms and are limited to two terms.

The newly drawn 27th State Senate District includes the northern two-thirds of Genesee County, including the City of Flint, Flushing, Swartz Creek, and Burton. Incumbent Democratic Senator Jim Ananich is term-limited, and a number of candidates have filed to run.

Democrats: Those running for the Democratic nomination in this strongly Democratic district include incumbent state Representative, John Cherry, former Flint school board mem-

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Ballot Preview ...

(Continued from Page 10)

ber David Davenport, former city councilperson and Flint council president Monica Galloway, and Bill Swanson.

Republicans: Seeking the Republican nomination are Aaron Gardner, and Christina Hickson.

Michigan House of Representatives

There are 110 members of the Michigan State House. They serve two-year terms and are limited to three terms.

The newly-drawn 69th District covers much of the northwest areas of Genesee County

Democrats: Three Democrats -- Jenifer Almassy, Kenyetta V. Dotson, and Jasper Ryan Martus -- are running for their party's nomination.

Republicans: In November, the winner of the Democratic primary will run against Republican Jesse Couch, who is unopposed.

State House District 70 includes all of the City of Flint.

Democrats: In the strongly Democratic area four candidates are running for their party's nomination. They are incumbent state Rep. Cynthia R. Neeley, DeWuan Robinson, Thomas James Harris Jr. and Rich Jones.

Republicans: The winner will face either Tim Butler or Trevor Berryhill on the Republican ticket.

Genesee County Commission

There are nine members on the Genesee County Commission and they serve two-year terms.

District 1: (northeast Flint city), There is no primary contest. Incumbent Democrat Bryant Nolden, will face Republican Steven Cousino in the Nov. 8 general election.

District 2: (central and south Flint city) Democratic incumbent Charles Winfrey is running against Donald Wright. The winner will face Republican Lynette Robinson, who is

unopposed for the nomination.

District 3: (Burton, Davison Township) Democratic incumbent Ellen Ellenburg is being challenged by Brian Ashley for the nomination. Elizabeth Guzak, Gary Goetzinger, and Nicholas Goyette are competing for the Republican nomination.

District 4: (Mundy Township, Grand Blanc Township) Democratic incumbent Domonique Clemons is facing challenger Kelsie Swanson for the nomination. The winner will run against either Republican Isaac Thomas or Amy Miller in November.

District 5: (Grand Blanc city, Atlas Township) Incumbent Democrat James Avery is facing Mark Stillman for the nomination. The winner will run against the winner of the Republican contest. Angie Carr, Teri Lynn Chambers and J. Michelle Kline are competing for the Republican nomination.

District 6: (Gaines, Argentine, Fenton Townships) Incumbent Republican Shaun Shumaker is the only candidate in the race. There is no primary opponent.

District 7: (Montrose, Vienna, Thetford, Mt. Morris Townships) Democrats Martin Cousineau, Warren Coffell, and Janet Peters are seeking the nomination. The winner will run against Republican Lynn Culver who is unopposed. There is no incumbent. Commissioner Debra Newman did not file for another term.

District 8: (Flushing, Clayton, parts of Flint Townships) Republican incumbent Meredith Davis is facing Virginia Sepanak and the top vote getter will face the winner of the Democratic primary. Dale Weighill, Andy Everman, and David Huffman are seeking the Democratic nomination.

District 9: (Genesee, Forest, Richfield Townships, Davison city) Incumbent Democrat Gary Peppin is not running again. Seeking the Democratic nomination are Michelle Davis, Janessa Phillips, Mo Aboneaaj, and Patrick Land. The winner will run against Republican Sue Hopper in the fall.

In addition to the mayor's race, here are further local contests:

Judicial election

Voters will also be electing a judge for the 7th Circuit Court District in a non-partisan race. Circuit Court judges serve six-year terms. Those running are Mary Hood, Rebecca Jurva-Brinn, and Dawn Weier.

Township elections

Elections are also being held for several positions in Flint, Mt. Morris, Richfield and Vienna Townships, as well as a mayoral race in Montrose.

Ballot proposals

Voters will also be deciding on two county-wide millage proposals.

The first is to renew the Genesee County Parks and Recreation millage to a .75 level.

The second is to renew and increase the millage that supports the Michigan State University extension programs in the county to .08 mills.

In addition, voters in Linden, Flint Township, Clio schools, Grand Blanc Township, and Lake Fenton schools, will have millage and other ballot issues.

County convention delegates

Though there is rarely any competition, voters will also be electing delegates to their party's county convention.

Voters can register to vote, view sample ballots, locate their polling place, and find more information with Voter Information Center at the Michigan Secretary of State's website www.Michigan.gov/sos/resources.

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

Education ...

(Continued from Page 5)

Thomas Dewey; William Glasser; Abraham Maslow; Geoffrey Canada.

- Describe the following and how they impact schoolchildren: IEP; MASB; GISD; SAT; ACT; UTF; MEA.
- Summarize the controversy surrounding Critical Race Theory.
- At what grade(s) is it OK to teach any sex-ed topic(s)?
- How are public schools funded? A candidate unable to provide

cogent answers to most of the questions above, should step back from his/her candidacy and/or public-school board position.

Beyond the bare requirements are board candidate qualifications as recommended by the Michigan Association of School Boards:

- A willingness “to take the time to study current education issues (see 10 questions above).”
- A willingness “to pursue the skills, the knowledge, and the training

necessary to become a fully engaged and effective board member (see 10 questions above).”

- A readiness “to champion an effective public school system to serve our youth despite diminishing resources and increasing demands of the global economy.”
- Preparation “to speak up and serve as an advocate for public education in your community.”
- A willingness “to uphold state laws ... put learning first, and give priority to what’s best for children.”
- The ability “to work as a governance team member, putting personal agendas aside and working cooperatively for the best interest of students in your school district.”

“Putting personal agendas aside and working cooperatively for the best interest of students” is arguably the most serious shortcoming of some FBOE members. “Personal agendas” hinder the board’s collective capacity to lead the Flint district forward. For some, haughty arrogance has displaced a spirit of cooperation and clouds what is in “the best interest of (Flint) students.”

Unprecedented challenges

Multiple forces have worked against the success of Flint Community Schools including: the near-abandonment of Flint by General Motors; the more than halving of Flint’s population in the past few decades; an unprecedented water crisis; a worldwide pandemic with a resultant loss of learning.

But some of FCS wounds are primarily self-inflicted: irresponsible management of the district’s budget, bumped by a \$20 million dollar loan taken out in 2014; the constant turnover of board members and administrators; the inability to retain and/or hire a sufficient force of highly qualified educators; a decades-long inattention to infrastructure needs; an inability to right size the district and close some school buildings; an apparent unwillingness, thus far, to accept an offer from Flint’s largest foundation to

(Continued on Page 13)

Education ...

(Continued from Page 12)

renovate or replace deteriorated buildings.

Flint’s budget has been temporarily buoyed by the infusion of \$144 million in COVID relief funds that will disappear by 2024. FCS directors of finance and outside auditing firms have warned the district that, without significant changes to the district’s financial portfolio, it will return to the same bleak profile of annual deficit spending and long-term debt.

Parliamentary bumbling

Parliamentary sloppiness frequently sidetracks the FBOE, wasting its time, sapping its energy. The most recent example unfolded at the FBOE’s June 15 regular meeting.

A motion by Del Morone to reconsider a motion passed a week earlier at the board’s June 9 meeting – a motion to provide FBOE Treasurer Laura MacIntyre additional legal support following an alleged assault by another board member – never received a requisite seconding motion as required by both Robert’s Rules of Order and FBOE Bylaws.

Each board member has a copy of FBOE Bylaws tucked in their board binders. Additionally, an electronic copy of “Amended and Restated Bylaws Board of Education of the School District of the City of Flint” is posted at the district’s website.

On page 62, under “1350 Voting Method” is found the following language: “No motion may be acted upon until it has been duly seconded by a member of the Board.” Again, Del Morone’s motion never received a seconding motion.

Further, Ellis-McNeal compounded the parliamentary untidiness by declaring Del Morone’s motion to be passed on a 3-2 vote. Another error.

“1350 Voting Method” clearly indicates that four votes on the seven-person panel are required for passage of a motion: “No act of the

(Continued on Page 15)

Village Life ...

(Continued from Page 16)

in today’s tumultuous, nervewracking world, I love that journalism is protected in the Constitution. A free press cannot be separated from the democracy: the two are unequivocally intertwined.

Here’s the thing; If democracy goes, the free press will go with it.

In this picture, I’ve got a personal complication. For me, there has always been a tension between the neutrality of journalism and my own impulses toward self-revelation. When I was a preacher’s kid growing up in Ohio in the Fifties, I was jealous of some of my little Catholic girlfriends. I was jealous of their First Holy Communion when they got to dress up like tiny brides and kneel for the Host and then get lots of presents.

I was also jealous of something else: the Confessional.

I envied that my friends could slip into those mysterious wooden boxes and, with the screen ostensibly keeping everything private, spill their venial little secrets to the priest.

And apparently, once spitting it out, they’d be forgiven for most of it and get back to hopscotch and sneaking bubble gum from the corner store. When we grew up I imagined their confessions took a darker turn and I envied that, too.

My craving for confession took an adult turn too. Becoming a writer was my path to my own truth hut. At the moment that confessional is called *East Village Magazine*. So freedom of speech has always been my thing. But there’s another side to it.

Sometimes, I’ve used journalism as an excuse. I’ve liked being “neutral” about many controversies all these years.

Using journalism as an excuse for neutrality, I increasingly understand, can be Fourth Estate malpractice.

There are some things that are not two-sided.

When it comes to threats against democracy, when it comes to

lies as government policy, there’s no place for the “other side” to be given equal time. And I cannot afford to ignore or tread lightly when those threats to the country begin to tear away at our national fabric.

I’m angry lately at the violations of my country’s noblest ideas. I’ve about had it with the indecency and corruption. But most of all, as a journalist, I’ve had it with the lies – the audacious lies delivered without shame. The repellent lies, which have ruined people’s lives and led to breathtakingly needless deaths – from a million dead from COVID to five Capitol police. It’s infuriating. Who do these liars think they are? How dare they?

The need is urgent to confront those who would take away our American right to the truth and those who act as if lying and threats of violence are just the way we do business these days.

That is to say, the need is urgent for ME as a citizen and as a journalist not to sit idly by, to keep clear the sometimes stark and life-threatening differences between truth and lies. The people I work with at *East Village Magazine* share my passions on this point and are devoted to the essential values of freedom of the press. In our hearts, when it comes to truth and democracy, not one is neutral.

I’d like a lot of things to change. I want decency back. I want those who threaten or commit violence to be put in handcuffs and sent away. I want hope back. And I understand that if this is what I want, I’d better be prepared to stand up for all of it.

As my body was apparently trying to remind me today, I can’t swallow the lies. I won’t. I have to exercise my voice for truth.

Please try in your own way, if you can -- for democracy -- to do the same.

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

2022 PRIMARY ELECTION


VOTE

KAREN
WEAVER

For The Next City Mayor

VISION

1 CRIME

Dr. Karen Weaver has a real plan to combat crime by using the latest technology such as drones, live cameras, and fully utilizing the police intel center that she created in 2017.

2 BLIGHT

Dr. Karen Weaver understands that as we tear down structures we should also be replacing them with affordable, durable and smart homes.

3 INFRASTRUCTURE

Dr. Karen Weaver's plan calls for the rebuilding of antiquated electrical grids and need to invest in roads and bridges.

YOUR VOTE CAN MAKE A CHANGE TODAY


KARENWEAVER
FOR MAYOR

Learn more about campaign
KARENABOUTFLINT.COM

TUESDAY/2022
AUGUST 02




THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

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

Flint Institute of Arts

On Exhibit

Now through Aug. 28

“Being Human: Contemporary Art from the Rubell Museum” features works from the Rubell Museum in Miami.

Admission is free for FIA members, Genesee County residents, children under 12 and all visitors on Saturdays.

Regular admission is adults \$10, students and seniors \$8.

FOMA films

“Twelve Angry Men” July 8-10 and “The Magnificent Ambersons” July 15-17.

Showings are Fri. and Sat. 7:30-9:30 p.m., and Sun. 2-4 p.m.

Admission for films is general admission \$7, FIA members \$6,

and FOMA members \$5. Flint Institute of Arts 1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint 810-234-1695 or visit flintarts.org

Flint City Bucks

Fri., July 8

Bucks vs. AFC Ann Arbor

Sat. July 16

Bucks vs. Midwest United FC

Tickets are \$12 and \$17

Atwood Stadium

701 University Ave., Flint

For more info visit

flintcitybucks.com

or visit their page on

[facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/flintcitybucks).

Journey Thru Music:

A Sound Bath Experience

Wed. July 13, 7-8 p.m.

Revive Wellness Spa will guide a Sound Bath experience using healing instruments and singing.

For ticket info visit

<https://allevents.in/flint/journey-thru-music>

Longway Planetarium

1310 E. Kearsley St., Flint

Genesee Parks Events

Exotic Animals with Science Alive

Sat. July 9, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

At For-Mar Nature Preserve & Arboretum will be an animal show featuring live animals, up close learning, and fun facts about each animal. For families, all ages, and abilities.

Pre-registration by July 8.

Cost: \$8 per person

Full Moon Hike

Fri. July 15, 8:30 to 10:30 p.m.

This is held at For-Mar Nature Preserve & Arboretum. The hike is at least one mile long with stops along the way and has some hills

and exposed roots. For all ages.

Pre-registration by July 14.

Cost: \$5 per person

Nature Story Time

@ Bluebell Beach

Thurs. July 21, 11 a.m.

to 12 noon.

Encourage a love of reading in preschoolers and early elementary students.

Bluebell Beach

5500 N. Bray Rd., Flint

Pre-registration by

July 20.

Cost: \$2 per child

For more info on Genesee Parks outdoor activities visit geneseecountyparks.org/calendar.

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB)

Sat. July 23, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

A Greet & Meet for blind people, parents of blind kids, blind students, those losing vision, and more.

The organization's focus is to promote the latest in technology and other new ways that our community can introduce helping the visually impaired live the life they desire.

Union City Field

4151 Torrey Rd., Flint

For more info call

810-241-6124.

Armchair Explorer: The Human Race

Tues. July 26, 12-2 p.m.

This is a 57-minute film about a race across Australia. It will be shown in the Harris Room in air-conditioned comfort at the newly renovated Flint Public Library. This is for all ages.

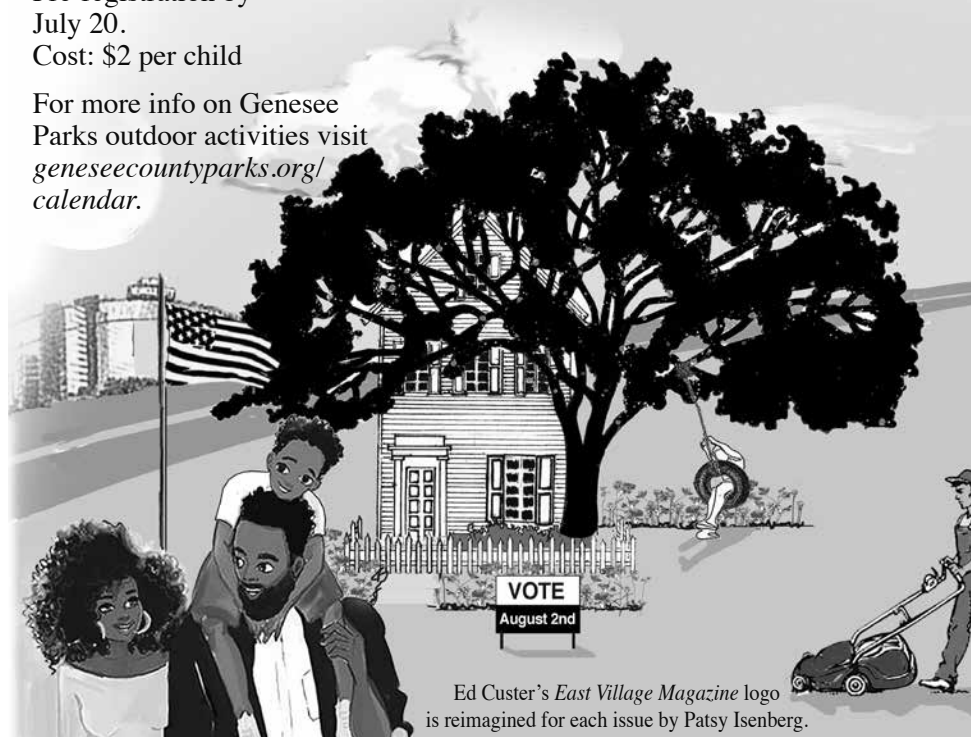
Free

Flint Public Library

1026 E. Kearsley St., Flint

For more info call

810-232-7111.



COLLEGE CULTURAL NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
Sign up to get notices of meetings at ccnaflint@gmail.com

Education ...

(Continued from Page 13)

Board shall be valid unless voted on at a proper meeting of the Board by a majority vote of the members elected to and serving on the Board ...

Nonetheless, FBOE members spent 52 of 97 minutes – fully 60 percent of the board's meeting time – on Del Morone's motion. [Interested readers can witness these parliamentary miscues at YouTube; Del Morone's motion is introduced at the 35-minute mark; the discussion concludes at 1:27. A link is in the online version.]

The FBOE would be well-served to acquire a knowledgeable parliamentarian to help guide them at their meetings.

“Dogged out”

Del Morone's motion to reconsider additional legal support for MacIntyre unleashed a crossfire of impolite and angry comments so familiar to veteran FBOE-watchers.

MacIntyre's response to Del Morone's motion to reconsider: “I may have underestimated the ignorance of my colleagues.

“You don't want to call other board members ignorant,” snapped Allen Gilbert, trustee, in response.

“Listening comprehension, reading comprehension spells ‘pay atten-

Unclassified Ad

Apartment for Lease

Two-bedroom second story apartment for lease on Avon near Kearsley St. Can be partially furnished. Has a large upper deck, off-street parking, washer, dryer, storage. Walk three blocks or less to U of M-Flint, MCC, Cultural Center, library, downtown, Farmers' Market, three parks, and bike paths. Easy freeway access. References and credit check requested. \$650 per month plus utilities.

E-mail ecuster@sbcglobal.net or write:

Apartment
Box.11
720 E. Second St.
Flint MI 48503.

tion,” MacIntyre lectured. “I suggest that you get your facts straight.”

The affair evolved into a shouting match between Ellis-McNeal and Gilbert.

“You're going to have to respect me!” shouted Ellis-McNeal.

“And you're going to have to respect me as well!” Gilbert responded.

Ellis-McNeal concluded the unpleasantness with a painful soliloquy of sorts: “Since Joyce Ellis-McNeal got in this seat, it's been dog, dog, dog ... But to be beat down and dogged the way that I've been dogged out, I didn't ask for this seat ... We done spending 45 minutes against ... the policy ... All the elephant in this room is these policy.”

Good news stories

Some FCS good news stories forthcoming in the next Education Beat report include:

- A re-visit to the state's dismissal of Flint's Emergency Deficit Elimination Program.
- FCS graduated more than 80 high school seniors in the Class of 2022.
- An analysis of the addenda to the recently-adopted FCS Strategic Plan.
- The move by the FCS administration and board to rid itself of 13 abandoned properties and/or buildings: Cook; Dort; Garfield; King; Johnson; Lowell; Manley; Merrill; Stewart; Washington; Williams; Wilkins; and

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PLEASE JOIN US

Artwalk

July 8, 6-8:30p

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eclectic multimedia

Larry McDonald
piano

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(810) 234-8627

Zimmerman.

• A report by Diona Clingman, FCS executive director of academics, of some modest assessment gains made by FCS students.

The only future meeting of the Flint Board of Education, as posted at its website, is a Human Resources Subcommittee Meeting at 5:30 p.m. at Accelerated Learning Academy, 1602 S. Averill Ave., Flint, MI 48503. Meetings can be attended virtually; check the FCS website for details. Recordings of meetings can be viewed at YouTube.

EVM Education Beat reporter Harold Ford can be reached at hcford1185@gmail.com.

Village Life

It's too hot for lies and threats to democracy, even for community journalists

By Jan Worth-Nelson

Today's it's 95 degrees outside and the AC is rumbling like a 19TH century train. I'm passing on taking my daily walk, and I hurry outside only briefly to add water to the bird bath, hoping all the creatures will find a cool retreat.

I'm recovering from a trip to the dentist, where something came over me. I had a mouth full of the hygienist's hands as she scraped away, and I got a coughing fit. I grabbed her hand time and again and started to panic until we slowed everything down and I calmed down. She was very kind and we got through it.

But I think the panic was telling me something: there's too much scary stuff going on right now. What's going on is just too much to swallow.

And it's hot inside, too: my TV today is sizzling with anguished testimony, an afternoon of mourning wails on the fourth set of Jan. 6 hearings by people whose lives were ripped apart by a bullying former president and his lawless minions.

That sobering reality leads me to think about how journalism -- and those who love journalism -- are managing to keep the truth alive in these chaotic times.

You may notice that every story in this issue of *East Village Magazine* is about democracy. Among us, we've been calling it the "good governance" issue, and it corresponds not just to an observance of July 4 but to the nation's most explicitly urgent themes: outright and deliberate threats to democracy; among them, repellent, unapologetic lying, and escalating, shocking violence and threats of more violence directed at those simply trying to do their jobs -- as election workers, as

investigators, as journalists.

Our need for government to do its democratic job is huge. That applies to our own local elected officials. When democracy doesn't work here, in our own city, in our own neighborhoods, it feels like ALL the dominoes are falling.

It's my job as a human to examine my own heart first, before presuming to tell other people what to do. So here is my reflection.

I usually come here to you as a journalist.



Jan Worth-Nelson

It's generally a pretty safe place to be, in which the objectivity that is supposed to characterize the profession theoretically shields me from having to take a stand.

We're supposed to be available to tell "both sides of the story" and let the reader decide.

That's a simple, common way to describe our job. But it also could be seriously misleading.

Today in the midst of the continually and increasingly damning Jan. 6 committee hearings, I am rethinking my role and my responsibilities.

And not just rethinking, but re-acting ... a word we never separate

with a hyphen but which means something powerful if you do it that way.

Allow me to indulge in some personal history. One aspect of my presumptuous privilege as a white American is that historically I assumed I could be myself first of all, following my own lights. For much of my life, the best government was the one I could ignore.

Before I was a journalist, of course, I was an American. To be an American comes with particular meaning, often uncomfortable and carrying dark burdens -- but also with rights and responsibilities we too often fail to consider.

And to be an American journalist is particular and exceptional. It means I'm part of the constitutional architecture that was created to support and sustain this democracy, this country.

I was the child of actively religious people who believed their chief calling was to save other people from sin. As a young adult of the Sixties, I scoffed at those obsessions. What other people did was not my business.

I hated the self-righteousness of it, the unctuous and embarrassing efforts to demand a certain kind of inflexible religious conformity. In contrast, I loved the "neutrality" of journalism. It was the perfect discipline for me.

And I still love journalism. I love that it relies on facts and evidence. I love that it doesn't tell the reader what to think -- but expects readers to decide for themselves what to think, based on what you have observed.

I love when somebody famous advised a young journalist, "If you want to prove a man a fool, don't call him a fool: just quote him."

And most crucially, perhaps,

(Continued on Page 13)

LIX: 6 (709 issues, 8,052 pages)