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

## CH ballot Issue 6 is one step in transition

Kim Sergio Inglis

On the Nov. 3 election ballot, Cleveland Heights voters are being asked to vote ‘yes’ or ‘no’ on Issue 6—a proposed city charter amendment that reads as follows:

“Shall Article VII, Sections 3, 4, and 5 of the Charter of the City of Cleveland Heights be amended to provide that candidates for all elected offices shall file petitions with the election authorities not later than 4:00 p.m. on the ninetieth (90th) day prior to the date set for the primary election?”

Ballot Issue 6 pertains to the city’s mayoral elections—the first of which will take place in fall 2021. In November 2019, CH voters approved ballot Issue 26, a charter amendment to change the city’s government from the current council-manager form to a mayor-council form, in which resi-



Cleveland Heights City Hall.

dents directly elect the city’s mayor. The winning candidate in November 2021 will take office on Jan. 1, 2022.

This year’s ballot issue is intended to clarify ambiguity in the city’s charter. According to Mayor/

President of Council Jason Stein, “The way the charter is currently written, candidates have 180 days to collect signatures, and not less than 90 days to turn them in, but [it] doesn’t

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## Fairmount School of Music becomes Musicologie CH



Kevin and Patricia Richards of Musicologie Cleveland Heights.

David Budin

Folk musicians—like me and, for instance, fellow traditional- and roots-music artist Kevin Richards—are, by nature, somewhat more resistant to changing how we do things. That’s why we continue to play old music, rather than, say, electro-punk or funk-

tronicanica.

Richards has been running the Fairmount School of Music, with his wife, Patricia, for 32 years—in the same location (3473 Fairmount Blvd.) and in the same way. But the COVID-19 pandemic has forced them—like almost everyone else—to

*continued on page 11*

## Crowe named head of Peacemakers Alliance

Ken Wood

Myesha Crowe, an experienced youth-development professional, is the new executive director of Cleveland Peacemakers Alliance (CPA).



Myesha Crowe

COURTESY KEN WOOD

A nonprofit violence-prevention organization, CPA conducts street outreach in the city’s higher-risk neighborhoods, provides violence interruption services at MetroHealth Medical Center and University Hospitals, and helps youths in the juvenile court system find positive paths.

Crowe lives in Cleveland Heights with her daughters Elle, 7, and Cori, 3.

She served as the group’s interim director, and holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in social work from Cleveland State University.

A Cleveland native and John Marshall High School graduate, Crowe was raised by a single mother. During her childhood, her family moved more than 20 times, and she transferred schools about 15 times. She is the first in her family to graduate from college and graduate school.

Cleveland Peacemakers Alliance Board Chair Kevin Griffin announced the appointment. “The board is enthusiastic about the next phase of the Cleveland Peacemakers Alliance,” Griffin said. “We are

*continued on page 8*

## ‘Heights Conversations’ continue virtually

Sruti Basu

In spring 2020, a group of nonprofit and public-facing organizations, led by Heights Community Congress (HCC), planned to host conversations in which diverse groups of Heights residents would come together around a shared meal to have conversations centered around race to raise awareness and build community. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, thwarted those plans.

As the year wore on, it became apparent to group leaders that discussions about race were more urgent and neces-

sary than ever, and they sought a way to move forward, with participant safety as a top priority. At 3 p.m., on Sunday, Nov. 15, the group will host “Heights Conversations: Let’s Talk About Race,” virtually.

Organizers are seeking community members to participate as facilitators



and participants. The conversations will be held via Zoom, in small groups, using the breakout-rooms feature. In each breakout room, two trained facilitators, and up to 10 participants, will meet for a guided conversation.

Several community groups are coordinating the conversations: HCC, FutureHeights, Reaching Heights, Heights Libraries, Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District, Home Repair Resource Center, and Compass Consulting.

“Our goal is to raise awareness of

*continued on page 22*



## 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](http://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](http://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](mailto:info@futureheights.org).

Articles to be considered for the November issue must be submitted by Oct. 12. 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.

# Thank you, from the bottom of Tommy's heart

Tommy Fello

This has taken longer to write than I intended, mostly because it is hard to put into words the feelings of gratitude I have experienced over the last several months.

Beginning on March 16, and through May 3, Tommy's shut its doors for the longest period ever since our 1972 opening. While we were closed, loyal customers purchased huge amounts of gift cards, without knowing when we would re-open and they could redeem them. This gesture was the first of countless, incredible displays of love and kindness. You showed up to support us when there were so many unknowns. This gesture was such a light in a really dark and scary time.

On May 4 we opened for curbside service only. We had limited staff because many were understandably concerned about returning to work during a global pandemic. Staff that did come back worked in areas with which they were unfamiliar, but they adapted and learned without hesitation. Some of them have been working with me for over 20 years, doing the same jobs, and had to learn new positions. They did this with so much eagerness and patience. To those who came back even though you were worried for your health and well-being, I know you did this to support your co-workers, my family and me, and for that I will never be able to say thank you enough. Our team is full of special people. You are the best of the best,



Tommy's is offering in-person dining on the patio at the now-closed Panini's Bar and Grill.

and I am a lucky man to have you as my Tommy's family.

Throughout my nearly 50 years of being in business, I have had the good fortune of having the "Coventry Village Community" (though many are now all around the world) take me under its wings and provide generous support.

That was undeniable on May 4. You showed up and supported us, not only by ordering food, but by being so patient and generous with our Tommy's family while we worked out the kinks of "Operation Tommy's Curbside." We were short-staffed,

and went from 10 percent takeout to 100 percent. There was a definite learning curve, but not one employee, and very few customers, complained. Our Tommy's family was happy to be back at work, making the food and shakes that so many missed, and our customers were happy to be supporting us, learning curve and all.

The city of Cleveland Heights and the police department also stepped up for us, graciously allowing us to use five meters in front of the restaurant for curbside.

Our volume of business through-

*continued on page 18*

## Why my family supports Issue 69

To the Editor:

My family and I have lived in Cleveland Heights since 2001. After beginning their education with wonderful years at Canterbury Elementary School, our daughters (now 20 and 17) switched to the private school where my husband worked. We continued to support every CH-UH levy during this time because we understand the value of strong public schools to the entire community.

In 2018 our younger daughter, Lily, asked to tour Heights High. Coming from a small, high-touch private-school experience, I suspected we [might] receive an impersonal introduction. How wrong I was. Joy Henderson provided thoughtful, individualized support and guidance as Lily learned about Heights and considered making the change. Lily started Heights as a ninth-grader and has loved it from day one.

Now a junior, Lily enjoys a challenging schedule of AP and honors classes, and is in her third year of Swim Cadets.

She loves the school community—she's met teachers she truly respects and has made great friends. Lily tells everyone who asks that returning to Heights schools was the best decision she ever made—and we agree.

Today, we still support the CH-UH levy because we believe in public schools. But now, our support is also based on first-hand, up-close experience.

We urge everyone to support the most important expression of community, our schools, and vote for Issue 69 to ensure that Lily—and students across the district—can continue to have such a high-quality educational experience for years to come.

Kirsten Fawcett-Dubow  
Cleveland Heights

## School levy defeat would defund our public schools

To the Editor:

For those trying to cut through all the nonsense and figure out whether to vote for the school levy this fall, here's a simple check to see if the levy request is reasonable:

- In Ohio, the dollar amount raised from levies is fixed, so as prices (and hopefully home values) rise with inflation, the amount raised to fund the schools does not rise. That means if we don't pass a levy every few years, we are effectively defunding public schools.

- With inflation hovering around 2 percent per year, prices rise about 8 percent every four years.
- The CH-UH district receives about \$72 million per year in local property taxes; 8 percent of \$72 million is about \$6 million.

Conclusion: All else being equal, we need to pass a levy for an additional \$6 million per year every four years or so if we don't want to defund the public schools.

The last time we passed a school levy was in 2016, and the proposed levy on the ballot this November would raise about \$5 million per year. The fact that this amount is lower than what one would expect just from inflation reflects the belt-tightening that our school board has already been doing, and expects to continue doing.

Of course, not everything else is equal: you can delve deeper into the numbers for enrollment, pay scales, benefits, administrators, changes to state funding levels, and state-mandated EdChoice payouts; some influence the numbers one way, some the other way. But the bottom line is that our school board has already trimmed millions from the budget, and it is critical that we pass this levy to support our kids, our public institutions, and our community.

Jesse Berezofsky  
Cleveland Heights



## District prioritizes athletics over other programs

Jessica Smith

The school district is prioritizing student athletics over other, safer extracurriculars and, more importantly, over providing special-education services to students with disabilities.

This isn't about being anti-athletics, I am not; they serve an important role in the development and mental health of children, but they have their proper place, which is not at the front of the reopening line.

When asked about this, Superintendent Kirby and the school board members have expressed they are following the guidelines, which is false. The CDC guidelines published in May indicate that playing sports against other local teams is a level 4 risk (5 being the highest). The Cuyahoga County Board of Health is recommending discontinuing athletics during virtual learning. Adding spectators, even just families, increases that unnecessary risk of furthering community spread. It is bad policy from a public health standpoint, and it is bad policy in terms of priorities.

Kirby indicated that [the district] didn't have a plan to provide in-person services because [the district] thought it would open in person for all; however, during all board meetings over the summer, [board members and administrators] reiterated multiple times that there would be a contingency plan if the district had to be remote again. Clearly, maintaining special-education services was not part of that plan.

Special-education services for district students was mentioned in one e-mail in April, when they switched to tier 3 learning. Then, nothing, until a poorly worded e-mail on Sept. 12 stated that only children with "low-incidence disabilities who have intensive needs" may be able to start receiving services later in the month.

The district doesn't get to pick and choose which children receive appropriate access to the services it is legally obligated to provide. Legal precedent, out of the U.S. District Court in New York, indicates that services should be in-person whenever safe to do so. If a coach can meet with an entire football team safely, my child can meet one-on-one with his physical therapist.

I'm angry, I'm disappointed, I'm frustrated. I feel the district is ignoring special-education needs and instead falling for the popularity of student athletics. I recognize, especially right now, athletics can be very helpful for students. But they should not be the priority.

District families deserve better. [Those who] raised concerns should have received a proper acknowledgment and response, not excuses and dismissal. [The district had] months to plan, and yet we have nothing but a "we are working on it." That isn't good enough, and I for one am done waiting. I will surely be keeping this in mind when filling out my ballot.

*Jessica Smith is a Cleveland Heights resident and parent of two young children.*

## Levy opponents outline concerns in letter to BOE

Maureen Lynn

On Sept. 2, a slightly longer version of the following letter was sent to the CH-UH Board of Education (BOE), Superintendent Kirby and Treasurer Gainer. As of Sept. 14, I had yet to get a single response. These "leaders" are ignoring their fiduciary responsibilities. We need to hold them accountable and demand more transparency. Vote "no" on Issue 69.

Dear School Board Members,

On July 28, TigerNation4LowerTaxes (TN4LT) reached out to let you know that a petition had been signed by over 800 residents asking you to request a performance audit by the state auditor as soon as possible and prior to voting to place a levy on the November 2020 ballot. Today, over 1,600 residents have signed the petition and joined the call for a performance audit.

We received a response from [BOE President] Sourini, stating that residents' calls for a performance audit were not going unheeded, and that we "simply did not like" the answer that was provided. That answer, according to Ms. Sourini, is that the district reached out to the auditor's office and was told it could take several months to get on the schedule and then six months to complete the audit. She

also stated that this timetable was before COVID-19, which could delay the process further. The State Auditor[us office], however, has stated that the pandemic has not impacted its ability to conduct performance audits and has not created a backlog.

On July 28, TN4LT also presented a revised five-year forecast to demonstrate that it is possible for the district to operate without additional levies. We are disappointed that you have chosen not to engage with us in a meaningful effort to review the district's forecast. To his credit, [BOE member Jim] Posch responded via e-mail on July 29 that he was grateful for our constructive feedback, and committed to review the revised forecast and provide us with a list of questions regarding our assumptions/projections.

In an opinion published in the *Heights Observer* on Aug. 18, a group of 18 residents called on the Schools to "fix" health care spending. That opinion stated that if the CH-UH school district's health care contract were similar to the Shaker school district's health care contract, it could potentially save our taxpayers more than \$7 million a year.

The CH-UH district's August 2020 Five-Year Forecast shows a \$53.2 million deficit by 2025. Even

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# It's time to move on Millikin

Susan Efroymson

On Sept. 3, the CH-UH Board of Education (BOE) voted to reject further discussion of proposals [for Millikin], brought to them by unanimous vote of Cleveland Heights City Council, [that were] in response to years of citizens seeking progress at the Millikin site and the desire to increase [tax] revenue. [Many] residents are appalled. How is refusing to explore [new] revenue possibilities a good idea, while [the BOE has proposed] levying residents for more revenue? The audit the BOE refused to undertake might have shown great possibilities could come from developing the Millikin property. Council [members], like many districtwide, believe it holds much promise.

With a declining population, the district will need to close more buildings. Millikin should be a warning to every neighborhood in the district: Coming soon to your neighborhood! For years the area endured the drug and gun deals that occur on neglected, abandoned properties. The building sits underutilized as a storage facility, with the ramshackle stables sporting graffiti.

The building is a loss to the district, costing tens of thousands [of dollars] a year to maintain. Off-loading it off-loads that cost. Multiply that savings over years.

No developer is going to buy that land when it means taking on the cost of tearing down the asbestos-laden building. Offers haven't exactly been pouring in. Hence CH council, responding to its citizens, offered a deal that would see much needed, awaited and desired development.

Without the oft-used procedure of the \$1 sale price, no one will even look at developing it, and Millikin remains a financial drain; unrealized potential. Fewer students require fewer buildings. A good disposition should be a priority. The Millikin neighborhood has been waiting for action for nearly 15 years.

Imagine if it had been developed right away and [had been generating] funds for years already!

Without abatements, we lose. Not the developer. He'll simply find another place to develop and make his money where he's wanted. Abatements are SOP [standard operating procedure] for attracting projects. This is the standard path to seeing future revenue. There are multiple [sources] of potential income to be explored. Some with short-term benefit, others with larger benefit long term. Declining to explore them follows a pattern. There are ample examples where the school district might have seen income, but turned that down (such as Gearity, Wiley and Coventry).

To be fair, after many years of nothing, the BOE returned a small playground—far less than the attraction neighborhood kids enjoyed when Millikin was open. Now, the adjoining backyard looks like more fun. A neighborhood group should be commended for making the best of the [playground] with paint and marigolds. It wouldn't present a challenge to move [it] in order to maintain a small playground in the new housing development. That's an easy lift.

The BOE needs to *educate*. The Millikin land remains tax abated for as long as it doesn't sell—already 15 years! Without the deal, we have no funds now, none in the future, and continue to lose money on maintenance. Move forward and possibilities exist, but history shows no other interest will be forthcoming. Turn this down, we get nothing. Go forward and the possibilities tally in the millions. It's time to bring in much-needed revenue for CH-UH public schools from the Millikin land. Put it back on the table.

*Susan Efroymson is active in the neighborhood and community, serving on CH's Refuse and Recycling Task Force and the CEM Transition Subcommittee. She was a Millikin parent and still lives just around the corner from the former school.*

# BOE can no longer abdicate its responsibility for Millikin

Jessica Cohen

In a single-family housing district, 11 acres sit almost abandoned. They're home to a decaying building only used for storage, a historic stable now used for school district equipment, and some lovely, but uncared for, woodlands. This property is generating zero tax dollars for the school district or the city, and has been a community liability since 2006, when the CH-UH school district closed the Millikin school. An attempt to sell it for \$650,000 collapsed when it was discovered that bringing the building up to code would entail millions of dollars in abatement. That revelation left the property essentially worthless, and the school board barely gave it another thought until this year, when the city of Cleveland Heights proposed a transfer of the property to the city, to entertain development proposals.

After acknowledging in March 2020 that it had no use for the property, the school board, in September, tabled the transfer of Millikin, citing three reasons: a lack of a revenue-generating proposal from the city, an inability to focus on this issue while managing the other needs of the district, and a desire to preserve the historic stables and woodlands. To these weak justifications I offer the following:

- The district has a tax levy on the ballot for this election, ostensibly [due to] the district's dire financial need. Yet, this same district has let a potentially revenue-generating property decline into worthlessness, while simultaneously failing to aggressively pursue any revenue-generating options. The district demands that the city bring it revenue-generating options. The city already indicated it is pursuing development for single-family homes—which are revenue-generating—but can do nothing if the district refuses to transfer ownership. The CH-UH Board of Education's (BOE) refusal to marshal every option at its disposal, in the face of significant financial distress, begs the question of whether the district is

serious about wanting this property to generate revenue.

- No one can deny that the school district is managing significant needs and competing priorities. However, if the financial health of the district is as much a priority as the district says it is (and insists that it should be for the entire community), don't taxpayers deserve the board's time and serious attention to this potential revenue opportunity? I want my public officials to take action, not make excuses and put off critical decisions. If not now, when?
- In 2014, the district conditioned the sale of the Millikin property on the retention of the historic Severance stables. Those who care about the stables' preservation should go see their condition today. It is, unfortunately, a graffitied dumping ground for district equipment and supplies. If the district truly seeks to keep the stables—which is eminently possible with the right lot division—it should give the property the attention it deserves at present. Lot divisions could also preserve the miniscule park that was installed without community input, and some of the woodlands. Even 8–10 acres of development would benefit residents more than continued excuses.

Millikin neighborhood residents have chosen to live here as a destination, not a stopover to suburbs farther east. These same residents want larger single-family homes, to enable them to stay in this Cleveland Heights neighborhood. I expect our elected officials to listen and respond to the needs of residents. I encourage my fellow Cleveland Heights residents to tell BOE members: We cannot wait any longer. If it takes work, then do the work. But it is time for you to have the Millikin property finally serve the residents, not force us to pay for its decay.

*Jessica Cohen is chair of the CH Planning Commission, was vice chair of its Charter Review Commission and a Citizens Advisory Committee member. A law-school student at night, full-time corporate affairs professional by day, and a full-time mom, she is a proud Cleveland Heights resident, as are her husband and four children.*

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# Attack on teacher benefits neither fact-based nor fair

Deborah Van Kleef

In a September *Heights Observer* opinion piece (“18 residents call on CH-UH school district to fix health care spending”) rife with inaccuracies, flawed reasoning and unfair assumptions, Tony Cuda and 17 co-signers urged the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union (CHTU) to agree to a cut in members’ health benefits, so that the CH-UH City School District can reduce its operating budget. While Cuda does not mention Issue 69 [the proposed school operating levy], he strongly implies that if greedy teachers and their families would sacrifice for the greater good, there would be no need for the 4.8 mill levy on the Nov. 3 ballot.

Cuda et al. believe that, because teachers in neighboring districts (specifically Shaker Heights and Beachwood) pay a larger percentage of their health insurance premiums, along with higher deductibles, it is “fiscally responsible” and “fair” to impose comparable costs on CH-UH teachers. They fail to consider that health benefits are just one component of an overall compensation package.

Negotiating a contract involves trade-offs, which vary from district to district. CH-UH teachers chose low out-of-pocket health-care costs in exchange for a salary freeze for three years out of the past nine. Former CHTU Vice President Brian Schaner, in a letter to Cuda, cited “higher salaries, retirement pick-up, longevity pay and other benefits to teachers in [Shaker Heights and Beachwood], that our members do not have.” Tuition reimbursement is also available in those districts, but not to CH-UH educators, many of whom earn as much as \$10,000 a year less than their Shaker and Beachwood peers.

Since the early 2000s, CHTU members have paid a premium share for their health insurance. During the last contract negotiation, in 2016, the parties agreed to a fixed amount, which at that time was 10 percent. As the premium has increased, that fixed

amount now covers 7.7 percent.

Cuda claims the district could save \$7 million per year by increasing the premium share and deductibles, and eliminating family coverage, but he doesn’t explain how he got this figure. CHTU leaders estimate that cutting \$7 million in benefits would cost each of their members \$8,000 to \$9,000 per year, regardless of whether they earn \$100,000 or \$30,000.

The imperative to bring employee compensation in line with “the market” has its own relentless logic. Suppose we make the proposed cuts, and another district slashes health benefits further? Do we then “level down” to match them? How long before we are engaged in the proverbial race to the bottom? And how would that affect our ability to attract and retain experienced and gifted teachers?

Public education has been under attack for more than 40 years. High-stakes testing has cynically undermined confidence in the schools that serve our most impoverished children. The Ohio Supreme Court ruled in 1997 that funding education with property taxes is unconstitutional, yet this inequitable system remains in place. State law requires levies just so districts can keep up with inflation. Vouchers and now EdChoice have siphoned millions of our tax dollars from our public schools to private institutions.

If we as a nation had the will to fix our bloated, broken health care system, there would be no bargaining table tussles over health care benefits. The United States is the only industrialized country where access to medical care depends on employment.

CH-UH teachers have sacrificed pay and valuable benefits to obtain excellent, affordable health care for themselves and their families. To demand that they give this up, especially during a pandemic, is punitive and unjust.

*Deborah Van Kleef has lived in Cleveland Heights for most of her life. A third-generation union activist, she is a member of American Federation of Musicians Local 4 and Local 1000.*

## CH-UH district’s benefit spending should be in-line with other districts

James Hurley

The CH-UH Board of Education (BOE) could save \$10.4 million by 2025 and upwards of \$17.8 million by 2030. The savings would come from simply realigning the district’s spending on employee benefits to be in-line with other local school districts.

While CH-UH currently spends 47.7 percent of salaries and wages on employee benefits, the average spent on employee benefits in other local districts is about 40 percent: Shaker spends 40 percent, South Euclid-Lyndhurst spends 40 percent, Euclid spends 40 percent, Beachwood spends 33.4 percent and Mayfield spends 40.5 percent.

Indications are the CH-UH

BOE plans to increase spending on employee benefits to 51 percent over the coming years. Instead of bringing spending on benefits in-line with other districts, the BOE appears to be heading in the other direction with plans to spend more on employee benefits.

We assume the district is correct about its student population declining by 900 students over the coming decade, and this is accounted for as part of this forecast.

The student-to-staff ratio should remain the same to continue providing the quality education the district seeks. However, spending on salaries and wages should decline in-line with the decline in student population, and this is also accounted for as part of the

*continued on page 7*



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# The common good is on the line



## THE COMMON GOOD

Susie Kaeser

I was waiting for the light to change, and there in front of me was Cleveland Heights High School, the flagship of our public schools.

The school looked glorious in the late afternoon light—a grand building with history and a public purpose that is as substantial as its presence at Cedar and Lee roads.

It is a concrete expression of how our community united to invest in the well-being of our young people, and yet, here we are in a tragic moment, shut out of our public space, isolated and

unable to partake in the full power of education.

Public school kids are being home schooled with the aid of a computer screen and hardworking teachers who are trying to nurture and inspire from afar. It is foreign territory for everyone. I can't get my head around how it works.

Just how long should anyone be required to connect through a screen? Some children will suffer from it in ways that will be hard to undo, and we will have to find a way to close the gaps created by circumstances we cannot control.

The absence of full access to the education process underlines the value of a strong system of public schools, and, yet, we must fight for them to remain strong.

Too many state lawmakers don't value this beautiful building and its public purpose. Our community is not only struggling to serve its children in the face of a pandemic. It is also faced with a

financial crisis. The legislature's preoccupation with cutting taxes and shifting the cost of its addiction to private education to local communities has put our public schools in a financial bind, requiring cuts to education opportunities and higher local taxes. This is not good for anyone.

Over the years the legislature has normalized its unconventional and inappropriate use of public funds to pay for private education, while ignoring its constitutional responsibility to provide for high-quality public education.

Schools are relevant to healthy communities, but the legislature seems willing to sacrifice communities to its ideology.

Thirty years of building a well-orchestrated and well-funded narrative that public schools are second rate is making it harder to muster support for public-school children and to embrace every child as valuable.

I worry that generations of voters have been attracted to school choice without thinking about how it threatens the common good.

Stress brought on by COVID-19 and by legislative indifference is wearing me down, but there is one glimmer of hope.

State Rep. Robert Cupp (R-Lima), the new speaker of the house, is ready to bring before the legislature the long-awaited H.B. 305, which would tackle Ohio's broken school-funding system.

Passage of the bill would not end public funding for private education, but it would shift the cost to the state general fund and take the burden off local property taxes. Given the legislature's resistance to any limits on privatization, passage of H.B. 305 is a long shot, but we still must fight for it, and right now!

Our democracy is limping, torn by state and federal leadership intent on dismantling government and our public institutions. I don't know how to revive our sense of common purpose and our interconnection, but we must.

The November election is our best option for protecting public schools and equal opportunity for all children. There are real choices at all levels that will make a difference in assuring the long-term viability of our public institutions.

Vote! Equal opportunity and democracy are on the line.

*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.*

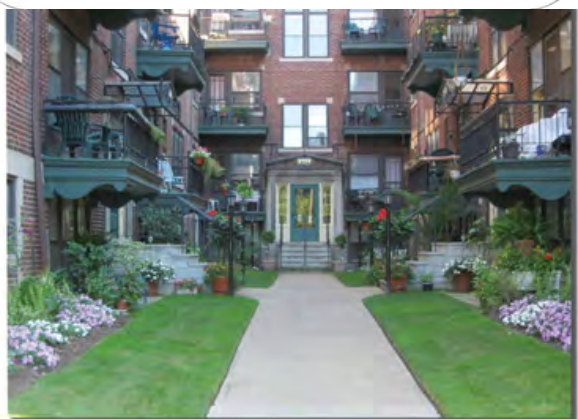
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# Virtual thoughts from a strange new world



A TEACHER'S VOICE

Karen Rego

A few weeks ago, teachers didn't know what it would be like to teach exclusively online. There were so many questions: What if the students can't connect? How will I know if the students are engaged? How will I know if they are learning? Although we now have a few days under our belt, these questions still remain.

Teachers always want what's best for their students. They want them to learn regardless of the situation. Although we don't have all the answers, I know that our teachers are working above and beyond expectations, to make this experience as positive as possible for their students.

The first-day jitters were different this year. Instead of trying to get my supplies and my classroom ready, I was busy setting up Google Meets, Google Classrooms, and becoming familiar with lots of new online material to use with my students.

I had to learn how to connect my grade book, my lessons,

and my assignments so they were organized for students to access. To say it has been overwhelming would be an understatement.

I began my 21st year of teaching feeling like it was my first. I was ready for the first day, but then I realized there were all the other days that would follow and I needed to be prepared for those, too. It was time for me to learn "virtual" tricks to keep my students engaged all day in Google Meets, which was going to be exhausting for all of us.

Teaching virtually provides all sorts of new challenges in communication, lesson planning, grading and, most importantly, connecting with our students. All of this is possible, once we adjust to this new environment.

I miss the hallway interaction with students and families. I miss engaging my students when class begins. I miss the "goodbyes" and the "see you tomorrows." Yes, it's the little things. I love teaching the content, but I love the student interactions more. Working off a list of students with muted mics is just not the same.

Like my colleagues, I spend a lot of time trying to make the Google slides appealing. I ask students to raise their hands, unmute to speak, or write a question in the chat. I know they have logged

on because I see their names or icons with photos, but they are still learning how to "unmute" in a timely manner. This is a strange new world for teachers who are used to the hustle and bustle of a live classroom.

What we're doing now is keeping everyone safe until the time when we return to teaching as we once knew it. Students are doing what they can to keep up with all their classwork, teacher expectations, and connectivity issues. Computers can never replace in-person instruction. What keeps my colleagues and me going every-day is the knowledge that we will see our students again.

*Karen Rego has taught grades K-8 in the CH-UH district, and currently provides math and language support at Monticello Middle School. She is president of the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union.*

*BENEFIT SPENDING continued from page 5*

forecast.

A 2 percent per year increase to salaries and wages is accounted for as part of the forecast, to encourage continued improvement in quality and effectiveness of the district.

It is almost impossible to reduce employee benefit spending at once, overnight. The reduction in spending on employee benefits would decline from 47.7 percent to 40 percent over the first five years, then stay flat at 40 percent for the following five years.

When added up, the district's spending on salaries plus wages plus benefits plus a 2 percent annual increase for staff would be \$86.9 million in 2020, and decline to \$69.1 million in 2030.

The cumulative savings from the realignment of employee benefits by the CH-UH district would result in savings of \$10.4 million by 2025 and \$17.8 million by 2030.

Will the BOE act on the savings opportunity of realigning employee benefits to be in-line with other local districts?

*James Hurley is a 15-year resident of Cleveland Heights.*

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CROWE continued from page 1

confident that Myesha and the CPA staff will serve as a trusted resource for young people in our community and that the organization will build bridges of opportunities and work to create environments that reduce incidents of violence among young people.”

Crowe said, “I am honored to have the opportunity to work toward a solution to a generational problem of violence, one that our neighborhoods and communities have been battling for years.”

CPA is an independent organization focused on reducing youth and gang violence in the city’s neighborhoods by engaging young people and those who influence them, such as family members and peers. CPA was re-launched in early 2016, when Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland, now a branch of Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Ohio (BGCNEO) agreed to take over the organization, restructure it and make it a subsidiary.

“Myesha is a passionate, driven leader who cares deeply about reducing violence in our community and keeping young people on a positive path,” said Jeff Scott, BGCNEO’s president and CEO. “She is committed to the mission of Cleveland Peacemakers Alliance and to finding ways to make our streets safer for everyone.”

*Ken Wood, a former journalist, is director of communications for Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Ohio.*

# Gratitude



HEIGHTS OF  
DEMOCRACY

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg

Though we often point out, in a spirit of constructive criticism, how local government and institutions fall short of democratic ideals, we deeply love our city. Long, solitary walks during the pandemic have led us to reflect on many of the wonderful aspects of life here. Below are just a few of the reasons we are grateful to be living in Cleveland Heights.

## Our neighbors

- Creative, friendly, interesting, kind, generous, quirky, accomplished, thoughtful, engaged, active.
- Diverse in household income, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion and political opinion to an extent that is rare in the region, the state, and the nation.
- Dedicated to democracy: 64 percent voted “yes” for an elected mayor last November; and 76 percent approved a 2013 ballot initiative supporting a constitutional amendment to end corporate personhood and money as speech.

## Our neighborhoods

- Leafy, green oases from Stoneleigh Road at the north end of town, to North Park Boulevard at the south, and from Cedar Hill at the western boundary to Dennison Park on the east side.
- Lush gardens; pollinator pathways established in the Noble and Shaker Farm districts, and proliferating elsewhere.
- Lovely pocket parks: one at Roanoke and Noble roads features neighborhood events throughout the year, while another, “Spirit Corner” at Hampshire and Cadwell roads, is a haven for quiet contemplation.
- Housing for a diverse population with something for almost everyone, from lovingly tended pre- and post-war bungalows to stately mansions, and from compact apartments to spacious century-old colonials.

## Our local leaders

- Heights Libraries Director Nancy Levin and her board, for working with their Coventry PEACE

campus tenants to forge a rental agreement giving the arts and community organizations breathing space for at least another year.

- CH Police Chief Annette Mecklenburg, for responding quickly and without the least sign of defensiveness to the concerns of Black Lives Matter, and working with residents to truly make this a “Safer Heights.”
- Susanna Niermann O’Neill, for assuming the position of CH Acting City Manager for the second time in her long career of service to this city, and for being its institutional memory.

## Our local businesses and organizations

- Zagara’s Marketplace and Dave’s, for providing groceries—the most essential service of all—throughout the pandemic and the shutdown.
- Our famous and longtime independent merchants: Tommy’s, Mac’s Backs, Appletree Books, Mister Brisket, Nighttown, and many others too numerous to list.
- Cain Park, Ensemble and Dobama theatres, Heights Arts, Lake Erie Ink, Artful, and more, creating a true home to the arts.

## Our editors

- Each other, for working through our occasional deeply held differences of opinion, making it a pleasure to write and edit this column every month.
- The *Heights Observer* editorial staff for providing our community with a platform for the varying opinions and healthy debate essential to democracy, and for editing us, publishing us, and even nominating us for a statewide award.
- The Cleveland Press Club, for honoring our work with a 2020 Ohio Excellence in Journalism Award.

## Please join us: vote Yes on Issue 6!

Last year, the charter change to an elected mayor won every precinct in Cleveland Heights. This November’s ballot includes Issue 6, another amendment to our city charter, regarding candidate filings for non-partisan mayoral primary elections. A September primary will be held if three or more candidates are certified to run for the office of mayor.



*Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg are longtime residents of Cleveland Heights. Contact them at [heightsdemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:heightsdemocracy@gmail.com).*



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## Rubbish pickup reservations are now online

Mike Cook

University Heights residents now can order, and pay for, special trash pickups online, at [www.universityheights.com/special-pickups](http://www.universityheights.com/special-pickups). "Special pickups" are defined as large, bulky items that cannot be collected as part of regular trash pickup.

Previously, residents had to arrange for special pickups in person, at the city's building department.

Special pickups are designed for the collection of bulk items that will not fit into the hopper of a rubbish scooter, and large quantities of items. There is a \$10 fee for each special pick-up load (the pick-up truck is 0.75 tons or 5 feet by 8 feet), and a two-load maximum per each six-month period. Any rubbish cans left in a special pick-up load will be discarded, with no exceptions.

Special pickups are arranged on a first-come, first-served basis. The city cannot specify a time or day for collection; special pickups will be collected within four business days of when payment is submitted.

Acceptable items for special pickup are appliances, furniture, carpeting, wood/tree limbs and branches, railroad ties, etc. All need to be boxed, bagged or tied; weigh less than 50 lbs.; and measure under 4 feet in length and 2 feet in diameter.

Unacceptable items are lumber, flooring (tiles/wood slats), concrete, bricks, dirt, roofing materials, asphalt, drywall, kitchen cabinets, and windows. Considered construction materials, these items must be removed by a contractor.

For additional information, residents should contact the UH Service Department at 216-932-7800, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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

## Trick-or-treating in UH is on, for now

Mike Cook

On Sept. 18, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) made recommendations on how Ohioans can participate in trick-or-treating as safely as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic. The city of University Heights urges residents who choose to participate this year to follow ODH recommendations.

Pending any new orders from the state or county boards of health, Trick-or-Treat night in University Heights will take place on Halloween, Oct. 31, 6-8 p.m.

If COVID-19 conditions worsen in Cuyahoga County before Halloween, plans and guidelines may change. Updates will be posted on the city's website, [www.universityheights.com](http://www.universityheights.com).

### Guidance for parents

- If taking your children trick-or-treating, limit the number of houses you visit and ask your children to stay as far from treat-givers as possible. For small children, consider holding the bag



Whether you dress like Cooper Chicken, or choose another costume, University Heights urges everyone to celebrate Halloween safely.

for them.

- Wipe off candy wrappers with sanitizing wipes when you arrive home. (Note: Never wipe any un-packaged food with wipes.)
- Allow children to eat only factory-wrapped treats. Avoid homemade

treats made by strangers.

- If your child is at greater risk of complications from COVID-19, contact your doctor before allowing participation in Halloween activities.

### Guidance for treat-givers

- For trick-or-treating, reach out to neighbors to discuss ways to ensure 6-foot social distancing, how candy can most safely be distributed, and the need for face coverings.
- Refrain from allowing children to select their own treats from a bowl/common container, or set up a hand-sanitizing station. Consider placing treats on porch steps or on a table in the driveway with a sign asking children to take only one.
- Or, use other creative ways to distribute treats, such as a candy "slide" made of PVC pipe, or hanging treats from a wall or fence.

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

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# This year's Ron Register Scholarship recipients announced

Quentin Smith

The Ron Register Scholarship Committee has announced that Damari Loretz and Alaysia Brooks are the recipients of its awards for the 2020–21 academic year.

Both are graduates of Cleveland Heights High School and members of the National Honor Society.

The scholarship is named in honor of Ron Register, who served on the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education for 16 years.

Damari Loretz excelled in Honors, Advanced Placement, and College Credit Plus courses, including physics. She made the Honor Roll every semester, and her class rank was 27 out of 409. She participated in numerous extracurricular activities.

She tutored students and was a member of the Minority Student Achievement Network and Alpha Kappa Alpha Inc. Leadership Academy.

Loretz plans to study interior design.

As a candidate for the Ron Register Scholarship, Loretz demonstrated her



Alaysia Brooks

awareness of social injustice and the need for change. In her application essay, she wrote:

"As a minority in America it's hard to overlook the constant injustice and oppression that takes place across this country . . . [which] hits extremely close to home and is deeply concerning to me. If law enforcement and the people who are supposed to protect us cannot



Damari Loretz

be trusted, who can we turn to? What do you do when you're terrified of the people who are supposed keep you safe? How can you live in constant fear that you, your mom or brother may be next?"

Alaysia Brooks ranked 49 out of 409 in her class. She, too, excelled in Honors, Advanced Placement, and College Credit Plus courses, and was a member

of the National Honors Society.

Brooks demonstrated her leadership skills, organizational talents, and compassion for others in taking several American Sign Language classes to help those with hearing loss.

She interned at the Cleveland Clinic, and earned her CPR certificate and State Nursing Assistant certification—all while still in high school.

Brooks was a member of the track and volleyball teams, and the Student Leadership Cadre (a group that gives students a voice in addressing change and equity). She played trumpet and sang in the gospel choir.

Brooks plans to major in nursing.

*Quentin Smith is a transplanted New Yorker, a former community organizer, high school teacher, and lawyer.*

## HRRC adapts to help homeowners during pandemic

David Brock

With the pandemic ongoing, the Home Repair Resource Center (HRRC) has altered its programming accordingly, but its commitment to Cleveland Heights homeowners is unchanged. From moving its repair-education and homebuying classes to a virtual model, requiring appointments for those entering the building, and borrowing from its tool library, and following health and social-distancing protocols, HRRC has adapted its services and continues to assist the community.

HRRC's popular home-repair classes continue online and are free for all participants, starting with a virtual tuckpointing class on Monday, Oct. 5, at 7 p.m. Though participants won't get to handle an angle grinder, get hands-on opportunities to mix the mortar or use a grout bag, they will learn the steps and tools involved. They will also get helpful tips to make brickwork easier.

For residents looking to repair their homes, HRRC's grant and loan programs continue for those with qualifying incomes. HRRC also assists by offering contractor referrals, and can help homeowners and renters adversely impacted by COVID-19 find assistance.

For more information, e-mail [dbrock@hrrc-ch.org](mailto:dbrock@hrrc-ch.org), or call 216-381-6100, ext. 22.

HRRC's free homebuying series, through which potential homebuyers can learn the ins and outs of the homebuying process, will be offered on Tuesdays, Oct. 6–27, from 6–8 p.m. Sign up at [www.hrrc-ch.org](http://www.hrrc-ch.org), or contact Denise Wallace at [dblack@hrrc-ch.org](mailto:dblack@hrrc-ch.org), or 216-381-6100, ext. 14.

*David Brock is the education and outreach coordinator for the Home Repair Resource Center.*

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# Taylor neighbors ask city to take action in response to recent shootings

Rhonda Davis-Lovejoy and Susan Efroymson

*This was read to Cleveland Heights City Council at its Sept. 21 meeting. It was written in response to the shooting that occurred on Sept. 20 on South Taylor Road at Blanche Avenue, near Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, and other recent shootings in the city.*

Dear Cleveland Heights City Council,

We do not have the answers.

We just know something must be done.

We just know that this assault on our neighborhood cannot go unanswered.

We know murder and violence are unacceptable.

We are grief-stricken and in shock.

It is not okay to mumble platitudes about the recent uptick in violence and hope it will not be in our neighborhood

next time.

We, the members of Taylor Neighbors Association, present a unified response of horror that there was a shooting in front of a school. It does not matter that it was at night. It is not okay. Anytime a life is cut down. It is not okay. A threat to one is a threat to all.

And we ask you, the city, not to accept it as a status quo either. We are not here to propose answers. We are not experts in surveillance or security.

Look into what security measures can be increased? Yes. Do we have the same measures our neighbors do? No? Are there improvements that can and should be made? Is there more Cleveland Heights can do to prevent a repeat? Let us have that conversation.

We look forward not only to Chief Mecklenburg's report, but also to her

response and swift indictments.

And although it sounds helpless to merely plead—"Do something!"—it reflects our feelings, as a neighborhood, as having been victimized, as feelings of raw helplessness.

Some of us were sleeping. Some of us were outside. Some of us were experiencing Rosh Hashana. Some of us send children to that school. Some of us heard the shots. But we all live here.

Silence is acquiescence, and so we speak out and say this is unequivocally unacceptable. We do not accept that it has to be this way. You should not either.

Our hearts go out to those who have experienced such a tragic loss.

*Rhonda Davis-Lovejoy and Susan Efroymson are members of the Taylor Neighbors Association.*

## I'm voting 'no' again

Joe Miller

Why is there another school tax levy on the November ballot? Didn't we just go through this a few months ago? As I write this, it is raining outside and my 100-year-old house with the leaky basement is letting water in.

I don't have money for foundation repairs. I'm worried about COVID-19, as my son has returned home from college, quarantining for 14 days. I'm wondering if my job will sustain itself through this pandemic. Cleveland Heights' water and sewer bills are endless; there's talk of our city tax being increased. Right now I need money for so many emergencies that it is depressing to think of another property tax increase. My property tax is so high already it's like a separate mortgage payment.

A public school is a benefit to the community when it is affordable for residents to maintain. The CH-UH district is no longer affordable for taxpayers and has become a real burden for all of us. This is why more and more parents are opting for voucher programs and private schooling, because it's more affordable. If you can receive state and federal help for private schooling, why not take it? Say "yes" to the voucher and "no" to a property tax increase. Best of all once the child graduates no more tuition payments! Property tax increases last forever, long after your children have grown and moved away.

The CH-UH school district has priced [itself] out of the education market. It is no longer affordable for residents, and instead of being a means of liberating the community it is more like a ball and chain around our ankle. The school system receives \$130 million a year; \$23,000 per child to educate. This is one of the most generous packages of any school system in the state. CH-UH teachers' salaries average \$82,000; statewide this number is \$62,000 for similar size districts. We have all been so generous I feel that we have been taken advantage of.

When I voted "no" on the school tax levy a few months ago, I meant "no!" And I'm voting no again on Issue 69, and this time with an attitude!

*Joe Miller has been a Cleveland Heights resident for 24 years.*

*MUSICOLOGIE continued from page 1*

significantly alter the way they give lessons; now they mostly conduct them online.

And that's not all. They have recently changed the way they run the business side, too. In September, they entered into a partnership with another small company that handles much of their business. That company, Musicologie, is run by a couple, Joe and Kay Barker, in a Columbus suburb. The Barkers are touring musicians who started offering music lessons online. Their six-year-old business comprises four other community music schools in Greater Columbus. Fairmount, their fifth partnership, is the first outside that area.

During this past year, the student population at Fairmount, now called Musicologie Cleveland Heights, has run between 100 and 150, with about a dozen teachers.

The school, founded in 1988, is a coalition of professional musicians who provide private instruction in strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion, piano, guitars, ukulele, banjo, mandolin and voice. The diverse musical backgrounds of its staff enable it to cover a range of styles and genres, including classical, folk, jazz, blues, flamenco, bluegrass, rock, heavy metal, R&B and gospel. Students receive a customized curriculum that can include music theory, harmony, ear training and composition. Lessons are given all year.

Kevin Richards said that Joseph Barker contacted him in early January, broaching the possibility of buying the Fairmount School of Music, and within a couple of weeks, they met in person.

"I was definitely looking for a young team that had a strong Web presence and embraced technology and Internet tools to broaden education," Richards said. "Patricia and I are 'old-school' and I knew that a young entrepreneur was what I was looking for. Kay and Joseph Barker are musicians, toured for years in bands, and are educators. They understand both worlds—the musician and educator."

Richards, who is also the founder and artistic director of the Cleveland Heights-based non-profit music-education organization, Roots of

American Music, said that Musicologie offers a marketing team, a good track record with a digital system, and a proven business model. "They provide software platforms for our database, online teacher training, apps for students and apps for teachers for scheduling. Everything is digital," noted Richards. "It is possible to reschedule a missed lesson with a different teacher."

"Musicologie's systems will not only improve the student experience for our in-studio lessons, but will support those studying music at home—[with] digital content, videos, and curriculum development focused on online lessons," Richards said. "It helps to have a larger company behind us, to be able to adapt in this environment."

Patricia Richards, who now serves as community manager for Musicologie Cleveland Heights, added, "More than anything, our values are aligned. We feel good about the fact that any change that is implemented will only be what is best for our teachers and students in the long run."

In September, Musicologie Cleveland Heights re-started in-person lessons, COVID-era-style; by mid-month, it was conducting about 15 percent of its lessons that way, with the remaining 85 percent still online. So far, recitals are performed online as well.

Musicologie offers lessons to students of all ages, children to adults. (Keep in mind that at the age of 90, one of the world's greatest cellists, Pablo Casals, was asked why he was still practicing. He said, "Because I think I am making progress.")

Musicologie Cleveland Heights has a new phone number: 216-260-6006, website: [musicologielessons.com/locations/cleveland-heights/](http://musicologielessons.com/locations/cleveland-heights/), and e-mail addresses: [pat@musicologie.com](mailto:pat@musicologie.com) and [kevin@musicologie.com](mailto:kevin@musicologie.com).

*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. He is a former board member of Roots of American Music, and he has taken a lot of music lessons in his life.*

# Vote 'no' on Issue 69

Joe Barmann

As longtime Catholic residents, our family has supported multiple school levies over the years, while choosing St. Ann's and Benedictine for our three sons. The CH-UH school board has a fiduciary responsibility to consider the interests of all Cleveland Heights and University Heights citizens. However, it has refused to allow an objective look at the operations of the CH-UH school district through an outside performance audit. This audit would investigate every possible way to uncover savings as well as offer suggestions for future spending made in the best interest of the students.

This audit request is not new. I ask, Why is the CH-UH administration afraid to do what residents are requesting? The petition to request a performance audit has been ignored. I think I know why they avoid this issue: the board is conflicted because the administrators who must request and implement the audit results receive the same generous health care and pension benefits that are received by the staff and support staff within the school system itself. The school board has lost sight of the marketplace, perhaps, in part because administrators have to know they could be adversely affected by any competitive adjustments.

I believe voters must send another strong message to the CH-UH school board. We need to raise our voices because the members of the board are choosing to not hear us. It's time to reassess an automatic "yes" vote to support every school levy. Until there is an independent look through a performance audit, I cannot support another levy, piled on top of all the others that are making our property taxes so high. The school board seems to be unable to recognize the need for competitive property taxes. As long as voters continue to automatically increase taxes, there is no reason to make meaningful changes in the system and to, optimally, increase student success within the district.

The only way taxpayers can change the status quo is to reject the current levy unless or until the CH-UH board requires an independent performance audit. They must insist that the district conduct and implement the suggestions that emerge from the audit. It's just not good enough to say: "We've done that before," or "It takes too long."

Taxpayers should demand that the district look internally for every avenue of savings before asking even more from us. This hard look within will ultimately result in more productive learning and a satisfied community. Vote "no" on Issue 69.

*Joe Barmann, retired, has been a resident of Cleveland Heights since 1979.*





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# Cleveland Heights City Council

## Meeting highlights



LEAGUE OF  
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SEPTEMBER 8, 2020

Council members present were Mayor Jason Stein, Vice Mayor Kahlil Seren, Mary Dunbar, Melody Joy Hart, Davida Russell and Michael Ungar. Also present were Susanna Niermann O'Neill, acting city manager; Amy Himmelein, clerk of council; and William Hanna, law director. The meeting, held online, lasted from 8:30 p.m. to 9:27 p.m.

### Public comments

A resident expressed disappointment that the Cleveland Heights-University Heights school board swiftly and unanimously rejected the city manager's Letter of Intent proposing to purchase the Millikin school property. The resident concluded that the school board was wasting money while asking for a levy at the same time.

### Recycling agreement

Council Member Dunbar introduced, on first reading, an ordinance authorizing the city manager to enter into an agreement for recycling services between Cleveland Heights and Kimble Company. This would be a collaboration among larger suburbs.

### City manager report

The report is available in the council meeting packet, pages 2-9, on the city's website, [www.clevelandheights.com](http://www.clevelandheights.com). [Go to the Government tab, then "2020 Meetings and Agendas."]

The acting city manager is creating a protocol for residents to use on the city's website for submitting public comments for city council meetings. It will most likely address length of time to read, or a word-count limit (probably 500 words or less) for written submission. This process will avoid this paraphrasing of resident comments that has occurred during COVID-19 virtual council meetings.

Proposals for a redevelopment plan for the Cedar-Lee-Meadowbrook site, and a preliminary neighborhood redevelopment program, will be discussed at the Sept. 14 Council Committee of the Whole meeting.

### Chief of police report

Chief Mecklenburg is developing a training curriculum proposal to incorporate services from the Diversity Institute at Cleveland State University. It will include:

- Eight hours of cultural competence and implicit bias training for police officers, to be offered in November and December, with further training offered in January, February and March.
- Policy analysis and community engagement recommendations.
- Analysis of use-of-force, vehicle pursuit, bias, and trust-building policies.
- Data analysis of traffic ticketing, with data to come from Cleveland Heights Municipal Court.

- Establishment of a civilian review board.

Information about the various activities will be posted on the city's website.

### Council member comments

Council Member Seren advised Chief Mecklenburg that he would prefer the civilian review board be called "community review board." Seren said council is working hard on appointing another council member.

Council Member Russell thanked Parks and Recreation Director Joe McRae for his efforts during these difficult times. On Sept. 5, she attended a concert at Severance Center, registering voters and advocating for the census. Look for movie nights in the near future at Severance. Cleveland Heights won the census challenge against University Heights.

Council Member Hart announced [she is sponsoring] a forum, to be held Oct. 8 at 7 p.m., to discuss the transition to a directly elected mayor form of government. The forum's panel will comprise three current mayors of local municipalities. Hart commented that her remarks have been misrepresented, and that council is close to announcing a new council member.

Council Member Dunbar invited council to send her questions regarding the proposed recycling ordinance so she can answer them in full before they vote. She thanked Niermann O'Neil for accepting the challenge of [working] as acting city manager.

Council Member Ungar reiterated that the Cedar-Lee-Meadowbrook site and Neighborhood Redevelopment RFPs will be discussed at the Sept. 14 meeting. Tim Boland, economic development director, and Richard Wong, planning director, have been working on these proposals. He also said it should not be suggested that council is not working hard to appoint a replacement council member.

Ungar thanked Russell and Hart for their work on establishing a Task Force for Police Reform. He said a questionnaire is being developed that will go out to citizens after it is approved by the law department. Input will be taken from council as well. Applications for citizens who want to serve on the task force will be forthcoming and available on the city's website.

LWV Observers: Gail Larson and Blanche Valancy.

Expanded reports are  
available online at  
[www.heightsobserver.org](http://www.heightsobserver.org).

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# Oct. 8 forum will address elected-mayor transition

Gary Benjamin

On Oct. 8, Cleveland Heights Council Member Melody Joy Hart and a committee of concerned citizens will host an online forum to inform the public about the city’s transition to an elected-mayor form of government.

The forum will explain the transition, discuss the skills and traits that are desirable for an elected mayor, and seek to determine citizens’ expectations for the new government.

“This will be an important change, electing our first mayor in 100 years,” said Hart. “We need to do all we can to get it right.”

The forum will take place, via Zoom, on Thursday, Oct. 8, at 7 p.m., and will feature a panel

discussion with University Heights Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan, Maple Heights Mayor Annette Blackwell, and South Euclid Mayor Georgine Welo.

In addition to their own experiences, the panelists will discuss the role citizens play in an elected-mayor form of government.

Tony Cuda, a leader of Citizens for an Elected Mayor, will discuss the components of the new charter amendment, and explain the proposal on the ballot this November, Issue 6, which clarifies dates for candidates to file for running for mayor.

Mark Chupp, professor at Case Western Reserve University, will facilitate the discussion, including an opportunity for attendees to ask questions of the panelists.

In addition to Hart, planning committee members include Cuda, Carla Rautenberg and Len Friedson.

The group is planning a series of at least two forums on this topic. The second forum will be planned based on feedback from those who attend the first.

“We want to know what you want to know about the transition or the elected-mayor form of government,” said Hart, “and what your expectations are for a mayor-council form of government. We all need to be prepared to fill our roles,

whether as a voter or an official.”

Hart invites residents to contact her with ideas for a second or third forum by e-mailing her at [mhart@clvhts.com](mailto:mhart@clvhts.com).

To register, and submit questions, for this free event, visit <https://facebook.com/events/cleveland-heights-mayoral-tran/2662638810720852/?ti=ia>.

*Gary Benjamin is a member of the forum planning committee and the spouse of Council Member Melody Joy Hart.*

## Forest Hill homeowners group marks 70 years

Beryl Tishkoff

Forest Hill Home Owners Inc. (FHHO) is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year. Established on June 13, 1950, the association was created to “promote, safeguard, and improve the property value and general welfare of the community.”

Celebrating in this pandemic year has required a different approach and has included Sunday strolls, T-shirts, area clean-ups, and new street signs featuring the signature cast-iron dove—an original symbol of the development. New signage is being planned, and an effort to repair and save the historic blue cottage at the corner of Lee and Monticello boulevards is underway.

Forest Hill is home to 930 residences spanning Cleveland Heights and East Cleveland. Originally the 600-acre country estate of John D. Rockefeller Sr., the land was purchased in 1923 by his son, also named John D., who, with New York architect Andrew J. Thomas, planned an upscale residential and commercial development “that would stand as the finest example of community planning in America.”

The stately tree-lined community features 81 French Normandy-style “Rockefeller” homes, 1950s heritage homes and lovely ranch and colonial-style homes.

Three parts of Forest Hill have the distinction of being listed on the National Register of Historic



The cottage, built in 1930 and situated at the corner of Monticello and Lee boulevards, is a gateway to the Forest Hill neighborhood.

Places: In 1986, both the Heights Rockefeller Building and the 81 Rockefeller homes were listed, and Forest Hill Park was added in 1998 as a historic landscape.

According to Gretchen Mettler, FHHO president, “Forest Hill, with its close proximity to University Circle institutions and easy access to downtown Cleveland, is in a prime location. In such a diverse and historic neighborhood, we realize that we are not only residents, but stewards, of a special community with an impressive history.”

*Beryl Tishkoff is a longtime resident of Forest Hill and chair of Forest Hill Home Owners Inc.*



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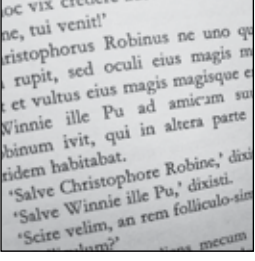
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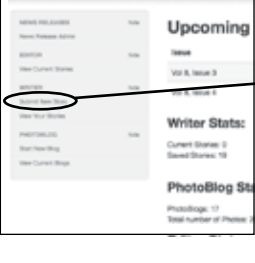
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4. **Reward yourself**; you're about to be published. We'll review and edit your article, and let you know if we have any questions.



# Cleveland Heights council member reflects on 2020

Melody Joy Hart

When I became a Cleveland Heights City Council member, I knew I would face challenges. The city had just decided to change to a elected-mayor form of government. Top of the Hill's (TOH) financing was before council. Legislation was needed to improve the foreclosure bond. The Waste Management Task Force report would need action. From walking Noble, I have been concerned about housing stock, so I led a team drafting legislation to amend the foreclosure bond.

Within weeks, other major issues became urgent. There was systemic racism and police reform; 5G towers; the COVID-19 budget impact;

the revenge porn ordinance; and, COVID-19 itself. And then a council member [Melissa Yasinow] resigned [in March 2020], and council faced the task of replacing her.

All of this in the time of COVID-19, when staff time is limited, and council had to deal with business issues such as allowing restaurants and bars to expand into their parking lots, or even into streets for outdoor sales; what to do about staff time; what to do about recreation; how to deliver coronavirus testing; and how to change the budget.

Meantime, I was getting calls for other issues—intervening on a basketball court where play was annoying neighbors; working with

a tenant and landlord who were trying to work out a problem; raising issues to the city on a house being rehabbed on Arlington Drive, with many neighbor complaints; working with Buckingham residents on issues related to the TOH project; examining a leaking roof at the city garage, from union complaints; hearing from residents for and against the development of the Millikin school site; talking to citizens on the Lee Road development site issue.

Council must still replace a member; vote on foreclosure bond improvements; establish a committee regarding ending systemic racism in the city, including police reform; decide what to do regarding solid-

waste removal; and prepare for the transition to mayor, the EPA lawsuit settlement, and what improvements will be required for our sewer system.

We still need that change we voted for in the last election. The job of a council member these days takes 20-30 hours a week. But the work is rewarding. Residents want responsiveness and the last election attested to that. It is time to up our game and bring us forward into a new era for Cleveland Heights. I am determined to ensure those changes the residents want occur. Stay tuned and stay engaged.

*Melody Joy Hart is a Cleveland Heights City Council member.*

CH BALLOT ISSUE 6 continued from page 1

specify primary or general election, so [that] could be open to interpretation, which will cause confusion for those who are running, voting, and the board of elections."

If this is not made clear, said Stein, "the election could be contested."

A primary election for mayor is mandated, said Stein, when there are more than two candidates. While the Issue 6 language does not specify it applies only to the mayoral race, Stein said, "I don't believe there is a change for council."

**"CEM is still intact," said Cuda, "and was asked by council to do certain tasks."**

If a primary election is needed, it will take place on the first Tuesday after the second Monday in September.

Asked what happens if voters don't pass Issue 6, Stein said that would be "open to interpretation."

Tony Cuda, the former campaign manager for Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM)—the group of residents who put last year's Issue 26 on the ballot, and crafted the Issue 26 language—commented, "We want clarity. We don't want any kind of challenge to the [mayoral] election. That would be a terrible outcome. That's why it is important that Issue 6 pass."

If Issue 6 does pass, it's one of many steps the city must undertake to prepare for its transition to the new mayor-council form of government.

For his part, Stein said, "We are on schedule for the transition," and "prepared to hand it off to the new leadership seamlessly. City council is addressing issues that need to be addressed prior to the transition."

Stein advised that "the city should go line-by-line through the city [ordinances] to make sure things are in-line. This will happen through

the law department or a third party."

Stein was unsure if the city would post information on its website about the transition process and steps, and advised those interested to attend council meetings.

"There is no city council transition committee, but [we] have worked with CEM on what they felt council should be looking at, that can't wait for the [new] mayor and new council, such as Issue 6 and mayoral salary," said Stein.

It was a member of CEM, Len Friedson, who asked the mayor to look into the need to clarify the city's charter via Issue 6. At council's request, the city's law director, William Hanna, drafted the ballot issue's language.

"CEM is still intact," said Cuda, "and was asked by council to do certain tasks."

Five of its members—Cuda, Rhonda Davis-Lovejoy, Susan Efroymson, Len Friedson and Carla Rautenberg—comprise the CEM Transition Subcommittee, and are advising council on issues related to the transition to the mayor-council form of government. [Rhonda Davis-Lovejoy is a member of the board of directors of FutureHeights, the nonprofit development corporation that publishes the *Heights Observer*.]

Key 2021 dates and deadlines for CH mayoral candidates, as identified by CEM, are:

- March 18: Candidates begin collecting petition signatures. This is 180 days before the date of the primary.
- June 16: Last day to submit petitions to the Board of Elections. This is 90 days before the primary.
- Sept. 14: Non-partisan primary will take place on this date, if there are more than two candidates for CH mayor.
- Nov. 2: General Election date.

Mayoral salary for the directly elected mayor is one detail of the transition that Stein anticipates council will vote on prior to the Nov. 3 election. The proposed salary, \$115,000, will have its second reading at the Oct. 5 CH City Council meeting, at which time Stein expects council to approve it.

Other issues, such as the city

administrator's salary, will likely "be left for the new mayor and council to decide," said Stein. According to the city's charter, the directly elected mayor will appoint a city administrator, subject to council approval.

Stein noted that Acting City Manager Susanna Niermann O'Neil and her administrative team are working on transition issues, and that the former city manager, Tanisha Briley, "was clear that preparation at department levels would ensure the mayor was prepared to take over." Stein added, "She said she would be open to having a meeting with candidates for mayor, to enable them to learn about the city. I think Susanna will offer that as well."

According to Cuda, council's Committee of the Whole will handle the discussion of the transition. "There are lots of other elements of our [city ordinances] that will need to be changed by the end of 2021," Cuda explained. "Bill Hanna will be working on that. Susanna Niermann O'Neil said she would 'work hard' on this, but we aren't sure what 'this' is. She may be best qualified to do it. Tanisha Briley [the former city manager] refused to do it."

Cuda advised, "Council needs to create a process by which the charter is further reviewed and possibly amended."

One member of council, Kahlil Seren, has declared his intention to run for mayor in 2021, and at least one other council member is widely rumored to be running. Asked at what point, if any, council members who decide to run for mayor need to recuse themselves from related votes, Stein said, "They need to announce that they are running for mayor, but they can still vote."

"Bill Hanna made a ruling on Kahlil voting on the mayor's salary. He said that he was not prohibited from doing so."

Stein could not recall if the law director said anything about that changing at some point, such as [when] a candidate pulls a petition to officially run.

In the meantime, said Stein, "The city continues to move forward and there are a lot of needs that we can't neglect—making sure that

**Mayoral salary . . . is one detail of the transition that Stein anticipates council will vote on prior to the Nov. 3 election. The proposed salary, \$115,000, will have its second reading at the Oct. 5 CH City Council meeting . . .**

the city is functioning and getting through the pandemic, working to ensure that we come out stronger than we went into it."

Stein expressed concern for the financial well-being of residents, noting that there is 20 percent unemployment in the city. "How can we assist those facing eviction, foreclosures? We need to find out how we can help them," said Stein.

Business loans are still available, and Stein suggested that struggling businesses contact Brian Anderson (216-291-2617) and Tim Boland (216-291-4857) in the city's Economic Development Department.

Asked about recent shootings in the city, Stein described them as "shocking, scary, and unprecedented." He expressed his confidence in Police Chief Annette Mecklenburg, who he said is formulating a plan, and the acting city manager, and said council will give the CHPD the resources it needs.

As this issue went to press, CH City Council had yet to fill the council vacancy created with Melissa Yasinow's March 2 resignation, leaving residents to speculate that the six current council members are deadlocked on choosing a replacement from the four finalists announced in May. [Tony Cuda, a member of CEM, is one of the finalists. The others are Craig Cobb

*continued on page 23*



# We endorse Issue 69, the Heights School Levy, because we value each of our children and because we value our public schools as an essential community asset.

Our communities have a proud history of supporting public education.  
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## Cleveland Heights - University Heights Board of Education

### Meeting highlights



AUGUST 18, 2020

Board members present were President Jodi Sourini, Dan Heintz, Malia Lewis, James Posch, and Beverly Wright. Also present were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby, Assistant Superintendent Paul Lombardo, and Treasurer Scott Gainer. [Virtual meetings are live-streamed on the district's YouTube channel ([www.youtube.com/CHUHSchools](http://www.youtube.com/CHUHSchools)) and recorded for later viewing.]

Ohio Teacher Evaluation System 1.0 through the current school year.

LWV Observer: Rosemarie Fairman.

SEPTEMBER 3, 2020

All board members were present, as were the superintendent and treasurer.

#### School reopening update

Superintendent Kirby's team presented the design for the remote-learning plan. The first nine weeks of the school year will consist of remote learning with a review at five weeks. Changes in plans will not take place until there is consistent suppression of the virus. Some teachers may be teaching from home while others may be teaching from school buildings.

The team also presented plans for students with disabilities, student and college application support, athletics, safety training, Chromebook distribution, virtual family cafes, and monitoring student expectations.

#### Public comments and board response

Millikin property sale: Two community members expressed opposition to the sale of the Millikin property, stating that selling it would not advocate for environmental justice, that the land was promised to be maintained as a buffer, in perpetuity, when Severance shopping center was built, and that "this is our treasure."

Intra-district transfer policy: Lindsay Means, a parent, requested that the intra-district transfer policy for students with special needs be revised to be less cumbersome. She said the window of time for obtaining a transfer is narrow and the process is confusing.

Concerns about board actions: Charles Drake stated that the board ignored complaints regarding mismanagement of funds in 1) refusing to request a performance audit, 2) selling public property at a great discount, and 3) being ineffective during contract negotiations with district teachers.

Board response: Board President Sourini said the board would only consider proposals for Millikin that provide a revenue path for the district. Because the board's current focus is a safe and successful educational program, she recommended that the issue be tabled for now; board members agreed. The district is still using the Millikin property and it continues to be viable for district use. Board Member Heintz said that the board has a responsibility to be good stewards of the property.

#### Five-year forecast

Treasurer Gainer presented the five-year forecast, and explained the components and uncertainties that were involved in creating it. After discussing the impact of the EdChoice voucher program, the board approved the forecast.

LWV Observer: Robin Koslen.

AUGUST 25, 2020

All board members were present, as were the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and treasurer.

#### School opening update

Teacher in-service has been held, covering data, technology, equity, operations, special education, and collaboration.

#### Communication with parents

Parent orientations are being held at all schools so parents can meet the teachers and become acquainted with the technology that students will be using. Orientation schedules are posted on the district's website. In addition, 16 virtual cafes have been held, and, along with ongoing virtual cafes, communication is continuing regarding schedule distribution and parent resources. Communication occurs through phone calls, e-mails, and postings on [www.chuh.org/FamilyResources.aspx](http://www.chuh.org/FamilyResources.aspx).

#### Fall athletics

The district is offering all fall sports, and the Ohio Board of Health has approved the district's athletic plan. Coaches have undergone additional training to comply with COVID-19 requirements. Additional equipment for COVID-19 protection was purchased for football.

#### Ohio Teacher Evaluation System

The board approved the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System 2.0, for implementation starting July 2021. The Ohio Board of Education requires that this be approved and in place, even though the district will continue with

#### Enrollment in remote-learning

Superintendent Kirby emphasized that the focus is always on the students. Currently, nearly 5,000 students are enrolled remotely, and some students are being home-schooled. Registration is continuing.

#### Ohio Senate Bill 358

Kirby testified in the state legislature regarding SB358 and also presented the district's experience with EdChoice. SB358 freezes district evaluation report cards during the COVID-19 pandemic. Superintendent Kirby supports this; she also calls for a freeze on the requirement that districts continue to pay for EdChoice scholarships. As of Sept. 3, the district has received 1,814 EdChoice requests, which represent about \$9 million in funding.

#### AP program participation

Advanced Placement (AP) participation increased to 58 percent of students. The district has 52 AP scholars [a designation conferred by the College Board based on AP test scores], and AP scores are up.

LWV Observer: Rosemarie Fairman.

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# AP scores at Heights High are on the rise

Krissy Dietrich Gallagher

The CH-UH City School District is addressing long-standing issues of academic disparities head on.

In 2015, Heights High took a hard look at its 21 Advanced Placement (AP) courses and discovered that, in a building where the vast majority of students are Black, the most rigorous classes were almost entirely white.

“We need high expectations for all our students,” said Alisa McKinnie, an assistant principal, “regardless of their background.”

The school partnered with Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS), an organization based in Seattle, whose mission is “to ensure that students of color and low-income students have equitable access to America’s most academically intense high school programs and succeed at the highest levels.”

The wheels were thus set in motion for a systemic change at Heights High that has resulted in two years of positive results.

Last fall, Heights High was one of nine schools in Ohio to be named to the AP Honor Roll, which recognizes buildings that increase AP participation without a significant reduction in scores. With the 2020 AP results released

this month, Heights High boasted a nearly 20% increase in the number of students earning a score of 3 or higher, the standard for earning college credit.

It took the concerted effort of administrators, teachers and students to reach this point. Heights High's leadership worked with EOS to create a roadmap with three main objectives: accessing opportunity, experiencing success and extending equity.

First, they had to delve into the cultural mindsets of both students and teachers through the use of three different surveys.

The results were eye-opening. Some students didn't know that AP courses existed, or how they were beneficial. Some had never been encouraged by teachers, guidance counselors, or their parents to assume a more-challenging course load. Some teachers wanted to teach the higher-level courses, but felt that those courses were assigned to an elite few.

After many workshops and focus groups, McKinnie received teacher recommendations for 392 students to enroll in AP classes. School staff sent letters to parents explaining what AP courses entail, invited students to an ice cream

social, and launched a series of workshops to prepare students for success in AP classes.

As enrollment in AP classes increased from 182 students in 2015 to 343 in 2019, scores did indeed drop, though not enough to be considered “significant” by the College Board, which administers the tests.

Nationally, between 56% and 59% of students earn a score of 3 or higher; at Heights High, that percentage went from 51% to 38% in those four years. This was not surprising, considering the rigor of the coursework and the fact that Heights High enforces an AP contract that requires every student enrolled in an AP class to take the AP exam, unlike many schools, where students can opt out.

McKinnie and her team knew they could do better. Through continued focus on achievement and providing individualized support and motivation to AP students, those test scores have risen.

In 2020, 58% of students earned a 3 or higher, virtually equal to the national average.

McKinnie believes that even more Heights students can do at

least that well, saying, “It’s not our job to be gatekeepers.”

Instead, McKinnie aims for the school to “provide experiences and exposures early on,” and “keep equity at the center of all we do.”


*Krissy Dietrich Gallagher is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, a graduate of the Heights schools, and a former Coventry School teacher. She is a freelance journalist under contract with the CH-UH City School District.*

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# Heights High junior is newest Heights Arts intern

Amanda Bohn

Each year, Heights Arts selects one Cleveland Heights High School junior intern, to join a returning senior intern, to work with its volunteer Exhibition Community Team (ECT). The team comprises community members with expertise in the visual arts. They are charged with reviewing artist submissions, connecting Heights Arts with new artists, providing assistance to hang shows, and setting up the annual Heights Arts Holiday Store in November and December.

Heights High art teachers are instrumental in identifying internship candidates. After she applied and interviewed with ECT members, Eryn Lawson was chosen from several candidates to be the 2020-22 intern.

Interns learn to work directly with team members, and to provide their own perspectives and opinions. They are also charged with acting as curators to create an annual student exhibition at the end of the school year, featuring the work of their peers.

Growing up, Lawson moved throughout the Heights, attending or living near almost all its schools at various points in time. She cherishes the community. Through Heights Arts, she sees an opportunity for a blossoming of artistic growth between younger and older generations. She feels it is important to nourish this growth, to grow it into something much greater, beyond our individual selves.

Said Lawson, "I'm excited to be joining the Heights Arts team! I can't wait to see what we can all make together!"

Lawson is the fourth intern to join Heights Arts since 2018, when it began its partnership with Heights High. Former interns ShaDonnah Miller and Ava Collyer have moved on to further their education at Cleveland Institute of Art and The Ohio State University, respectively. Miller, who is beginning her sophomore year



Heights High junior Eryn Lawson.

with a major in drawing, feels that the internship "really introduced me to the art side of Cleveland and got me used to speaking with other artists in a group setting." Collyer, the 2018-20 intern, summed up her two-year internship experience: "Having a more intimate understanding of the business and gallery aspect of art has made me much more thoughtful about the art I make and how I want to continue with this passion. I am

TOMMY'S continued from page 2

out May was promising. However, as the weather became nicer, with more restaurant patios opening each day, we saw our sales start to diminish and were faced with difficult decisions on what to do. We thought long and hard about opening for dine-in—in fact, we put together a survey asking our customers for help in deciding. The survey demonstrated that over 75 percent of our customer base did not feel safe dining inside. By June, COVID cases were spiking in Cuyahoga County. At that point, it just didn't feel right to open for dine-in, but cash flow was not sufficient to maintain a crew and keep Tommy's afloat.

Not only was business slow, but the cost of goods was significantly higher due to COVID. Weighing my options, it became clear to me that I would have to close my nearly 50-year-old business until it made sense—from a business and a safety standpoint—to open again.

With the kind of hope I start with every Sunday during Browns season (probably too much), I called the owner of the Panini's building, Debra Krenzler, to explain our situation and see if there was any chance of renting its patio. She said she would look into what was going on with the patio, talk to Mike Mercer, the owner of Panini's, and let me know.

In the meantime, we had scheduled a late-June staff meeting to discuss our options. I had planned to tell the employees that we were going to close on July 6, assist them in filing for unemployment, and try to wait out the storm. By some miracle,



Heights High senior Zelda Thayer-Hansen.

incredibly grateful for the time I spent listening [to] and learning from the Heights Arts community, and I hope the current and future interns enjoy the experience just as much as I did."

Current senior Zelda Thayer-Hansen will lead the intern duo during this year's exhibition season. As she began her second intern year in September, she described the impact of the experience so far: "This internship has given me the amazing opportunity

to collaborate with professional artists in our community, and has opened my eyes to the breadth of possibilities the art world has to offer. I am excited to continue working with this group for another year, and intend to use the skills I have earned from this program for the rest of my artistic career."

Executive Director Rachel Bernstein described the benefits of the partnership, noting, "This internship has not only been a learning opportunity for our young participants, but a great asset to Heights Arts. It has provided us with a fresh and valuable perspective from a younger demographic which serves to create richer programming reflective of our diverse community. We very much look forward to continuing our partnership with Heights High, and to find additional ways to engage the students."

*Amanda Bohn handles marketing and communications at Heights Arts.*

just 20 minutes before that meeting, I got a call from Debra saying we could rent the patio. That meeting turned from likely being the saddest one that I ever would have led, to one filled with happiness and excitement.

Again, our Coventry Village community and Tommy's family stepped up. Debra Krenzler, Eric Synenberg (her son, and the Panini's building's co-owner) and Mike Mercer helped me come up with our crazy, out-of-the-box plan on using the patio. The city of Cleveland Heights kindly fast-tracked the permits I needed. My wife, daughters, brother, son-in-law, sister-in-law and some longtime employees spent countless hours in the heat getting the patio aesthetically ready. We had to figure out how to transport food from our kitchen across the street in a way that was safe and preserved the Tommy's quality. In a truly team effort, we were able to open the patio on July 13.

Because nothing in 2020 has proven to be easy, the volume of business coming from patio dining was not what I hoped for, and curbside was still what was keeping us afloat, even with diminished volume there as well.

Then Channel 3, Channel 5, Spectrum, and Hillcrest Foods Buy Local did stories on our restaurant and the patio. In interviews, I explained what the pandemic has done to business, and how close we had come to closing until it was safe for my employees and customers to dine-in again.

In almost 50 years of business, I have had to overcome many hard times and obstacles, from fires to economic recession, but nothing has been as challenging as this pandemic.

Friends like Steve Presser and David Budin, among others, posted touching stories on Facebook in support of Tommy's and our employees. Again, I experienced firsthand what it's like to have people reach out to help when you're at a hard spot in your life. Steve and David sparked a huge wave of love for Tommy's and all small businesses in Coventry Village, and I am humbled by everything I have

witnessed and received—monetary donations and homemade masks, baked goods, gift cards bought in bulk, and people vowing to order curbside, to keep me in business.

Teenagers dropped off \$5 bills that they wanted handed to me personally so they could help. People purchased large quantities of box lunches to donate to hospital staff, front-line workers, and the city of Cleveland Heights Service Department—and they did not want any recognition.

A GoFundMe started by Nicole Glatz raised thousands of dollars. In my heart I didn't feel I deserved it, because I know there are many who are struggling more than me. I spoke with her and she brilliantly suggested we give it to my employees for the slow months. We decided to divide it amongst the employees and donate additional funds to Heights Senior Center, as it also is struggling now.

I wish I could describe all the amazing acts of kindness I have experienced during this crazy and uncertain time, but there are far too many to list here. It gave me such hope and showed me that we are all in this together. I want to say thank you, from the bottom of my heart, to my family, my employees, Coventry Village, Cleveland Heights, and my loyal customers. You will never know what your love and support has meant to me!

Coventry is a special place and there is nowhere I would rather be. Let's keep this momentum going by continuing to support the backbone of our economy—small businesses—during what are sure to be tough winter months. While we are not through this life-altering time, and we still have a tough road ahead, you all have demonstrated to me that we can come out of it better than we were before. If we all continue to shop small businesses, I know we can make a difference; I have seen it firsthand! Thank you again, stay safe, and I love you.

*Tommy Fello is the owner of Tommy's restaurant.*

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# I want(ed) candy



## SONGS AND STORIES

David Budin

I had a friend, John, who took so much LSD and other drugs that he kind of fried his brains. I met him in the late '60s, in the Cleveland Heights folk music club Farragher's, where he sometimes performed.

I lost track of him for a while, but then I started running into him all over Cleveland Heights during the '80s and '90s. Conversations always began pleasantly, but quickly deteriorated into either paranoia (his, not mine) or just plain madness (again, his... I think). I saw him once near the Cedar Lee Theatre, and our conversation seemed innocuous enough, until he suddenly said, "So. You're one of *them*?" I knew where that was headed, so I said, "Woah—look at the time. Gotta go."

Once, at the old Revco at Coventry and Mayfield, we were in the greeting card aisle, chatting, when he stopped, looked at one of the cards, grabbed it out of the rack, and said, "How did they know?" I said, "How did who... know what?" He held up the card for me to see, so I'd understand, and demanded, "How did they know that I'd be right *here*, right *now*?" I said, "Woah—look at the time. Gotta go."

Another time, my wife and I were leaving a concert at Cain Park and John spotted us. He worked his way through the crowd, as though he had something urgent to tell her. "Dave and I were at a Halloween party at Pete Dartmouth's house in 1967," he said, "and there was a big mail slot in the front door, and when trick-or-treaters rang the doorbell, Dave would put on a black glove and stick his hand out through the mail slot and take a piece of candy *out* of their bags, and they would run away."

Whew! Typically wacky story. He told the tale, laughed, and disappeared back into the crowd. My wife looked at me to try to gauge the degree of craziness. "Uhh... you know what?" I said. "*That* one is true."

Sorry, 1967 kids. But, I mean... you had enough candy. And I didn't have any.

I was 18 and, essentially, homeless at that time—meaning that I didn't have a permanent place to live. But, also, it was the hippie era, so I could usually find a place to crash and hang out. Usually. And that Halloween-party house was a place I stayed quite often. It had been purchased by Pete Dartmouth, a young guy—about 26 years old in 1967—who had moved here from California (for some reason), had a lot of money (from some unknown source), was a music fan and audiophile, and believed he could buy a bunch of friends. He was correct. He bought a bunch of friends.

Pete acquired this big house, started hanging out at Farragher's, and told all the local folk and rock musicians he met that he was building a recording studio in his basement. And, also, that any of us could stay at the house. He finished the basement and installed a state-of-the-art studio in it. In the house, he stocked a big refrigerator with food, got a color TV, and opened up his home and studio to us. We all recorded demos for free. But he also charged money for some bands to record there.

I started helping him in the studio and control room. That was my first recording experience, and I learned a lot. I met several musicians from other parts of town, many of whom are still my friends. I also stayed there on numerous nights. And if I couldn't find an empty bedroom, which was often the case, I just slept on the studio floor, covered by my jacket. I have surprisingly fond memories of sleeping on that studio floor.

But soon everyone left town, mostly for Los Angeles. John's band signed with RCA Records. I went to New York City. I got into a band that later became famous (without me).



DAVID BUDIN

This is that Halloween-party house today, not far from where I live now. I see that the mail slot is still in the front door. Maybe I should go and dump some candy in it.

I remained homeless for a while in NYC. I ran into a band I had met when they recorded a demo in Pete's studio, from which they got a contract with Columbia Records, and I lived with them in their one hotel room for weeks, while they recorded an album. I got signed to Sire Records (by the guy who had written and produced and played on the original hit record of "I Want Candy"), and I moved into an apartment. But that hippie-era tribal, let's-all-help-each-other thing was an amazing experience and has affected

me to this day. We could use more of that now. Wait—did I say "more"? Sorry—I meant "any."

So, I wound up, one year after that Halloween party, producing records in New York, partly based on that basement-studio experience. And I didn't steal candy anymore. Much.

*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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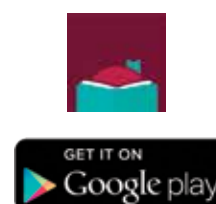
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# Library offers at-home Internet access and online tutoring



Additional borrowable hotspots are among Heights Libraries expanding offering of home learning tools.

Sheryl Banks

In an effort to support Heights families whose children are learning remotely, Heights Libraries is offering tools to make online learning easier: the online tutoring service Tutor.com, and additional Wi-Fi hotspots to help families who don't have home Internet service.

Tutor.com is available for free through the library's website, [www.heightslibrary.org](http://www.heightslibrary.org), and offers both one-on-one virtual tutoring services and independent, self-directed learning tools, such as webinars, study guides, essay feedback and practice quizzes.

"Since the pandemic has limited our ability to hold in-person programs, like our popular Homework Help series, we knew that we needed to find another way to help students, especially those who may be struggling with remote schooling," said Interim Youth Services Manager Sarah Rosen-

berger. "Tutor.com gives kids access to live tutors in most school subject areas, as well as writing help and webinars on all kinds of topics."

Every day, 2-9 p.m., students can chat live through text or video with a tutor who can help them with specific homework questions, or provide more general information about common subjects, such as social studies, science, English and math.

Students of all ages can have their essays critiqued and edited by Tutor.com staff. High school students can access ACT, SAT and AP exam test prep.

"One of the great things about Tutor.com is that it isn't just for K-12 kids," said Rosenberger. "It has plenty of resources for college students, like grad school prep, and for adult job seekers, who can use it to access resume, interviewing, and cover letter help."

None of these services will assist students and families, however, if they can't get online—that's why Heights Libraries purchased 40 more Wi-Fi hotspots this summer.

"The pandemic has forced us to restrict the number of people who can be in our buildings at one time," said Heights Libraries Director Nancy Levin. "So, that limits the number of people who can use our public computers. Families who need Internet access at home, but cannot afford to subscribe to a service, can borrow a hotspot."

A hotspot is a small device that allows a user to connect a wireless-enabled device, such as a laptop,

smartphone or tablet, to the Internet. Customers 18 and older, with a library card in good standing, can borrow a hotspot for two weeks at a time. They can reserve one by calling 216-932-3600, or visit the circulation desk of

any Heights Libraries branch to check out a hotspot.

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



Youth Services Associates Shamekia Chandler (left) and Kareemah Hairston (right) are ready to help young customers in the Lee Road branch children's room.

## Heights Libraries re-opens for browsing and computer use

Sheryl Banks

Heights Libraries has re-opened its buildings for computer use and browsing. Due to COVID-19, these services look different, and follow new safeguards to keep customers and staff as safe as possible.

Computer use now requires a reservation, and reservations may be made by phone only—walk-ups and online reservations are not available at this time. Computer use will also now require a library card—guest passes will not be available. Customers can make a reservation by calling 216-932-3600, ext. 1221. Use is limited to one computer session per day, and each session lasts for 45 minutes.

Browsing will be permitted in all sections—Adult, Teen, and Children's—but customers will be asked to stay only as long as it takes to get their materials.

To achieve safe social distancing, Heights Libraries is limiting the number of customers in its buildings, and staff have removed chairs and tables to discourage lingering. If staff members think an area is too crowded, they will ask customers to move along so that

others may enter the building. Reference staff are again manning reference desks, but will assist customers from behind Plexiglas barriers.

Per the state of Ohio's Statewide Mask Order, customers must wear face masks at all times, and maintain 6 feet of distance from staff and other customers at all times. Face masks must cover both the nose and mouth, and be in place for the duration of the visit. Face shields may not be worn in place of face masks.

Study rooms and meeting rooms will remain closed until further notice, as will the children's play areas.

"We are so happy to welcome customers back, and we have worked very hard to do so safely," said Heights Libraries Director Nancy Levin. "Services look very different now. While we can't yet welcome the community to spend time in our buildings, we still offer free access to computers, books, music and DVDs, and all kinds of information is available on our website and through our reference staff."

Full details, including guidelines for computer use, can be found on the Heights Libraries website, [www.heightslibrary.org](http://www.heightslibrary.org).

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## Cleveland Heights – University Heights Public Library Board

### Meeting highlights



AUGUST 17, 2020

Board members present were President James Roosa, Gabe Crenshaw, Max Gerboc, Annette Iwamoto, and Vikas Turakhia. Vice President Dana Fluellen and Patti Carlyle were absent.

#### Coventry PEACE Campus

Leases with the individual tenants of the Coventry PEACE Campus building expired as of June 30, 2020. Negotiations have been held this month between the library director and the tenants. The library director had hoped to ask the board to approve a letter of intent at this special meeting. However, the PEACE campus tenants and its board are

not in agreement with the library. Areas of disagreement include the base rent and tenant responsibility for utilities, operational expenses, and maintenance. Negotiations will continue in private with the involved parties. The special meeting was adjourned with no action taken by the board.

LWV Observer: Elizabeth M. Tracy.

[While pandemic restrictions are imposed on public gatherings, library board meetings are live-streamed, and posted the next day on the library's Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/heightslibrary](http://www.facebook.com/heightslibrary).]



# CH nurse receives 'Helping Hann' free furnace

Bob Rosenbaum

For a fourth consecutive year, Verne & Ellsworth Hann Inc. has chosen a winner for its "Helping Hann" free furnace giveaway. The company created the program to help a deserving member of the community who needs a new furnace.

Cleveland Heights resident Sommer Saddler is the recipient of the company's 2020 free furnace installation, which includes all materials and labor.

A registered nurse, Saddler has worked for the Cleveland Clinic for the past 16 years. Her passion is to care for others, despite her

own health issues. Diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) in 2017, Saddler said, "Every day is a struggle, but I have to get myself together to care for my patients. For a long time, I hid my MS so people wouldn't feel sorry for me. I have learned to accept my diagnosis even though it has changed my lifestyle and financial situation."

Working long hours was taking a toll on Saddler, but having to work less hours has caused a financial strain. "You can't give up," said Saddler. "Life happens. We have no control of that, but we have the ability, will, and faith to keep going."

Saddler's mother, Evette, lives



Chris Hann with Evette and Sommer Saddler at their Cleveland Heights home.

with her and has health issues of her own. The furnace in their home was old and unreliable, and has had problems over the years. Both women worried about the air quality in their home due to the outdated furnace.

Saddler and her mother were at home when Chris Hann, co-owner of Verne & Ellsworth Hann, called to give her the good news. "When Chris told me I had won the free furnace, my mother and I screamed!" said Saddler. "This has relieved so much stress and is one less factor I have to worry about. Chris was so attentive and personable. He is awesome! We continue to say that we just cannot believe we won!"

Hann said, "Our Helping Hann free furnace giveaway is really the highlight of our year. The fact that Sommer is a nurse during these uncertain times makes her a very

deserving winner.

"Our company looks forward to continuing our Helping Hann tradition and giving back to the community."

Verne & Ellsworth Hann, a five-generation family-owned company, is owned and operated by brothers Bill and Chris Hann. The HVAC company has serviced Northeast Ohio for more than 65 years, and is located at 2026 Lee Road. Visit the company's website, [www.vehbrothers.com](http://www.vehbrothers.com), for more information, and for the upcoming announcement of its fifth-annual Helping Hann furnace giveaway.

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



## Heights businesses are invited to submit holiday gift ideas

Jessica Schantz

This year more than ever, shopping here in the Heights has the capacity to help our local business districts.

The COVID-19 crisis has forced many beloved Heights merchants to close shop or pare back on their hours and services. As the holiday season approaches, the *Heights Observer* continues its efforts to encourage local shopping with its annual Holiday Gift Guide, to be published in November.

Cleveland Heights and University Heights retail businesses are invited and encouraged to e-mail photos and descriptions of items they would like to be considered for publication in the **2020 Heights Observer Holiday Gift Guide** to Jessica Schantz ([jschantz@futureheights.org](mailto:jschantz@futureheights.org)) no later than Oct. 16. Put "Holiday Gift Guide" in the subject line.

The 2020 guide will contain listings in each of the following six categories, two of which are new this year: Stocking Stuffers (\$10 or less); Gifts Less Than \$50; Gifts \$50 to \$150; Gifts More Than \$150; the Non-Traditional Gift, a new category meant to cast a wider net of potential gift ideas; and Best Socially-Distanced Gift or Experience.

Businesses must submit the following information for each item: item category (one of the six categories listed above), item

name, item price, name of business submitting the item, and a JPG photo of the item. Please limit descriptive text for each item to one sentence, or no more than 30 words. Entries are limited to two items per category per business. Photos of gift cards and gift baskets, for restaurants or service businesses, are welcome, too.

The gift guide will appear in the November print issue of the *Heights Observer*, as well as in weekly *Heights Observer* e-newsletters in the lead-up to the holidays, and online at [www.heightsobserver.org](http://www.heightsobserver.org).

Studies show that if more of the dollars Americans spend on holiday shopping were spent at locally owned, independent businesses, they would generate far more economic benefit in local communities than money spent online, at chains or businesses outside of the community.

The Heights is known for its small but unique commercial districts peppered throughout its walkable neighborhoods. As residents, we have a vested interest in keeping these districts vibrant.

This holiday season, more than ever, support our local businesses by committing to shopping here.

*Jessica Schantz is the e-news manager at the Heights Observer and a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights.*

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CONVERSATIONS continued from page 1

our communities’ challenges with race, racism and equity, and begin generating ideas for positive change while building community,” said Eric Dillenbeck, executive director of HCC, the lead organizer of the event. “We recognize a need to come together to explore issues of race and equity, discrimination, gentrification, poverty and political division. We hope that exploring our community through the lens of race, and gathering, even virtually, will help build community and create an opportunity for learning about different perspectives and how to better support one another.”

Anyone who lives, works, worships, or plays in Cleveland Heights or University Heights is welcome to participate as a facilitator or guest.

Facilitators must attend one of two training sessions, which will take

place virtually on Saturday, Nov. 7, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Tuesday, Nov. 10, from 3:30 to 8:30 p.m.

For more information, and to register to be a facilitator or participant, visit [www.heightscongress.org](http://www.heightscongress.org) or call 216-321-6775.

Founded in 1972, HCC is an advocate of social justice, a monitor of fair-housing practices, and a facilitator for building strong, diverse communities. Among its goals are generating inclusive communities and neighborhoods; instilling a sense of community spirit and involvement among residents of all races, religions, cultures, ages, ethnic heritages, and socioeconomic levels; and encouraging active involvement of community residents in the identification and solution of issues of mutual concern.

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

CONCERNS continued from page 3

if this November’s levy passes, the district would likely need to place another 9 mill levy on the ballot in March 2022!

Our community is struggling:

- As of June 2020, unemployment in Cleveland Heights [was] close to 14 percent.
- More than 100 full- and part-time city employees have been let go due to the pandemic.
- The current forecast projects the city will have a \$1 million funding shortfall this year.
- The city is contemplating a debt restructuring because its bond retirement fund is being rapidly depleted.
- The cost of bringing Cleveland Height’s sewer system into EPA compliance is estimated at a staggering \$620 million.

As public officials, you have a broad fiduciary duty to carry out your responsibilities in a manner that is faithful to the public trust that has been reposed in each of you. We urge you to:

- Reconsider your decision to place the 4.8 mill levy on the November ballot.
- Negotiate a contract with the CH-UH teachers’ union that brings health care spending in line with other school districts.
- Contact the State Auditor’s Performance Audit team and request a performance audit.

*Maureen ‘Mo’ Lynn is the treasurer of TigerNation4LowerTaxes and is self-employed with her consulting business. She and her family moved to Cleveland Heights in 2011.*

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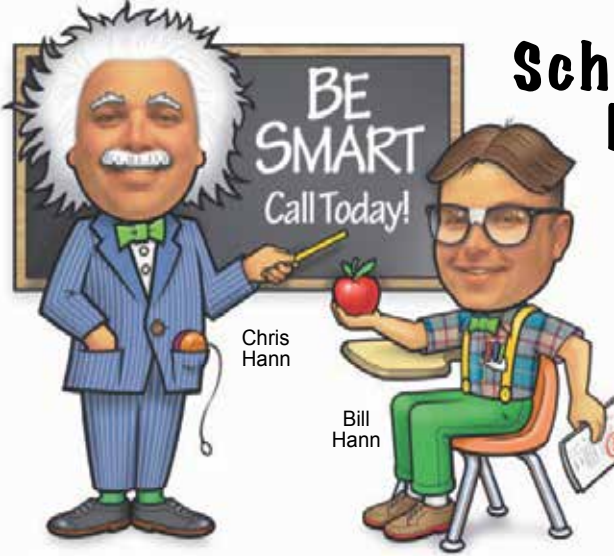


Bill’s Coffee Shop owner Cindy Schmidt has been serving breakfast and lunch for more than 32 years. Recently, she and her longtime team of John Cuva and Ronnie Black reopened for take-out orders. Think of Bill’s Coffee Shop the next time you’re looking for a classic diner meal, and pick up a copy of the *Heights Observer* while you’re there. Bill’s is located at 3954 Mayfield Road, in Cleveland Heights (216-381-6443).

Pick up the Heights Observer at Mac’s Backs



With some businesses closed, and others limiting in-store service, some readers are having trouble finding copies of the *Heights Observer*. Suzanne DeGaetano, owner of Mac’s Backs - Books on Coventry, continues serving the community by hosting virtual events, and carrying both best-sellers and books by local authors. For information, visit [www.macsbacks.com](http://www.macsbacks.com). You can also pick up a copy of the *Heights Observer* there.



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CH BALLOT ISSUE 6 continued from page 14

(a FutureHeights board member), Anthony Mattox Jr. (also a FutureHeights board member), and Robert Koonce.]

Commenting on that process, Stein said, "Council has had numerous executive session meetings and has talked about it individually. It's been a long process; however, we think it shows the strength of our democratic system. This council is really working hard and not abdicating their role in choosing another leader. We need four votes to appoint someone, and I am hopeful that we will eventually get there. We are not going to give up. I will call for additional meetings if necessary until we do appoint someone. There is not a member of council that isn't losing sleep over this. Each one is thinking of the best interests of the city."

**"The city continues to move forward and there are a lot of needs that we can't neglect—making sure that the city is functioning and getting through the pandemic, working to ensure that we come out stronger than we went into it."**

If council does select someone to fill the vacancy, he or she will serve out the seat's current term, which will expire on Dec.

31, 2021. During council's May 18 Committee of the Whole meeting, Stein reminded council members that, under the CH City Charter, "no choice has to be made"—i.e., council is not required to choose someone.

In neighboring University Heights, that city's charter sets forth a clear procedure for the appointment of a new council member. It specifies that council has 30 days to fill a vacancy; if council is unable to do so, the mayor becomes responsible for choosing the appointee.

*Kim Sergio Inglis is editor-in-chief of the Heights Observer, and is a Cuyaboga County master gardener volunteer. Deanna Bremer Fisher, executive director of FutureHeights and publisher of the Heights Observer, contributed to this article.*

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