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March 2026



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Commentary

To my Republican friends: Trump's second term

By Paul Rozycki

A little over six years ago, I penned an appeal to Republicans as President Donald Trump entered the last year of his first term – a time at which he was facing several impeachments.

Today, Trump is now a little over a year into his second term, and the state of affairs is even more troubling.

In the time since his January 2025 inauguration, we have seen pardons for those who led the Jan. 6 insurrection, a flurry of tariffs that change by the day, military forces deployed domestically, rollbacks of environmental protections, multiple government shut-downs, suggestions of taking over Greenland, and the start of a war with Iran.

Trump has also threatened to “nationalize” the upcoming mid-term elections, insulted multiple Supreme Court justices who ruled against him – even if they were his own appointees – and had to walk back his administration’s initial statements labeling American citizens Renee Good and Alex Pretti, both killed by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents in Minnesota, as “domestic terrorists.”

So, with a few updates, maybe it’s time to revisit the same comments I made back in 2020. They feel even more important and relevant now.

An open letter to my Republican friends

To my Republican friends:

While we may disagree on many things, there is no doubt that the Republican Party has a long and honorable history.

It led the nation through a brutal civil war, ending slavery. It was an early advocate for civil rights and racial equality in the years following that war. It has been a strong supporter of fiscal and personal responsibility, both within the government and in personal lives. It has been the voice of those who wished to spread the American ideals of democracy and freedom around the world. It has also been a leading force against those who would limit those same ideals.

The legacy of past Republican presidents

Your party is heir to the proud heritage of Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan. It was your own party leaders who had the courage to tell Richard Nixon that, in spite of his political victories, it was time to leave. Yet today, many of those ideals are being erased as you become the party of Donald Trump.

You are the party of Abraham Lincoln, who held the nation together and ended the scourge of slavery, but support a president who says “there are fine people on both sides,” when responding to a white power march supported by neo-Nazis and the KKK – a president who, more recently, posted a

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Cover: Lunch at the Flint Farmers' Market. (Photo by Edwin D. Custer)



Photo of the Month: Fruit and veggies at the market. (Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

Education Beat

Flint Schools in February: revised plan for Flint Central, new playgrounds, and an investigation into ‘felony charges’

By Harold C. Ford

The February 18, 2026 meeting of the Flint Board of Education (FBOE) featured a revised plan for the long-abandoned Central-Whittier campus that retains more elements of its original architecture; a playground initiative funded by the C. S. Mott Foundation that promises new playgrounds at five Flint elementary schools; and renewed FBOE tensions that resulted in the launch of an investigation into possible “felony charges.”

Flint Central rebuild

After numerous starts and stops toward reopening the deteriorated Flint Central-Whittier campus – shuttered in 2009 – a revised redesign plan was announced at the FBOE’s Feb. 18 meeting. The plan will preserve a few more elements of the structure’s classic design than announced back in December 2025,

including some familiar brick-and-mortar components.

Additionally, multiple firms that will participate in the teardown and rebuild of the campus were confirmed. The targeted date to reopen the campus for students is the fall of 2028. Visible evidence that the project is underway should occur in April 2026 with the installation of a security fence and other preparatory steps.

Demolition

As previously announced, the Central and Whittier buildings will largely be razed, except for the tallest portion of Central often referred to as “The Tower.”

“The Tower itself will be preserved,” affirmed Plante Moran’s Valentino Mancini, senior project manager, during a presentation to the Board.

Mancini said The Tower is old,

vulnerable, and will need additional support as the structure around it is demolished and removed, while columns, beams, and new walls will ultimately offer support for the five-story feature.

As for the Whittier building, Mancini said: “That will come down in its entirety.”

Demolition targets also include removal of the underground tunnels that still exist beneath the campus, the track area, and many trees – close to 30 by this reporter’s count – based on a schematic map shown during Mancini’s presentation.

Without removal of the trees, Mancini explained, the demolition, excavation, and building phases of the project would be “very, very difficult,” and replanting them is not likely.

Even so, he added that his firm is “planning to save as many trees as

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Flint Schools...

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we can,” and planting new trees on the property is a possibility. Flint Community Schools (FCS) Superintendent Kevelin Jones also suggested that he and others will walk the property to review which trees are targeted for removal and why.

Preservation

The considerable public outcry regarding the initially-proposed near clean-sweep demolition of Central-Whittier, aside from the campus’s tower, was apparently heeded by school leaders and project managers.

At the Feb. 18 meeting, it was announced that additional elements of the campus will now be preserved, including: a large arch that hovers above a doorway; other limestone arch and leaf pieces; a cupola, or small dome, that currently sits atop one of the roof peaks; metalwork; solid wooden doors; and some plaster detail found in the interior of the building. Further, much of the concrete will be removed, crushed, and used as backfill on the site.

“I’m really thrilled about the salvaging,” said Trustee Melody Relford. “It does my heart good.”

Construction team

The project team named at the same Feb. 18 meeting includes Lansing-based Clark Construction as construction manager, while Stantec, with some 450 locations in North America, will provide the architectural, mechanical, electrical, and structural engineering teams. The civil engineering team will be assembled by the Michigan-based firm of Spalding DeDecker, and landscaping services will be headed up by Berkley, Michigan-based Foresite Design.

Centennial parks and playground initiative

In addition to Central updates, Superintendent Jones announced that

FCS would be the first recipient of a collective \$20 million initiative by the C. S. Mott Foundation to renovate the city’s playgrounds.

The district will receive just over \$7 million to upgrade playgrounds at five elementary campuses: Potter, Freeman, Durant-Tuuri-Mott, Eisenhower, and Doyle-Ryder.

FCS plans to employ a co-design process for the upgrades that’s similar to the one used to renovate the playground at Brownell Elementary last year. Beginning in March, student focus groups and stakeholder surveys, assisted by the Flint Center for Educational Excellence, will kick off the co-design process. The second phase in April will include conceptual renderings and gallery walks, during which the public will be invited to view conceptual renderings – including those imagined and drawn by students. Phase three in May and June will then see the rollout of final renderings and the start of construction.

The process will include school-based advisory teams, community school directors, building administrators, school board members, parents, neighborhood association members, and students according to Ja’Nel Jamerson, president and CEO of FCEE.

Jamerson also explained that finalized playground features may include medical equipment, early childhood play areas, safe and accessible surfaces, walking paths and play circuits, plentiful lighting and seating, and community-friendly design.

Stantec and Clark Construction, already on board for the Central-Whittier project, will build the playgrounds. Planners expect the new playgrounds to be completed by June 2026.

Divided board votes to authorize “investigation of felony charges”

Also at its Feb. 18 meeting, the Board voted 4-3 to launch an “investigation of felony charges” relating to comments by Trustee Relford – though the way the motion was

presented didn’t immediately make that understanding clear.

“Board, I seek a motion and a second from the board to approve action item 21.6: third-party investigation of felony charges – the third party being the Allen Law Firm – through a recommendation from Attorney Gardner of Thrun Law,” FBOE Vice President Laura MacIntyre said. President Joyce Ellis-McNeal made the motion, which was then seconded by Secretary Claudia Perkins.

As discussion began, Treasurer Dylan Luna said that he’d not been aware of the agenda item, noting that it wasn’t in the Board packet.

MacIntyre responded that the item was on advice of Thrun Law, which she had sought out because “accusations were made in the last Board meeting that have serious legal, uh, felony implications for the Board, the president, and a certain third-party vendor.”

She added that more wasn’t written down because “the investigation will include breaches of the Open Meetings Act and confidential information,” and that “the investigation itself is going to be looking at the disclosure and the leakage of some of the communications of legal opinions.”

“It needs to be done immediately because of the potential consequences,” concluded MacIntyre before discussion continued. “You just can’t say whatever you want in an open meeting.”

While the ensuing discussion did not mention the person who had made the accusations now in question, Ellis-McNeal offered a summary of what had been said that spurred the motion for investigation.

“Last Wednesday, a public accusation was made when we voted for a certain company. The accusation was that President Joyce Ellis-McNeal take kickbacks and get money from this contract,” Ellis-McNeal said.

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Commentary ...

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video on social media that portrayed the Obamas as apes.

You are the party of Teddy Roosevelt, the “trust buster” of the early 20th century, but support a president who has given huge tax breaks to his billionaire friends and corporations as the middle class continues to shrink and struggle. He and his family now use the White House as a platform to sell gold sneakers, watches, trading cards, and Bibles.

Roosevelt was also an avid conservationist who led the early formation of national parks, yet you’ve watched our president deny climate change as he removed the U.S. from the Paris Climate Accords, ended the Green New Deal, and weakened the Endangered Species Act.

Dwight Eisenhower led the nation in war and peace, and he believed that strong alliances protect America’s security. Yet, we have seen the current president work to weaken our most important and long-lasting treaty organizations, insult our allies, and cozy-up to our enemies. He has created a “Board of Peace” as he begins a war in the Middle East, and many of his actions threaten the very existence of NATO, one of our most critical international alliances.

Ronald Reagan believed that the Soviet Union was “the evil empire” and set the stage for the fall

of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Soviet system. Our current president is willing to attack and insult nearly every world leader, with one exception. He has gone out of his way to support Russia’s Vladimir Putin.

The values Republicans support

You are the party of family values, yet you support a president who brags about assaulting women, paid off an adult film star with whom he committed adultery, and heavily redacted and delayed the release of the Epstein files.

Under the direction of Trump’s ICE, we have seen families broken up at the border, parents – and even children – arrested, and immigrants who have been here for generations deported to countries they may have never even known.

You claim to be the party of constitutional law and limited government, yet you have supported a president who blatantly ignores Congress and the Constitution when it suits him as he expands presidential power. In fact, he recently said the only limit on his power is his “own morality.”

You claim to be the party of law and order, yet you have supported a president who has seen more than 30 of his associates indicted (and some convicted) for a variety of criminal acts. Trump himself has been convicted on 34 felonies, and more than a few of his enterprises and charities have been charged with fraud. He has pardoned those who

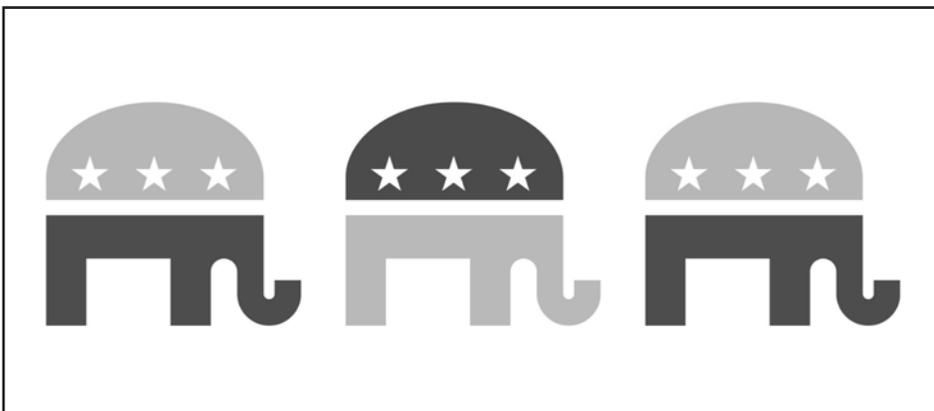
attacked police officers on Jan. 6. His blatant lies and misstatements grow by the day, and he has used the Justice Department for revenge against those who oppose him.

The Republican Party claims to be the party of tradition and patriotism – the flag is ever-present at public events – yet President Trump has attacked and undermined many key elements of the federal government, from the FBI to the CIA, the EPA to the CDC, the Department of Education to the military. He has insulted American veterans by saying he only liked those “who weren’t captured,” and his recent actions, such as attempts to take legal action against Senator Mark Kelly, a former Naval captain, for a video affirming that troops are not required to follow illegal orders, have undermined the authority and respect of our military and its leaders. When he hasn’t attacked a department outrightly, he has often left it understaffed and unsupported.

During the Watergate scandal, it was the leadership of the Republican Party, who decided that even though President Nixon had delivered a landslide victory for them in 1972, they had to stand on the principles of law and decency. In 1974, when Republican Senators Barry Goldwater, Hugh Scott, and House Leader John Rhodes came to the White House and told Nixon that he had few votes in the Senate to protect him from removal, he resigned the next day. Would any Republican leaders, or for that matter the president, do the same today?

The future of the Republican Party

Certainly, some truly believe that Trump is the new voice and future of the Republican Party. And the party seems to remain solidly behind him – perhaps because many of those who had doubts



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Commentary ...

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about him have either left the party, retired, or lost a primary election by now.

But there are some Republicans who admit a long list of misgivings over Trump's personality, his policy, and his competence, even if they remain silent in public and fear retaliation with an angry tweet or a Trump-backed challenger in the next election.

Further, the president's recent actions with the Affordable Care Act, Iran, Venezuela, and Greenland have given at least some Republicans – such as former Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, Senator Susan Collins, Tucker Carlson and Senator Rand Paul – second thoughts about their support, and overwhelming Republican denouncement caused the Trump Administration to finally release the Epstein files.

On a voter level, though, the majority of Republicans still support the president. But that number is shrinking.

A year ago 67% of Republicans said they supported the president's agenda. Today, that number is down to 56% according to a Pew Research Center Report.

Regardless of where you land on the political spectrum, it's worth remembering that supporting this president is a risky gamble. He has shown no loyalty to his staff and supporters, except perhaps his family, and a willingness to throw former friends and associates under the bus if they cross him on the slightest matter.

Finally, somewhere in the back of your mind, won't you secretly be relieved when Trump's second term is over, so you won't have to explain his crazy posts, defend his personal behavior, attend his stream-of-consciousness, word-salad rally speeches, and try to make sense of it all?

In the end it's worth asking: do you want to be the Republican Party, with all the values that you have supported for decades, or do you want to be the "Trump Party," whose political values can change on a whim of a mercurial and uninformed personality?

It was President John F. Kennedy who admired those leaders who could exhibit "Profiles in Courage" and go against popular sentiment by taking a principled stand. Though he was a Democrat, Kennedy wrote of leaders on both

sides of the aisle who showed the courage to lean against their own parties – and even their own voters – when they stood up for what was right.

Though it's a long shot, maybe it's time for some more "Profiles in Courage." I suspect that the nation will be better for it, and so will the Republican Party. A functioning democracy needs the honest interchange of ideas between all of us, after all.

Not that I wish you too much good luck. I'm still a Democrat. ●

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THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

Below is a selection of events available to our readers, beginning after our March publication date. To submit events for our April issue, email information about your event to eastvillagemagazineflint@gmail.com by March 31.

Shamrock the Alley!

Tuesday, March 17 | 4 - 8 pm

For the first time ever, Friends of the Alley is hosting "Shamrock the Alley" — and it's not just a party, it's a fundraiser to support our work in downtown Flint! Join us for a festive St. Patrick's Day celebration featuring a beer garden, live music, and all the alley vibes you've come to love — all while supporting FOTA's mission to beautify and activate our public spaces.

Buckham Alley
Downtown Flint

Flint Under the Stars: Cult Therapy and Final-BossFight!

Wednesday, March 18 | 7 pm

Flint Under the Stars is a concert series that spotlights local talent, held on the third Wednesday of each month under the starry dome of the FIM Capitol Theatre. This series, which supports local artists by providing them with a professional performance experience, features a donate-what-you-wish ticket price, with a \$5 minimum donation. All proceeds benefit KidsTix, a program that expands access to the arts by providing admission to live performances for children and their families. Tickets available at <https://tickets.thefim.org/altpunk>.

FIM Capitol Theatre
140 E. Second St., Flint

Flint City Bucks vs. Forward Madison FC

Thursday, March 16 | 6:30 pm

Your Flint City Bucks will host Forward Madison FC in the first round of the 2026 Lamar Hunt US Open Cup. Come on out and support elite soccer right here in Genesee County and Mid Michigan. The event will feature food trucks, bounce houses, live music, giveaways and much much more. Tickets available at <https://tinyurl.com/y3mzb8xt>.

Don Bachelor Field
11920 S. Saginaw St., Grand Blanc

Kew's Korner Pub Grand Re-Opening Party!

Saturday, March 21 | 10 pm

After weeks of remodeling and big changes, Kew's Korner Pub is back, and we're celebrating the only way we know how: with an unforgettable night of drag, music, and community. Join us for our Grand Re-Opening Drag Show featuring an incredible lineup of performers including Perry Dox, Marz, Faux Minx and host Salmon. Shows at 10:30 pm, 11:30 pm and 12:30 am. Music all night by DJ Allaus. 21+ event.

Kew's Korner Pub
4509 S. Saginaw St., Flint

Brunch, please!

Sunday, March 22 | 11 am

Gather your girls and get ready to let loose and belt out your favorite tunes! We're hosting the first monthly women's only brunch with delicious eats, tasty drinks, and a banging sing-along session led by DJ Heather Cairo! No talent required - this is your safe space to laugh, eat, drink, dance and sing at the top of your lungs. Advance tickets required. \$40 ticket includes entry, endless brunch plates and 2 drink tickets (additional drinks available for purchase). Tickets available at <https://tinyurl.com/yfaap9pa>.

Tenacity Brewing
119 N. Grand Traverse St, Flint

Mid-Michigan Pet Expo

Friday, March 27 - Sunday, March 29

Watch the fast action flyball relay races, the high flying United Dock Diving dogs, visit the animals at the 4H booth, adopt a new cat or dog, try barn hunt with your dog, and shop at the tons of vendor booths! Friday, 2 - 7 pm; Saturday 9 am - 6 pm; Sunday 9 am - 4 pm.

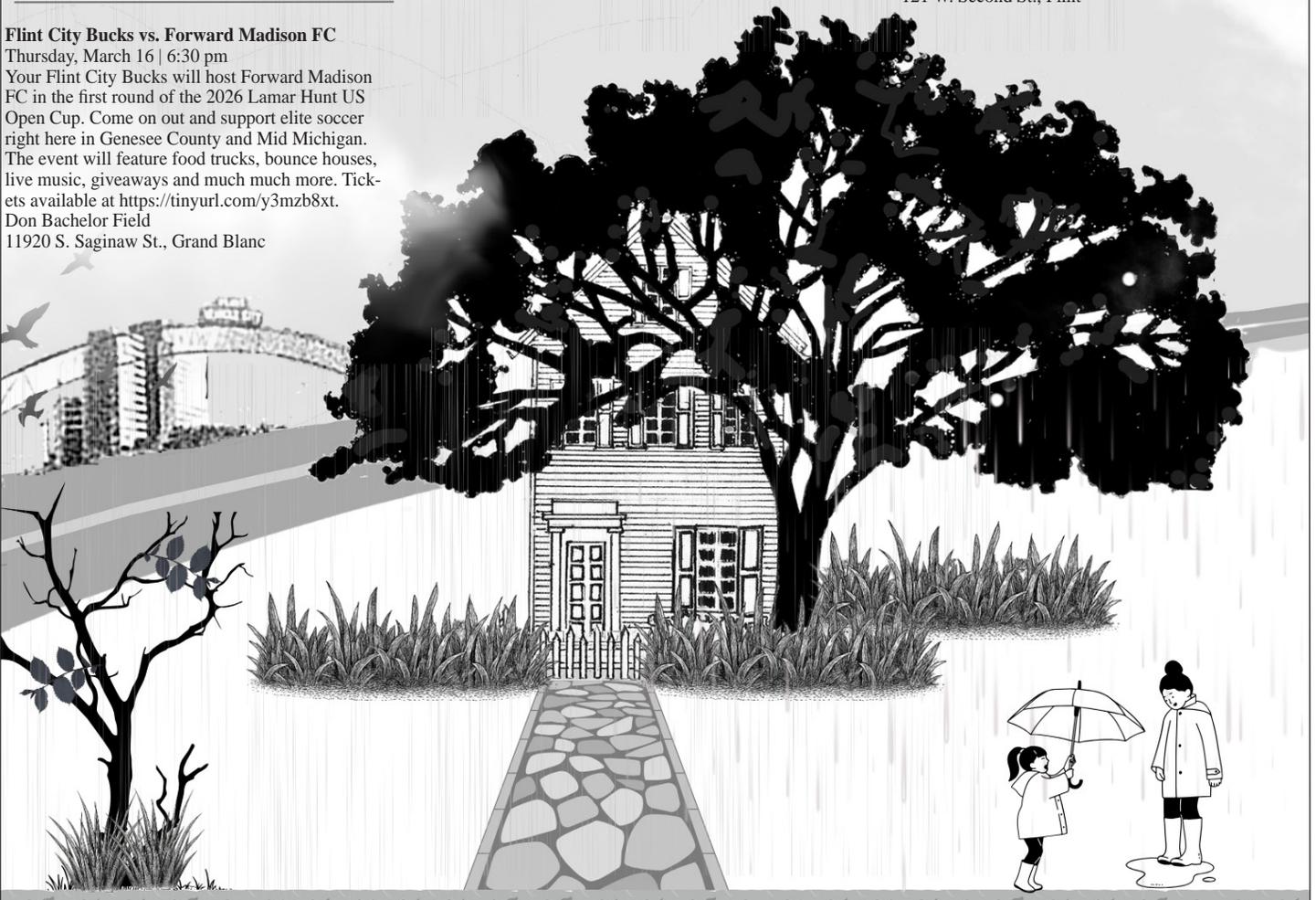
Tickets \$10 for adults, \$5 for kids 12 - 17 years, free for kids under 12 and pets. More information and tickets available at www.midmichiganpetexpo.com.
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Build Your Own Collection

Friday, March 27 | 7 - 10 pm

Buckham Fine Arts Project 501(c)(3) invites you to join us for our fourth annual fundraising event: Build Your Own Collection. Don't miss this - exclusive VIP preview or general admission, live music performance, and strolling hors d'oeuvres. With each ticket purchase, you'll not only experience an evening of merrymaking, but also build your art collection while supporting Buckham's mission of enriching the cultural life of our community with innovative contemporary arts programming and providing support to artists. Tickets available at <https://buckhamgallery.org/byoc-2026.html>.

Buckham Gallery
121 W. Second St., Flint



Flint Schools ...

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“The board member requested public – that it be put in the public record ... I requested a full investigation to be done to prove or not prove that these allegations is true,” Ellis-McNeal said. “This is my reputation”.

In review of that Feb. 11 meeting, the statement Ellis-McNeal was referring to came from Trustee Relerford.

It was made after Relerford had been given the floor by Ellis-McNeal and began to ask Superintendent Jones a financial question. Ellis-McNeal interrupted, saying Relerford could not change the agenda, to which Relerford responded that she wasn’t and asked that she be allowed to finish.

Ellis-McNeal then began speaking, followed by MacIntyre, while Relerford stated she still had the floor. The back-and-forth escalated until Relerford said, over calls for “Point of Order” from Ellis-McNeal and MacIntyre: “We already have a contract in place with Genesee Health Plan, so why are we adding money to it?”

Ellis-McNeal responded, “Point of order, this has nothing to do with Genesee Health,” to which Relerford replied: “It does. ‘Cause you getting a kickback, that’s why. I want the record to show that.”

In addition to MacIntyre, those voting for the resolution to launch the investigation were: Ellis-McNeal, Perkins, and Linda Boose, FBOE Assistant Secretary-Treasurer. Voting against it were: Luna, Relerford, and

Trustee Terae King.

In his comments before the decision, King noted that the trustees were being asked to vote without knowing the investigation’s scope, timeframe, or cost – nor the reason Allen Law Firm was suggested over other possible firms. He questioned why there had been no discussion or closed session to learn all of the Board’s legal options before being presented with an opinion they’d not collectively agreed to seek out.

“I’m just concerned when we talk about that – because putting something to this magnitude on the agenda not only sews distrust inside the community, but it kind of – it kind of fractured at the board table because we usually don’t do it that way. We just don’t.”

For her part, Relerford said she was “all for an investigation” but she wanted the Board to “follow the policy and send the complaint.”

“I don’t know where felony charges come from,” she said during discussion. “It sounds like somebody’s feelings was hurt, but feelings are not a felony. So I just ask my colleagues: just submit the information so the entire board can make a decision and not just two people in they emotions wanting the district to pay for something because they feelings are hurt.” ●

* * * * *

Future FBOE meetings are scheduled for: March 18; April 8 & 15; May 13 & 20; and June 17. Meetings typically start at 6:30 p.m. and are broadcast on the district’s YouTube page.



Graphic of FBOE Trustee Melody Relerford (left) and FBOE President Joyce Ellis-McNeal.
(Original photos by Tom Travis)

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Flint family starts four endowments to support the preservation of Flint & Genesee County history

By Kate Stockrahm

One local family is looking toward the future for four area organizations dedicated to Flint and Genesee County's past.

William Gainey, Brian Tesler, and their son, Aiden Gainey, approached the Community Foundation of Greater Flint (CFGF) about starting endowments for the Genesee County Historical Society, Whaley Historic House Museum, Flint Genealogical Society, and Stockton House Museum, respectively, back in July 2025.

I just really love history," the elder Gainey explained of why he and his family wanted to contribute to the four organizations. In fact, Gainey said, one of his first memories of falling in love with history was on a school trip to the home of President Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis.

A commercial pilot originally from rural Indiana, Gainey might be better known to Flint locals for his

many other historical pursuits, like his collection of 1940s and 50s-era pinball machines, restoration work to the family's 1872 Italianate home (the Hiram "Hardwood" Smith House), or his historic house atop I-beams in Flint's Grand Traverse District.

Gainey said that he and Tesler, who was born and raised in Flint and now serves as Chief Medical Director of Women's Health for McLaren, established the four endowment funds through a \$40,000 gift from their shared business, Ob/Gyn Board Prep®. He told East Village Magazine the funds are "our way of giving back to our community."

When asked why his family chose to give in this way, Gainey said he felt that setting up endowments was one of the best means to ensure the four organizations would benefit without board members having to manage the funds themselves.

"Look, these boards, when you

give money directly, have to manage that money," explained Gainey, who has been on Whaley House's board since 2009. "It's a pain, and many board members are volunteers, so there's not necessarily always someone there that has the financial savvy to manage it and invest to build it. The Community Foundation does that. It's an incredible service."

Once each fund reaches \$50,000, CFGF will issue yearly payouts to the organizations, whose leaders can then use the money "however they'd like," Gainey said, rather than be restricted to grant or donor stipulations.

Since the funds were established in early October 2025, the Whaley House Historic Museum has met the \$50,000 goal to start seeing payouts. A boon, President Izzy Guertin explained, as the museum celebrated its 50th anniversary in February.

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The Whaley House Historical Museum at 624 E. Kearsley Street in Flint. (Photo by Kate Stockrahm)

Flint family ...

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“As a nonprofit, we rely completely on grants and donations to operate,” Guertin said. “Heading into our 50th year, this endowment will help us to 50 more no matter the uncertainty of the surrounding economy.”

For the family’s part, Gainey said he was surprised that the four organizations didn’t already have endowments given their relative ages – the Genesee County Historical Society has been around since 1915, he pointed out – and his belief that “Genesee County is a very giving community.”

Regardless, Gainey said, he hopes that now that endowment funds are established for these four organizations, others will consider giving to the places working to preserve Flint and Genesee County’s rich local history. ●

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April Fools! Going Against Type

7:30pm at Elgood Theatre Lobby



For more information and to purchase tickets, please scan the QR code or visit thefim.org/aprilfoolsev

FIM Flint Repertory Theatre



Faculty Concert Series 2025-26

Po-Chen Chang

cello

Nocturne by
Candlelight



APR
17
7pm

MacArthur Recital Hall

This free concert series runs October - May. Reserve your season pass at

thefim.org/faculty1ev

FIM Flint School of Performing Arts



Flint Symphony Orchestra

Highlands & Seascapes

Smyth's Overture to The Wreckers, Finzi's Five Bagatelles, Op. 23a, Weber's Concertino for Clarinet and Orchestra & Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 3 in A Minor

Enrique Diemecke music director and conductor
Ricardo Morales clarinet



Saturday, April 18, 2026

7:30pm at Whiting Auditorium



For more information and to purchase tickets, please scan the QR code or visit thefim.org/fso5ev

FIM Flint Symphony Orchestra



Village Life

Goodbyes to good people

By Kate Stockrahm

I try to keep my Village Life contributions light, my friends, but this year is not off to a great start.

We've lost so many good people – so many good, Flint people – since the clock struck midnight and ushered us into 2026.

For me, the first was Heather Burnash. A long-time Flint lawyer, problem-solver, and all around doer, I didn't know to be intimidated when we first spoke: I just called her up because she was the Chair of the Historic District Commission and I was covering the Saginaw Street restoration project.

She was generous with her time, despite a cold-call from a newer-to-Flint reporter, and we ended up talking about her grandfather, a bricklayer, whom she spoke of with deep pride as she told me of his work on Flint's main thoroughfare. She kept a beautiful house near the highway that I admired on walks around my old apartment building nearby.

When she passed away in January, much too young, I cried as I drove by it on my way to my new home, wishing that I'd just gone over and knocked on her door sometime, or thanked her more often for all of the ways she served Flint.

There have been so many others since – in such quick succession it feels like whiplash.

Just a couple of weeks ago, in late February, we lost two prominent downtown personalities: David Wall, who worked at the Ferris Wheel's Biggy Coffee and always greeted you – friend or soon-to-be friend – with a

smile; and Levon Coleman, whom most knew as "Peanut."

In fact, as my friend Joel Rash said on Facebook, trying to help us all process Peanut's awful, unexpected passing with a bit of levity: "I knew Peanut for at least thirty years, but didn't find out until today that his government name was Levon Coleman."

Joel went on to mention Peanut's distinctive dreadlocks, the difficult life he'd lived and his kind demeanor despite it, and his omnipresence for all of us who frequent Saginaw Street. I'll admit I've been avoiding walking



(Photo courtesy WMrapids, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons)

along the downtown strip since his death, even as the weather's started to warm. It just won't be the same without him.

Then there's the losses adjacent to me, those I'm seeing my Flint people experience and wishing I could take some of their pain away.

These are perhaps hardest, personally, because I can only watch as these community pillars – these leaders whom I fiercely respect and that always show up for everyone else in Flint – become suddenly, critically human.

I want to scream as they quietly bear their pain, pausing from the day's duties only to quickly text how much their heart hurts. I want to break things as I'm copied in on emails showing how these solid, Flint folks still, incredibly, continue to consider others – scheduling meetings, sharing resources, answering neighbors' calls – even while faced with the immeasurable grief of losing a dear friend, a spouse, a parent.

I don't know what to offer here, nor even what I'd hoped to offer, in acknowledging all of this loss instead of

my usual attempt at a bit of self-effacing humor and some sort of message about the start of spring or something. Truly everything I start to type feels trite – another platitude on "being kind to each other" or remembering that "you have no idea what someone else might be going through."

But Flint is family, it's our home, and when any one of us is hurting we all are.

So, yeah, I guess I do want to offer those platitudes. Because we *should* be kind to each other – not just in times of grief but always. Hug your people, show up for strangers in need, and insist on supporting your community – this strange, beautiful family we call Flint.

It's a long way to 2027, friends, but it's just a short distance to your neighbor's house. Go check in, and let's be better to each other while we can. Life's too precious to do otherwise. ●

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