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

MetroHealth plans expansion at Severance

Kim Sergio Inglis

MetroHealth has proposed an expansion of its Cleveland Heights medical center with the addition of a 110-bed behavioral health hospital. The new hospital is designed to be a short-term-stay facility, for patients in need of evaluation and stabilization for mental health and addiction.

Dr. Julia Bruner is leading the design and development of the new hospital, and will serve as president of the behavioral health initiative at MetroHealth's Cleveland Heights medical center.

In a Dec. 11 presentation to the FutureHeights Planning and Development Committee, Joe Frolik, MetroHealth's senior vice president for communications and community and government relations, and Bruner described plans for the new facility,



MetroHealth's proposed new Cleveland Heights Behavioral Hospital (in blue, above) will add 75,000 square feet to its Severance campus.

which has a target opening date of October 2022.

The MetroHealth Cleveland Heights Behavioral Health Hospital

would be built on a section of parking lot at the east of the health system's Severance facility, and connect to it

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Best of the Heights 2021 kicks off Jan. 1

Sally Kramer

Beginning Jan. 1, Heights residents can show their appreciation for locally owned, independent businesses by voting for their favorites in the FutureHeights 2021 Best of the Heights Awards contest.

New this year: each "vote" will be entered for a chance to win a prize package of gift certificates from Heights businesses.

"Our independent businesses are so important to the vitality of our community," said Deanna Bremer Fisher, executive director of FutureHeights. "Their individual personalities and unique products and services are one of the things that makes the Heights such an awesome place to live! This year, more than ever, it is important to show our support so that they will still be here when we come through this pandemic."

Since 2005, FutureHeights—a nonprofit community development corporation—has conducted the Best of the Heights Awards to recognize the unique attributes of Heights businesses, and their con-



tributions to the local economy.

Each year, residents cast their votes for their favorite businesses by nominating them for an award in a variety of categories.

This year's ballot includes popular categories from previous years, as well as new categories that recognize the innovation and perseverance of local entrepreneurs, such as Best Online Ordering and Best Socially Distanced Dining.

Residents are encouraged to

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New teachers' contract averts strike

Cathan Cavanaugh

The CH-UH City School District Board of Education (BOE) has approved a new contract for the teachers' union, averting a strike by teachers. [To view the contract, go to [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1\\_9s3n1qUxjCDwF\\_fc3-D-9IVPvhZvgu3/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_9s3n1qUxjCDwF_fc3-D-9IVPvhZvgu3/view).]

Following an all-night negotiation session that began Dec. 1, a tentative agreement was reached between the BOE and the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union early in the morning of Dec. 2—the date the union had intended to begin its strike. The union voted on Dec. 3 to ratify the agreement, with 94-percent approval.

As the final step [in the agreement], BOE members unanimously approved the contract during its regular meeting on Dec. 8. (BOE Member Malia Lewis was not present, due to an excused absence.)

"I'm glad we were able to reach an agreement that's more sustainable for the long term. Both sides worked hard and were able to ultimately agree on important compromises and meet in the middle," said BOE President Jodi Sourini. "We are thrilled to be able to move forward united for our students."

The ratified agreement covers the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years. Teachers will receive their steps (salary increases for years of service to the district, and for additional education) this year and next, with a 1-percent increase in base salary next year.

Effective March 1, 2021, employee health care premium contributions will be tiered at 9-, 10-, or 11-percent of the monthly premium cost, with those employees at the lower pay range contributing slightly less (9 percent) than those at the higher pay ranges (who will contribute 10 or 11 percent).

Other key points of the agreement

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Community groups plan elected-mayor public forum

Deanna Bremer Fisher

FutureHeights, the community development corporation for Cleveland Heights, and Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM), the grassroots group that advocated for passage of Issue 26 in fall 2019, are co-sponsoring a public forum to help prepare voters to directly elect a mayor, for the first time, in 2021.

"Electing Our First Mayor: Moving Cleveland Heights Forward" will take place via Zoom, from 7 to 8:30 p.m., on Wednesday,



Feb. 3.

In preparation for the forum, the groups are asking citizens to complete an online survey to help identify the top issues that a new mayor will need to address in order to move Cleveland Heights forward. Visit <https://conta.cc/2LSDmv3> to participate.

"Community input is an essential part of shaping what our first elected mayor's priorities should



be," said Tony Cuda of CEM. "We believe this will not only help candidates create their platforms, it will help citizens evaluate candidates and identify the qualities, experiences, and qualifications that a mayor would need to address the issues."

In addition, the groups are asking members of the public to play an active role in the event by

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## Letters Policy

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

## HEIGHTS OBSERVER

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Cleveland Heights, OH 44118  
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### PUBLISHER

Deanna Bremer Fisher  
[dbfisher@futureheights.org](mailto:dbfisher@futureheights.org)

### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Kim Sergio Inglis  
[city.editor@heightsobserver.org](mailto:city.editor@heightsobserver.org)

### E-NEWS EDITOR

Jessica Schantz  
[jschantz@futureheights.org](mailto:jschantz@futureheights.org)

### ADVERTISING

Bob Rosenbaum  
216-401-9342  
[brosenbaum@heightsobserver.org](mailto:brosenbaum@heightsobserver.org)

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Deanna Bremer Fisher, David Budin, Greg Donley,  
Judith Eugene, Jewel Moulthrop, Vince Reddy, Bob  
Rosenbaum, Jessica Schantz, Kim Sergio Inglis

### EDITORS

Jamison Babb, Maryann Barnes, Deanna Bremer  
Fisher, David Budin, Greg Donley, Jewel Moulthrop,  
Vince Reddy, Bob Rosenbaum, Jessica Schantz, Kim  
Sergio Inglis.

### DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

Temma Collins, Diane Roberto

### DISTRIBUTION

Sally Kramer

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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 February issue must be submitted by Jan. 11. 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.

## Join our free seminar, How to Write for the Observer



OPENING  
THE OBSERVER

Bob Rosenbaum

Somewhere around 800 people have contributed to the *Heights Observer* since its first issue in April 2008.

It sounds like an impressive number to me.

On the other hand, it represents just 1.2 percent of the 66,000 people who live in the *Heights Observer's* service area of Cleveland Heights and University Heights.

So we have room to grow.

If you've ever considered contributing an article to the *Heights Observer*, you may want to sign up for our upcoming online seminar, which we have cleverly titled "How to Write for the *Observer*."

The seminar is free, on Thursday, Jan. 21, 7–8:15 p.m. A registration link is at the bottom of this column.

It will cover four main topics:

- What the *Heights Observer* publishes

- How community organizations can leverage it
- How to submit contributions
- A simple process to make writing easier

As a warm-up to the seminar, here's some information to help you understand the *Heights Observer*.

- It's published by nonprofit FutureHeights with a goal of helping to keep Heights residents engaged and the Heights community connected.
- Everything we publish is contributed by members of the community. And anybody in the community is welcome to contribute.
- We don't pay for editorial contributions.
- We limit our content to information that's directly relevant to the communities we serve. If it's not about something or someone in Cleveland Heights or University Heights, it's probably not for us.
- We seek to provide news and information about the Heights community that's not available elsewhere, and to support dialogue about things that matter to our readers. (We don't have a policy against publishing poetry, for example, but

we're not a literary journal and we rarely do it.)

- The *Heights Observer* strives to be an agnostic platform for people who have information to share with the community—such as opinions about local political issues, articles about school events, coverage of meetings and forums, and profiles about Heights residents who do interesting things.
- Everything we publish gets reviewed by an editor, for a few reasons: It helps keep order; it makes the job of writing easier for nervous contributors; it identifies errors and omissions; and it's part of a mindful approach to publishing.

If you think you have stories about the Heights to share, and you want some more insight on how to get started, please consider this an invitation to join our seminar.

It's free, but you have to register. Here's the link: <http://bit.ly/HOwrite21>.

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

## CH-UH schools and teachers union announce agreement

To the Editor:

After months of contract negotiations culminating in an all-night session, the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union (CHTU) and the CH-UH City School District reached a tentative agreement on the morning of Dec. 2. The union ratified it with 94% approval. On Dec. 8, the agreement [was] presented to the CH-UH Board of Education (BOE) for a vote. We are happy to be able to move forward united and, above all else, we are relieved that our teachers are exactly where they're needed most—with their students.

The battle we continue to fight together is one against our district's common enemy: the impact of disastrous EdChoice legislation and inequitable school funding. The CH-UH schools lost \$7 million last year, and we expect to lose more than \$9 million this school year, due to the way EdChoice vouchers are funded in Ohio. We will continue to testify in front of state lawmakers, provide Heights residents with information and ways to support fair school funding legislation, and work closely with our advocacy partners such as the Heights Coalition for Public Education.

We wish to thank the Heights community for their engagement, advocacy and support. Together, we remain committed to fulfilling our mission of preparing our students for college and career. We are unified in our commitment to make positive change to school funding and, ultimately, the future of education for our Heights children.

Elizabeth Kirby, CH-UH City School District superintendent  
Karen Rego, CHTU president  
Jodi Sourini, CH-UH City School District BOE president

## Seconding the call for an 'excellent' Cleveland Heights mayor

Bruce Hennes

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg's November column in the *Heights Observer*, "Wanted: An Excellent Mayor for Cleveland Heights," listing the qualities we should seek in a new mayor, was accurate and on-point.

Having worked in and around Cleveland Heights City Hall for 45 years, and serving a quarter-century on the faculty of the Leadership Academy at Cleveland State University, I can say from experience that the job of mayor of a large, diverse community, with a budget of \$45 million per year, should not be held by anyone with a thin résumé.

I voted against the CH charter change to eliminate the city manager form of government because of my belief that the deficiencies of that form of government could be mitigated with a strong city council led by a strong council president. But nature abhors a vacuum.

When you have a city council that is divided on a number of key issues, the city manager's hand is strengthened. Because the city manager is focused narrowly on keeping at least four members of city council satisfied—rather than the entire community—you end up with a disconnect—one that Citizens for an Elected Mayor took to victory with the recent charter change.

The other reason I voted to keep the city manager form of government intact was based on my belief that in Cleveland Heights we do not have a "civic infrastructure"

in place that has a number of residents prepared to become mayor. Decades ago, we had something like that in place, but Coventry Neighbors, Oxford Neighbors, the Heights Community Congress and similar community organizations are either gone or are no longer incubating the kind of civic leadership enumerated in Van Kleef and Rautenberg's column.

Keep this in mind, too: While the amended charter says that the new "city administrator" will oversee daily operations, I doubt the search for that person will begin in earnest until the new mayor takes office—and it could indeed be many, many months before that person is hired—so the new mayor will have to be hands-on as administrator. And if the person who becomes mayor has few of the desired qualities mentioned in the November column (one with a "vision for the city", "financial acumen", "the self-confidence to make tough decisions, and the humility to ask for help"), what's the likelihood we'll attract a city administrator who is truly outstanding?

Please, Deborah and Carla, keep the pressure on. It would be detrimental to the community if we elect a new mayor based on pure political clout rather than on qualifications.

*Bruce Hennes, a 47-year resident of Cleveland Heights, is a past president of Coventry Neighbors, past chairman of the 1980s-era Coventry Street Fair, and founder of the Coventry Village Special Improvement District.*



# Outsourced Safebuilt inspection ‘a joke’

Dean Sieck

As an opponent of privatizing city services, I had an interesting experience in mid-October, when I had a new driveway installed. I watched the crew pretty closely, and at one point I noticed a man approach them from my neighbor’s yard and hand one of them a piece of paper. He then turned and walked away. Curious about who he was, I watched him leave and saw that he got into a car with a Safebuilt logo on the door.

Safebuilt is the private, for-profit company that now handles all the duties of the former building department of the city of Cleveland Heights.

Later, when I talked to the foreman of the crew about how the job was coming along, he asked me, “Did you see the inspector?”

He relayed that his entire crew was gobsmacked by the so-called “inspection” that Safebuilt had performed on my driveway. He also mentioned that the crew had delayed part of its process, waiting for the inspection of the gravel base before applying the first layer of asphalt. But the inspector showed up two hours early.

The foreman further stated that if this job had been in Shaker Heights, the inspector would have walked the entire driveway, stomping on the stones to make certain they were well packed before the asphalt was applied. When I talked to him later, he did acknowledge that another Safebuilt “inspector” had come to the jobsite, but that one didn’t look at the job either—just talked to the crew a bit and left.

I was pretty certain that I had hired a reliable company, and thus was not worried about the quality of work for my new driveway. But what if I hadn’t? And what if the other driveways that were done that day in Cleveland Heights were subjected to a similar “joke inspection,” as described by the foreman of my crew? Given the financial pressures many are experiencing during COVID-19, what if some of those other hired contractors were less than thorough, or less than scrupulous, hired by homeowners who just want a job to pass inspection? What if they were

given the same hastiest of “inspections” that my driveway received? What if that kind of slipshod performance extends to other jobs in Cleveland Heights, such as pouring concrete, building an addition, or putting on a roof?

The reason a city has an inspection process for new building is so that the quality of housing stock in the city will be maintained, and perhaps enhanced—especially as it ages to 100 years and more. The carelessness I witnessed in what now passes for building inspection in Cleveland Heights bodes ill for the future of this city that I love. Let us hope that perhaps a new Cleveland Heights mayor will move to reinstate a true building department—and terminate an outsourced department of box-checking and paper passing.

*Dean Sieck is a 45-year Cleveland Heights resident. He’s a former board member and president of HRRC (then FHC Housing), and former member of Forest Hill Homeowners Executive and Standards committees. A member of Forest Hill Church, he enjoys gardening, canning and writing poems.*

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## Barbee announces candidacy for Cleveland Heights City Council

Lee Barbee

Greetings fellow Cleveland Heights residents, my name is Lee E. Barbee II. I would like to introduce myself as a candidate for Cleveland Heights City Council.

I was born in Cleveland. My family moved to the Forest Hill area of Cleveland Heights in 1970. My parents (Lee Barbee Sr. and his wife, Marlene) wanted to move from our home on 124th Street, off of St. Clair Avenue. The neighborhood was changing, and our home was robbed several times. I remember an incident as a child: We returned home and I saw the robber inside; he walked past the front window. My father became the protector he was and enacted his Second Amendment right and reached for a gun. He instructed us to go to his brother's house around the corner while he secured the premises.

My father retired after working for 44 years at a Ford Motor plant; my mother worked 20 years at General Electric at Nela Park. The home I live in was our family home, which I have vowed to always keep in our family. The traditions that were started here in Cleveland Heights reverberate through our family to this day, and I will keep them abreast.

I live in the home I grew up in because I love the neighborhood, and I always have. Every time I hear the sound of owls in the late evening it reminds me of quiet summer days in

Forest Hill. This section of Cleveland Heights is different from others: the residents are zoned to attend East Cleveland City Schools (East Cleveland, once a formidable suburb). Forest Hill is divided by the East Cleveland School District (ECSD) and the East Cleveland side of Forest Hill. So, I have voted on ECSD issues and city of Cleveland Heights issues. Individuals from past to present have moved into this unique and beautiful area and been confused and defeated. They have sought help from courts to send their children to Cleveland Heights-University Heights schools, and have failed.

I applied [to join] the Citizens Advisory Committee and was recently appointed to serve on it. I believe in this community! I am not running as a Democrat or Republican. I will be running as an independent, non-partisan candidate whose interest is all residents. [Editor's note: All elections for Cleveland Heights office are nonpartisan. Per the city's charter, all ballots used in elections provided for in the charter "shall be without party marks or designations."]

I believe that 2021 should be the year of diplomacy. We should be teaching our kids and other adults that, no matter what your party affiliate is, we should all use diplomacy toward one another. We can all agree to disagree, but move forward as a community based on the entire body as a whole.

For example, we have just witnessed a division of opinion with the CH-UH school levy; but we should accept the decision of the people and move forward as a community. At the same time, the winning side of the vote should take into consideration those who opposed the issue and work together as a community.

This was an issue within the Forest Hill homeowners association; because we disagreed on an approach to an issue, we became tribalized in our perceptions of one another. This was one of the main things Machiavelli spoke of; therefore, please consider me for a CH City Council seat for 2021, to bring the city together to achieve common goals for the progress of Cleveland Heights—my home and yours.

*Lee Barbee is a candidate for CH City Council.*

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# Speak up for democracy



HEIGHTS OF DEMOCRACY

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg

We imagine everyone will be glad to put 2020 in the rearview mirror. The ugliness of presidential politics, police brutality, and the COVID-19 pandemic have touched us locally and roiled the nation. As we write, not only is President Trump still disputing the election, it appears that Ohio electric ratepayers will be charged an extra \$7 per month for the foreseeable future, thanks to our General Assembly's failure to repeal their utterly corrupt creation, House Bill 6. These are failures, not of democracy, but of governments that serve the power of money, rather than the public interest.

There will be plenty for citizens to address at Cleveland Heights' eighth annual Democracy Day on Thursday, Jan. 28, at 7 p.m. For the first time, the public hearing will be virtual, livestreamed on YouTube. Whether as an audience member or a participant, please plan to attend. Do you have something to say about the corrosive effect of corporate power and big money on our democracy? You can speak for up to five minutes (about 500 words). Send your full name, e-mail address, and topic to Carla at heightsdemocracy@gmail.

com by Tuesday, Jan. 26, to receive a participants' link. The link will also be posted on the city calendar.

In 2013, with a 77 percent "yes" vote, Cleveland Heights voters passed a citizens' initiative calling for a 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution to establish that human beings, not corporate entities, have constitutional rights, and that money is not speech. The initiative also created, by city ordinance, an annual public hearing on these topics (Title 15, Chapter 183 of the Administrative code). Eleven other Ohio cities have passed similar initiatives, the most recent being Painesville, last November, with 78 percent voting "yes". Note Painesville's location in deep-red Lake County; this is not a partisan issue, and the supporting organization, Move to Amend, is non-partisan.

The 28th Amendment, which so many Ohioans and others across the country have voted to support, is House Joint Resolution 48. Its 75 co-sponsors include Ohio representatives Marcia Fudge, Marcy Kaptur and Tim Ryan.

Here is the full text of the 28th Amendment:

Section 1. The rights protected by the Constitution of the United States are the rights of natural persons only. Artificial entities, such as corporations, limited liability companies, and other entities, established by the laws of any State, the United States, or any foreign

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## School-funding pain must end



THE COMMON GOOD

Susie Kaeser

Have you ever lost your credit card and worried that a stranger was ringing up a big bill for you to pay? Fortunately, once you discover you have lost your card, you can cancel it and stop the theft. In most cases, the credit card company will cover the fraudulent expenditures assigned to your small piece of plastic.

Deduction funding, the way the state legislature funds private-school vouchers and charter schools, is like a community losing its credit card and then having the state legislature pick it up and use it to advance its agenda, without paying for it. The legislature has had a field day over the last decade, cutting taxes and looking good to voters, while simultaneously increasing education costs and slowly shifting more funding responsibility to local taxpayers and more blame to local boards of education. Its spending spree has forced an increase in local taxes just to keep up with the state funding that is being forfeited to private schools.

State education dollars are appropriated based on local need and are supposed to satisfy the legislature's obligation to fund its public schools, but deduction funding ignores this goal. Instead, school districts are expected to use state aid appropriated for their students to pay for students they don't educate. In so doing, the legislature fails to support universal access to well-funded public schools and increases local education costs.

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights school system demonstrates the damage caused by the state's willingness to advance unregulated and unaccountable alternatives to public schools. We are the hardest hit of any Ohio district by the percentage of our state funding that is diverted to pay for private-school tuition. This year, the loss of state resources left us with two unacceptable

choices: cut programs or raise local taxes. Our district did both, yet it is still not enough to keep pace.

Standard opposition to tax levies places the blame on bloated budgets, bad board decisions, or greedy teachers, but these are not the reasons we faced a financial cliff this year. It is decisions by state lawmakers that sent us back to the ballot for increased local funding, led to multiple layoffs, and brought the teachers union and board of education to a painful standoff. This funding void pushed the board to demand givebacks from teachers that were comparable to asking each teacher to subsidize a voucher. Everyone who cares about public education was put in the horrible position of seeking funding options that created pain and division within our community.

The legislature's failure to treat public schools fairly creates deep division and conflict between teachers and school leaders, and mistrust and worry among voters. Our community must now try to heal from the local fallout of destructive state policy. These lasting wounds are the cost of legislators abdicating responsibility for school funding and using local communities as their credit card.

As I write this column, the fair school funding plan, as set out in House Bill 305 and its companion in the Senate, SB 376, has passed in the Ohio House of Representatives and is awaiting action by the Senate. It is a robust solution to a terrible problem. One key component is direct funding of vouchers. If approved, it would be a game changer. It's the only way out.

We can only hope that the fair school funding plan becomes law. Then we can press to ensure that the legislature adequately funds public education in every Ohio community, so that all Ohio students will have access to a high-quality public education.

*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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# There's always a path to compromise



A TEACHER'S VOICE

Karen Rego

Coming to an agreement during contract negotiations can be a long, tough road. Both sides begin negotiations with the intention of finding a settlement quickly. As negotiations move along, however, finding times to meet and agreeing on language that both sides can accept takes longer than anyone expects.

There are moments of good discussion and mutual agreement, and there are other moments when union and management strongly disagree. In the end, it's all about compromise. Neither side will get everything they desire, but ultimately both sides will achieve some of what they want.

The path to the current agreement between the CH-UH Board of Education (BOE) and Cleveland Heights Teachers Union was long and, sometimes, arduous. But our bargaining team strongly believed that we were never at an impasse. The union always trusted that there was a way to reach an agreement.

We negotiated for months. The last, 13-hour, overnight session took us down to the wire. There were moments when we thought an agreement might not be reached. But neither side gave up; both sides pushed on.

Both the BOE and the union walked away from the table feeling that a good compromise had been reached. We know we have more work to do to fix the financial crisis that the state of Ohio has created through EdChoice vouchers. But contract negotiations are over, and now is the time to fight this particular crisis together.

House Bill 305 passed the Ohio

House overwhelmingly, and now moves on to the Ohio Senate. Its proposed new funding system would give our district some relief from having to allocate local taxes to subsidize private schools. Under the proposed funding bill, voucher payments would come directly from the state.

Local public schools are funded primarily through property taxes. This money should remain with our public schools.

Because of an inequitable funding system, the CH-UH school district is forced to put levies on the ballot every few years. It's time for the state to fix school funding, and provide the relief that our public schools need and that our children deserve.

*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 the president of Cleveland Heights Teachers Union.*

TEACHER'S STRIKE continued from page 1

include:

- Moving from \$0 deductible and \$0 out-of-pocket in the medical insurance plan design, to \$100 single/\$200 family deductibles, and \$500 single/\$1,000 family out-of-pocket, in addition to co-pays and prescription-pay adjustments.
- Additional flexibility for several workdays in the academic calendar.
- Elimination of the 1-percent State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) pickup by the BOE, with that now being the responsibility of teachers' union members. For 2020-21, teachers will receive a \$500 stipend to help ease the impact of the STRS change.

During the meeting, board members discussed what district leaders and public-school advocates agree is the root cause of the district's financial losses and strained negotiations: EdChoice laws and inequitable school funding in Ohio.

"It is unfortunate that [this contract] is a response to the misaligned priorities of our state leadership in Columbus," said BOE Member Dan Heintz.

The CH-UH district lost \$7 million last year, and expects to lose more than \$9 million this year due to the way EdChoice vouchers are funded in Ohio.

"We will continue to testify in front of state lawmakers, provide Heights residents with information and ways to support fair school-funding legislation, and work closely with our advocacy partners, such as the Heights Coalition for Public Education," said Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby.

In a Dec. 4 public statement, the Cleveland Heights Teachers' Union said, "We are committed to unite with our board and administration to fight against the harmful EdChoice voucher deductions that have been breaking our district's budget and making it harder for us to give our students the education they deserve."

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

BEST OF HEIGHTS continued from page 1

vote for their favorite businesses online at <https://conta.cc/3mwwu1FS>, or by using the paper ballot that will appear on the last page of the January and February print issues of the *Heights Observer*. Voting will conclude Feb. 15, and winners will be announced in the April issue of the *Heights Observer*.

All Cleveland Heights and University Heights businesses are eligible to be nominated.

Each person who submits a valid ballot qualifies for a chance to win one of four packages of gift certificates to local businesses (each worth a minimum of \$250). Additional chances to win can be obtained with a donation to FutureHeights: two chances for \$10 and six for \$25.

"Proceeds will help cover the costs of the program and support the work of FutureHeights to create a vibrant and sustainable future for our community," said Fisher, "not to mention helping support

our local businesses when they need it most."

According to a study conducted by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, each dollar spent at a locally owned, independent business returns three times more money to the local economy than one spent at a chain. Because local businesses are often owned by people who live in the community, those owners have a natural interest in the community's long-term health, and many participate in community causes.

To vote in the Best of the Heights Awards, visit [www.futureheights.org](http://www.futureheights.org), or fill out and return the paper ballot. For more information, call FutureHeights at 216-320-1423 or send an e-mail to [info@futureheights.org](mailto:info@futureheights.org).

*Sally Kramer is a longtime Cleveland Heights resident and the administrative assistant/Heights Observer distribution manager at FutureHeights.*

HEIGHTS OF DEMOCRACY continued from page 5

state shall have no rights under this Constitution and are subject to regulation by the People, through Federal, State, or local law. The privileges of artificial entities shall be determined by the People, through Federal, State, or local law, and shall not be construed to be inherent or inalienable.

Section 2. Federal, State and local government shall regulate, limit, or prohibit contributions and expenditures, including a candidate's own contributions and expenditures, to ensure that all citizens, regardless of their economic status, have access to the political process, and that no person gains, as a result of that person's money, substantially more access or ability to influence in any way the election of any candidate for public office or any ballot measure. Federal, State, and local govern-

ments shall require that any permissible contributions and expenditures be publicly disclosed. The judiciary shall not construe the spending of money to influence elections to be speech under the First Amendment.

Section 3. Nothing contained in this amendment shall be construed to abridge the freedom of the press.

If you see a big difference between how government works now, vs. how and for whom it could work following passage of the 28th Amendment, join Cleveland Heights Democracy Day on Jan. 28.

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



ELECTED MAYOR continued from page 1

submitting a 15- to 30-second video clip expressing an important challenge for Cleveland Heights' first elected mayor (see instructions in box on page 7). Videos should be submitted no later than 9 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 26.

The Feb. 3 forum will begin with a brief overview of the process for electing a mayor, and will revisit some of the qualities and qualifications that mayors from surrounding communities had emphasized at a previous forum. The groups will then present the results of the online survey and share video clips from residents as a jumping-off point for discussion of the issues. Participants will also have an opportunity to ask questions and comment during the forum.

"The forum will not be a place to register complaints or a soapbox for political candidates," said Robert Brown, president of the FutureHeights Board of Directors. "Rather, our goal is to have productive discussions around the challenges and opportunities our city faces as we elect a mayor for the first time."

"We hope that candidates considering the run for mayor will find this information helpful in designing their platform," said Susan Efroymson, CEM member. "It is not our goal to tell them what that platform should be, or flesh out solutions to Cleveland Heights' many challenges in our 90-minute forum. We feel this will be robustly helpful to them in knowing what topics their constituents are looking to see addressed."

For more information and to RSVP for the forum, visit <https://tinyurl.com/y76adqn3>.

The organizers invite residents to play an active role in this event. Share what you think is an important challenge for Cleveland Heights' first elected mayor.

Here are a few details and requests for your video:

- Record your video by holding your phone horizontally (landscape orientation).
- Make sure that your room is well lit with ample light in front of you, and try to eliminate all background noise.
- Can't decide what to wear? Solids always work best on camera.
- Be brief; a maximum of 30 seconds is ideal.
- Once recorded, upload your video by going to [www.wetransfer.com](http://www.wetransfer.com). Drag the video file into the website window, enter your e-mail address and enter [digizoommedia@gmail.com](mailto:digizoommedia@gmail.com) for the recipient e-mail address. If you prefer, you may use Dropbox or Google Drive, also using [digizoommedia@gmail.com](mailto:digizoommedia@gmail.com) as the recipient address; and
- Submit your video by Tuesday, Jan. 26, at 9 p.m.
- Questions? Contact us at [info@futureheights.org](mailto:info@futureheights.org) or 216-320-1423.

*Deanna Bremer Fisher is executive director of FutureHeights and publisher of the Heights Observer.*





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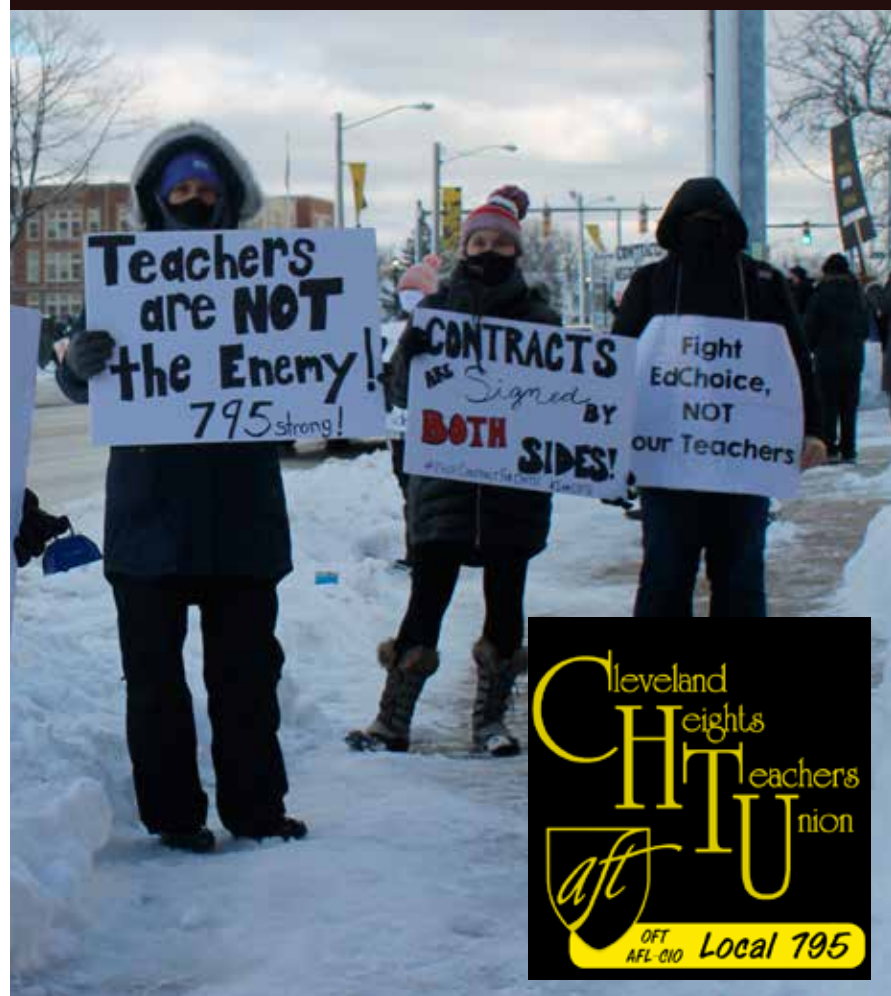
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## Brennan applauds new teachers' contract; urges state funding changes



UH Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan testified in Columbus on Dec. 2, regarding House Bill 305.

Mike Cook

University Heights Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan said residents are the winners in the new contract agreed to by teachers in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. He said he hopes the agreement will lead to a renewed effort to fix Ohio's system of funding schools.

At the school board meeting on Dec. 8, Brennan congratulated the teachers' union and board of education on the new two-year contract. "Everyone at the bargaining table made their points and came away with wins, but the winners overall are the students and families of this district," Brennan said. "In spite of everything stacked against this district, both sides were tenacious in asserting their valid and competing interests. Now, if we would, let us take that tenacity and join together and redirect it to Columbus."

Brennan urged both sides to lobby state legislators on school funding. "Everyone needs to pivot and be as engaged in school funding issues as we were in ensuring fair compensation for our teachers and fiscal sustainability for the district as a whole," Brennan said.

"The future of University Heights and Cleveland Heights, our fortunes, our success, are all tied at the hip, together with our shared school district," he said. "May we all prosper together, and dedicate our efforts to ensure that happens. It does not happen without reform in Columbus on school funding."

Noting that achieving school funding reform "may seem difficult, impossible even," Brennan pointed

out that, until recently, achieving a new contract without a long strike seemed impossible.

"Rather than feel spent by this last round with each other, let us all be energized by it, join forces in this common goal, and fight for fair school funding," urged Brennan.

On Dec. 2, Brennan testified at the Statehouse in favor of House Bill 305, which would have made significant changes and improvements to Ohio's school funding system. The legislation passed the Ohio House, but was not acted on by the Senate.

Brennan anticipates the legislation will be reintroduced early in 2021, and he is optimistic it could be part of the next state budget.

Brennan has discussed school funding reform with State Sen. Sandra Williams, as well as the Senate Finance Committee chair, State Sen. Matt Dolan. "After speaking with them both, I know they both understand how important reform is, especially to the CH-UH district," Brennan said. "We're going to need to keep up the pressure to make it happen."

HB 305 addressed the funding disparity in Ohio's school funding system, found to be unconstitutional by the Ohio Supreme Court in the 1996 DeRolph decision. The proposal determines a base cost of education unique to each district, together with a new formula for local share. HB 305 resolves the over-reliance on property valuation by implementing a blend of income wealth with property wealth.

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

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"We must find the time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives." *John F. Kennedy*

January is often considered the month for deep reflection. We look back at the year behind us and then look forward to the future year.

**LOOKING BACK:**  
My sincerest thanks for all your good wishes, Confidence in me and support in my business.

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METROHEALTH continued from page 1

via the emergency department.

In addition to a new, 75,000-square-foot, three-story structure, plans include the renovation of 21,000 square feet of existing space.

MetroHealth’s capital investment in the construction and renovation is \$42 million. Cuyahoga County will contribute an additional \$5 million—part of opioid settlement funds it received. MetroHealth is requesting no incentives from the city of Cleveland Heights.

Plans call for no reduction in current services offered at MetroHealth’s Cleveland Heights Hospital, which, in 2019, had 90,000 patient visits. The facility will also remain home to the Regional Dispatch Center.

MetroHealth brought the proposal before Cleveland Heights City Council’s Committee of the Whole on Nov. 23. In what he described as a “tight timeline,” Frolik said he anticipated that the proposal would go before the city’s board of control in late January or early February, and would be considered by the city’s planning board on Feb. 10. Planning and development are underway, said Frolik, and MetroHealth hopes to have “shovels in the ground by spring.”

“Our investment and commitment support the city’s

goal to revitalize Severance,” noted Frolik, a 39-year Cleveland Heights resident. “By investing there, we’re hoping others will see that, and think it’s a good idea to invest.”

In a Nov. 20 letter to Cleveland Heights residents, posted on the city’s website ([www.clevelandheights.com](http://www.clevelandheights.com)), Mayor Jason Stein described MetroHealth’s proposed expansion, and stated that city council is supportive. “This is an opportunity to provide a much-needed service while also improving our local economy,” Stein wrote.

Frolik estimates the labor budget for the new construction and renovation will be \$12 million, bringing \$270,000 in income tax to

continued on page 10

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METROHEALTH continued from page 9

### Cleveland Heights.

In 2019, Frolik said, MetroHealth's CH hospital had a payroll of \$14.6 million, for 190 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. In the new facility's first year of operation, MetroHealth projects a payroll of \$9.6 million for an additional 155 FTEs.

Frolik pointed out that MetroHealth's minimum wage is \$15 per hour. A mission-driven provider, MetroHealth treats all patients, regardless of their ability to pay.

Between 2021 and 2026, MetroHealth projects the new facility's income-tax revenue to the city will be \$1.76 million.

The behavioral health hospital will serve adolescent, adult and geriatric patients, with an average stay of 6–10 days. The goal, said Bruner, "is to get them started in treatment and stabilized, then transition them to outpatient care."

"All facilities will have a locked process," explained Bruner. "Some patients will be required to stay there because they are at risk of harming themselves."

"MetroHealth security officers will be on duty, and are well-trained," said Bruner. "We have a psychiatric department on MetroHealth's main campus, and have never had anyone leave there who wasn't meant to."

Bruner described the hospital as "a mental-health, addiction space, not a medical space." As such, said Bruner, "It will be more dependent on therapists and therapy technicians, with large areas dedicated to group counseling."

Because treatment will be going on throughout the day, visitation will take place only during brief evening hours.

Asked about the new facility's



Dr. Julia Bruner will serve as president of MetroHealth's new Cleveland Heights Behavioral Health Hospital. The new behavioral hospital will connect to the existing MetroHealth Cleveland Heights facility via the emergency department.

impact on nearby residents, Frolich noted that the existing hospital and outpatient facility at MetroHealth's Cleveland Heights site already has an extensive buffer of "high berm and trees" between it and adjacent properties. Bruner added, "The placement of the new building recognizes that we have neighbors, and want to be a good neighbor."

In wrapping up his presentation to council on Nov. 23, Frolik said, "We look at tonight as the beginning of a long discussion and expansion of our relationship. The city has been a really good neighbor to us, and that's one of the reasons we look forward to expanding here."

Stein commented, "We look forward to having some community engagement and public outreach, educating our neighbors and residents about this exciting development, and then, hopefully, April groundbreaking."

*Kim Sergio Inglis is editor-in-chief of the Heights Observer, and is a Cuyahoga County master gardener volunteer.*



## Cleveland Heights City Council Meeting highlights



NOVEMBER 16, 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'Neil, city manager; Amy Himmelein, clerk of council; and William Hanna, law director.

### Public comments

Nine residents asked council to reconsider amendments to the Landmark Commission as recommended in legislation coming up for vote at tonight's council meeting. Among them were Deanna Bremer Fisher and Robert Brown of FutureHeights, who advocated tabling the ordinance to allow further study.

### Chief of police report

Police Chief Annette Mecklenburg reported no updates on recent murders and shootings. Warrants have been issued for a suspect in the carjacking that occurred at the Cedar Hill Sunoco. No gun shots were fired last week, but police remain vigilant and responsive.

The department received its state certification on engagement and use-of-force and hiring. It will be working to obtain the bias-free and vehicular-pursuit certifications next. The Safe Community initiative from the White House encourages transparent, safe and accountable policing. The Department of Justice will be credentialing municipalities through individual state agencies. Mecklenburg will be submitting her report to include the department's policy adherence to state and local laws and prohibition of chokeholds.

### City finances

Finance Director Amy Himmelein highlighted the projected budget and said that the city is doing well. Income tax collections are down only 3 percent from 2019. An October infusion of \$1.5 million in COVID-relief funds made a big difference.

### Refuse and recycling

Council approved an ordinance repealing and replacing Chapter 935 "Solid Waste Collection and Disposal" of the city code, in anticipation of the purchase of new, automated equipment for waste collection. The ordinance mainly changes the fee structure for solid waste collection. Fee increases will cover the cost of new equipment and increased cost of services.

### Landmark Commission

Council approved legislation changing provisions of the Landmark Commission in the city code. Prior to approval, the legislation was amended to delete a subpart that would have ended the permit referral requirement. Council Member Ungar moved to waive two readings of this ordinance, and the motion passed. Council Member Dunbar voted against all three actions, saying she needed more time to evaluate changes, as her e-mail had been inaccessible due to a power outage.

Council Member Seren assured residents that there will be further discussion on this legislation, to make certain citizens' concerns can be heard on future landmark issues.

LWV Observers: Gail Larson and Blanche Valancy.

DECEMBER 7, 2020

All council members were present, as were the city manager, clerk of council and law director.

### Council appointments

Council appointed nine new members to the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) on separate votes, as requested by Council Member Ungar. Council unanimously approved the appointment of Lee Barbee, Susan Efroymson, Catalina Wagers, Marc Lefkowitz, Patty Substelm, Josephine Moore, Alison Height, and Allosious Snodgrass. Council Member Ungar raised an objection to the ninth candidate, Diane Hallum, stating that she has a history of writing to council to defame city staff. Ungar said he felt she would be a difficult person for the CAC to work with. Council members Hart and Russell expressed support for Hallum as a resident who cares about our city. Council approved Hallum's appointment, with Ungar voting no.

### Vacant council seat

Council Member Hart advised council and the public that she is supporting Tony Cuda, Anthony Maddox and Robert Koonce, in that order, for the vacant council seat. She said she could not support Craig Cobb because he already was appointed once and lost in a general election. Prior to her statement, Council Member Ungar objected, saying it was not appropriate for her to state her selections publicly. Law Director Hanna ruled that she could do so, as she is expressing her opinion.

### CARES Relief Funds

Council approved legislation regarding the city's Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Relief Funds by amending previous legislation to include the Cleveland Network Housing Partners as receivers of \$300,000 in CARES funds. Council Member Ungar advised council that hundreds of thousands of dollars will be released to help residents pay rent.

### Foreclosure penalties

Council approved amendments to the city code that strengthen the penalties that lenders who are engaged in foreclosures in Cleveland Heights must pay if they do not pay the foreclosure bond.

### Racial Justice Task Force

Council Member Ungar advised Council Member Russell that Legal Aid will be making a presentation in 2021 regarding residents' rights when they are threatened with eviction. He confirmed that 76 applications for the Racial Justice Task Force had been received. He agreed to meet with Russell to discuss how the applications are to be processed.

LWV Observers: Gail Larson and Blanche Valancy.

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# Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education

## Meeting highlights

NOVEMBER 10, 2020

Board members present were President Jodi Sourini, Dan Heintz, Malia Lewis, James Posch and Beverly Wright. Also attending were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby, Treasurer Scott Gainer and Athletic Director Joe D'Amato.

### District response to the pandemic

Superintendent Kirby reviewed the district's response to COVID. She expressed frustration that the state has given detailed guidance for athletic participation, but little for academic requirements. She recommended the district remain in remote-learning mode for the full second quarter. Some students are receiving in-person education. The board voted for the schools to remain in remote learning for the second quarter.

### District's role as a financial agent

Scott Gainer explained how the district's responsibility for acting as a fiscal agent to some non-public schools requires considerable time on the part of his department.

LWV Observer: Robin Koslen.

NOVEMBER 17, 2020

All board members, the superintendent and the treasurer were present, as were Assistant Superintendent Felisha Gould; Director of Data, Research, and Assessment Allison Byrd; and six school principals.

### Resolution to support Ohio HB 305

The board unanimously approved a resolution in support of the Fair Schools Funding Plan (Ohio House Bill 305).

### First-quarter educational data report

Superintendent Kirby stated her commitment to the strategic plan and said data must be analyzed to determine whether adjustments are needed.

Assistant Superintendent Gould said all seven elementary schools have attendance rates of at least 90 percent; secondary schools are reporting rates of 85 percent to 90.75 percent. Staff regularly connect with families to provide support and intervention.

The principals use strategies to reduce problems with student attendance and technology. These include home visits to struggling students, and opportunities for vulnerable student groups to come into school to work in a supportive, supervised setting.

LWV Observer: Rosemarie Fairman.

NOVEMBER 23, 2020

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

### Strike preparation

Superintendent Kirby addressed the difficulty of the (pending-strike) situation, particularly because teachers have done a tremendous job this year under trying circumstances. She emphasized to parents that school attendance and continued instruction is compulsory during a strike.

Board President Sourini apologized to families for the failure of the board and the teachers union to reach an agreement.

Board Member Posch said that, given the failure of one levy and [narrow] passage of a smaller one, one cannot assume community support for higher taxes. He said that even if the board's last, best and final offer (LBFO) is agreed to, cuts will be necessary.

Board Member Heintz said that, if he were a member of the union, he would have voted against the contract but not for a strike, as striking [now] over fringe benefits makes no sense; the benefits change occurs in January and contract renegotiation commences in April.

After discussion, the board took several actions relevant to the strike; it:

- Authorized the superintendent to develop and implement an action plan.
- Directed the superintendent to take steps to continue student instruction and other operations, as required by Ohio law.
- Authorized discontinuance of health care and other benefits and salaries, effective midnight Dec. 2, of any employee participating in the work stoppage, consistent with state and federal law. Employees can continue health insurance benefits by paying premiums in accordance with COBRA regulations.



- Contracted Huffmaster Crisis Response L.L.C., an outsourcing substitute company, to provide substitute teachers and other personnel.

### Update on the pandemic response

The superintendent reported that the district currently has nine COVID cases (six staff and three students). She recommended that:

- The district institute a high-alert plan during the county's stay-at-home advisory through its expected expiration date of Dec. 17.
- In-person instruction for students in MD/AU [multiple disabilities/autism] classes be suspended until Dec. 18.
- Childcare services continue.
- All sports practices and games be suspended.
- District buildings and facilities remain open, with limited staff.
- Planning will continue for January reopening. The board approved her recommendations.

### Treasurer's report

The current forecast shows a positive 2022 year-end balance of \$2,931,399, and a negative 2023 year-end balance of minus \$2,371,978. The compensation and fringe-benefits provisions in the board's LBFO are included, as are \$2 million in cuts yet to be identified. The forecast assumes passage of the 4.8 mill levy will survive the recount. The state auditor's office is requiring a statement discussing financial difficulties due to COVID funding cuts and additional expenses. Also required is a note that the district is still in fiscal distress because of EdChoice deductions.

LWV Observer: Kathy Petrey.

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Heights Libraries again among top rated

Sheryl Banks

Heights Libraries has once again received the highest possible rating—five stars—in *Library Journal's* Index of Public Library Service.

The just-released Star Library report is based on 2018 statistics, so does not reflect the impact COVID-19 has had on public libraries since spring 2020.

Heights Libraries has earned the five-star designation in 10 out of the 13 years that *Library Journal* has published the ratings; it received a four-star rating the other two years.

*Library Journal* is a trade magazine that reports news about the library world, emphasizing public libraries, and has a nationwide circulation of 100,000.

Libraries are categorized by yearly expenditure and rated on criteria that includes circulation of physical items and eMedia (such as eBooks), visits, program attendance, public computer use and WiFi sessions.

Heights Libraries circulation came in at 30.33 per capita in its service area of roughly 58,000 residents, up from a previous high of 29.3, meaning that roughly 30 items were circulated for every resident in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights service area. Visits per capita averaged 13, program attendance averaged .89, public computer use was 4, WiFi sessions were 2.37, and eMedia circulation was 2.56.

“Over the past few years, our community has been using the library more and more. In fact, we reached our highest circulation numbers ever in 2019, with just a little over 2 million items loaned out or downloaded,” said Heights Libraries Director Nancy Levin. “Even now, with shutdowns due to COVID-19, our community members are still borrowing items, attending virtual programs, taking advantage of free WiFi outside our buildings, and getting help on the phone and online with things like

continued on page 15

Cleveland Heights – University Heights Public Library Board

Meeting highlights



NOVEMBER 16, 2020

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

**2021 permanent appropriation**  
The board approved an appropriation of \$11,408,535 for expenses during the fiscal year ending Dec. 31, 2021.

**Materials evaluation and selection policy**  
The board approved the library materials evaluation and selection policy as amended for 2020. This policy deals with how public library materials are chosen for purchase. The policy will be posted on the library's website.

**2021 wage increase**  
The board approved a 3-percent wage increase for all library staff for 2021. Staff who are at the top of their pay grade will receive a lump-sum payment. The total amount for the base-wage increase and lump-sum payments will not exceed \$150,000, and is within the 2021 budget appropriation approved by the board.

**Co-learning spaces**  
There are four co-learning spaces in the Lee Road Library's Teen Room, available for K-12-grade students by reservation only. Each space has been set up so that the student can sit with a parent, sibling, tutor, or another student, to work together on schoolwork. Two of these spaces (A and B) have computers with Internet access, while the others (C and D) do not. They will be reserved using the same procedure as for computers. Each patron can have a maximum of one 45-minute reservation per day.

**Meeting rooms**  
Due to the current significant rise in COVID case numbers, the library will continue its policy of not opening meeting room use to customers.

**Mobile pantry**  
The library continues to provide a mobile pantry the fourth Monday of each month, with food provided by the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. Monthly use has averaged about 300 families.

**Executive session**  
The board moved to executive session to discuss pending litigation and the purchase or sale of property.

LWV Observer: Elizabeth M. Tracy.

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SALLY KRAMER

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A photograph of three young children sitting on the floor in a classroom. A boy on the left is wearing a yellow apron and a plaid shirt, laughing. A boy in the middle is wearing a red shirt and smiling. A girl on the right is wearing a black shirt and smiling. In the background, another girl is visible, and there are wooden shelves with various items.

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# 'Posing the Question' at Heights Arts

Megan Gallagher

The topics of racial equality and a fight for justice dominated headlines in 2020. The issues have forced many to decide where they stand—whether they choose to stand in unity, agree to disagree, or just disagree. In the latest Heights Arts exhibition, *Posing the Question*, artists tackle these topics and our nation's response to them.

Featured artists are Kenneth Bernstein, Matthew Deibel, Mona Gazala, Kenn Hetzel, Scott Kraynak, Liz Maugans, and Omid Tavakoli, with an accompanying spotlight show by Helen Liggett. Their work

features photography and paintings that reflect systematic racism, and manipulated photos taken during social justice protests in 2020.

Maugans' paintings recall a time of self-reflection in 2020, when she enrolled in a social-justice class and started daily morning runs to meditate on what the classes taught her.

"On these runs, I wonder how things can be fixed, what those new ideas and structures can look like, so they are equal and fair and socially just," Maugans said. "It is hard to find an hour that is hopeful, but this temporary escapism and affirmation of sweating the toxins and stress from my body allows me to face the day



Running Series #3, by Liz Maugans.

ahead with this very simple vision of equality and love."

In Tavakoli's *Sea of Cops*, the artist multiplies figures of state troopers in full SWAT gear to fill half of a canvas. He said the image is intended to evoke current concerns about over-policing.

"From a distance, the work looks like a black blob of ink; then, as the viewer gets closer, they start

to see markings. As they investigate further, they see the bigger picture, much like all the issues that have made 2020 such a monumental year," Tavakoli explained.

The adjacent Spotlight Gallery features work by artist Helen Liggett, whose photographs depict women she has known for years as they gather for clay-making classes.

Liggett considers her spotlight show to be a complement to *Posing the Question*. In contrast to some of the direct political statements in the main exhibition, these pieces, showing artists at work making things of clay, present the idea of stillness as an answer.

"They worked in an open space with layers of clay below and floating, flowing, rippling conversation above, fashioning worlds based firmly in experience and in the clay," said Liggett. "The hands of potters have an intimate relationship with their materials. These hands and their work are such familiars that at some point the differences between them begin to blur. Photography reveals this process, announcing truths both humble and profound."

*Posing the Question* opens Jan. 22 and will run through March 14. Originally scheduled for summer of 2020, the show was pushed back, to enable the public to view it in person.

The Heights Arts gallery is at 2175 Lee Road. Visit [www.heightsarts.org](http://www.heightsarts.org) for hours and additional information.

Megan Gallagher is the new Heights Arts marketing coordinator.

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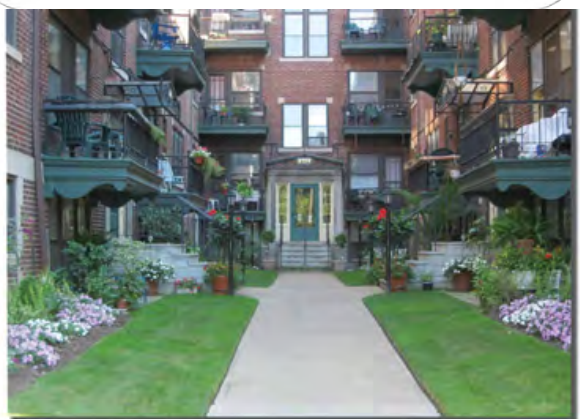
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LIBRARIES continued from page 12

reference questions, tech questions, and even limited printing services.”

“People need us now more than ever,” Levin continued, “and we are finding new ways to help them safely with services like virtual résumé help, online storytimes, and free online tutoring services.”

The entire state of Ohio did well in general in *Library Journal's* rankings, compared to the rest of the nation. Ohio, with 31, was second only to New York State, with 34, in terms of the number of libraries that received star ratings.

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

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# Might as well jump



SONGS AND  
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David Budin

By the time you read this, you probably will have missed seeing me jump off the couch. If I do that this year. And if anyone actually sees it happen. I'm writing this before Jan. 1, naturally, because this is the January edition, and it gets printed, so it's not instant like an online-only publication is, and everything is written in advance. So, I don't know if I'll really jump off the couch. But the couch is lower than a chair, if you know what I mean. And I'm fairly certain you don't.

A few weeks ago I read an essay online, written by my younger brother, Noah, that included this paragraph:

"When I was a child, probably around 8 or 9 years old, my mother read about a Danish New Year's Eve tradition. The Danes, she discovered, jump off of chairs at the stroke of midnight, propelling themselves into the new year and leaving the

Evil Spirits of the past year behind. Who knew that Evil Spirits couldn't jump off of chairs? We did this in my house for several years, if you can picture it: my mother, my father, and me, all standing on furniture, watching our large, boxy TV set as the ball dropped in New York City, and the three of us clumsily leaping into our unknown future as Guy Lombardo and His Royal Canadians struck up 'Auld Lang Syne'."

I had totally forgotten about that chair-jumping thing. I was already out of the house by then—I'm 11 years older than Noah—but I heard a lot about it, and I'm pretty sure I witnessed it once or twice. Or else I was told about it and the image was so vivid and strange that it has given me a false memory of it.

The last New Year's Eve I spent at the house I grew up in, on Belmar, was when I was in what I laughingly refer to as the 12th grade (it was more like the 12th year that I sometimes walked into a school building). It was the 1966-67 New Year, so Noah was 6. My mother asked me if I would stay home with Noah so my parents could go out. I have never liked New Year's Eve parties. I had a small number of my Heights High

friends over. During the event, Noah drew a picture of the scene (sort of like a court reporter); then, the next day, my mother helped him with some writing on it. The only thing I remember about it is that someone was saying, "Wheee! More pop!" I remember because my friend Walt quoted that for many years afterward, whenever we were at a dull party.

But dull parties are preferable to me. New Year's Eves are like any other night. This year, of course, I won't have to worry about what not to do on New Year's Eve. There are no parties to turn down. And Nighttown, at the end of my street, is temporarily closed again. So, it will be dinner at home for us. And TV. And . . . "Wheee! More pop!"

People everywhere are saying they'll be glad to see 2020 go. But 2021 probably won't be much different, at least for a while. Though there are some signs of hope. A new U.S. President and administration, and all that it entails. And maybe a COVID-19 vaccine. And, for me, winter walking.

I started walking in May. But I haven't seen Cleveland Heights during the winter since the late 1970s. Since then, until this year, I have just stayed inside from November to April. If I had to go somewhere, I'd jump into the car, drive, get out at my destination and hurry inside. I haven't even owned any cold-weather clothing for 40-some years—just a light coat and a pair of gloves I could never find.

This year I have a real winter coat, with a hood, from one of those sporty companies that everyone but I knew about; and heavy-duty gloves;



COURTESY DAVID BUDIN

Just to be clear, this is not a picture of me. We generally don't do this in folk music concerts. This is David Lee Roth, presumably singing the line "Might as well jump."

even long underwear. And new boots that are made for walking, and that's just what they'll do. Yes, Cleveland Heights, one of these days these boots are gonna walk all over you.

And I'm going to have cataract surgeries. Not a big deal—everyone tells me. But I've been avoiding it for many years because almost nothing freaks me out more than the idea of someone sticking knives into my eyes. But I can't see much. And, this year, it was much harder to say I couldn't because I had a musical performance coming up, or anything else.

Much was different in 2020, and it looks like 2021 will include even more changes. So, I'm planning to jump off the couch—because it's lower than a chair—at midnight on New Year's Eve. This seems to be the year for taking leaps.

*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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