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Magazine

January 2026



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Commentary

What to look for in Michigan and Flint elections, politics, and more in 2026

By Paul Rozycki

If 2025 offers any guidance, 2026 will be a year of challenging and unpredictable events.

While there are a number of things that are sure to draw our attention in national politics this year, it's worth taking a look at what we might face on the state and local level as we enter 2026, too.

Michigan's U.S. Senate seat

With incumbent Democratic Senator Gary Peters not seeking re-election, a number of candidates are lining up to replace him. For the Democrats Abdul El-Sayed, State Senator Mallory McMorrow, and U.S. Rep. Haley Stevens are currently declared candidates. For the Republicans former U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers has already filed to run. A number of other names have been mentioned and may well join the fray to replace Sen. Peters. The deadline for filing is April 21.

U.S. House 8th District

Michigan's 8th District, which includes Flint, Saginaw, Bay City and parts of Midland, is currently held by Democrat Kristen McDonald Rivet, who is in her first term. The 8th District is one of the 13 districts in the nation that Trump carried in 2024 that is currently held by a Democrat.

The district is rated as leading Democratic by most analysts, and prior to McDonald Rivet it

had long been represented by a member of the Kildee family. But, by every measure, this could be a very competitive race and the incumbent is already running ads for her campaign.

In 2023 the Cook Partisan Voting Index rated the district at the median one of the nation, with 217 districts being more Democratic and 217 being more Republican. So far Amir Hassan, a former federal law enforcement officer, is the only Republican who has filed to run against McDonald Rivet.

Michigan Governor

Michigan Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer is term-limited, and there will be a hard fought campaign to replace her in the coming election.

At this point there are a number of candidates running, including both parties and an independent candidate.

For the Democrats, incumbent Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, Genesee County Sheriff Chris Swanson, and current Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist are seeking the nomination. Potential Republican nominees are former Attorney General Mike Cox, Anthony Hudson, U.S. Rep. John James, former House Speaker Tom Leonard, Michigan Senate Minority Leader Aric Nesbitt, Ralph Rebandt at time of publication. There are also a few lesser-known candidates in both parties that may raise their

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Cover: The historic Industrial National Savings Bank building on N. Saginaw St.

(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)



Photo of the Month: Wood to fire. (Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

Education Beat

Flint Schools continue to face student enrollment, test score challenges

By Harold C. Ford

Heading into the new year, Flint Community Schools (FCS) remains troubled by declining student enrollment and low standardized test scores.

Student enrollment

“We’re going to have to look at enrollment,” said a chagrined Joyce Ellis-McNeal, president of the Flint Board of Education (FBOE), at a December 17, 2025 meeting. “We got to get this enrollment [up] ... got to get out of debt.”

Ellis-McNeal was likely reflecting upon the latest enrollment data provided by the Michigan Department of Education at its MI School Data website. That data shows FCS enrollment has fallen to 2,605 students, down from 2,888 in March 2024 and far further down if you consider the district served over 40,000 students in the 1960s.

The district’s current enroll-

ment makes FCS the eighth largest of Genesee County’s 21 public school districts, despite its location in the county’s most populous city. The top ten enrollments in the county, in order, are now: 1. Grand Blanc (7,489 students); 2. Davison (5,460); 3. Flushing (4,094); 4. Carman-Ainsworth (3,500); 5. Swartz Creek (3,483); 6. Fenton (2,872); 7. Kearsley 2,835); 8. Flint (2,605); 9. Clio (2,491) and 10. Linden (2,351).

Ellis-McNeal’s coupling of “enrollment” and “debt” may have also been a reference to state aid, as each enrolled student brings with them a record \$10,050 in funding, up by \$442, or 4.6 percent, from the previous year.

Thus, a loss of just 10 students means a loss of \$100,500 in state aid. A loss of 100 students means a loss of \$1,005,000. And so on.

A 2024 EVM report found that FCS lost about \$100 million each year in state aid given that about 80 percent

– or some 10,000 students in the district – did not enroll in Flint’s public school system. Projected over a decade, that would equate to a staggering loss of more than \$1 billion.

EVM’s research has also shown that students with City of Flint addresses have enrolled in every one of Genesee County’s twenty other public-school districts via Michigan’s schools of choice program. Other options that siphon off Flint’s students include high school-college hybrids, home-schooling, online schooling, and charters. Spurred by the pandemic, some students also simply stopped attending school.

Adding to that loss are the 15 public charter schools in Genesee County. Their combined enrollment – 7,047 students – would make charters the county’s second largest school district. State aid for those public charter students totals nearly \$71 million annually.

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Flint Schools...

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“When we look at the data ... we know there are problems.”

The bulk of a prior FBOE meeting on Nov. 19 was spent examining the school district’s latest round of disappointing standardized test results.

“When we look at the data, no one at this table likes the data as it is,” said Kevelin Jones, FCS superintendent, at the start of the meeting. “We know there are issues. We know there are problems.”

“Proficiency remains low across most grade levels,” added Kelly Fields, the district’s executive director of academics, while addressing the board. “We know your north star is proficiency,” she said. “We can’t just focus on growth.”

Proficiency

Proficiency in Michigan on a state assessment, such as the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP), measures the “understanding and application of key academic content standards defined for Michigan students,” according to the state’s Department of Education.

Spring 2025 testing of Flint students found the following percentages of students proficient in math in eight FCS buildings: Brownell, 1.3%; Doyle Ryder, 2.3%; Durant-Turi-Mott (DTM), 6.7%; Eisenhower, 4.7%; Freeman, 1.8%; Holmes, 0.0%; Neithercut, 8.0%; and Potter, 3.9%.

Testing of Flint students in English Language Arts found the following percentages of students proficient in the same FCS buildings: Brownell, 7.7%; Doyle Ryder, 10.3%; DTM, 6.8%; Eisenhower, 18.8%; Freeman, 8%; Holmes, 5.8%; Neithercut, 13.1%; and Potter, 7%.

Growth

Test data in math found 42.3% of all FCS students “meeting their growth projections” in math, according to the presenters, which included Fields as well as Natoya Coleman, FCS chief innovation officer; and consultants Tracy Davis and Wanda Cook-Robinson. Only two schools of the district’s ten – Neithercut at 50% and Southwestern at 56.5% – met growth projections or expectations.

The other FCS buildings that did not meet growth projections included: Accelerated Learning Academy (ALA) at 30.6%; Brownell at 43.1%; Doyle Ryder, 25.7%; DTM,

52.7%; Eisenhower, 43.5%; Freeman, 32.4%; Holmes, 30.5%; and Potter at 40.9%.

The presenters also included “baseline data” from spring 2022, which showed that only DTM and Brownell had an increased percentage of students meeting growth projections since that time. All other schools had a lower percentage (many by roughly nine or 10%) than the prior baseline data.

In reading for all grade levels, only 36.6% of the district’s student population met growth expectations. Neithercut was the only FCS building that met growth expectations at 50.4%. All other FCS buildings fell short.

“Moving forward” or “absolutely horrendous”?

“It shows we’re moving forward,” concluded Ellis-McNeal, following the presentation of test data.

The comment drew strong rebukes from her board colleagues.

“I believe that what we’ve been doing is not working,” said Trustee Melody Relerford.

“The student scores are terrible, absolutely horrendous,” added Laura MacIntyre, the board’s vice president. “Our students are failing.”

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The Flint Community Schools Administration Building on Kearsley Street. (Photo by Harold C. Ford)

Commentary ...

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profiles by the time nominees are decided in the August primary.

What may make the already crowded race even more unpredictable is that Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan is running as an independent, and will likely pull many votes from Detroiters, potentially taking votes from the Democratic candidate.

Michigan Secretary of State

Like Gov. Whitmer, incumbent Democratic Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson is term-limited.

Seeking to replace her are Democrats Barbara Byrum, Ag-hogho Edevbie, Adam Hollier, and Suzanna Shkreli. Timothy Smith is seeking the Republican nomination.

The nominees will be chosen at the state party conventions rather than in a primary. Both parties will be holding "endorsement conventions" in the spring, and will hold formal nominating conventions in the late summer, after the August primary elections.

Michigan Attorney General

Incumbent Democratic Attorney General Dana Nessel is also term-limited. Seeking the nomination for the Democrats are Karen McDonald, Oakland County Prosecuting Attorney; William Noakes, Trial Lawyer; Eli Savit, Washtenaw County Prosecuting Attorney; and Mark Totten, Department of Justice Attorney.

Republicans seeking the nomination are Matt DePerno, Attorney; Kevin Kijewski, Defense Attorney; and Doug Loyd, Prosecuting Attorney, Eaton County. Nominees for both parties will be chosen at state party conventions in late summer.

Michigan House and Senate

This year will also see elec-

tions for the 110 seats in the state House and the 38 seats in the state Senate. Currently, Democrats have the majority in the state Senate, and Republicans have the majority in the state House.

For the Michigan Senate, incumbent Democrat John Cherry (27th District) is running for reelection and Republican Bill Bain of Flushing Township is running for his party's nomination.

For the state House, Democrat Cynthia Neeley represents the 70th District in Flint, Democrat Jasper Martus, represents the 69th district in western Genesee County and Republican Dave Martin represents the 68th district in eastern Genesee County, and all are running for reelection.

Statewide proposals and ballot initiatives

At this time there is one proposal that is certain to be on the ballot and three possible measures for the voters in 2026.

As required by law, November's ballot will include a proposal for a new state constitutional convention.

The three other measures that may be on the ballot if they get enough valid signatures in time include a proposal to require an additional 5% tax on high incomes to fund public schools; a proposal to prohibit individuals or organizations who have contracts with the government from donating to political campaigns or committees; and a proposal providing that only U.S. citizens can vote in elections.

Other proposals, such as a provision for rank-choice voting that garnered some attention earlier this year, did not make the cut for 2026 but may be on the ballot in 2028.

Flint Mayor's race

Based on Flint's city charter, the Flint Mayor's election now takes

place in the same year as the gubernatorial election. So far incumbent Mayor Sheldon Neeley is the only declared candidate. Genesee County Commission Chair Delrico Loyd, who was considering running, said he will not do so. If needed, the primary will be held on Aug. 4.

Flint City Council and more

All nine Flint City Council seats are up for election in 2026, with a primary in August as needed. Though the City Council finally broke its 4-4 deadlock with the election of Third Ward Councilwoman LaShawn Johnson in August, some conflict remains and the next election may help resolve it.

There will also be elections held for judges, the Flint Community Schools Board of Education, and the Mott Community College Board of Trustees.

For all of these elections there may be more candidates who emerge and others that may drop out before the summer primary and the November general election.

Beyond the elections

While elections and the politics surrounding them may dominate the news this year, there are other issues in Flint and Genesee County that might matter just as much to locals, like a new high school, a possible megasite, and Flint's water settlement payouts.

As reported in East Village Magazine, the Mott Foundation's commitment to building a new Flint high school has generated much excitement and hope for the future of Flint Community Schools. Yet, even as plans move forward, there remains some controversy over the design of the new building and the preservation of the historical architecture of the old Flint Central High School.

One of the more contentious

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Commentary ...

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issues in the county this year has been the proposal to create a large complex in Mundy Township for a possible industrial development. Supporters said that it would create thousands of new jobs and revitalize the local economy, but opponents feared that it would destroy the rural community and the promises of jobs might never be fulfilled. When Sandisk Corporation pulled out of a deal to use the site in early 2025, the hope was that someone else would step in to create the same economic development. We will see if that happens in 2026.

And, after a dozen years, the Flint Water Crisis may reach a conclusion in 2026 as the settlement funds for those harmed are beginning to be dispersed. As reported by Michigan Public, more than 26,000 individuals are scheduled to receive a share of a \$600 million fund set aside by the state of Michigan, the City of Flint, McLaren Hospital, and Rowe Professional Services as a result of lawsuits over the water crisis.

Though the payouts have begun, some residents remain frustrated with the response to the water crisis and many who were harmed will not receive compensation — or much less than they expected — as part of the settlement.

In summary, while it's true that the national midterm elections will dominate the headlines for much of the year as Democrats attempt to regain control of the U.S. House and Senate, Michigan elections and state and local issues may prove just as important.

As was the case in 2025, there will certainly be surprises this year. But with all that's at stake, 2026 will be more important than most mid-term election years and deserves our most critical attention. ●



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THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

Below is a selection of events available to our readers, beginning after our January publication date. To submit events for our February issue, email information about your event to eastvillagemagazineflint@gmail.com by February 3.

FAFSA Workshop

Monday, Jan. 12 | 5:30 - 7:30 pm

This hands-on workshop is meant to assist those having difficulty with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Parents should plan to attend with their high school senior(s). Stop in for the workshop and get one-on-one help! Register at: <https://tinyurl.com/fafsaflint>
Genesee Intermediate School District - Davis Education Center
2413 W. Maple Ave., Flint

Flash Tattoo Fundraiser for Fostering Furbabies

Saturday, Jan. 17 | 10 am - 8 pm

The artists at Ink'd 810 Tattoo Studio will be offering flash tattoos starting at \$40 dollars for black and white and \$50 for color, with part of the proceeds going to help nonprofit Fostering Furbabies rescue, foster, and adopt out area animals.
Ink'd 810 Tattoo Studio
3725 S. Saginaw Rd., Flint

Flint Drop Fest - Winter Edition

Saturday, Jan. 17 | 2 - 11 pm

Join neighbors and visitors in downtown Flint for the 2nd Annual Winter Drop Fest. The Flint Drop Fest team will be partnering up with local downtown businesses, restaurants, and bars to bring you a day of live musical performances by DJs and producers from across the Midwest, live art, vendors, and more for all ages. The event is free and open to everyone, though some venues are reserved for ages 21+ only.

Buckham Alley Theatre Presents: A Night of Comedy

Friday, Jan. 23 to Sunday, Jan. 25

Join Buckham Alley Theatre as they showcase several one act plays by two playwrights: Steven Shelton and Jeff Goebel, featuring: A Walk in the Park, The Hitchhiker, The Tie Thief! and Spies! Tickets are \$10 and available online at buckhamtheatre.org or at the door. Performances are Jan. 23 and 24 at 7 pm and Jan. 25 at 2 pm.
Flint Local 432
124 W. First St., Flint

Swing with Jimmy

Saturday, Jan. 24 | 2 pm

St. Paul's Episcopal Church presents a musical performance by trumpeter Jimmy Leach and Abe Wallace on the organ in the ongoing "Music in the Heart of the City" series. Tickets are \$12 at the door, and \$5 for students. MCC and UM-Flint students are free with school ID.
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
711 S. Saginaw St., Flint

Bring Your Own Project: Art Club

Saturday, Jan. 31 | 5 - 7 pm

Looking for a relaxed space to make art and meet other creatives? Sign up for a free open studio-style night where you bring your own supplies and work on whatever inspires you. Painting, sketching, collaging, embroidery – you name it. Tickets available at factorytwo.org.
Factory Two
129 N. Grand Traverse St., Flint

Tapology: Matters of the He(A)rt Gala

Thursday, Feb. 5 | 6 pm

Matters of the He(A)rt is more than a gala. It's an evening of gratitude for a man whose footsteps shaped a city. The gala is both tribute and triumph: a celebration of Alfred Bruce Bradley's extraordinary legacy and a testament to the community he built - a community that held him through a miraculous recovery, and one that continues to beat forward through its young people. Your \$75 ticket includes dinner, cash bar, art auction, guest performers and speakers, and more. Tickets available at www.tapology.org.
Sloan Museum
1221 E. Kearsley St., Flint

The Sleeping Beauty

Thursday, Feb. 12 | 7 pm

Flint: step into a fairytale brought to life on stage! For one magical night only, The Sleeping Beauty will fill FIM Whiting Auditorium with elegance, wonder, and breathtaking artistry. Don't miss the chance to experience a world-class ballet that touches the heart and awakens the imagination, featuring an outstanding international ensemble from Moldova, Spain, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, United Kingdom, Brazil, Poland, United States, Japan, Turkey, Armenia, Tajikistan, Belarus, and Principal Dancers from Ukraine! FIM Whiting Auditorium
1241 E. Kearsley St., Flint



UM-Flint to relauch Michigan Times

By Kate Stockrahm

The Michigan Times is coming back.

The University of Michigan-Flint's student newspaper, which covered the campus from 1959 until the end of the 2023-2024 academic year, is relauching on January 14, 2026.

"I'm really excited," Ramla Ouedraogo, the paper's editor-in-chief, told East Village Magazine a little over a month after the publication's quiet comeback announcement on Facebook.

Since that post, Ouedraogo – whose role includes managing the Michigan Times' social media alongside writing, editing, and supporting hiring decisions – has had the paper's four new staff writers introduce themselves via first names and short blurbs across the publication's social accounts.

Egor, for example, said: "I'm here to make campus stories a little less boring and a lot more real – from small everyday wins to the big problems nobody wants to talk about."

There's also Maxwell, who wants "to cover stories that matter" and "give the student body a voice"; Anij, who brings prior experience from research project writing; and Alyssa, who said her goal "is to take the stories and emotions we hear from our community and turn them into language that feels honest, warm, and real."

For her part, Ouedraogo told EVM her immediate focus as editor is to get the Michigan Times back up

and running for UM-Flint's student body, which has felt left out of campus happenings in the absence of a student-led paper.

"A lot of people do miss it and do want it back," the UM-Flint senior said. "They do want the independent information back."

er and the Times' faculty co-advisor alongside UM-Flint communications specialist Caroline Rathbun, said it was an unfortunate blend of circumstances.

"I hate the cliché, but it really was kind of a perfect storm," Atkinson explained, citing the pandemic's impact on all facets of campus activity combined with staffing transitions and a lack of journalistic course offerings that may otherwise spur student-writer participation.

"In short, we didn't have anyone apply to be the editor-in-chief," he said. "I feel like I have to drive that point home because there were a lot of people who kind of called 'bullshit' on that. But the truth was we had a couple of editors who were having a hard time just hiring writers."

Eric Hinds, editor-in-chief during the publication's sunset, seemingly confirmed as much in his own statement back in March 2024.

"Ever since I took over, I've been bailing water out of a sinking ship that never left the dock," Hinds said. "There just didn't seem to be any way to find people to work at the paper."

At the time, Hinds was preparing to head off to law school in another state and had just one staff reporter, Grace Walker, who was transferring to Central Michigan University in the coming year.

But now, after serious discussions among the Michigan Times' publication board, an encouraging trip to a college media confer-

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A still from the Michigan Times' comeback announcement on Facebook Reels, November 27, 2025.

As for why the publication went away in the first place, Scott Atkinson, a former Flint Journal report-

UM-Flint ...

(Continued from Page 9)

ence, support from staff and a new chancellor with his own journalism background, and the return of a two-course offering in journalism essentials (taught by Atkinson under an “English and Communications” heading) this academic year, the Michigan Times seems poised for a solid return.

“There were a lot of good sessions and a lot of good ideas,” Atkinson said of the conference, recalling a presentation by a small school in Ohio that pushed him, Rathburn, and others to consider a different recruitment and training structure to meet students where they’re at this time around.

“[The session] really helped us wrap our heads around how we might approach it, not having a journalism program and being a smaller school,” Atkinson explained.

The school in question, Ohio Northern University (ONU), had opened up its paper’s staffing beyond English and Communications students, implemented a hybrid system of both staff and freelance writers to allow students to participate as their schedules allowed, and favored writers’ interests in its reporting beats, among other things.

While Atkinson noted the idea of solely catering to writers’ interests meant coverage would shift depending on who was on staff – a concession he “never wanted to make as an advisor” – he said the success of ONU’s paper is encouraging to him and the staff and students bringing the Michigan Times back to campus.

“It kind of opened our minds on how we might approach it structurally,” he said. “Instead of having a set number of staff writers, have it be more open to a larger group that can contribute based more on what they can.”

So far, the adjustments seem to be working.

Ouedraogo said the paper re-

ceived somewhere around 20 applications for reporters in its initial job postings, and Atkinson, who is also a lecturer at UM-Flint, is hoping to continue to build on that momentum through his course series and the workshops he and Rathburn offer to Michigan Times writers.

While Atkinson admitted the career market for journalists is “dismal” right now, he said he hopes some of his students and the Times’ reporters will try pursue it, as skills you learn in journalism work are incredibly valuable, regardless.

“We live in a world where the trust in the media is at an all-time low, and I think it’s important for people to see how it actually works,” Atkinson said. “And I think beyond even that, the training you receive as a journalist teaches you a method of thinking that is very valuable and not often practiced... Journalism teaches

you to accept difficult information, no matter who you are.”

Ouedraogo, an aspiring news and entertainment reporter herself, said it’s been quite a process to build the Michigan Times back up since she was hired in summer 2025. Even so, she confirmed that the new website will launch with at least six stories at the ready this month —with possible multimedia elements to come.

“I’m proud of them,” Ouedraogo, a self-proclaimed “not bubbly person,” said of her reporting team. “I am actually extremely proud of them and their work. I’m really excited for everyone else to see it on the 14th.”

The Michigan Times will re-launch at a new web address, mtimes.org, as its former domain was purchased by another entity in 2024. Ouedraogo and Atkinson also confirmed they plan to return to print, too, sometime this semester. ●

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Flint Schools ...

(Continued from Page 5)

Ellis-McNeal then pointed to student behaviors and classroom management as causal factors. “Board members, we got to look at this classroom management,” she said. “We got to stop allowing these kids to get to a level where the teacher cannot teach.”

Ellis-McNeal added, “If we don’t get ahold of this [student] behavior ... it’s not gonna work.”

“A way forward”

“We believe we have a way forward,” Jones said.

He told the Board that the district’s goal – in partnership with the Genesee Intermediate School District, Michigan State University, and the Michigan Department of Education – is to increase M-STEP scores measuring proficiency by one percent every year over a three-year period. He did not clarify if that period included the current 2025-26 school year.

“We’re going to make sure that we’re turning the ship around,” said Jones. “Big ships turn slowly.” ●

* * * * *

As of press time, the FBOE is scheduled to meet: Jan. 14 and 21; Feb. 11 and 18; March 11 and 18; April 8 and 15; May 13 and 20; and June 17. Meetings typically start at 6:30 p.m. and are broadcast on the district’s YouTube page.



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Village Life

A little post-holiday magic?

By Kate Stockrahm

If it were up to me, our holiday lights would be down already.

Maybe that makes me sound like old Ebenezer (before the ghosts), but so be it.

We're just two days into January as I write this, and all I want to do as I look out onto our snow-dusted porch – gently glittering under the red, green, yellow, blue, and purple bulbs of the lights we so painstakingly strung up in single-digit temperatures last month – is shove them into a plastic storage tub in the basement and forget about them until next December.

Which, I know, makes it seem like I shout “bah humbug!” into the brisk night air as carolers go by and children whisper Christmas wishes into a shopping-mall Santa’s awaiting ear.

But I don’t do that. I actually love the holiday season.

I love the way we all slow down a bit between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day, regardless of what holiday (if any) we celebrate in our homes. I love seeing which of my neighbors go all out with their yard decor (think: inflatables, arches, candy canes, light shows with musical accompaniment) and which keep it subtle with crisp white lights and a wreath. I love baking dozens of cookies with my mom (whose powder-blue stand mixer sits idle from January to November otherwise) and coating our years-worn paper recipes in another layer of flour and buttery fingerprints as we work. I love going to the store to pick out a fresh roll of

wrapping paper and complementary ribbons that will make sense for next year’s birthday gifts, too. I love laughing with my friends – all dressed up in sequins and velvet and feathers – as we share our resolutions, bowls of salty snacks, and cheap champagne around a dining room table at 2 a.m.

I love it all.

But now it’s no longer “the holidays,” right? It’s just winter. In Michigan. Which means it will be pretty gray (both sky and snow) and pretty cold (both outside and in my bones) for another three to four months.

So yeah, bah humbug.

joyful and certainly devoid of twinkling lights and trays of holiday cookies.

But then my partner, who is forever the optimist of the two of us, says something wildly sweet and encouraging about how “we are responsible for our own happiness.”

He suggests that rather than viewing those multi-colored lights adorning our porch as a spectre of holidays past, I’m allowed to view them as a reminder of the joy we made and can continue to make even after those holidays are over.

In summary, he tells me, as if it

was always obvious and easy: “We can just leave the lights up if they make the world feel less gray and cold.”

He says it in a way that’s sincere (and therefore incredibly annoying to me as a cynic), because even in my post-holiday melancholy I know that he’s right.

So, we’ll be leaving our lights up for another few weeks – those happy, cruel, wonderful reminders of past and future joy.

Maybe we’ll even leave them up the whole month of January. Who knows? Who cares? Because I love the holidays, after all, and I do hope to carry some of their magic with me into 2026.

Happy New Year, Flint. ●

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A close up of EVM Editor Kate Stockrahm’s holiday lights.

(Photo by Kate Stockrahm)

As of Jan. 2, the lights on our porch represent something delightful that’s behind me now, and they shouldn’t be allowed to shine happily while I languish in the return to real life and the dread of responsibilities to come. Instead of festive, cheery decor, those bulbs have become glowing reminders that I need to “get back to it” on Monday – “it” being decidedly less