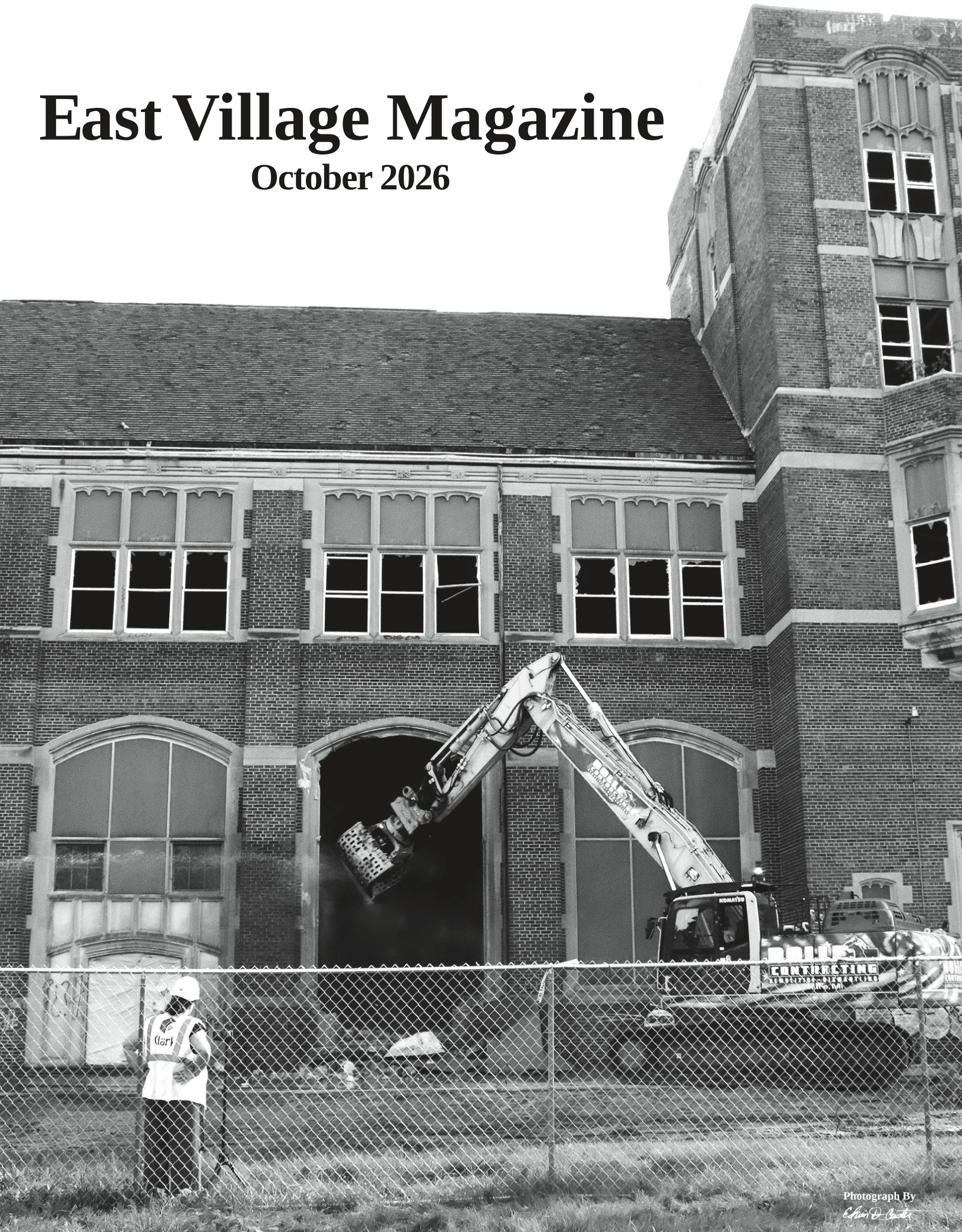


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October 2026





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Commentary

A look at the proposals Flint and Genesee County voters will decide in November

By Paul Rozycki

Based on the tsunami of political ads we see daily, the bulk of the attention heading into the Nov. 3 election are races for Michigan Governor, U.S. Senator, and Flint's mayor and city council. It's easy to overlook several proposals that voters will be asked to decide this year. While the legal language can seem complex and confusing, these proposals, particularly the local ones, are often critical to the ability of many local organizations to operate.

This column provides brief summaries of the eight proposals that voters in our area will see on their ballots. Many of them are renewals that often pass, but with the division and conflict in our politics today nothing can be certain. The actual wording of the ballot questions can be found on the Genesee County Clerk's website under the 'Elections' heading. More detailed information about many of them is also available in Flint Daily's election coverage at www.flintdaily.news.

State Proposals

Proposal 2026-1: A proposal to revise or rewrite Michigan's state constitution

This proposal is placed before voters every 16 years as required by Michigan's current constitution. When this was presented to the voters in past years it was typically turned down by wide margins. This year many political leaders of both parties are urging a 'no' vote on this out of concern

about partisan deadlock and conflict. The UAW has urged a 'no' vote as well.

However, as reported in a recent Ballenger Report, the Glengariff Group conducted a recent poll suggesting that as much as 47% of voters said they are likely to support the proposal and only 31% are inclined to vote no, with 22% undecided. General public frustration with the government may be one reason for more support for this proposal than in previous years when it was on the ballot.

Proposal 2026-2: A proposal to prohibit campaign contributions from certain regulated gas and electric utilities and government contractors

This proposal would prevent major utility companies such as Consumers Energy or DTE from contributing to political campaigns. It would also limit those with annual government contracts over \$250,000 from contributing to campaigns. It would also prohibit those with strong connections to those utilities from making donations to candidates running for office if it would impact them. It would require public disclosure of campaign contribution from donors. In the Sept. 20 Ballenger Report, a Progress Michigan poll indicates that nearly 80% of voters support the proposal with only 16% opposing it. Other polls suggest similar results. The UAW has urged its members to vote yes.

(Continued on Page 6)

Cover: Demolition begins on the former Flint Central High School on September 10, 2026.
(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)



Photo of the Month: Playful Halloween decorations on Mountain Avenue.
(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

Sports Beat

Flint Firebirds open season with new faces, high hopes

By Nathan Waters

The air is cooling, the leaves are changing, the ice has been set and that can only mean one thing: Flint Firebirds hockey is back.

Following a record setting season and an up and down playoff run, the Flint Firebirds are eyeing a brand new set of challenges.

Offseason adventures

Summer may not be known for hockey, but that did not keep players from lighting up the ice in the off-season. Two of Flint's players were participants in the Hlinka-Gretzky Cup. The annual event, started in 1991 as the Ivan Hlinka Memorial Cup, sees U18 teams from across the world compete for the gold medal. Each installment, which rotates between Canada and Czechia/Slovakia, had the 2026 edition held in Edmonton.

Left wing Charlie Murata suited up for team Canada while goalie Mason Courville stood guard of the net for the United States. Murata was

able to notch two assists in five games played and four penalty minutes while Courville played three games across the tournament, picking up wins against Slovakia and Finland.

Both players met in the gold medal game with Canada breezing to a dominant 8-1 win. The game saw Courville play 20 minutes and allow 6 goals before being replaced. He would have to settle for silver while Murata brings the bragging rights back to Flint, along with his gold medal.

Farewells and fresh faces

Alongside the players who have either aged out or gone on to further their careers and education in college, Flint had three players who would have been expected to suit up this season traded away.

In Flint's biggest trade of the offseason, they sent 2025 draftee Landon Pickersgill to Sarnia. Flint also included four draft picks, a third rounder in 2027, a fourth rounder in

2029 and fourth and 15th round picks in 2030. In exchange, Sarnia sent defenseman Nicholas Bogas to Flint.

Last season, Bogas played for the U.S. National Team Development Program, and in 37 games he had two goals and two assists. His dad Chris Bogas is a former professional player who played for the Flint Generals in 2009-10.

Bogas, a Royal Oak native, was described as "a bit of an old school defenseman" by Flint Firebirds coach Paul Flache, who has coached the team since 2023. "He blocks shots, hits guys, and wins his battles. He's tough as nails."

The St. Louis Blue draftee also participated in this summer's Hlinka Cup with new teammate Courville, and has committed to play college hockey at Michigan State University.

St. Louis, Missouri, native George Komadoski was traded for a third round pick in the 2027 draft. He

(Continued on Page 5)

Flint Firebirds...

(Continued from Page 4)

had 50 appearances for Flint in 2025-26, recording three assists and 50 penalty minutes. He will play 2026-27 in Brantford with the Bulldogs before heading to South Bend to suit up for the Notre Dame Fighting Irish in fall of 2027.

Brayden Lappalainen will also be setting down roots in Brantford this season. The 2025 draftee was moved for a 2029 second round draft pick. He only suited up for one game for Flint in 2025-26, spending most of his time in Flint's Ontario Junior Hockey League (OJHL) affiliate Leamington Flyers in Leamington, Ontario.

Christian Colismo, born in 2008, who played 15 games for Flint in 2025-26, is now suiting up for the Niagara IceDogs. Flint received a 2030 fifth round pick for him.

Flint brought in two other players besides Bogas via trade so far this season.

Goaltender Trenton Bennett was acquired on June 2 from the Owen Sound Attack in exchange for four draft picks. Bennett should be familiar with Flint as he faced his new team in the playoffs this past spring. He will play in tandem with Courville, replacing the departed Mason Vaccari.

"We wanted to solidify our goaltending along with Mason [Courville]. So now we have a one-two punch," Flache said. "He has the experience you can lean on and he's very big and athletic. You can't teach size."

Flint also picked up Simon Belohorsky from the Guelph Storm for two draft picks. The forward played 34 games in Guelph netting nine goals and four assists.

The team also adds players to its roster through the international draft, which includes all teams in the Canadian Hockey League (CHL), each offseason. Franchises are limited to a total of three players from this draft on the roster, and may have experience that includes junior or

professional ice time, especially in Europe.

Flint brought in two players of the three allotted for this year's import draft, held on June 30. Latvian center Martins Klaukans was brought in using the 28th overall pick. Born in Riga, this is the second year in a row Flint has drafted a player out of the city following the 2025 draft selection Darels Uljanskis who now holds down the blue line at St. Cloud State in Minnesota.

With the 43rd pick and Flint's final pick of the import draft, they selected Tomas Selic of Bratislava, Slovakia. The right winger spent the 2025-26 season playing for the HC Kometa Brno U20 team in Czechia where he tallied up 21 goals and 29 assists during the 45 games he played. He also played for the Slovakian U18 team in this summer's IIHF U18 World Junior Championships where he notched three goals and three assists.

The bulk of new players come in the OHL Priority Selection Draft. Held on June 12 and 13, the 15-round 301-player draft saw 18-20 year old

players from across Ontario and several adjacent states in the United States get selected. Some of these players will slot right into the team while others will spend some further time with their current junior teams until they are ready to step up to the main Flint team in future seasons.

Flint also added players ages 16-18 through the U18 Draft on June 8. These athletes play in the U18 AAA hockey programs across the province of Ontario. The draft, held in two rounds, requires each team to select two players. Should the team select a goaltender in those first two rounds, they may select an additional skater in an optional third round.

The Firebirds selected Toronto's Matthew Pittman, a left handed defender who played for the Don Mills Flyers U18 AAA team, 15th overall, and Quinn Young of Greely, Ontario, a right hand shooting right winger who played for the Upper Canada Cyclones U18 AAA for 2025-26, 35th overall. Young scored two goals and provided three assists.

(Continued on Page 7)



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Commentary ...

(Continued from Page 3)

Genesee County Proposals

Renewal of the Genesee County Health Services millage

This proposal is a renewal of the Health Care Services millage that was initially passed in 2006 and renewed in 2012 and 2018. This renewal would be for five years and would continue the current .8 mill tax of \$.80 per \$1,000 of taxable property value until 2031. It would provide about \$11.2 million for health care in the first year. The funds would provide health care for those who are low income and uninsured county residents with the Genesee Health Plan.

Renewal of the Genesee County Animal Care millage

This proposal would renew the existing millage supporting the Genesee County Animal Care Shelter. It was first approved in 2015 and was renewed in 2020 for seven years. A renewed millage would run from 2028 to 2034. It would continue the current millage rate of \$.19 per \$1,000 of taxable property value and would not be a change in the tax for residents. It would generate about \$2.7 million and provide a major part of the Animal Care Shelter's budget.

Renewal of the Mott Community College millage

This proposal would be a renewal of the current .61 millage rate and would be a slight reduction on an earlier .64 millage rate that was reduced because of Headlee Amendment cuts. If renewed it would be in place for 10 years, from 2028 to 2037. It is expected to generate about \$8.9 million to support the college and its programs in the first year. Though it is a renewal, the recent conflict and controversy on the Mott Board of Trustees might be a concern for voters this year.

City of Flint Proposals

Renewal of the Flint County Public Transportation millage

This proposal renews the current millage to support the services offered by the Mass Transportation Authority. The current millage is approximately \$.60 cents per \$1,000 of taxable property value. Approval of the renewal would continue the current millage until 2033 and is expected to generate about \$650,000 in the first year.

Renewal of the Flint Police and Fire millage

This proposal would continue the current 5.9 mill tax on \$1,000 of taxable property to fund police and fire protection in the city. It would cost about \$5.96 per \$1,000 taxable property value and would support police and fire services with about \$6.5 million in the first year. A renewal would run until 2031.

Renewal of the Flint parks millage

This proposal would renew the current .49 mill tax on \$1,000 of taxable value until 2036 to support the city's parks and related recreation and maintenance. Renewal would continue until 2036 and would generate about \$544,000 in revenue in its first year.

Other cities, villages, townships and school districts throughout Genesee County will have millages, bond issues, or similar proposals on their local ballots. One of the most interesting in Genesee County may be the proposal that could begin the process of changing the name of Flint Township to Oak Hills Township.

Take the time to vote

While some of the proposals may seem complex, one of the advantages of being able to vote early or absentee is that voters can take the time to study the candidates and the proposals in some detail.

Some of the key dates for this election, as recommended by the League of Women Voters, are: Oct. 19 is the last day to register to vote online (after that you will need to register in person); Oct. 20 is the last day to drop your absentee ballot in the mail (after that use the election drop box or clerk's office in person); Oct. 24 is the first day of statewide in-person voting; Nov. 1 is the last day of in-person voting; Nov. 3 is Election Day. Polls are open from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m.

Take the time to learn about the proposals and take the time to vote. There is a lot at stake this year. ●

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Flint Firebirds ...

(Continued from Page 5)

Staff updates

Flint's staff also has a slightly new look this season due to one departure and some promotions.

Assistant coach Reijo Ruostalainen stepped down from his role in Flint after three years as he looks to spend more time with family in his native Finland. Scott MacDonald has been promoted to take his place. He was formerly director of analytics and video.

Flache, assistant coach Justin Solcz, and goaltending coach Rob Liddell have all been rewarded with new contracts to keep them in the Vehicle City through the 2028-2029 season.

"It's great, [we] are really excited and happy for the entire staff,"

Flache said. "For a few more years, we get to help our players and (are) just grateful for the opportunity."

A strong start

The Firebirds got off to a fast start to their season, winning two of their first three games, including two straight on the road.

They opened the season with an exciting 5-4 comeback victory over Saginaw that saw the 'Birds take home the I-75 cup from their rivals at the Dow Event Center on September 19. Xavier Tessier had a hat trick in the win and Darian Anderson and Brady Smith also scored.

The team won its second straight with a 4-2 win in Windsor on Sept. 25. Anderson, Josh Bonnyman, Jimmy Lombardi, and Klaucans all picked up goals.

Flint dropped its home opener on Sept. 26, 5-2 to Niagara. Flint fell behind by two in the first period before goals by Anderson and Lucas Nutting tied it in the second. Niagara scored three unanswered goals to put the game away, though.

On the horizon

The Firebirds schedule and ticket information is available online. As always, the Firebirds will be hosting a variety of fun promotional theme nights this season, including 810 Nights each Wednesday game of the season, Hockey Scare Cancer with trick or treat at the rink on Saturday, Oct. 31, and Women in Sports night on Saturday, March 13.

For those unable to attend the games in person, every game is streamed on FloSports, with a subscription. ●



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THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

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

A Benton Harbor Story: Film Screening & Panel Discussion

Tuesday, Oct. 13 | 5 p.m. Dinner, 5:30 p.m. Film
A Benton Harbor Story, a film by Cedric Taylor, explores decades of disinvestment, failing infrastructure, and state emergency management that contributed to a water crisis in Benton Harbor. The screening will be followed by a panel discussion featuring Nayyirah Shariff, Claire McClinton, and Reverend Pinkney, offering perspectives on the fight for safe water, accountability, and community voice.
University Center KIVA
400 Mill St., Flint

Mott Community College Regional College Fair

Thursday, Oct. 15 | 6-7:30 p.m.
Mott Community College's 40th Annual Regional College Fair brings representatives from more than 50 colleges, universities, military branches, and trade and workforce organizations together for an evening of exploring educational and career opportunities. Attendees can learn about admission requirements, academic programs, financial aid, student life, and transferring credits, while MCC departments will showcase their own programs and training opportunities. A free financial aid workshop will also be offered from 7-7:30 p.m.
Ballenger Field House, Mott Community College
1401 E. Court St., Flint

Civic Matters: Flag Conservation

Friday, Oct. 16 | 1-4 p.m.
Meet the conservator who helps preserve artifacts at Applewood as they care for a flag in the historical collection. Learn about the conservation process and get tips for caring for your own special items. This drop-in program is part of Civic Matters, a monthly series exploring ways anyone can engage in civic life. Admission and activities at Applewood are free.
Applewood Estate
1400 E. Kearsley St., Flint

The Addams Family Live Parody Show

Friday to Sunday, Oct. 16-18; Thursday & Friday, Oct. 22 & 23; Sunday, Oct. 25 | Various times
They're creepy and they're kooky! Dark Room Productions brings an original parody inspired by the classic 1960s The Addams Family TV series to the stage at Flint Local 432. Come find out whether Fester will regrow his hair, whether Morticia will speak French, and—most importantly—what's in the box! Expect an offbeat, altogether ooky night of comedy and live theater. Sunday shows at 2 p.m. all others at 7 p.m.
Flint Local 432
124 W. First St., Flint

Who's Bad: The Ultimate Michael Jackson Experience

Friday, October 16 | 8 p.m.
Who's Bad brings the music, movement, and energy of Michael Jackson's legendary live performances to Flint in a high-energy concert experience. With more than 2,500 performances worldwide, the group features world-class musicians and dancers who recreate the grooves, vocals, and choreography that made Jackson's music unforgettable. Fans can expect a celebration featuring hits spanning Jackson's career, from the Jackson 5 era through his solo work.
Capitol Theatre
140 E. Second St., Flint

Flint Symphony Orchestra: Heroes, Legends, and Tall Tales

Sunday, November 8 | 3 p.m.
The Flint Symphony Orchestra presents Heroes, Legends, and Tall Tales, featuring music by Copland, Strauss, and Zimmer. The program explores larger-than-life musical stories and legendary characters through the power and drama of a live symphony orchestra.
Whiting Auditorium
1241 E. Kearsley St., Flint

St. Cecilia Society Performance

Sunday, Nov. 15 | 2 p.m.
The following St. Cecilia members will perform: Stephanie Dean, soprano, Hyekyung Sia Lee, piano, Michael Abbasspour, guitar, and Richard Kerry Thompson, tenor. The event will take place at 2 p.m. in the Mac Arthur Hall at the FIM. The event is free and open to the public. A reception will follow the performance.
MacArthur Recital Hall
1025 E. Kearsley St., Flint



Local News

Spanish speaking group creates monthly place to practice conversations, language skills

By Patrick Hayes

As a native of Mexico who grew up speaking Spanish, the monthly Spanish Conversation Club Verónica Piedra Góngora facilitates at Queens' Provisions isn't necessarily meant to improve her own fluency. It does, however, help her build skills related to her current educational pursuit.

Piedra Góngora works at the Genesee Intermediate School District and is pursuing her master's degree to eventually teach multilingual students. The conversation club allows her to test out pedagogical methods she's learning in her teacher education program on participants in the group.

"The attendees have different proficiency levels," she said. "Some of them are just starting, some others are very proficient, so they are more comfortable speaking and having conversations. So that's how I started bringing some of the things that I'm learning now that I'm taking classes so that I

can improve my instruction. I bring it to the Conversation Club, like having some graphic organizers or some sentence frames for them to be able to say, 'Ah, I can read this expression, and I can paraphrase it with my own vocabulary.'"

Piedra Góngora was born in Isla Mujeres, an island off the coast of the Yucatan Peninsula in the Gulf of Mexico. She lived in a multilingual household, with grandparents who spoke Mayan while she also learned and spoke Spanish.

"At home, they would usually scold me in Mayan, and then kinda mix it with Spanish," she joked.

She was an attorney in Mexico, practicing environmental protection law for nearly 10 years, but when she moved to Illinois a little over four years ago, she wasn't able to practice law in the U.S. due to differences in licensing requirements. There was a

period of time after first moving here when she couldn't work at all because of immigration laws. To pass the time, she enrolled in ESL classes for adults to gain more proficiency in English. That also opened up a new career interest for her.

"My instructor asked me at the end of the course, 'Hey, Veronica, would you like to work with students?'" Piedra Góngora said. "I couldn't work back then, but I kept improving my English, and when I was able to work, I interviewed at GISD, and I got the job."

She moved to Flint about two years ago, ultimately settling in the city's historic Carriage Town neighborhood, and began hanging out at nearby Queens' Provisions. As she made friends in different circles in the city, her knowledge of Spanish came in handy and people sought her advice on how to help people in different environments who didn't speak English.

"Some friends that work at the friend of the court or banks or the police, they would have families that come or customers that come and they

(Continued on Page 10)



Children 12 and under receive a free ticket with the purchase of an adult ticket.

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A new Halloween tradition comes to life with the Flint Symphony Orchestra. Audiences of all ages are invited to arrive in costume and enjoy a festive afternoon filled with playful favorites, spooky classics, and delightfully eerie musical surprises.

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Guitar & Song

ST. PAUL'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Spanish ...

(Continued from Page 9)

wouldn't know how to communicate because they only speak Spanish," Piedra Góngora said. "So they'd ask, 'Do you know what expressions I can say to break the ice, for them to feel more comfortable?' So I just started making some notes for my friends, like this is what you can say to them when you greet them, this is something that you should ask or be respectful not to ask. I just started giving tips like that to my friends around Flint."

Those impromptu conversations caught the attention of Queens' Provisions owner Emily Doerr, who approached Piedra Góngora with an idea.

"I live two blocks away and Emily said, 'You're always hanging out here, would you mind having kind of like a conversation club or building a space for the community to be exposed to Spanish?,'" she said.

The club started officially about a year ago. They meet at 6 p.m. once per month on the last Tuesday of the month.

"I'm studying in the evenings and work in the mornings, so I only committed to once a month, but that's how we started," she said. "So on the last Tuesday of the month, we meet, we drink some wine, and we practice."

The group provides an environment for a wide range of Spanish speakers to get together, practice, and learn. Piedra Góngora said the group averages about eight people per week, with some weeks having as many as 15 people and other weeks only having a few participants. The experience levels also differ.

"Maybe they learned it in high school and they haven't practiced," she said. "Or maybe they traveled to Madrid, España, last summer and they want to continue improving or learning their Spanish."

Piedra Góngora plans out lessons and activities and tailors them to the group. Sometimes, those lessons are specific and practical, like if someone has an upcoming trip to a Span-

ish-speaking country and wants some advice on vital phrases. Sometimes, when there isn't a specific need, she'll simply theme conversations around common experiences, like pets.

"I try to bring topics that are related to everyone," she said. "Some people will tell me they're gonna travel, so I'll say, okay, you probably need survival vocabulary. Other people say, 'I'm having an interview and I will probably have some people who speak Spanish, and I want to look professional.' So that month, I bring vocabulary for more work or professional (settings). Other times, if you're traveling and you get bit by a mosquito or something, a spider, and you need to go to a doctor in Central America and communicate how you are feeling and where it hurts. When you are in a foreign country with a foreign language, you need those survival skills."

The sessions are informal, but there's a loose structure, with some conversations, some reading, some games, and other interactive ways to get people communicating mixed in. She also tries to mix more experienced

speakers with less experienced ones so they can help each other. The group is open to anyone who wants to come and learn, even if it is just to listen.

"You can always grab a glass of wine and just hang out," Piedra Góngora said. ●

This article was originally published by Flint Daily. It has been lightly edited here, for format.



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Flint Symphony Orchestra

Enrique Diemecke music director and conductor
Julian Schwarz cello | Bruce Bradley narrator
Flint Youth Theatre | Samuel Richardson, director

Sunday, November 8, 2026

Whiting Auditorium

2:00pm Inside the Music pre-concert talk
3:00pm Performance
Intermission Backstage Pass for students age 13+

Heroes, Legends and Tall Tales

Hans Zimmer and Klaus Badelt
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The Curse of the Black Pearl (2003)

Aaron Copland
Lincoln Portrait

Richard Strauss
Don Quixote, op. 35

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Opinion ...

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ing project. What would I do? Well, for starters, spend a lot of money.

First, there are some obvious needs: they need a new, more modern scoreboard and desperately need new and bigger locker rooms that teams using the stadium can better utilize. They also need to fix several sections of concrete in the bleachers that are chipping away.

Thinking bigger, though: get rid of the entire parking lot. It's not even close to big enough to accommodate a 10,000-seat stadium anyway. Extend the playing surface all the way through the parking lot so that the stadium can host football, soccer, or lacrosse tournaments or major events. Put a track in so that it can also host track meets. Build a huge outdoor stage on the banks of the river so the stadium can have major concerts and performances. Turn it into our own "reverse" Pine Knob – our expensive seats are on the "lawn" close to the stage and the cheap seats are back in the bleachers.

So ... How?

I'm just an ideas guy, sorry! I have no ability or money or knowledge to be able to implement anything.

I also don't mean this as disrespect to UM-Flint or Kettering. But both have spaces on their campus that are important parts of Flint's history, and aren't priorities for either institution. So let's call this what it is: the ice rink and Atwood Stadium are underutilized. That's understandable, as an ice rink and a humungous stadium aren't mission critical to the primary educational objectives of either institution. Maintaining those two spaces is expensive, so it makes sense that they aren't prioritized over more university-specific goals. They shouldn't be.

The State Park project represents a chance to utilize them more, though, whether that is through actually transferring the properties back to the city (or the county parks system) and its residents to be incorporated into the larg-

er development or simply coming up with an innovative collaboration that allows the universities to keep ownership while letting the state and county parks systems run them, fundraise for improvements, and program them.

The Flint State Park project is the most creative development that has happened in this city in decades. It would be a shame not to explore every wild possibility to make it as big as possible. ●

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Opinion

Let's make the Flint State Park project even more epic

By Patrick Hayes

Flint has a lot of unique natural features that we like to refer to as “hidden gems,” which is technically a compliment but also an admission that many of those special attractions aren’t as optimized as they should be. So for me, the most exciting aspect of the currently under construction Flint State Park project is simply that it bundles a lot of cool things together to hopefully create more awareness of some of the magical places tucked in pockets of our city.

The state park includes more than 200 acres in five dramatically different spaces: Riverbank Park, downtown on the banks of the river with an amphitheater and (once they’re repaired) absolutely insane lights and fountains; Chevy Commons, which not long ago was a grotesque industrial wasteland that looked like it could never be repurposed into a useful space, let alone one that gets more beautiful each year as plants mature; the Mott Park Recreation Area, which used to be a golf course best known for annual flooding but is now alive with wildlife and outdoor activities for kids and families; Vietnam Veterans Park, which will give visitors river access before the University of Michigan-Flint’s campus, something that previously wouldn’t have been a possibility due to the presence of Hamilton Dam; and Happy Hollow, a tucked away nature area that has always been beautiful but not easy to access for people who didn’t know it existed.

Those spaces all have charm as-is, but with enhancements that will include playscapes, pavilions, kayak launches, connections to larger trail systems, mountain biking trails and terrain, and possibly even a skate park, this is truly one of the most exciting and potentially transformative projects in the modern history of the city. As a resident, I am excited for what has been proposed, what has already been done, and what is on the horizon.

I’m also a writer, though, and I pride myself on always asking for too much. So there are two more historic facilities that I would love to see absorbed into Flint State Park in some capacity.

The UM-Flint Ice Skating Rink

Last year, I did a survey of Flint. Daily’s readership to find out what projects or ideas people would like to see added to Flint’s downtown. Overwhelmingly, the most popular response was a return of ice skating at the historic rink on Saginaw Street.

The rink was originally opened in the 1980s as part of the Water Street Pavilion development. The inside featured shops and restaurants, with the ice skating rink open to the public in winters. It didn’t last long, as the rough Flint economy in the 1980s and 90s led to its closure in 1990. It was purchased by UM-Flint in 1993, with the interior of the building housing restaurants and various campus offices.

The ice rink was mostly an afterthought, with its last use as a public good occurring in the early 1990s before UM-Flint, Kettering University, and the Hagerman Foundation partnered to reopen it – with great fanfare – in 2016. It lasted a few winters, but hasn’t reopened for public ice skating since before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

That should change. Although there are still plenty of things to do outdoors in the winter, recreation opportunities in the Flint State Park will undoubtedly decline when the weather gets cold. Having an attraction like an ice skating rink right on the river, near restaurants and downtown businesses would provide a way to keep visitors interested in visiting the park during winter months.

Even with construction not completed on several aspects of the park, Genesee County Parks and the State

of Michigan have already done an exceptional job of coming up with programming, which included everything from fishing to archery to disc golf this summer. A skating rink, hopefully with skates available to rent, gives them the chance to offer another unique youth activity that gets kids outdoors in the winter.

Atwood Stadium

Few places in Flint, or even in Michigan, have the lore that comes with Atwood Stadium. (In addition to our homegrown Heisman Trophy winner, Olympic medalists, and numerous future pro athletes, icons like Jesse Owens, Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, The Who, and many more have all performed in the stadium.) Atwood is approaching its 100-year anniversary in 2029, which is sort of miraculous considering how in peril its future was a little over a decade ago.

At one time Atwood was a city park. However, with Flint under a state-appointed emergency manager in 2013, the stadium was on the verge of being shuttered. It needed significant repairs that the city couldn’t afford, including replacing the 1970s-era astro turf.

An unlikely community partner stepped up to ensure that Atwood wouldn’t close. Kettering University, which doesn’t have a sports program other than intramurals, took ownership of the stadium and worked with funders to make repairs to concrete within the stadium, improve accessibility, and replace the turf with a more modern surface.

Kettering’s leadership deserves credit for stepping up to creatively save an iconic part of Flint’s history and steward it toward a brighter future. The next step in the future should be connecting Atwood to the larger surround-

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