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FutureHeights
2843 Washington Blvd. #105
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118

The most-watched film in the Cedar Lee's history

Fred D'Ambrosi

It's the most watched film in the history of the Cedar Lee Theatre. It's not an award-winner, and it's not "The Rocky Horror Picture Show." Created by a director who's a native of Cleveland Heights, it premiered in July 2014 and has been running daily ever since. By my back-of-the-envelope calculations, it's played more than 40,000 times.

It's the policy trailer that plays before every feature film. You know, the 55-second short that tells you to keep your feet off the seats, find the nearest exit, and turn off that cell phone! Locally produced for CH-based Cleveland Cinemas, it features local people, unlike most of its generic counterparts you see in national theater chains.

If you're the rare Heights resident who hasn't seen a film at the Cedar Lee in the past five years, here's a recap (or, view it here: <https://tinyurl.com/cedarleetrailer>): The trailer starts with a couple buying tickets which shoot out animated confetti in joyful anticipation of the fun to come. The couple head to their seats, blocked by two rude dudes



Bill DeCapite, 95, and his wife, Rose, 91, at the Cedar Lee Theatre. They act in a trailer that has run before every movie at the theater for the past five years. Bill owned the Cedar Taylor Garage until 1995.

with their feet up. A subtitle tells you not to do that, and the dudes drop their feet. A few rows ahead, annoying text animations are rising from someone's phone. The woman in the seat next to the texter tells her to knock it off. The texter mouths "sorry," and puts her phone away. An older couple wisely checks for the nearest exit, which

helpful animation illuminates. Finally, another couple is enjoying the film when a shocked or rude (you decide) patron ahead of them tosses popcorn into the air. It's a ton of storytelling, with no narration, crammed into less than a minute.

The idea for the local trailer originated with Cleveland Cinemas Director of Marketing Dave Huffman. "We felt it was time to have a little bit more of a personal touch," he said. To make that happen he hired Digizoom Media, a Cleveland firm founded by former TV journalist Richard Stewart, who grew up in Cleveland Heights, a half-mile from the Cedar Lee.

Though the trailer would play in all of Cleveland Cinemas' theaters (currently four in Greater Cleveland, one in Pittsburgh and one in Oberlin), and was shot in Cleveland's Capitol Theatre, Stewart's creative process focused on his hometown and the theater he knew best, Cedar Lee. He said he wanted

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Stephens vows not to run for mayor

Bob Rosenbaum

Local politician Cheryl Stephens, a Cleveland Heights resident, has announced that she will not run for mayor if voters choose to change the city charter to a "strong mayor" form of government this November.

The announcement is significant because Stephens was an early supporter of changing Cleveland Heights' government from its current "city manager/council" form. And some opponents to the ballot measure have pointed to her supposed interest in becoming the city's first strong mayor as the real political motivation behind the initiative.

Stephens made her announcement in an opinion piece written for the *Heights Observer*, printed on p. 3.

In it, she wrote: "We are being warned that cronyism and corruption will descend upon us if we dare let people vote directly for Cleveland



Cheryl Stephens

Heights mayor. Rumors of ulterior motives and conspiracies—some even involving me—have already begun making the rounds. . . . So, let me state my position and put speculation about my motives to rest: I strongly support and fully endorse the proposed charter amendment. Also, when the amendment passes, I will NOT run for the position."

Stephens, who is CEO of the East Akron Neighborhood Development Corp. and at one time served as Cleveland Heights Director of Plan-

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Renovated middle schools open their doors

Cathan Cavanaugh

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District is celebrating the reopening of Monticello and Roxboro middle schools with community open houses. Monticello Middle School will be open on Sunday, Sept. 15, and Roxboro Middle School will welcome visitors on Sunday, Sept. 22, both from 1 to 4 p.m.

All families, students, staff, community members and friends are invited to enjoy self-guided tours, musical entertainment provided by students,



Roxboro Middle School

a resource fair featuring school and community partners, giveaways, and light refreshments.

The buildings each received an approximately \$15-million renovation from 2017 to 2019. During that time,

CH-UH students in grades 6-8 attended school at the Wiley Campus in University Heights.

The classrooms now boast new audio, visual and computer technology. New heating and cooling systems provide comfortable learning spaces. Surface and lighting upgrades reveal a bright, revitalized aesthetic—all alongside the historic, familiar elements of the buildings.

"I know my staff, students and I are so excited to start the new school year together in our beautifully

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LWV plans candidate and issue forums for voters

Blanche Valancy and Maryann Barnes

In the run-up to the Nov. 5 election, the League of Women Voters (LWV) of Greater Cleveland Heights Chapter will present two informational forums for Heights voters.

The first, a Candidates' Night planned for Thursday, Oct. 3, 7-9 p.m., will provide an opportunity for voters to hear candidates for Cleveland Heights City Council.

Because the races for University Heights City Council and Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education (BOE) will be uncontested, they will not be presented, in accordance with LWV's forum guidelines.

The Heights Chapter of the LWV of Greater Cleveland (LWVGC) and FutureHeights are presenting the Candidates' Night forum, which will take place at the Cleveland Heights Community Center, 1 Monticello Blvd.

In Cleveland Heights, five candidates—Mary Dunbar, Melody Joy Hart, Anthony Mattox Jr., Carol Roe and Kahlil Seren—are running for three city council seats with four-year terms. Two candidates, Craig Cobb and Davida Russell, are running for a two-year term to fill the council seat vacated last year by Cheryl Stephens. (Cobb was appointed to the seat in April 2019, to serve through the end of the year.)

In the two uncontested races, Barbara Blankfield, Justin Gould, John P. Rach and Michelle Weiss are running for four seats on University Heights City Council; James Posch and Beverly Wright are running for two seats on the CH-UH BOE.

All of the candidates will be invited to participate in the LWV's Voters' Guide, which will be distributed with the October *Heights Observer* and be posted online at both www.heightsobserver.org and www.futureheights.org

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Letters Policy

The *Heights Observer* welcomes letters to the editor. They must be submitted electronically, along with the writer's name, phone number and e-mail address, to: www.heightsobserver.org/members.

HEIGHTS OBSERVER

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About the Observer

The *Heights Observer* is not an ordinary newspaper; it is a nonprofit publication for residents of Cleveland Heights and University Heights.

The *Observer* has no writing staff; it is written by you—the readers.

Individuals throughout the community decide what stories they want to write, then submit them for publication. Anyone in University Heights or Cleveland Heights is welcome to contribute regularly, occasionally or even just once.

Is there something you think should be covered in the *Heights Observer*? If so, please write it on your own, or with friends, neighbors or colleagues. Our volunteer editors will make sure it's ready to publish and contact you with any questions.

If you're writing a news article, it should be clear and factual. If you want to express an opinion, submit it as a letter to the editor or an opinion piece. Either way, make sure it's about something specific to our two cities.

- To make a submission of any kind, go to www.heightsobserver.org and click on "Member Center" at the left.
- For information about writing style, article length, etc., click on "Become an Observer" at the left. For questions that aren't answered there, call the FutureHeights office at 216-320-1423 or e-mail info@futureheights.org.

Articles to be considered for the October issue must be submitted by Sept. 9. We publish some articles online as they come in—and still consider them for the next print issue. We also publish an e-newsletter each Tuesday.

Navigating an important civic debate



OPENING
THE OBSERVER

Bob Rosenbaum

For most of the nation, this is an off-year election. But in Cleveland Heights, the November 2019 ballot will offer one of the biggest decisions residents have ever been asked to make: Should the city change its basic form of government?

The *Heights Observer* hasn't taken sides on previous ballot issues, and won't on this one either. Our guiding principal is to favor the individual voices arising from the community. So every opinion you read in the *Heights Observer* is that of the person or group whose name is attached to it.

I've heard criticism that the *Heights Observer* should do more to explain pros and cons of the ballot issue to help people decide how to vote. But as a paper built entirely on contributions from the community, we can't claim that kind of expertise. Further, this particular debate isn't

one for which there are credible, objective outside experts.

So our approach has been to encourage those on each side of the issue to make use of the *Heights Observer* to explain their positions.

I chafe a little at the early results. I don't think either side has done a good job yet of making its case. But unlike the marathon of a presidential campaign, local campaigns only last a couple of months. This one is just getting started, and I hope the next 60 days bring more clarity. I'm also realistic: No amount of information is likely to make this a simple decision for many voters.

After the August issue hit the streets, I saw a few complaints on social media that it contained too many opinions in support of the current form of government and not enough in favor of the change. We're aware of the sensitivity, but we can only publish what we receive. If the result looks lopsided, it means the contents of the inbox that month were lopsided.

For the September *Heights Observer*, we've received more opinions on both sides of the issue than we

have room to publish in print. Deciding which of those to print involves multiple variables—length, clarity, coherence, and factuality, to name a few. We aim to present a variety of viewpoints, voices and arguments on both sides of the issue. And we try to present a fair, representative sample of the entirety of what people submit, without preference to one side or the other. It's easier said than done, but that's the goal.

Finally, a word about the organization that publishes the *Heights Observer*: FutureHeights' leaders don't have a role in deciding what gets published. They don't call or write, and we don't ask. Executive Director Deanna Bremer Fisher, who also holds the title of *Heights Observer* publisher, does participate regularly in editorial conversations but, after she provides her perspective, the editor and I work together to make a final decision.

Cleveland Heights resident Bob Rosenbaum is co-chair of the Heights Observer Advisory Committee, and is responsible for its advertising sales and market development.

Congratulations to CH's sports honorees

To the Editor:

I want to congratulate the following individuals for their induction into various sports halls of fame in 2019:

John Malloy and Otis Chapman will be inducted into The Greater Cleveland Sports Hall of Fame on Sept. 17. Malloy was hockey coach at Cleveland Heights High School 1981-96 and won a state championship (1986-87). He was a great mentor to many youth players who aspired to play, and later played, for Heights High.

Chapman, previously inducted into the Greater Cleveland Slo-Pitch Softball Hall of Fame,

was also a nationally renowned racquetball player at Severance Athletic Club (SAC) in Cleveland Heights and is being inducted as such. He also played for SAC in the Cleveland Heights Co-ed Softball League at Forest Hill Park and was inducted into the Cleveland Heights Softball Hall of Fame.

John Carter will be inducted into the Greater Cleveland Softball Hall of Fame on Oct. 17. He was one of the original umpires when the Cleveland Heights league began in 1976, was the first umpire-in-chief in the Cleveland Heights Umpires' Association, and was the first person inducted into the Cleveland Heights Softball Hall of Fame, in 1992, after his untimely death.

(It was John Carter and Guss

Barnwell's move from Cleveland to Cleveland Heights that legitimized the new league.)

Congratulations are in order for all three men who helped legitimize Cleveland Heights sports to be among the best in Greater Cleveland.

Larry Shaw
Cleveland Heights

Check facts before making assumptions

To the Editor:

Before Sarah West decided to "posit that CEM has already vetted possible mayoral candidates" ("CH and the strong-mayor dilemma," *Heights Observer*, Aug. 1), she could have checked if her assumption was true. It's not.

All 10 members of Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM), listed on our website and easily accessible if she had chosen to ask us, would have told her we have not vetted possible candidates.

We also agreed to not endorse a candidate nor run for mayor ourselves. We have not even discussed possible candidates, other than to say we are optimistic many qualified residents will be interested in running.

Only two CEM members were connected with the earlier exploration of an elected mayor initiative she mentioned—a group that quickly distanced itself from all elected officials. CEM's actions are about structure, not people.

Michael Bennett
Secretary, CEM

Heights Observer local candidate policy

With the November election approaching, the *Heights Observer* is publishing its policy for contributions by candidates for local office.

As a community newspaper committed to equal access for everyone, the *Observer* is unique among publications in providing opportunity for any member of the Cleveland Heights and University Heights communities to raise and discuss issues of local interest.

At election time, however, this commitment creates a challenge in managing the finite space that is available for community members who are running for public office.

The policy, approved by the FutureHeights Board of Directors, is designed to address that challenge. It states the following:

- The August through November is-

sues of the printed publication will not carry any editorial contributions from known candidates for office.

- During this pre-election period, *Observer* contributors who are not running for office will produce any coverage of election issues.
- During this pre-election period, all candidate contributions of news or opinion will continue to be accepted for publication online at www.heightsobserver.org.
- Candidates seeking to place information in the August through November printed editions of the *Observer* may do so through advertising space purchased from the *Observer*.

The *Heights Observer* and its parent organization, FutureHeights, do not endorse candidates.

CH needs strong responsive leadership

Cheryl Stephens

The campaign over the “strong mayor” charter amendment has barely begun, and the scare tactics that always accompany government-reform efforts are well underway. We are being warned that cronyism and corruption will descend upon us if we dare let people vote directly for Cleveland Heights mayor. Rumors of ulterior motives and conspiracies—some even involving me—have already begun making the rounds.

This is as silly as it is unfortunate. Cleveland Heights can’t be afraid of voters. We can’t fear our future. And we don’t have any reason to be scared.

So, let me state my position and put speculation about my motives to rest: I strongly support and fully endorse the proposed charter amendment. Also, when the amendment passes, I will NOT run for the position.

I am a 30-year resident of the Heights and a career government and nonprofit professional who specializes in economic development and finance. I was a Cleveland Heights City Council member and mayor under our current “weak mayor” form of government. I am Cleveland Heights’ current Cuyahoga County Council member. And EVERYTHING in my experience tells me that the strong-mayor amendment is right for Cleveland Heights.

Our municipal government in Cleveland Heights has many strengths and employs many talented, dedicated people with whom I’m proud to have worked. But it has a structural weakness when it comes to accountability and responsiveness.

In theory, if voters think Cleveland Heights is headed in the wrong

direction, they can vote for new leadership. In practice, though, who are voters to hold accountable? City managers are insulated against being held accountable by residents by design. Their jobs require them only to keep the support of city council, not voters, and their tenures tend to outlast the council members who hire them. This arrangement may stabilize other cities against volatile political shifts, but volatility isn’t Cleveland Heights’ problem.

Council members, including weak mayors, cast votes. Strong mayors, on the other hand, have responsibilities and take action. They set priorities and build support for them. By combining administrative responsibility and political accountability, a strong mayor can engage and respond to residents and focus community attention in ways a city manager can’t.

Cleveland Heights needs robust and accountable leadership, a clear agenda for the future, and an engaged citizenry supporting it. We have the capacity to improve our city, and with the recognition of this capacity, we have an obligation to act.

A strong mayor will be a valuable asset for our city. I look forward to working with whomever ultimately fills the role to create a more vibrant and resilient future for Cleveland Heights.

Cheryl Stephens has lived on three continents (Asia, North American and Europe) and has chosen to make Cleveland Heights her home. Currently a Cuyahoga County Council member, she has worked for a variety of national and local nonprofits, as well as local government organizations, to help revitalize communities and help Americans live their dreams.

Now’s the time for checks and balances

To the Editor:

Several authors of opinions published in the August *Heights Observer* lauded Cleveland Heights’ current system of government as “collaborative.” I agree. But it requires collaboration between two branches of government that ought to be separate: the legislative and the executive.

With the current system, city council not only hires, and can fire, the city manager, it is also charged with supervising the manager, and therefore, indirectly, city staff. This means that council, which is supposed to be the legislative branch of city government, spends much of its time protecting and attempting to manage the executive branch. Rather than providing checks and balances, council members have a vested interest in making the city manager look good, since that makes them look good. It may not always, however, be what is best for our city.

There is not a single elected official working at Cleveland Heights City Hall from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. A weak city council can become little more than

a rubber stamp for the city manager.

Moreover, the spectacle of seven part-time council members trying to accomplish everything required of them can be painful. I am one of four or five CH residents who regularly attend the working sessions of council, called Committee of the Whole meetings, and we know. Most of our council members have day jobs and families, as well. While their service to the city for a pittance in pay is laudable, it really is hard for them to keep up with the volume of work required.

I have personally witnessed our current city manager lamenting the fact that she must answer to seven bosses. Surely this makes efficiently administering city affairs more difficult.

Part-time council members who don’t have responsibility for supervising the city’s administration will be better able to respond directly to constituents and fulfill their responsibilities as legislators. Having an elected mayor and appointed city administrator working full time to handle the executive branch will create a real system of checks and balances in our city government. For good governance, we need that!

Carla Rautenberg
Cleveland Heights



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Elected-mayor issue is really about discontent with status quo in CH

Matthew Wilson

First off, I want to say there are bright and conscientious people making some good arguments for why the city-manager system is right for our city.

Second, I'm not a political science expert, but I've researched this topic, and it is clear that successful and unsuccessful cities exist with a variety of structures.

Third, I want to say that the people arguing for preserving the system are utterly missing the bigger picture.

If people were largely content, there is no way a handful of part-time volunteers would have been able to get this far.

Ask your activist friends just how much work it is to gather 4,000 signatures. Consider how many years you have lived in the Heights, and consider all the petitions you've been asked to sign in the past. How many of those went anywhere? The vast majority of the time, these projects never go anywhere.

But this Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM) issue tapped into a deeper sense of pessimism and dissatisfaction with our city leadership. If people were generally content, the adage "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" would make this effort impossible.

The popularity of CEM's issue shows many believe that "it is broke," so they're eager for change.

My suggestion to the folks who want to keep things as-is: quit saying it could always be worse. That's like Candide claiming that this is the best of all possible worlds*. Instead, acknowledge the grumbling! Acknowledge that the status quo is not satisfying enough people, and then describe a new inspiring plan. Offer something new to inspire hope.

*Normally I wouldn't use a pretentious literary reference, but since this is the Heights, I figure y'all would get it. That's why I love it here.

Cleveland Heights resident Matt Wilson is an avid computer programmer, backyard gardener, and Internet crackpot. He welcomes feedback at matt@tplus1.com.

To protect abortion rights, say 'abortion'

Mallory McMaster

I've recently been criticized for using the word abortion too much because it makes people uncomfortable.

Well, you know what makes me uncomfortable? Abortion bans. Abortion stigma. People who have never been in my shoes, who don't know what's in my heart, ridiculing me, judging me, and calling me tunnel-visioned or clueless because I've chosen to dedicate my life to fighting for abortion access.

I'm a small business owner in Cleveland Heights. I'm civically active. I'm a parent of a young child who will grow up in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights school system. You see my family at the library every Saturday for storytime. You see us at the park. You see us at Tommy's, at Stone Oven, and Dave's. You've seen us at block parties, car washes and concerts. We've been behind you at CVS, in front of you at Starbucks, and you've probably said hello when we pass you walking into The BottleHouse. I'm your neighbor—I'm part of this community—and I wouldn't be here if I hadn't had an abortion when I needed it.

We have one of the best, most well-respected abortion clinics just a few miles away in Shaker Square. Preterm provides abortion care for more patients than any other clinic in the state. It trains doctors and nurses, provides counseling, and changes lives like mine every single day. Now, more than ever, it's time for our community to rally around our abortion clinic, not turn away in shame. Though the horrific six-week abortion ban passed and was signed

by Governor DeWine, we still have plenty of work to do to make abortion accessible and stigma-free here in Cleveland Heights.

Here are some steps we need to take as a community to ensure that people who need abortion care can get it when they need it:

First, we need to fight abortion stigma. That means using the word abortion. You don't have to shout it from the rooftops like I do. But don't be afraid to say it either. You can use broader terms like reproductive freedom if you'd prefer to talk about the full scope of reproductive decisions we make in our lifetimes, but please don't shy away from discussing the medical procedure that has changed so many lives. Ask your friends, your parents, your daughters if they've had an abortion. You don't have to have a fight, just talk about why abortion access is important to you.

Second, we need to protect our clinics. Preterm, our local independent abortion clinic, is a nonprofit that has existed since 1974. What I love most about Preterm is that it never turns anyone away who can't pay. If you can donate, do so. Call to volunteer if you want. Preterm needs gardening help, escorts, and many other things.

Third, we need to strategize for the future. If Ohio's abortion ban is upheld, let's pursue legislation that allows people to use safe, effective medication abortion methods at home without risk of criminalization. We need to ask every single elected official if they'll commit to this. This isn't a partisan statement—there are plenty of anti-abortion Democrats out there, even today—this is a values statement.

We need to ask our CH-UH

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Elected mayor would be a slippery slope

Jimmie Hicks

A former African-American Cleveland Heights council member for eight years, and now pastor of Start-RightChurch for 13 years, I have stayed away from politics for almost 15 years. I enjoy the ministry that we do in the Caledonia neighborhood.

However, I feel the need to give my thoughts on the upcoming ballot initiative.

I believe that changing our form of government to an elected mayor would be a big mistake and not serve our community well. That type of change, if successful, would take us down a slippery slope and eventually lead to another ballot initiative asking that our city council be changed to an elected ward system. This would also be a big mistake.

The people from Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM) want our community to believe that this type of change would benefit our city. They are relying on the lack of knowledge our community has about the city-manager form of government to bring them success at the polls. I am praying that our community will not be deceived and [residents] will seek to understand what they currently have before they change to what seems familiar.

If I were still a politician and only cared about winning and political power, I would be the first to support these types of changes. In fact, if we had this type of government, I would still be the council member of Ward 5, where I always produced the most votes over my peers. My goal would have been to please only the part of the city that elected me, and it would have been at the expense of the rest of the city. And it would have been petty politics at its worst.

The best thing about our city government, and what most people

don't understand, is that our council members, from different corners of the city, come together from all ethnic, social and economic backgrounds to work for the betterment of the entire city. This includes hiring, directing and evaluating the work of the city manager.

As a council member, I received some of my best ideas from talking to residents, taking their ideas to our council committees and working out the details. Once approved by a majority of council, we instructed the city manager to get the job done with the knowledge and expertise of city staff.

Our city government is not perfect, but it is perfect for our community. We benefit from having a professional city manager who does not have to be concerned about running a campaign every four years, or accepting campaign contributions from people who might one day look to do business with the city.

We benefit from having stability in city hall that is not jeopardized every time there is an election for mayor.

We benefit from not having to deal with politically motivated hirings that come with any elected official who rewards supporters after a victory. Not to mention the possible need for a transition team and chief of staff.

It is ironic that members of Citizens for an Elected Mayor took issue with what they deemed a questionable donation made to Cleveland Heights Citizens for Good Government. This is the same type of contribution issues and questions that will plague an elected mayor but will never be an issue with a city manager.

Please vote NO on changing our government to an elected mayor.

Jimmie Hicks Jr. was the first African-American man elected to Cleveland Heights City Council.

Support for elected-mayor charter initiative

Tas Nadas

I'm supporting the Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM) charter initiative because it is a citizen-led initiative powered by passion, leadership and vision from people right here in Cleveland Heights.

We've recently learned that the PAC formed to oppose this measure, Cleveland Heights Citizens for Good Government, is being funded with up to \$25,000 from a D.C.-based lobbying firm that fights to retain city-manager forms of government all over the world. They're hiring Burges and Burges, well-known political strategists, to come to Cleveland Heights and craft a compelling message to convince voters not to change our current form of government.

This isn't who we are in Cleveland Heights! This is wrong! We are not the toxic political swamp in D.C., or part of the gridlock of Columbus—we're a community of diverse but tight-knit neighbors who care deeply about our community and our future. We value

our democracy here, in a city where democracy still means something. As our city council members have pointed out, we have some of the most sophisticated and capable voters in the country.

That's what CEM is about. This initiative gives our citizens the power to choose the vision for our future. Having a full-time, directly elected mayor gives us a voice. Just imagine what we can do with that voice.

Look around you. Look at your neighbors. Think about who lives a few blocks over, and a few blocks over from there. There is an absolute wealth of knowledge, talent and inspiration here just waiting to be tapped; giving our citizens the ability to directly choose who leads us will do just that.

For far too long, we've been represented by some city council members who aren't accountable, don't represent their constituents, and resist efforts to collaborate with community members. It's time for a change. The initiative

continued on page 9

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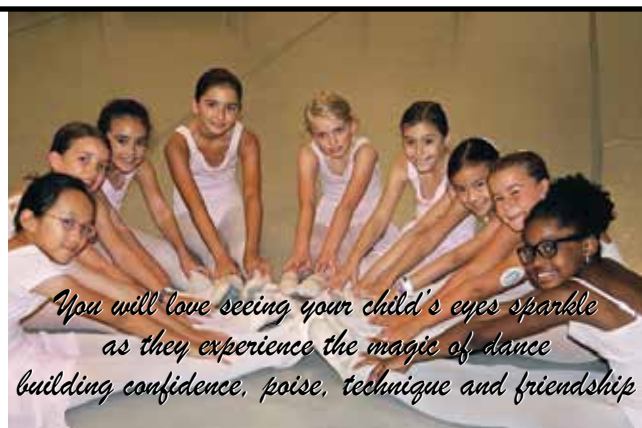
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Former union leader recalls Wiley wildcat strike



A TEACHER'S VOICE

Ari Klein

Tom Schmida was president of the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union from 1990 to 2012. He currently serves as an advisor to me, the current president. Incidentally, Tom was also my homeroom teacher when I attended Wiley and had me in his seventh-grade social studies class. I asked Tom to write this month's column, recalling a one-day teachers'

strike. —Ari Klein

This year marks the 40th anniversary of an unprecedented event that rocked the CH-UH school district.

In March 1979, teachers at Wiley Junior High (later Wiley Middle School) staged a wildcat strike. Surprisingly, this one-day walkout was not over typical bread-and-butter issues that divide union and management; it was instead a job action directed at the failure of district administration and the Board of Education (BOE) to effectively deal with student discipline problems.

The short story: A female student (white—not that it matters) refused the directive of a teacher (a newly hired African American—not that it matters) to leave a hallway; the student refused while swearing at the teacher. The teacher, in her attempt to escort the student to the office, was slapped by the student. The principal, who was new to the building, responded appropriately. The student was processed for suspension and recommended for ex-

pulsion. The teacher was instructed by her union to file a police report.

What happened next defied reason, and angered the teaching staff. The central office administration decided not to expel the offending student who committed the assault. Word spread quickly among the teaching staff, and that evening the union leadership in the building, Jack Quinn and I, used a phone tree to call every teacher and ask them to take a bold step by staging a walkout the next morning. Even though teacher strikes were illegal in Ohio at the time, nearly the entire teaching staff agreed to picket.

That morning, as students arrived, their teachers were on the sidewalk with homemade signs.

The district administration had no choice but to cancel classes at Wiley. Throughout the day, there were numerous expressions of support for the teachers—coffee and donuts brought to the picket line by members of the community, car horns honking support.

The response from the BOE was quite different. Initially, the desire was to fire every teacher who participated. The union responded by giving notice that 600 teachers would be on the street the next school day if the board pursued that course. As it turned out, all of the participants received a written reprimand to which the union president attached a response in support of the Wiley teachers' action.

In retrospect, while there was plenty of criticism from officialdom directed at the Wiley teachers, their job action led to the district taking a more serious approach to student discipline in the years that followed.

While assaults on teachers and school support staff are a rare occurrence in CH-UH, taking a strong action, when district leadership falters, is at times necessary to ensure the safety of our students and staff. —Tom Schmida

Ari Klein is a lifelong community member, math teacher at Cleveland Heights High School, and president of the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union.

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A message to CH's neighbor cities



HEIGHTS OF DEMOCRACY

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg

Dear Neighbors:

Don't worry—Cleveland Heights has not lost its collective mind. As a community, we're struggling with how to improve our government. Some of us believe we need systemic change; others are convinced such change would be a mistake.

We who favor changing to the kind of government you have are optimistic. We look forward to electing a mayor as the full-time executive of our city, who will appoint a professional city administrator to manage daily operations. That mayoral administration will be checked and balanced by a legislative body, our elected city council.

Those who oppose the change to an elected mayor insist that it will bring corruption and "politics" into our city government. Meanwhile, they—a group that includes five sitting council members—sought and received a pledge of up to \$25,000 in matching campaign funds from the International City/County Management Association, a Washington, D.C., lobbying organization. Yet they tout council/manager government as incorruptible and above politics!

Those resisting change are

frightened. They can't see that, when they loudly insist direct mayoral elections will inevitably lead to political corruption, they insult and demean your duly elected mayors and, by extension, your voters. If they were less attached to the status quo, they might be able to see the advantages of having a democratically elected leader—one who is actually on the job at city hall during business hours, with a finger on the pulse of the city, and accountable to the voters every four years.

Fear of change is insidious. Opponents of mayor/council government have adopted it as their primary weapon against the citizens' initiative for an elected mayor, which will appear on our Nov. 5 ballot. We believe these opponents will fail, and this is why: Not only did 4,000 voters sign petitions saying they wanted to vote on this issue, but since Citizens for an Elected Mayor launched that petition drive, resident conversation about and interest in city government have skyrocketed.

That is all to the good. As we outlined in a three-part Heights of Democracy series earlier this year, it was far-sighted Cleveland Heights residents who led the way when our municipal government resisted racial integration in the 1960s and '70s.

More recently, in 2015, outraged citizens informed the city manager and council that we would not allow our water to be privatized. Dedicated neighborhood advocates pressed for foreclosure bond legislation for five

long years before council finally passed it in 2018. That same year, artists and residents fought successfully to preserve the former Coventry school building as a center for arts and education.

A significant number of Cleveland Heights residents—a majority, we believe—are ready for systemic change. We're tired of waiting for a solution to the civic disaster that is Severance Town Center. The fact that this is the location of our City Hall only aggravates an open sore. Plans for Top of the Hill—a council priority for more than five decades—may be threatened by mediocre design and sub-standard structural specs (cheaper pre-cast vs. superior poured-on-site concrete for the parking garage, for example). Although much of our housing stock is still distressed, today we have fewer inspectors than we did pre-2008.

So, neighbors, we aspire to our own version of what you already have, in Shaker Heights, South Euclid, University Heights and other area suburbs. We need, want and intend to elect a mayor who will communicate a vision, negotiate deals, and address the challenges of our aging infrastructure—while standing for election every four years.

Change is hard. Please bear with us, and wish us well.

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg are longtime residents of Cleveland Heights. Contact them at heightsdemocracy@gmail.com.

LWV continued from page 1

vote411.org.

At the second forum, planned for Thursday, Oct. 10, 7-9 p.m., a panel will discuss a ballot issue proposal to change the Cleveland Heights City Charter to institute an elected mayor, supplanting current governance where city council hires a city manager.

The panel will comprise representatives of two campaigns: Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM), which is promoting the ballot issue, and Cleveland Heights Citizens for Good Government (CHCGG), which supports maintaining the current city-manager form of government.

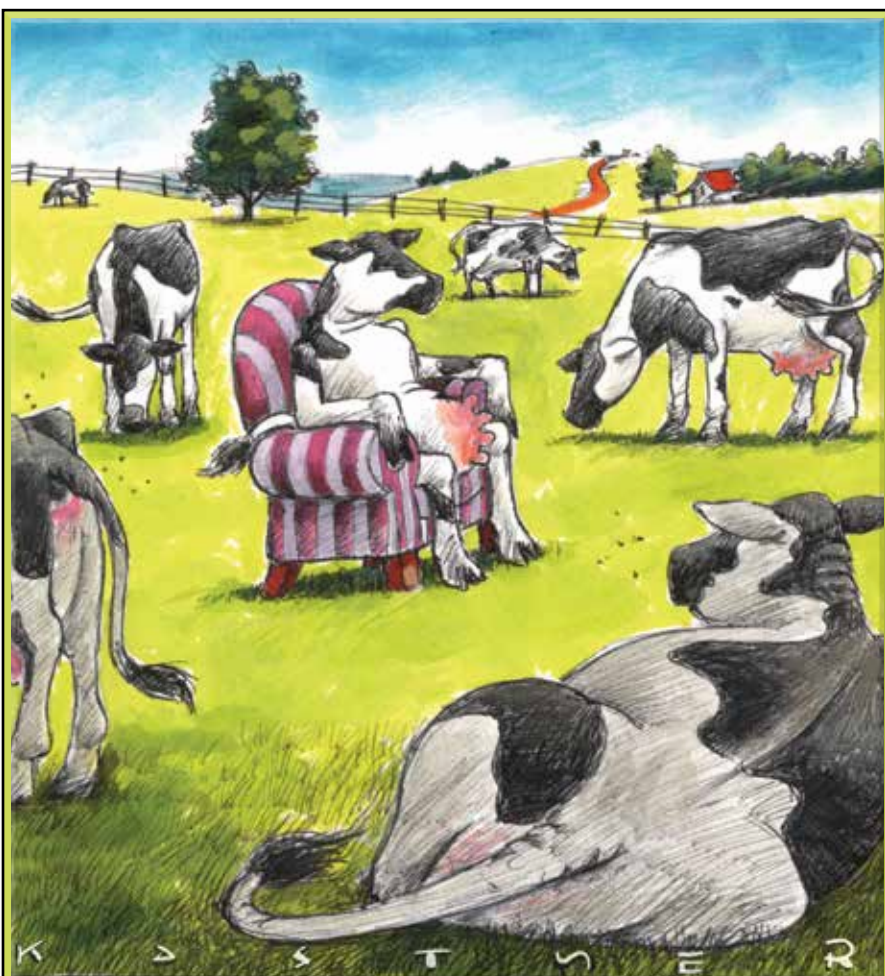
The ballot-issue forum, presented by the LWVGC Heights Chapter, will take place in the Cleveland Heights High School cafeteria, 13263 Cedar Road.

Both forums will include formal presentations as well as responses to written questions from the audience. The events are free and open to the public. Both venues are accessible and free parking is available.

For more information, contact LWVGC Heights Chapter Voter Services Coordinator Blanche Valancy, at blanche@valancy.com, or LWVGC Heights Chapter Chair Maryann Barnes, at mbarnes@lwvgreatercleveland.org.

The League of Women Voters does not endorse candidates or support political parties. It encourages informed and active participation in government and works to influence public policy through study, education and advocacy. It has been a leader since 1920, empowering voters and defending democracy.

Blanche Valancy and Maryann Barnes are members of LWVGC Heights Chapter.



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Time to fix the voucher problem



THE COMMON GOOD

Susie Kaeser

In his 2003 book, *Seeking Common Ground, Public Schools in a Diverse Society*, education historian David Tyack observed that “government requires environmental impact statements for construction projects, but not student and teacher impact reports for educational reforms.” If only Ohio’s policymakers had done an impact study of their voucher laws.

Vouchers are eroding, rather than improving, education available to children of color and those who are enrolled in high-poverty school districts in Ohio. The use of public funds to pay for private schools is made worse by the payment method. Funds for three voucher programs are deducted from state aid to local

school districts, often taking funds away from public school students.

EdChoice vouchers are triggered primarily by low test scores. Last year they were available in 39 districts in Ohio, and seven in our county. This year 138 districts are affected, including 10 in Cuyahoga County. Two special education voucher programs are available in all districts and are also funded by the deduction method.

The legislature sets the value of each kind of voucher. EdChoice costs \$4,650 per elementary school student and \$6,000 per high school student. Autism grants are worth \$27,000 per student, and grants through the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship Program range from \$7,500 to \$27,000, depending on the diagnosis. Voucher payments are deducted from the state aid that is allocated to the school district where each voucher recipient lives. Voucher students are guaranteed that amount, and public school students get what is left.

This year, the Cleveland Heights-

University Heights public schools will transfer \$9.9 million in state aid to private schools for 1,473 voucher students. They constitute 21 percent of the students who must share in the state aid, but take 46 percent of the available funds. Five years ago, vouchers used only 7 percent of the funds. The growth rate is unsustainable!

Vouchers are particularly harmful to public schools that serve poor children, where the need for adequate funding and the likelihood of low test scores is the highest. Vouchers also increase funding inequality among districts and can increase reliance on local property taxes or prompt cuts in educational programs. Neither option is good for children nor the communities that public schools serve. CH-UH is one of the hardest hit districts in the state and this year the situation has gone too far. It’s time to examine the impact and repair the damage.

I looked at last year’s data for the seven EdChoice districts in Cuyahoga County. Three variables conspire to make the Heights situation unusual among our neighbors. Ours is a high-poverty district, receives less state aid

than is required to fund vouchers of any amount, and has many families for whom religious education is an obligation. This translates into the largest number of EdChoice and special education vouchers of any local district.

An impact analysis might have shown some critical flaws in the voucher programs that have led to their lopsided and untenable impact. Lawmakers did not address how to fairly distribute both the opportunity and burden of vouchers across the state. Second, they did not consider how the deduction method of funding would affect adequacy or equity, core objectives for fair state funding. Third, they ignored that their policy would discriminate against children in high-poverty districts. I wonder why they thought taking resources away from poor children would improve their schools.

Vouchers are part of the market approach to change. Competition is supposed to drive improvement. Experience shows that vouchers don’t cause consumers to shop around for the best education value. Rather, they help people who care deeply about educating their children in a religious environment and effectively diminish the capacity of public schools to serve the common good.

The experiment is over. It’s time to face the consequences and mitigate the impact.

Susie Kaeser is a 40-year resident of Cleveland Heights and the former director of Reaching Heights. She is active in the Heights Coalition for Public Education and the League of Women Voters.

STEPHENS continued from page 1

ning & Development, was elected to CH City Council in 2009. She was the city’s mayor in 2017 (under the current form of government, city council appoints the mayor, and the role’s primary function is to preside over council meetings). She vacated her CH City Council seat in late 2018 after being elected to Cuyahoga County Council.

Cleveland Heights resident Bob Rosenbaum is co-chair of the Heights Observer Advisory Committee, and is responsible for its advertising sales and market development. He has donated \$75 to Citizens for an Elected Mayor but remains undecided about the upcoming ballot initiative.

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“The amenities and the resources of the library are what keep me coming back. It’s really an incredible place. I love that teens have their own space to congregate, and I feel like the library is a welcoming and safe space for all members of the community. The librarians and staff here are all super helpful; they always assist me in finding whatever books, movies, and other materials I need. I can’t imagine a place more welcoming than Heights Libraries.”

—Charlene Adams



“I teach at Case, and having access to books I need for work and for my kids too is pretty amazing. My kids devour books – they read constantly. The play area is fantastic as well; as a parent, I appreciate how Heights Libraries’ integrates early literacy and learning in their play area. We also attend some of the library’s programs, and appreciate the way the library creates a sense of community.”

—Fey Parrill (and daughter Rilla)



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City seeks nominations for UH Civic Awards

Mike Cook

For years, University Heights was known as “The City of Beautiful Homes.” While houses in University Heights are still beautiful, the city is now focused on honoring the beautiful people who live inside those homes.

After a decade-long hiatus, the University Heights Civic Awards returned last year, and will once again be an annual event, honoring the people who make University Heights a great place in which to live, work, and raise a family.

If you know someone who is deserving of a Good Neighbor award, e-mail UH City Hall staff at info@universityheights.com. Awards will also be given to Citizen of the Year, Volunteer of the Year, and city Em-



ployee of the Year.

The deadline for nominations is Friday, Oct. 4, at 4:30 p.m.

The 2019 University Heights Civic Awards event will take place on Nov. 13, at 6:30 p.m., at the Jardine Room on the campus of John Carroll University.

Mike Cook is the communications and civic engagement coordinator for University Heights.

Registration is open for inaugural UH 5K

Mike Cook

The inaugural University Heights City Beautiful 5K Run is planned for Sunday, Sept. 22, with a start time of 9 a.m. Race proceeds will benefit the City Beautiful Community Investment Corporation.

The course starts at Walter Stinson Community Park, and goes through “Logoville”—the streets that form the letter “U” inside an “H,” that inspired the new University Heights logo.

5K awards will be given to the overall female and male runners, and the top three runners in seven age groups. All race participants will receive a T-shirt and post-race refreshments.



Pre-registration is \$25 for adults, and \$15 for students. Race-day registration is \$30. To register, visit www.hermescleveland.com.

Mike Cook is the communications and civic engagement coordinator for University Heights.

SUPPORT continued from page 5

on the Nov. 5 ballot will bring that change.

I deeply appreciated the Aug. 1 Heights of Democracy column from Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg. The history of the city-manager form of government was awesome to read, and knowing that the structure rose in popularity because wealthy elites and leaders wanted to hold on to every last ounce of control and power they had in the 19th century makes me even more skeptical of the opposition to the initiative on

the ballot.

It's time to trust the residents of Cleveland Heights. Trust them to choose the next mayor. Trust them to identify the vision that will take our city to the next level. Trust them to choose city council members who will do the vital work to make that vision a reality. And trust them to put our city's, our community's, and our neighbors' best interests first.

Tas Nadas is a resident of Cleveland Heights.

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'Soul-crushing mediocrity' makes the case for change

Eric Silverman

After reading opinions in the *Heights Observer* in defense of a city-manager system, I am confused. We need to maintain the status quo because the residents of Cleveland Heights are easily persuaded sheep apt to fall under a Tammany Hall style of corruption, which will lead us on a path of ruin? But these same voters are smart enough to elect a council that is a paragon of pure virtue?

I've been very much on the fence in regard to altering our form of government, not because I think it is hitting on all cylinders, addressing major challenges with a council and city manager who have a bold, comprehensive and viable vision for the future—they don't. My

reticence has been due to my concern regarding who might be waiting in the wings to run for mayor. I can see a scenario where two of three high-profile names end up in a run-off to be our elected mayor, and I don't want ANY of those individuals having their hands on the levers of power.

As much as I fear unintended consequences, the city's handling of Top of the Hill (TOH), and its actions and responses to 4,000 citizens seeking to have a vote on their form of government, makes me far more inclined to support moving to an elected mayor. It would seem that EVERY action taken by council for the status quo only makes the case for change.

I just assumed that members of

council not responding to my inquiries or answering my questions was due to animosity toward me, but it would appear that contempt for members of the public and the inability to respond to correspondence applies to ANYONE who does not support them and their actions without question. The only positive to their behavior, while it is reminiscent of the occupant of the Oval Office, is that they do have a better vocabulary—no one has called TOH "beautiful."

The city manager form of government worked well for the first 50 years of Cleveland Heights, as it went from a "borderland" of farms and country estates to a built-out (former) streetcar suburb. For the next 25 years, this system coasted with a risk-averse, status quo mentality of small, incremental change, whose only concern was to avoid the disinvestment and decline that befell East Cleveland.

For the last 25 years this system has not worked. A council operating from a sense of *noblesse oblige* has been unable to help business districts weather the rise of big-box retail, and now the rise of e-commerce; has displayed veneer sup-

port for the public schools; has shown consistent ineptitude at infill development projects; and, 10 years after the Great Recession, is only beginning to take the smallest of steps in regard to systemic housing renovation efforts—25 years after it should have.

What boils my blood and draws my ire is, when I look at Cleveland Heights and examine our assets of location, amenities, walkability and housing stock, I fail to see why our leadership, year after year, fails to use the resources we have and make us a destination. We have assets that the "hot" areas wish they had; yet we seem mired in quicksand, fearful that ANY movement will sink us.

When I hear from council members, IF I hear from them, I do not hear passion. I do not see vision. I do not feel humility. I am merely told "trust us."

I don't know if an elected mayor can bring the change we need, but I do know that doubling down on the soul-crushing mediocrity we currently have will not get us to where we can and should be.

Cleveland Heights resident Eric J. Silverman was a member of the CH-UH Board of Education, 1994–2002 and 2014–18, and a member of Heights Libraries Board of Directors, 2003–09.



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Get all the facts before you decide

Don McBride

As the Committee for an Elected Mayor (CEM) steps up its campaign for passage of its charter initiative, I urge everyone to look closely at what [supporters] have written and what they are saying. I have attended CEM public meetings and have read the complete text of the proposed charter amendment on CEM's website. To put it in the kindest way possible, I have found many inconsistencies.

During public meetings, members of CEM claimed that Cleveland Heights needs a full-time, directly elected mayor to be fully focused on the needs of the city. But CEM's proposal specifically permits outside employment for the mayor. CEM members also said the mayor should be at city hall full time to be available to respond immediately to resident requests, and also spend 80 percent of his/her time on economic development.

Currently, the city manager hires and evaluates city employees. The city manager, in turn, is accountable to city council. A mayor's hiring and firing decisions will not be subject to council oversight. That's way too much power to entrust to one person in Cleveland Heights. It opens the door to city departments being led by the politically connected, rather than professionally qualified administrators. The risk is that a strong mayor may be more beholden to his or her donors than to residents. Political power and campaign contributions may well trump our interests. We will have only one opportunity every four years to replace a mayor. Today we can replace half our council every two years.

Not mentioned by CEM: a strong mayor, unlike city council, is not

continued on page 14

CH Citizens for Good Government supports CRC's conclusions

Mike Gaynier

Cleveland Heights Citizens for Good Government (CHCGG) is a political action committee (PAC) created by former members of the Charter Review Commission (CRC). I co-chair this group with Jack Newman, former CRC chair, and Lee Chilcote, former CH City Council member.

We provide continuing support for the conclusions of the CRC—a group of 15 CH residents who worked for 16 months to make recommendations to improve our government. We are committed to the citizens of Cleveland Heights, to clarify what is at stake on Election Day this November.

Identifying the most effective, efficient and equitable way to deliver services to our residents must be left to a professional, qualified city manager with skills and training. We currently

have that in place with our council-manager form of government. It permits the seven directly elected city council members to have equal voices, and encourages cooperation and accountability between them and our city manager.

We do not want one person with all the power. Our council-manager form of government is the most common form of municipal government in the United States. It keeps partisan politics and corruption, that we see in so many other communities in Cuyahoga County, out of Cleveland Heights.

For that, and many other reasons, we believe the council-manager form of government should remain in place. With more than 600 employees and an annual budget of more than \$80 million, our city needs qualified, nonpartisan and professional management—not a politician who may make decisions based on

campaign contributions and favors.

The leaders of an opposing PAC reject the recommendations of the CRC and promote a government that substitutes politics for professionalism. Their proposal [would] replace our form of government with a leader whose only requirement is being a Cleveland Heights resident, and not being a felon. This shift would open the door for a power grab. We cannot allow political favors, political hires, and political contracts in our city.

Unfortunately, the recommendations of the CRC won't share the ballot on Nov. 5 with the opposition's proposal. If it did, it would have provided citizens with a clear choice between the two very different visions for our future.

We must stop this power grab. Our group is committed to protecting and improving our city by defeating this ef-

fort to upend our form of government. We are working to get our message to voters despite the political barriers we face to counter the narrative created by politicians who stand ready to take over Cleveland Heights should we fail?

We say no to injecting politics into our city services, including police, fire, trash pick-up and snow removal. They are practical services—not political.

We say no to destabilizing our system by putting in charge one partisan politician who can be influenced by contributors and election supporters.

We say no to political deals on Nov. 5.

Mike Gaynier is a leadership consultant and co-chair of Cleveland Heights Citizens for Good Government, a PAC formed to inform voters about the benefits of the council-manager form of government. He served on the CRC.

Separating fact from fiction

Michael Bennett

Incorrect assumptions, false accusations and—dare I say it?“alternative facts” populate political discourse. Let's consider the facts and clear up misinformation about Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM) and the charter initiative on the November ballot in Cleveland Heights:

The mayor is full time. The initiative says the mayor “shall serve the city on a full-time basis” and allows for “limited outside employment” provided such “does not conflict or interfere with carrying out the duties assigned by this charter or general law.” The clause, similar to Lakewood's charter, provides a limitation on outside employment since none exists in the current charter. Typically, when an item is not addressed, it is permitted. The clause protects against unchecked outside employment.

CH City Council included similar protection in the city's manager's restated employment agreement, effective Aug. 12. It permits “limited teaching, consulting or other business opportunities with the understanding that such arrangements must neither constitute interference with nor a conflict of interest with her responsibilities under this Agreement.”

The city's budget supports a mayor and a city administrator. The initiative replaces the current top administrative positions—city manager and vice manager—with the mayor as an elected executive, and a professional city administrator appointed by the mayor and approved by council. Council sets salaries, which are currently \$105,314 to \$168,585 for the manager, and \$94,030 to \$150,522 for the vice manager—ample to support both new positions.

The citizens' initiative is broad-based. CEM committee members and hundreds of volunteers come from across the city's neighborhoods. In 23 days, we canvassed locations in every corner of the city and collected 4,000 signatures.

CEM welcomes any candidate. CEM's concern is the best government structure for Cleveland Heights, not a single officeholder. We have not and will not meet with, endorse, discuss, or advocate for mayoral candidates. CEM members have agreed not to run for mayor.

Choosing the mayor is the job of all voters—not four of seven council members that now choose a (part-time) mayor/president of council and a full-time city manager who reports to council.

CEM operates in the open. Our membership has been listed on www.citizensforanelectedmayor.com since the site went live in February, following our Jan. 17 Secretary of State filing. The website includes the amendment, and other information is added regularly. We held public meetings in February and March at the Lee Road and Noble Neighborhood libraries. So far, more than a dozen residents have hosted friends and neighbors in their homes to promote the initiative.

CEM is a new, grassroots group. Only two CEM members belonged to a small group that years ago met once with the then-council president to discuss an elected mayor. That group quickly distanced itself from all elected officials. Its efforts ended when council named the Charter Review Commission (CRC). The CRC process catalyzed CEM members, many of whom did not know one another previously.

CEM thanks the CRC for its work. But citizens can disagree with its 11-2 vote (with 2 absences) to retain the current government structure. Even council disagreed with some CRC recommendations. For example, it substantially revised an ethics provision, decided a vacated council seat could remain open for 150 days instead of 90, and restored “mayor” as a council president title.

Cleveland Heights needs a change in type of leadership. CRC and council see that as a change in the manager's job from “chief administrative officer” to “chief executive officer,” with additional duties.

CEM prefers that the strong executive leader of local government, who will represent us across a region where elected mayors are the overwhelming majority, be a mayor directly elected by and accountable to all Cleveland Heights citizens.

Michael Bennett, a 30-year resident of Cleveland Heights, is secretary of Citizens for an Elected Mayor.

It's time for an elected mayor

Jessica Cohen

I was honored to be appointed to the CH Charter Review Commission (CRC) in 2017, and elected vice chair of that body a number of months later. Despite being distraught at what I had characterized as a lack of vision and leadership in the city, I saw the CRC as an opportunity to learn more about the structure of our city's government and determine for myself, based on the evidence presented, whether the lack of leadership in the city was a structural or personnel issue.

I was frustrated with the lack of attention to core infrastructure issues, such as water and sewer. Both issues got “cleaned up” only when it finally got so bad it was a crisis. And we had to pay for it. Our own former finance director stated clearly that infrastructure was not given the attention it warranted in years past, under the city-manager system. Where was the city manager with the vision and leadership to ask: What infrastructure planning and management does our city need, not just today, but for the next 20 years?

For years I have complained to city council about the disgusting state of garbage regulations. Prohibited from having garbage cans, our streets end up strewn with garbage each collection day, attracting vermin and significantly diminishing the aesthetic appeal of our city. Inattention has wasted tens of thousands of dollars on rehabilitating old sanitation trucks while we wallow in deciding (years behind!) what next-generation sanitation trucks the city should purchase. Where was a city manager with the vision and leadership to ask: Where do our sanitation system and ordinances need to be, to serve our city not just today, but for the next 20 years?

Our city has clearly lagged in economic development efforts. CRC members heard from some of the region's most esteemed developers and business owners that, when they sought to do business with Cleveland Heights, there was no one there to make the decisions needed to move development deals forward. Where

was a city manager with the vision and leadership to attract innovative development, not just today, but for the next 20 years?

After months of listening and asking questions, I concluded that CH government suffered from a structural deficiency. Where other cities of our size and type had elected mayors, Cleveland Heights has only a city manager with a very part-time elected body of seven bosses, none of whom can claim lead or sole oversight of the city manager.

My vision for a new government for Cleveland Heights is a directly elected full-time mayor who governs and leads with a full-time city administrator managing city operations—exactly what is on the ballot for a “yes” vote this November.

Cleveland Heights is in desperate need of vision, accountability, and leadership that will make our city a place in which people want to live, work, play, and do business. We need transparency about how decisions are made. We need someone who has a vision for where our city needs to be, and a full-time presence to oversee the city administrator's management of operations. And when things fail, we need an elected mayor that we can call to get answers, who feels accountable to the residents, and who knows we are watching each election.

A part-time elected body without an elected mayor is just not enough to allow Cleveland Heights to flourish the way we need it to today.

Any legislative branch is only as successful as the vision and leadership of the executive branch allows it to be. But Cleveland Heights has no executive branch that residents have any influence over . . . yet—until we vote YES this November for an elected mayor and city administrator. Join me.

Jessica Cohen serves as chair of the Cleveland Heights Planning Commission and was vice chair of the CRC. A law-school student at night and nonprofit executive by day, Cohen, along with her husband and four children, is a proud Cleveland Heights resident.

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Cleveland Heights City Council Meeting highlights

JULY 15, 2019

Council members present were Mayor Carol Roe, Vice Mayor Melissa Yasinow, Craig Cobb, Mary Dunbar, Kahlil Seren and Jason Stein. Michael N. Ungar was not present, but listened by telephone. The meeting lasted from 7:40 to 9:30 p.m.

Public comments

Ballot issues: Fourteen citizens spoke on this topic, especially regarding whether the ballot initiative proposing direct election of a mayor, supported by Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM), or the amended charter referred from the work of the Charter Review Commission (CRC), or both, will be placed on the Nov. 5 ballot.

Several speakers expressed concern that placing both on the ballot would confuse voters. Speakers felt the ballot language is unnecessarily long and complex. Representatives of both sides have met together to work on improving the ballot language.

City manager's report

City Manager Tanisha Briley paid tribute to Jim Juliano on his retirement as city law director, and announced the appointment of William R. Hanna the city's new law director, effective Aug. 1.

Amended charter

An ordinance to submit to voters a First Amended Charter of the City of Cleveland Heights, which would repeal and replace sections of the current city charter, received a first reading. Council Member Dunbar supports the legislation as written. Vice Mayor Yasinow said the CRC kept in mind the best interests of the city and that she thinks CEM is rushing its issue, not the council. Council Member Seren advocated placing an unbiased summary of the elected-mayor issue on the November ballot, and holding this one for the March 2020 election. Council Member Stein opined that council should delay putting this measure on the ballot. Council Member Cobb did not comment. Mayor Roe stated that the CRC's work grew out of issues that needed to be addressed, the process was open, and members were appointed who did not already

have positions [on the issues].

Initiative petition

An ordinance to submit the citizens' initiative petition to revise the charter to establish an elected mayor received a first reading.

Liquor permit objections

Council passed three resolutions objecting to renewals of current liquor permits at three establishments due to numerous incidents requiring police calls. The businesses are:

- Noble Gas, 2610 Noble Road
- City & East Hookah Bar, 2781 Euclid Heights Blvd.
- 7 Eleven/BP, 3983 Mayfield Road

LWV Observer: Blanche Valancy.

JULY 29, 2019

Council members present were Mayor Carol Roe, Vice Mayor Melissa Yasinow, Craig Cobb, Mary Dunbar, Kahlil Seren, Jason Stein and Michael N. Ungar. The meeting lasted from 7:38 to 9:50 p.m.

Public comments

Ballot issues: Commentary by 21 citizens took up the first hour of the meeting. Approximately 12 spoke in favor of an elected mayor and opined that the citizen-led initiative should be the only issue on the November ballot. About six spoke in favor of maintaining the city manager/council form of government, and opined that the CRC's amendments should be placed before voters at the same time as the citizen-led initiative.

First Amended Charter of the City of Cleveland Heights

By a unanimous vote, council tabled this resolution indefinitely, admitting that there were only four council member votes in favor and five are needed for passage.

Several members commented on this decision. Dunbar expressed disappointment that both choices would not be on the ballot, because the CRC considered all possible choices. She noted that the city manager form is predominant around the country, if not in this region. Ungar said he was disappointed,



but this was the right decision in the interest of comity. Seren said he thinks voters should have a chance to decide on this issue and that criticisms are of the system, not of individuals occupying positions. Cobb stated that he was on the CRC, with no idea he would ever be a council member, and he voted to keep the current system. He said he will vote to do what is right, regardless of personal political consequences, and that he is committed to voters' right to decide. Some people have alleged that he has been "bullied," but he asserted he has only been strongly lobbied. He desires a clear choice with no confusion and will respect the outcome.

Initiative petition

The resolution to place the citizens' initiative petition for the direct election of a mayor on the November ballot passed unanimously.

Seren said he agrees with the placement of the elected-mayor issue on the ballot at this time, and so voted for the resolution. Cobb noted that the language passed was acceptable and a vast improvement over previous versions.

Ungar said he favors the current form of government but will respect the decision of the voters.

LWV Observer: Blanche Valancy.

Look for earlier, and often expanded, postings of meeting summaries online at www.heightsobserver.org.

To receive email postings of full reports, send an email to heights@lwvgreatercleveland.org or join through Google groups using "lwv-chuh observer reports" as a search phrase.

These reports contain member observation and selected highlights of public meetings and are not official statements of the Heights Chapter of the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland. This disclaimer must accompany any redistribution of these reports.

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CEDAR LEE continued from page 1

"something more reflective of the sophistication of Cleveland Heights. Diversity. Authenticity. A video with real people." Huffman gave him "the autonomy and space and volunteers to create something special," said Stewart. "And that's what we did."

Stewart credits Huffman with the casting. Everyone in the video is an unpaid volunteer. Huffman asked friends Lisa Pasquale and Tim Polak to star as the couple who buys the tickets. Three years later, when Polak decided to propose to Pasquale, Polak rented the same theater and played the trailer, with new video edited onto the end showing him walking out of the theater. When the lights came up, Polak walked in with the ring, and presented it to his future bride (they still haven't set a date) in front of family and friends, including Huffman.

Huffman recruited Bill and Rose Decapite as the couple looking for the exit. Bill, now 95, served as a Seabee in World War II and helped build the runway in the Mariana Islands that launched the Enola Gay on its mission to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. He and Rose, 91, are legendary volunteers in the film and theater community, with 35 years at Playhouse Square, and 20 at Cain Park. They also usher at Dobama and Cleveland Public theaters. "Everyone we usher with says, 'We see you in the trailer!'" said Bill, adding that, when they work will-call at the Cleveland International Film Festival, "The real theatergoers know us." Even if you're not a theatergoer, you still might recognize Bill if you ever had your car

repaired at the Cedar Taylor Garage in Cleveland Heights, which he owned until 1995.

The shoot, on April 17, 2014, took about six hours. Most of the extras were recruited from Cleveland Cinemas Marquee Rewards Card members.

Both Stewart and Huffman said everything went pretty smoothly, but both remember having a hard time picking the music. "I took them through about 10 different songs," said Stewart. Huffman said his colleagues liked an upbeat cut with a guitar solo, but he worried, "Everyone will be doing an air guitar solo, making fun of it." Wanting something that would wear well after many viewings, "something that was innocuous, that you would barely remember," Huffman chose a less distinctive song. Five years later, Stewart agrees, saying, "David knew something I didn't."

Stewart said he's called Huffman to ask if Cleveland Cinemas wants to make a new trailer. Huffman told Stewart, the company has no plans to make a change. Stewart is OK with that. He said nothing pleases him more than to go to the movie theater near his boyhood home and see something he created on the big screen. "I have an enormous sense of pride," Stewart said. "It's indescribable. If I'm sitting next to a stranger, I tap him on the shoulder and say, 'I did that.'"

Fred D'Ambrosi has been an award-winning journalist for 40 years, mostly as a TV news director in Cleveland, D.C., San Diego and Milwaukee. He's enjoyed living in Cleveland Heights since 2015.

Noble Neighbors to host election forums

Brenda H. May

Noble Neighbors will host two election forums this fall, at Noble Road Presbyterian Church, 2780 Noble Road. The first, on Wednesday, Sept. 25, will feature candidates for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education and Cleveland Heights City Council. The second, on Wednesday, Oct. 2, will focus on proposed changes to Cleveland Heights' form of government. Each forum will begin at 7 p.m.

Noble Neighbors forums are characterized by a few unique components. The audience is asked to agree to a social contract, a common expectation of one another intended to make the evening more productive. Audience members agree to refrain from responding to the candidates or the issue representatives throughout the presentations. No one applauds or makes any gesture or vocalization, either in support or disapproval of a candidate or representative's position. Past audience members have observed that this has allowed them to listen more easily, without distraction.

Candidates and issue representatives are sent questions two weeks in advance. Noble Neighbors is currently accepting suggested questions, which

will help forum organizers settle on the most relevant questions. Suggestions may be submitted to nobleneighbors@gmail.com by Sept. 9.

While every candidacy and issue affects everyone in the school district or city, Noble Neighbors asks that candidates and issue representatives craft their responses to address the particular concerns of neighborhoods along Noble Road. Participants will have a chance to submit additional questions at the forums.

Parking will be available in the church's lot, across the street at Noble and Navahoe roads. The Kirkwood door of the church has a barrier-free entry and a chairlift to the upper-floor meeting space. A free-will offering will be taken at each forum to defray the costs of the host site.

More information on the Noble forums can be found at www.nobleneighbors.org. Voters will have additional opportunities to hear from candidates and issue representatives at forums sponsored by the Heights Chapter of the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland. For information on those forums, visit www.lwvgreatercleveland.org.

Brenda H. May is one of the leaders of Noble Neighbors.

First CH GardenWalk a success despite heat



This colorful, mixed border was just one feature of a garden on North Park Boulevard.

Jan Kiou

The first GardenWalk in Cleveland Heights, held July 20 and 21, was a free, self-guided tour of 50 gardens across the city. With the temperature on Saturday at around 95 degrees, few people ventured out, but on Sunday, with the temperature 10 degrees cooler, most gardeners reported having more than 50 guests.

The gardens included one with an adult tree house, and there were many with wonderful water features, and ponds with enormous koi. Others showcased beautiful perennial flower beds and several Japanese-inspired gardens. Old friends reconnected, and neighbors met neighbors. The walk proved to be a great community-building event as well as an inspiration to all who enjoyed the beauty of the landscaping.

Tom Gibson, Elsa Johnson and Madeline Macklin worked with Cleveland Heights High School students to create a series of 10 pollinator pocket gardens on Langton Road. For many people who visited them, it was the first time they had been in that neighborhood.

CH's GardenWalk will be repeated in 2020, on July 18 and 19.

Jan Kiou, resident of Cleveland Heights since 1974, founded and organized the Cleveland Heights Garden Walk.

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GET ALL THE FACTS continued from page 10

subject to state public meetings laws. This invites secrecy, which does not foster confidence in our city government.

Top of the Hill (a major component of CH's master plan development objectives) has [been the subject of] dozens of public meetings with countless hours of resident comment, much of which improved the plan. Ironically, many of the folks who are disappointed about some aspect of Top of the Hill are fooling themselves thinking a strong mayor would be more accountable to their wishes. They don't realize that strong mayor-favored development projects could be sped to completion with far less input than residents have had on Top of the Hill under our current council-manager structure. Again, this is way too much power to entrust

to one person in Cleveland Heights.

Not mentioned in CEM's online summary is that, if passed, the proposal will add judicial powers to the mayor's office. Does the CEM want a Mayor's Court in Cleveland Heights as well as our existing municipal court? Or, is CEM's hope to replace the municipal court and its elected judge, giving the mayor even more power?

Again, I urge everyone to look at ALL the facts and consider ALL the implications before making a decision. I believe we are more likely to thrive as a community with accountable, professional administration led by a democratically elected council.

Don McBride has lived in Cleveland Heights for close to 40 years, and in the Noble neighborhood for 35 of them. He is a member of the Noble Corridor Planning Project Steering Committee.

More opinions can be found online.

Visit www.heightsobserver.org/read/news-/opinion/.

What about ethics?

Jack Newman

A strong-mayor system of government in Cleveland Heights would concentrate power in a single politically elected ruler. The proposal on this November's ballot to do that lacks a modern ethics provision putting boundaries on how this power can be exercised.

Currently, city council is the sole legislative authority, with substantial say over the structure and powers of the city's administrative units. Executive authority is in the hands of a professional city manager educated for the task—an at-will city employee who is hired, monitored and, when called for, removed by council. This distribution of governing authority is completely upended by the strong-mayor initiative.

Let's examine what happens if voters approve the proposal: The professional executive goes by the wayside. The powers of the replacement executive, the strong mayor, would be exercised behind the protection of a four-year term, with no term limits and no intra-term removal mechanism other than a [potentially] cumbersome, divisive, and generally ineffective voter-recall process. This mayor would have sole "control over all departments and divisions" of the city, as well as certain "legislative powers," namely:

- Almost complete discretionary power of political appointment and removal, except four positions whose hiring (but not removal) must be confirmed by council.
- Authority to introduce ordinances and resolutions, though not a member of council.
- Power to veto ordinances and resolutions enacted by council, including, as to appropriations, the right to pick and choose which priorities will actually be funded or not.
- Sole power to create government departments, combine them, abolish them, and prescribe the functions and duties of each. This power would be taken away from council.
- In conjunction with a mayor-designated administrator, definitive authority as gatekeeper for any member of council to have business interaction with any city employee (other than

for "inquiry").

The strong-mayor ballot measure would focus power in one individual, including power previously exercised by council. It would remove from council the authority to hire or contract with others for assistance in its own functions. So there would be not only a new, non-professional political leader with concentrated power, but also a weakened council with fewer resources available for acting as a "check" or "balance" on the strong mayor. Take a moment to reflect on this.

With the new concentration of power, unprecedented in this city, one would think it critical to include a healthy, modern, updated ethics provision as part of the package. And all the more so when, as here, the new, powerful strong mayor would serve as, and be paid as, a "full-time" city employee. Yet in the proposal, the strong mayor is explicitly authorized to have separate employment or other work. Incredibly this proposal has no such ethics provision. Why not?

Do proponents prefer that the new strong mayor not labor under such pesky restraints? Or perhaps they overlooked this in their zeal to upend and dramatically change our tradition of seven directly elected representatives, with equal voices, forming a council that employs a professional executive to direct and oversee city services and development based on expertise and experience, rather than political aspirations and personal agendas.

The strong-mayor proponents had squarely in front of them the substantial record developed by the Charter Review Commission on ethics provisions in city charters, together with a verbatim draft of a modern provision. Their rejection of that, or an equivalent ethics clause, or at best their woeful inattention to it, is reason enough to reject the seismic shift in power they advocate.

Jack Newman, a retired lawyer, is former chair of the Charter Review Commission and co-chair of Cleveland Heights Citizens for Good Government, a political action committee formed to inform voters about the benefits of the council-manager form of government ahead of the elected-mayor charter amendment on the Nov. 5 ballot.

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Saturday, October 5, 2 p.m. — *Remembering Anton Heiller:* Fulbright grant students Christa Rakich and Jay Peterson will share remembrances of the beloved Viennese organist, composer, conductor and pedagogue.

Sunday, October 6, 3 p.m. — Recital: Christa Rakich (Oberlin/Boston); works by P. Hindemith, J.S. Bach and A. Heiller

Friday, October 18, 7:30 p.m. — *Vive la France!* Erik Suter (Wash., D.C.); works by M. Duruflé, M. Dupré, J. Langlais, Ch. Tournemire, and J. Alain

Saturday, October 19, 4 p.m. — *Organ Music of the Seventeenth Century:* Steven Plank (Oberlin/St. Paul's); works by S. Scheidt, G. Frescobaldi, D. Buxtehude and L. Couperin

Sunday, October 20, 4 p.m. — *Petr Eben: Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart* (after Jan Amos Komenský-Comenius): Karel Paukert, organ; John Orlock, narrator

All events made possible by grants from the Ingalls Foundation and the Charles H. Teare and Clifford K. Kern Music Fund at the Cleveland Foundation.



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ABORTION continued from page 4

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Mallory McMaster is president and CEO of The Fairmount Group, a Cleveland Heights-based communications firm that specializes in social justice and abortion communications. McMaster is a We Testify abortion storyteller. [Preterm is a former client of The Fairmount Group, prior to McMaster buying the communications firm. McMaster is a former employee of Preterm; this opinion is written without Preterm's knowledge or input.]

FutureHeights' Cedarbrook Society revitalizes Cedar Lee Mini-Park



2019 Cedarbrook Society students: from left: Ronan Karem, Aminah Abdul-Hafeez, Zeld Thayer-Hansen, Thalia Lisowski, Michaela Schomisch.

Sruti Basu

The Cedarbrook Society, a group of five Heights High students, worked with artist Tom Masaveg this summer to help FutureHeights enliven the Cedar Lee Mini-Park, a 7,500 square foot site located between Boss Dog Brewing Company and Heights Arts in the Cedar Lee Business District.

For six weeks, the students, with Masaveg's guidance, served as ambassadors for the space, welcoming visitors and guests, planting flowers, weeding the flower beds and creating signage. Masaveg installed a mural of white trees on the side of the Cedar Lee Theatre building and worked with the students to create augmented reality artwork to interact with the mural via smart phone technology. With help from Heights Libraries, he installed a Little Free Library. The students managed a Cedarbrook Society social media account to document their activities and keep the community up-to-date. They also gathered additional input on future use of the space through on-site surveying.

The mini-park site was created when the city of Cleveland Heights vacated a portion of Cedarbrook Road in the 1960s as the parking lot was being constructed, creating a pedestrian walkway from the lot to the businesses on Lee Road.

FutureHeights, the community development corporation for Cleveland Heights, began gathering community input on the future use of the

space following a study of the business district it commissioned in 2016. The study recognized the site's potential to become a vibrant community space. The Cedarbrook Society student ambassador project was a direct outcome of the organization's desire to include the voices of young people in the planning process.

The project was supported by the residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. Other aspects of the improvements made this summer, such as the café tables and chairs that were installed throughout the perimeter of the site, were funded through donations to the FutureHeights Cedar Lee Mini-Park Fund.

On Aug. 5, the project steering committee issued an RFP to architecture and design firms interested in illustrating the community's vision for the site through a final design. Applications are due Sept. 15, and the organization expects to begin implementation in spring 2020.

FutureHeights representatives will demonstrate how to use a smart phone to activate the augmented reality mural at the 2019 Heights Music Hop on Saturday, Sept. 14.

Learn more about the project by visiting www.futureheights.org, liking the FutureHeights Facebook page, or following @futureheights on Instagram.

Sruti Basu is the director of community building programs at FutureHeights.

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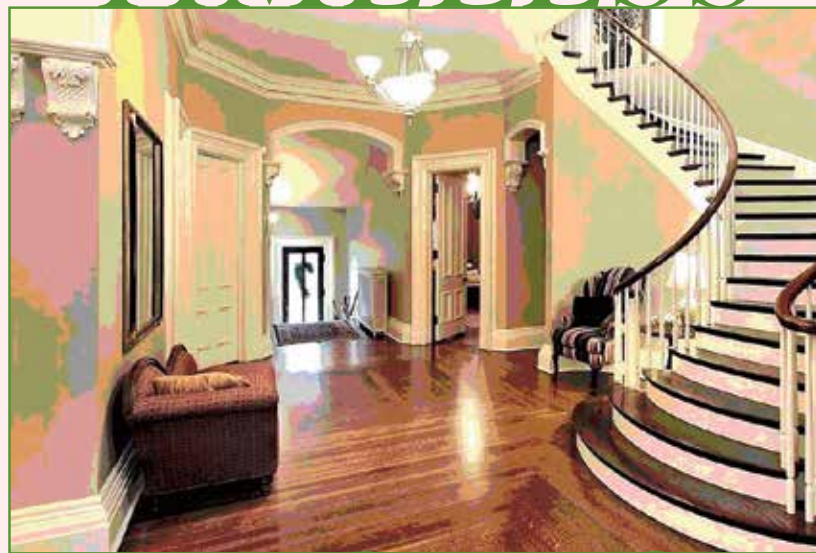
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Registration is open for FH 2020 Neighborhood Leadership Workshop Series



2019 Neighborhood Leadership Workshop Series participants at the 2019 FutureHeights Annual Meeting.

Sruti Basu

Residents of Cleveland Heights are invited to apply for the 2020 FutureHeights Neighborhood Leadership Workshop Series, a free multidisciplinary neighborhood leadership development program designed for individuals enthusiastic about positively contributing to the community in which they live, work and play. Participants will develop leadership skills, as well as gain knowledge and tools to help make their neighborhoods strong, safe and vibrant.

Since 2015, 60 CH residents have completed the workshop series. Some participate because they are interested in learning more about the city, want to meet their neighbors and other civically-minded people, or have a specific neighborhood project they want to complete. Many program graduates go on to join nonprofit boards, or city committees or commissions. Some apply to receive funding for a project through FutureHeights’ Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program, which has biannual deadlines. (The fall mini-grants deadline is Sunday, Sept. 15.)

“I found the workshops to be extremely helpful in giving me a space to work out ideas I had, and shape them with the help of other people with similar interest in working for Cleveland Heights,” said Michael Hagesfeld, a 2018 participant. “The speakers were interesting, and helped give different perspectives I could apply to my particular situation. Working with other people who also had a drive and love for

Cleveland Heights inspired me, in addition to giving me ideas I could apply to my concept, and be able to help them with theirs.”

Donna Johnson, a 2019 participant, said that participating in the program “was the perfect impetus to help me rally and engage my neighbors!”

The program takes an assets-based community development approach, which means that it seeks to build upon a neighborhood’s strengths. It is funded by the city of Cleveland Heights through a Community Development Block Grant and by individual contributions to FutureHeights.

In 2020, the series will take place on Sunday afternoons, 3–6 p.m., on Jan. 26, Feb. 9, Feb. 23, March 8, March 22, and April 5 at FutureHeights’ offices at Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus, 2843 Washington Blvd.

Topics are: Individual Leadership; Asset Based Community Development; Planning Your Project; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion;

Policy & Advocacy, Learning the History of Cleveland Heights and Your Neighborhood; Leveraging Community Resources; and Building Community. All Cleveland Heights residents are encouraged to apply to participate. Free childcare is provided during sessions.

The application deadline is 5 p.m., Jan. 17. The simple, two-page application can be found at www.futureheights.org/programs/community-building-programs. For more information, call 216-320-1423 or email sbasu@futureheights.org.

Sruti Basu is the director of community-building programs at FutureHeights.

LEI offers evening programs for teens

Adam James Zahren

The Coventry neighborhood bustles at night, and not just for adults. Lake Erie Ink (LEI), the nonprofit writing space for youth, provides a place where teens can hang out and explore their creativity in a variety of ways.

LEI has created various workshops for teens in grades 6–12 to help them express their unique visions and develop their literary style and form. These workshops, affectionately called Evening Ink, offer something for everyone.

The Teen Writers’ Workshop meets on Tuesday nights. Participants write, express themselves, and encourage one another in their literary pursuits. The workshop meets 6:30–8 p.m.

Another offering is Stage Write—a comedy club for teens that meets on Wednesdays, 6:30–8 p.m. Teens gather to find comic relief through stand-up comedy and sketch writing.

In addition, the teen editorial board is set to publish its fourth annual anthology of teen literary works. This year’s theme is Fundamental Elements. (Think fire, water, wind, and earth.) Teens interested in reading and compiling the publication are invited to join the teen editorial board. The board meets on select Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.

All Evening Ink programs take place at LEI’s offices at Coventry P.E.A.C.E. campus, 2843 Washington Blvd., and begin the week of Sept. 3.

Teens who have a poem in their notebook, a song in their heart, or a joke in their pocket are invited to share these (and other special talents) at LEI’s Teen Open Mic nights. Everyone is welcome.

For more information about these and other LEI programs, visit www.lakeerieink.org.

Adam James Zahren holds an English degree with an emphasis in creative writing from Allegheny College, and coordinates LEI’s Ink Spot program, for third- to sixth-graders.



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This land is your land



Friends of Lower Lake volunteers take a break from digging out non-native species. Environmental organizations are hoping for a big turnout Sept. 28 for National Public Lands Day. Back row from left: Pow Joshi, Emma Shook, John Barber, Ryan Miller, Eran Shiloh, Mark Majewski, Andrew Klooster, Front row, from left: Lamar Shepherd, Sue Strauss, Sasha Strauss, Kathy Smachlo.

Peggy Spaeth

National Public Lands Day has been celebrated on the fourth Saturday of September for the past 25 years as a day of volunteerism on which people give back to the environment. This year Lower Shaker Lake will be the site of one of those volunteer opportunities on Saturday, Sept. 28, from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m.

The lake has actually been a volunteer site most Sunday mornings since May 2018. Much of the vegetation around it is a monoculture of aggressive non-native plant species.

Friends of Lower Lake, a volunteer project of the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership, has been removing and replacing invasive plants with native trees, shrubs, flowers, ferns and sedges. Most of the work, supervised by experienced volunteers, occurs at the Canoe Club site behind the wood chip pile on South Park Boulevard.

The 1.5 acre public parkland at the man-made lake has 300-year-old oak trees and groomed paths for walkers, runners, birders, bicyclists and botanists. It's free and open to the public.

Adjacent to the lake, the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes is a 20-acre nonprofit educational nature preserve that also relies on volunteers under the expert oversight of Natural Resources Specialist Nick Mikash.

Volunteers are important to both organizations, because resources for urban parks are often scarce. Mikash said, the more volunteers, the more invasive species removed. "This land is your land!" said Mikash. "Join the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes, the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership, and Friends of Lower Lake to restore a local ecosystem in your own backyard."

The National Environmental Education Foundation reported that last year 113,055 volunteers worked 452,220 volunteer hours at 1,176 sites across the country on National Public Lands Day.

Volunteering is free but the organizations ask that you register so they can plan. Contact Kristina Arthur, volunteer coordinator at the Nature Center, at arthur@shakerlakes.org, or 216-321-5935. Families with school-age children or older, teens, and groups are welcome.

Work will be done at the dam on Brook Road at the west end of the lake. Parking is available on South Park Boulevard and on the surrounding side streets. Please bring a labeled reusable water bottle. Gloves and tools will be provided.

Peggy Spaeth is co-chair of Friends of Lower Lake with John Barber. Her personal goal is to have 100 volunteers at Lower Lake for National Public Lands Day.

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Heights Heritage Home & Garden Tour is Sept. 15

Susan Roberts

The 42nd annual Home & Garden Tour, presented by Heights Community Congress (HCC), will be held on Sunday, Sept. 15, from noon to 6 p.m. This year's theme is Timeless Elegance, and the tour will feature homes and gardens in Cleveland Heights' historic Coventry and Fairmount neighborhoods.

The five homes on the tour, two of which have gardens, were all designed and built in the early 20th century, and are a testament to the timelessness of quality workmanship. Their elegance is displayed in ornate carved woodwork, beautiful molding and plaster friezes, hand-wrought ironwork, and expert tile work,



This full-yard garden on Bradford Road thoughtfully uses every inch of space for plantings and habitats for pollinators.

among the many special features. There are also three stand-alone gardens to visit on the tour. Refreshments will be available at Fairmount Presbyterian Church from 2 to 4 p.m.

This year's featured homes com-

prise an English manor house with an enviable collection of vinyl records and CDs, and a lush border garden; a "sister" house next door with contemporary furnishings, and a renovated kitchen with an eye-catching

green marble table; a bright and spacious Tudor house that combines contemporary, art nouveau, and Craftsman-style furnishings with an intriguing mix of contemporary, and sometimes offbeat, artwork; a classic medieval-style house, owned by a self-described Anglophile, and notable for its carved woodwork and motifs, and its clay-tiled roof; and an English cottage and garden, first owned by a Cleveland toymaker and designed to appear larger than its actual size.

Then, there are the gardens: a playful, colorful space integrating many found objects of glass, wood

and iron carefully placed by its imaginative owner; a garden of plants, birdhouses and feeders, as well as habitats for pollinators, such as bees and butterflies; and a backyard garden that features a flowery border of annuals and perennials around a travertine patio.

The traditional preview party is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 14, in Tucker Hall at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. A limited number of tour sponsorships and preview party tickets may still be available by calling HCC at 216-321-6775 before Friday, Sept. 6.

Tickets for the Sunday tour can be purchased online at www.heightscongress.org, or in person at Appletree Books, Bremec's on the Heights, Dunn Hardware, Heinen's at South Green Road, Stone Oven on Lee Road, Tommy's restaurant, and Zagara's Marketplace. The cost of tour-only tickets is \$20 per person through Labor Day, and \$25 thereafter, including the day of the tour.

Susan Roberts led the home search for Heights Community Congress's Tour Planning Committee this year.

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CH Senior Center News

Amy Jenkins

On Tuesday, Sept. 10, 11 a.m., at the Cleveland Heights Senior Activity Center (SAC), Dennis Sutcliffe and Lost Cleveland Memories will present "Meet Me at Gate A – Cleveland Municipal stadium in the 1930s." This free program will explore the vision for a city-owned venue that would draw thousands of people downtown for myriad events, including boxing, college and high school football, track and soccer, operas, and community celebrations with baseball as the lynchpin. It was expected that the stadium would bolster the local economy, increase tax revenues, and elevate Cleveland's national status. But there was a problem—the Cleveland Indians didn't want to play there!

On Tuesday, Sept. 17, 11 a.m., SAC's partnership with University Circle's distance-learning program continues with a lecture on "Healing Plants" from the Royal Botanical Gardens. After an exploration of plants used in traditional healing, that also provide inspiration for botanicals, the program will also consider their sustainability and impact on biodiversity.

The second part of the "Healing Plants" program will take place on Tuesday, Sept. 24, when participants will travel to Holden Arboretum for a special tram tour of Holden's forest and gardens. The tour will point out

highlights of the season throughout the grounds, and there will be ample time for personal wandering or explorations of the Murch Canopy Walk or the Emergent Tower. Those who don't want to explore will be treated to a talk about Holden's rare book collection.

Advance registration and payment for the "Healing Plants" program is required, as trip seating is limited. The fee is \$20 for the Sept. 17 lecture and Sept. 24 trip; \$5 for the lecture only.

The Cleveland Heights SAC, located in the CH Community Center at 1 Monticello Blvd., offers a variety of programming for those 60 and older. A complete schedule of programs is published in the community center's newsletter, available online at www.chparks.com.

SAC membership is \$5 for Cleveland Heights residents. To sign up, bring a recent piece of mail (such as a bill) and a photo ID.

University Heights residents who would like to join SAC must first register with Patrick Grogan-Myers, University Heights community development coordinator, at 216-932-7800, ext. 203, or pgrogan@universityheights.com. Membership is \$10 for University Heights seniors.

Amy Jenkins is supervisor at the Cleveland Heights Office on Aging and the Senior Activity Center. She can be reached at 216-691-7379 or by e-mail at ajenkins@clvhts.com.

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Cleveland Heights - University Heights Board of Education

Meeting highlights

AUGUST 6, 2019

Board members present were President Jodi Sourini, Vice President James Posch, Dan Heintz, Malia Lewis and Beverly Wright. Also present were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby and Treasurer Scott Gainer. The meeting began at 7 p.m. and ended at 7:50 p.m.

Recognitions

The board thanked Brian Williams for acting as interim superintendent, and congratulated the summer graduation class of 14 students.

Board policy approvals

The board unanimously approved the final 15 policy changes—the last of the policy changes it has worked on for the past year.



Treasurer's five-year forecast

Treasurer Gainer presented the five-year forecast and commented on it. The Ed-Choice voucher program will cost the district about \$4 million from 2019 to 2020.

The levy that passed in November 2016 was calculated to last three years but has lasted four years.

Middle schools update

The middle schools' construction is on time and on budget. Public open houses will be held at Monticello Middle School on Sept. 15, and at Roxboro Middle School on Sept. 22.

LWV Observer: Adele Cohn.

Look for earlier and often expanded postings of meeting summaries online at www.heightsobserver.org. See disclaimer on page 12.



Monticello Middle School

MIDDLE SCHOOLS continued from page 1

upgraded building,” said Rachael Coleman, Roxboro’s principal. “Our school theme for this year is ‘Homecoming’ because we’re coming back to the school that feels like home to us.”

“We really are lucky to have the privilege of being the first cohort of educators and students to walk these new halls,” said Jeff Johnston, Monticello’s principal. “I’m very thankful to the community for their support of this project and of our students.”

Cathan Cavanaugh is the supervisor of communications for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

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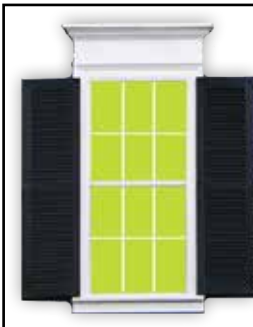
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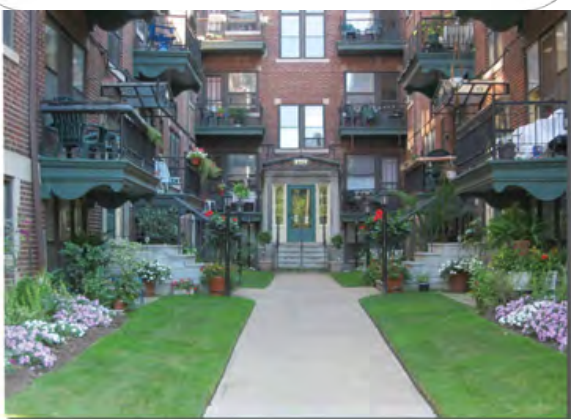
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Library reaches out to non-users for Library Card Sign-Up Month

Sheryl Banks

September is National Library Card Sign-Up Month, a campaign established in 1987 by the American Library Association and the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. The campaign was designed to encourage parents and their children to sign up for library cards at the start of the school year.

In keeping with this original mission, Heights Libraries will be reaching out to kids this month, sending library card sign-up flyers home with school-aged children, and offering prizes to kids who check out a book with their new cards. The cover of the library's fall program guide, *Check Us Out*, also encourages kids to get cards, proclaiming that

"a library card is the most important school supply of all."

This year, for the first time, library staff will also focus specifically on adults.

"A surprising number of adult residents don't have library cards," said Nancy Levin, Heights Libraries director. "We've compared our population to the number of card holders, and it's clear that not everyone has a card—about 60 percent of residents have cards—so we're heading out into the community to find those folks who don't and see if we can get them signed up."

Library staff will set up tables at Zagara's Markerplace, Whole Foods, and elsewhere to talk to people about the benefits of having a library card. If someone doesn't have one, library staff can sign them up on the

spot, as long as they have a photo ID and live, work or own property in Ohio.

"It's really important that we get out of our buildings and talk to residents," said Isabelle Rew, the library's community engagement associate. "It's true that plenty of people without cards still enter our buildings and use our services—you don't need a card to sit and read the paper or even use a computer—but we really want to reach the people who either don't know about us or who know about us but don't have cards."

Staff especially want to find out why a community member may not have a card, even if they know about the library. That information could help guide the library's outreach and communications efforts, as well as offer insight into present-day attitudes about public libraries.

"It's possible they just don't think we have anything they want or need," said Rew. "And I would love to show them otherwise."

In addition to providing free access to materials such as books, movies and music, the library buildings offer access to resources that can be essential to people's lives, including high-speed Internet, printing and faxing, reference help, study and meeting rooms, low-cost copies, and a space to spend time in that does not require a purchase or have a time limit.

"Some people still think libraries are just about books," said Rew. "We love books, and we have plenty, but we're so much more."

Sheryl Banks is the communications manager for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System.



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Cleveland Heights - University Heights Public Library Board Meeting highlights



JULY 15, 2019

Present were Board President Chris Mentrek, Vice President James Roosa, and board members Annette Iwamoto, Susan Moskowitz and Vikas Turakhia. Dana Fluellen and Max Gerboc were absent.

Financial report

The board reviewed and accepted the February financial statement. Total cash balance across the operating accounts, Bauer Fund accounts, and investment accounts at the end of June was \$15,032,248.60.

Service and Administrative Policies

The board approved the Service and Administrative Policies as amended for 2019. The updated policies will be posted on the library's website. Policies relating to non-smoking, photography, service animals, and meeting room guidelines are among the updates.

Lee Road chiller rental

The board approved rental of a chiller for a 12-week period, at a cost of \$35,589, to maintain a comfortable air temperature in the Lee Road Branch, until the main air conditioning unit can be repaired in the fall.

Parking lot improvements

The board authorized contracts in the amount of \$11,535 for parking lot crack sealing, commercial seal-coating, and line striping at the Lee Road, Noble Neighborhood and University Heights branches.

Summer reading programs

Youth summer reading numbers are up 79 percent and adult summer reading numbers are up 24 percent, with three weeks remaining in the program. New this year: day cares and preschools can track daily reading and are eligible for a book prize at the end of the program.

Equipment for Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Park

Soccer balls, Frisbees, Wiffle balls and bats, kickballs, footballs, bases, and cones are now available to check out from the Coventry Village Branch for three hours to use in the park.

New monthly podcast

Hosted by Jessica Robinson, local history librarian, "Living in the Heights" is a monthly podcast that features interviews with local groups and individuals who have stories to share about the Heights community that are of historical interest. The podcast will also offer information on upcoming local history programs, including new additions to the Ohio Memory digital archive, and tips on researching local history. The podcast can be accessed on Google Play and the iTunes store.

Summer lunch program

Heights Libraries Summer Lunch Program, through the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, kicked off on

June 3 and runs through Aug. 9. Youth service programming and projects are provided twice a week; coding and technology-related programming is provided once a week. In June, Heights Libraries served 502 lunches to 309 individual children.

LWV Observer: Elizabeth M. Tracy.

AUGUST 5, 2019

Present were Board President Chris Mentrek, Vice President James Roosa, and board members Dana Fluellen, Max Gerboc. Susan Moskowitz and Vikas Turakhia.

Library board bylaws

The board approved the bylaws as amended for 2019. The updated policies will be posted on the library's website.

Materials evaluation and selection policy

The board approved the materials evaluation and selection policy of the CH-UH Public Library System as amended for 2019. The updated policies will be posted on the library's website.

Compressor replacement

The board approved replacing a rooftop compressor at the Washington Boulevard building (the former Coventry school) to be compatible with the building's current HVAC system at a cost of \$14,766. Tenants will pay back this cost.

Waterproofing project

Bid specifications for the Coventry Village Branch waterproofing project will be published Aug. 7 and 14 in the *Plain Dealer*. The board will hold a special meeting Sept. 3 to accept and award a bid.

Community survey on website

The public is encouraged to share community aspirations as part of the library's strategic planning process. A link on the library website leads to a brief survey.

Book Bike

In July, the Book Bike distributed more than 200 young adult and children's books.

Voter registration

The library reminds all citizens to check their voter registration on the Ohio Secretary of State website: www.sos.state.oh.us/elections/voters.

LWV Observer: Elizabeth M. Tracy.

Look for earlier and often expanded postings of meeting summaries online at www.heightsobserver.org. See disclaimer on page 12.

City managers are not immune to corruption

Jeanne Gordan

The August *Heights Observer* contained a series of opinions written by former members of the Cleveland Heights Charter Review Commission and members of the Cleveland Heights Citizens for Good Government PAC. They had headlines containing words like “risk,” “conflict,” “cronyism” and “politics.” The authors went heavy on the scare tactics, regaling readers with examples of directly elected mayors acting badly. They claim the only way to prevent scary outcomes and bad behavior is to rely on city managers and “professionalism.”

The problem with such a contention is that professionalism does not guarantee the absence of corruption, or cronyism, or conflict, or even politics. We all have read about corrupt professionals—doctors who scam Medicaid, business persons who skirt regulations, attorneys who embezzle client funds—professions of all sorts are at risk of having corrupt professionals in their ranks.

In fact, corruption and cronyism can occur among city managers. A city manager in California, Robert Rizzo, received a 12-year prison sentence for a \$6 million corruption scheme that nearly bankrupted the city (www.nydailynews.com/news/crime/bell-calif-city-manager-12-years-prison-9-million-corruption-scheme-article-1.1758564). A Michigan city manager, Brian Kischnick, was sentenced to 30 months in prison this past January for bribery and pay-to-play scheming with city contractors (www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/oakland/2019/01/21/troy-city-manager-bribery-case/2632999002/). The city manager of Opa-Locka, Fla., two city officials, and the mayor’s son were indicted on multiple corruption charges. Opa-Locka’s new city manager also came under a cloud of suspicion for corruption and was fired after nine months (www.miaminewtimes.com/news/opa-lockas-new-city-manager-accused-of-corruption-by-whistleblower-9704840). In Texas, Crystal City’s city manager was sentenced to 35 years in prison for fraud, theft and bribery—a scheme that also implicated the mayor and most members of council

(texasmonitor.org/city-manager-in-crystal-city-sentenced-to-35-years-in-prison/).

Going tit for tat on risks of corruption, cronyism, conflict and politics between a council-manager or mayor-council form of government, however, does nothing to help Cleveland Heights voters decide which form of government is right to move our beloved city forward.

Political systems have forever fallen prey to abuse of power. James Madison’s answer to this was to incorporate checks and balances into the Constitution in the form of three distinct branches of government—something the council-manager form of government lacks.

Interestingly, while council-manager proponents assert that professionalism provides checks and balances that reduce corruption and produce better results, a University of Illinois professor determined in a 2015 study (<https://indigo.uic.edu/bitstream/handle/10027/20131/Carr%20C%20PAR%20Text%20and%20Tables%20C%20Final%20Version.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>) that the empirical evidence is inconclusive. He did find, however, that council-manager cities experience lower voter turnout. And voters are key in demanding transparency and sunshine.

I believe that a directly elected mayor, with an appointed city administrator, provides for both professionalism and checks and balances. I believe that in a county where 55 of 57 municipalities have directly elected executive mayors, Cleveland Heights is at a disadvantage. I believe a directly elected mayor will do a better job engaging citizens and setting forth a vision by which to be judged.

I can advocate for what I believe and attempt to sway voters to my point of view without turning to “corruption, conflict, cronyism . . . oh, my” scare tactics. I can and do trust the residents of Cleveland Heights to determine the manner in which they wish to be governed—and I trust they can determine that without being frightened.

Jeanne Gordan is a member of Citizens for an Elected Mayor.



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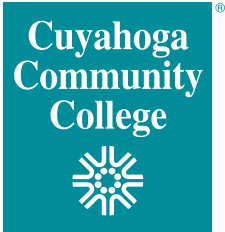
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Exhibition explores 'digital paradox'

Laura Freeman

Heights Arts kicks off its fall exhibition season with *Untouched: The Digital Paradox*.

Matthew Hollern, professor and chair of jewelry and metals at the Cleveland Institute of Art, is the guest curator for the show, which explores the evolving role of technology in the creation of art.

"Sometimes the digital history of an object is apparent," said Hollern. "At other times the role of technology is there but it's invisible. Sometimes a work seems like digital trickery but it is actually not. Digital work can really challenge assumptions."

Artists in the show are George Kozmon, Barry Underwood, // Benitez_Vogl (Margarita Benitez and Markus Vogl), Janice Lessman-Moss, Marcus Brathwaite, Tony Ingrisano, Yasniel Valdes, and Matthew Hollern. The exhibit is on view through Oct. 13.

On Thursday, Sept. 26, 7 p.m., Ekphrastacy will feature a group of invited poets who'll perform original poems inspired by work in the *Untouched* exhibition, along with brief artist talks. It's a free event full of poetry, prose and artistic reflection.

For a musical event, stop in to



Linear Construction #10, photograph by Barry Underwood.

the gallery on Saturday, Sept. 7, 7 p.m., to hear No Exit open its season with new music for ensemble and cimbalom, with guest artist Chester Englander. This is a free event with complimentary refreshments and cash bar.

In the Spotlight gallery this month is work by photographer and mixed media artist Jamie Richey. Visit Friday, Sept. 13, 6-9 p.m., for the opening reception. This show will be on view through Oct. 27.

For more information on Heights Arts community programs and events, including house concerts, gallery performances and outreach, visit www.heightsarts.org.

Laurel Freeman is a marketing intern at Heights Arts.

White Gallery fall show opens Sept. 6

Robin M. Outcalt

The Nicholson B. White Gallery at St. Paul's Church invites the public to an artists' reception on Friday, Sept. 6, 5-7, p.m., to view work by photographer Thomas Abel, painters Patricia Ingram and Jerome T. White, and textile artist Martha Young.

Abel took the photographs in the 1950s and '70s in France, mostly in Paris, using the distinctively rich Kodachrome color film. He studied and worked in France for part of his life, and became fascinated with the architecture. His images capture a time gone by in one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Abel worked for more than 30 years in Cleveland as an architectural photographer and photographic artist. While in France, he met his wife, who shared his love of art and architecture. With the encouragement and assistance of his family, the White Gallery is thrilled to show Abel's work.

Depicting subjects closer to home, Ingram has earned recognition as a painter of Cleveland buildings and sites. Her cityscape murals adorn the walls of Cleveland's recently renovated Garfield Building, and she has played a role in restoring grand spaces, such as the Marble Room in the former National City Bank building. An appreciation of various architectural styles is evident in her bold paintings.

A well-established artist and educator, White paints people and other living beings. A recurring theme in his work is the Underground Railroad, an exploration of the journey and its adversity. Ancestry and fatherhood are other themes



Wall Doll, by Martha Young.

depicted in his rich, expressive paintings about human experience. White is a teacher in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District, and author/illustrator of a children's book.

Young, a textile artist, uses fabrics from all over the world to create her wall dolls, showcasing materials she acquired through her extensive travels, or received as gifts. Each doll is unique. Her early pieces have eyes, but no mouths, and none have hair. To embellish the dolls, she adds beads, shells, buttons and other found items. Young began making dolls after attending a workshop by the Textile Art Alliance, of which she is a member. She is also a much-appreciated longtime member of the gallery committee at St. Paul's.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church is located at 2747 Fairmount Blvd. The nonprofit gallery is open weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and weekends, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Robin M. Outcalt is a committee member of the White Gallery at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Cleveland Heights.

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SONGS AND STORIES

David Budin

I've noticed that when I hear groups of people singing, for instance, the "Happy Birthday" song, in restaurants and in videos, that almost everyone in the group is singing in a key that's different than everyone else's. And they don't notice. Or care. That's not the way it was when I was a kid. It was unusual when one person sang out of key.

I don't think it's a coincidence that I remember, and almost everyone I've asked who went to Cleveland Heights elementary schools from the 1930s through the '60s remembers, that there was a piano in every elementary school classroom, and that every teacher knew how to play it.

I attended Coventry School in the '50s. We did music with our teacher every day, and with a traveling Heights schools music specialist once a week. In addition, starting in third grade, kids could take lessons, once a week, for free, on an individual instrument, with one of the junior high music teachers. I took drum lessons, using drumsticks on a rubber practice pad, from Wilbur Turner, who later served as my band director at Roosevelt Junior High.

At some point, probably in the '70s, the music-every-day thing went away. When my kids went to Heights elementary schools in the mid-'80s and '90s, there was little music in the classroom. Maybe none. In school talent shows, literally every time a kid or group of kids, black and white, said they had written a song, it was always a rap. There's nothing wrong with rap, but a rap, by itself, is not a song; it's a poem.

My son's elementary school did have an orchestra. It was made up of only fifth-graders, and it met only once a week, for 20 minutes (the second half of their lunch period). And the orchestra's sound reflected exactly how much time was spent rehearsing. I used to have to sit through those concerts, and the only way I could tolerate them was, literally, to pretend I was listening to experimental, atonal music. It wasn't the music teacher's fault; the school, or the school system no longer valued the arts at that time. Not enough, anyway.

When my son was in third grade, his private violin teacher suggested that he join his school orchestra. She thought the experience would be good for him, and I agreed.

I took him to see the music teacher, but he informed me right away that the orchestra was open only to fifth-graders. I ignored him and told my son to take his violin out of the case and play something. After my son had played about four measures, the teacher said, "Okay. He can join. But you'll need to clear it

with the principal."

I met with the principal and explained the situation. She looked at his class schedule and told me that it would not be possible, because at the time the orchestra met, he would be having a math class. "And," she said, "we can't have him missing math for something like music."

I've been a professional musician since the age of 12 . . . but I kept outwardly calm. And I pointed out that he would be missing only half of one math class, once a week, and that if he started falling behind in math, we would work with him on it (more) at home. And that while math is something we were able to work with him on, we could not provide him an orchestra experience. And if working with him at home wasn't working, we'd pull him out of the orchestra. She said, "No, we just can't have him missing something like math for something like music."

I told my son to show up at orchestra rehearsals, anyway, and that if he got in trouble with the principal to tell her I told him to do it and for her to call me. I wrote a note to his classroom teacher, telling her that he'd be going to orchestra rehearsals and to let us know if she noticed it affecting his math work. I never heard anything from the teacher or the principal, and my son enjoyed his time in the orchestra. And then he played in the esteemed Heights High Orchestra for all four years he was there, and in Cleveland's great Contemporary Youth Orchestra for several years.

There is a massive amount of evidence, from many studies, showing how important learning music is to learning everything else, for children and adults.

I used to mention that in the speeches I made every year, for 15 years, on behalf of the Friends of Cain Park, at Heights High's Senior Awards Night, when I presented their arts scholarship. And I also discussed how being in the Heights Choir had literally saved my life, and that I was sure I was far from being the only kid to have had similar experiences. And I would say, to the administrators and board members seated behind me, "So keep these things in mind the next time a levy fails and you're looking for something to cut."

But it probably wasn't totally necessary to tell them. The Heights school system seems to have come back around to understanding the value of arts education. Plus there are organizations like Reaching Heights that support and encourage and supplement music education in the schools.

And someday everyone—at least in Cleveland Heights—will sing "Happy Birthday" in tune again. There IS hope for the world.

David Budin is a freelance writer for national and local publications, the former editor of Cleveland Magazine and Northern Ohio Live, an author, and a professional musician and comedian. His writing focuses on the arts and, especially, pop-music history.



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