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## INSIDE



**Special  
Insert**  
LWV Voters  
Guide to CH  
mayoral can-  
didates



**13**  
MetroHealth  
provides  
construction  
updates



**17**  
Dobama adds  
staff, renovates  
and reopens

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

## Benches aim to enhance Noble corridor

Sruti Baz

Noble Road has just gotten a bit more comfortable. Five new benches were installed there in July as part of the Noble-ity Project, an Early Action Project undertaken by the Noble Road Corridor Steering Committee as part of the Noble Road Corridor Planning Project. FutureHeights, the community development corporation for Cleveland Heights, formed the committee in winter 2018, subsequent to the planning process it had led in partnership with the cities of Cleveland Heights and East Cleveland, and several community groups.

The planning process took a comprehensive look at the needs and opportunities along the Noble Road Corridor, focusing on its four commercial districts: the Noble, Mayfield, Warrensville Triangle; Noble Monticello; Noble Nela; and Noble Euclid in East Cleveland. Goals of the process include promoting walking, bicycling, and transit use; promoting



One of the newly installed benches, in the Noble-Roanoke Mini Park.

“placemaking” and strengthening community life; the productive use of vacant/under-utilized sites; providing additional jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities; and increasing property values.

Although many plan recommendations may take years to realize, an Early Action Project can be implemented in the short term, creating momentum and moving plans forward, while funding and other prerequisites are assembled for larger project goals.

The Noble-ity Project places benches strategically along the Noble Road Corridor to serve pedestrians, including those with physical disabilities and other mobility limitations, and enhance its walkability for all. The benches build on community assets, such as the Noble-Roanoke Mini Park, developed and maintained by Noble Neighbors, and the proximity of bus stops, local businesses, and institutions, such as the Noble Neighborhood Library, and churches along the corridor.

*continued on page 4*

## Noble Gardeners' Market opens Aug. 7



Noble Gardeners' Market.

Brenda H. May

Noble Gardeners' Market (NGM) will open for the 2021 season on Saturday, Aug. 7, and will run for eight weeks, through Sept. 25, on Saturday mornings, 10 a.m. to noon.

The market takes place at the corner of Noble and Roanoke roads, at the site of the new Noble-Roanoke Mini Park. (The Cleveland Heights Centennial Celebration mural has been installed on an exterior wall of the building next to the park.)

NGM provides an opportunity for

neighbors to buy from, and sell to, one another. Market offerings include fresh flowers, fruits and vegetables. Anyone who grows in their backyard or in a community garden is welcome to sell — for just a week or two, or for the entire eight-week season. Sellers do not need to live in Cleveland Heights to participate.

The market is registered with the Ohio Department of Agriculture as a venue for the sale of freshly picked fruit and vegetables. Cut flowers and potted plants may also be sold, but no processed food is permitted.

*continued on page 6*

## Multiple election dates loom for Heights voters

Maryann Barnes

Cleveland Heights residents will go to the polls in three elections in the next four months, on Aug. 3, Sept. 14, and Nov. 2.

In the same period, University Heights voters will cast their ballots in two elections, on Aug. 3 and Nov. 2.

To help Heights voters make sense of this crowded local election season, the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland, Heights Chapter, compiled the following list of election dates and races:

**Tuesday, Aug. 3: Special Primary Election for Ohio's 11th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives**

In this partisan primary, voters will request either a Democratic or Republican ballot. The special election is the first of two in which voters will elect a replacement for Marcia Fudge. (Elected to represent Ohio's 11th District last November, Fudge resigned upon her appointment as U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.)

There are 13 contenders on the Democratic ballot, and two on the Republican ballot.

The winners of the Democratic and Republican primaries will subsequently face off in a Special Election on Nov. 2, the same day as the General Election for local government. As the 11th is considered a “safe” Democratic district, the Democratic primary is likely to determine the ultimate winner.

*continued on page 19*

## Library gardens buzz with native plants and potential

Sheryl Banks

Erika Hogan is a big nature fan. “I grew up loving outdoor spaces and gardening with my family,” said Hogan, Heights Libraries new youth services associate.

When she first started work at the library, Hogan noticed that the Lee Road branch's small children's garden had potential.

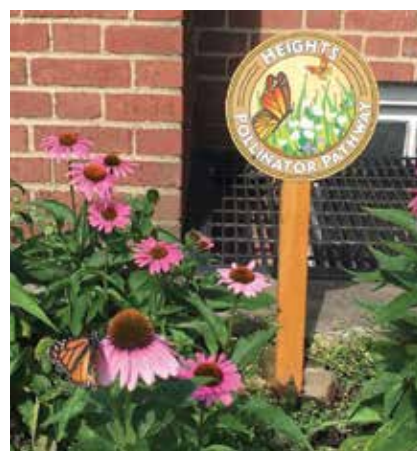
“I could tell that it was a special space—there was already an emphasis on pollinator-friendly, native plants, and fruiting shrubs and trees,” she said. “I recognized all the elements

were there to allow us to be a certified habitat through the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), and also to register it with the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge of the National Pollinator Garden Network.”

Hogan said certification and registration with the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge and NWF are great steps to help raise awareness about the importance of gardens, of all sizes, that support sustainable practices and healthy ecosystems.

“Because of habitat loss, birds, butterflies, bees and other wildlife

*continued on page 8*



The Noble Neighborhood Library garden has been designated a pollinator garden by the local group Ecological Heights.



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 September issue must be submitted by Aug. 16. 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.

Another award and a relaunch of the Observer blog



OPENING THE OBSERVER

Bob Rosenbaum

*Heights Observer* honored again

For the fourth consecutive year, the *Heights Observer* was recognized as one of Ohio's best community publications in the All-Ohio Excellence in Journalism Awards.

The program is run by the Press Club of Cleveland as part of its mission to recognize the importance of good journalism. With more than 700 entries, it's one of the largest programs of its kind in the nation.

The *Heights Observer* earned second place, with top honors going to the *Cleveland Jewish News*.

In one way or another, I've been involved with this awards program since the mid-1990s. We entered the *Heights Observer* for the first time in 2018—winning in 2020, and taking second place in 2018 and 2019.

Much of the credit for producing such a strong community publication belongs to our editor, Kim Sergio Inglis, who works to ensure the paper reads well, is relevant, and reflects a broad range of community voices.

The rest of the credit goes to everyone in the community who contributes

in some way—especially those who write articles, but also volunteers who edit and distribute the paper; advertisers who support it; the paid contractors who do layout, bookkeeping, and the other unglamorous parts of publishing; and, of course, FutureHeights, which assumes all the risk and cost to publish the *Heights Observer*—even during a difficult economy like the past year's.

Thank you and congratulations to everyone who is part of producing this community asset.

*Heights Observer* blog site relaunched

In February 2011, we launched the *Heights Observer Blog* to broaden our capacity for sharing community-based opinion and commentary. Its purpose was to allow people to discuss local issues and ideas in a more casual and spontaneous environment than the monthly printed edition.

Over the next few years, the blog site averaged more than one new post per week, by more than 70 individual bloggers.

I built the original blog site myself, and managed it on a volunteer basis while simultaneously handling the advertising sales that sustain the *Heights Observer* project. As ad sales (and my own consulting business) demanded more and more attention, the blog site got less and less of it. New posts, site visitors and technical upkeep tailed off. At about

this time last year, in a too-little-too-late effort to update the technology behind the site, I managed instead to fatally crash it. It's been offline ever since.



Now we have repaired and relaunched the blog site, and are again encouraging contributions from community members.

Its focus is the same as always: Life in the Heights. It's moderated by Vince Reddy, who was a founding board member of FutureHeights and has been an active participant in the *Heights Observer* project since its very beginning.

His job is to encourage and help people post blogs, maintain order to the extent needed, and troubleshoot as the need arises.

All of the content from the old site has been carried over. There isn't much new yet, but there is no shortage of local issues, and we hope you'll consider the *Heights Observer Blog* a good place to discuss them.

For more detail and instructions, visit the *Heights Observer Blog* at its new, easy-to-remember location: [www.heightsobserver.blog](http://www.heightsobserver.blog).

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

CH council has problems with math

Eric Silverman

It would appear that Cleveland Heights City Council has a problem with math, which is not something you want to hear about those who handle tax dollars.

When I plot out all of the publicly available revenue numbers for Top of the Hill (TOH) for 33 years, I find how the city comes to the conclusion that the project will generate approximately \$14.3 million, but that is the GROSS amount, not net.

When I deduct the lost parking revenue for 30 years combined with the cost of the \$1.85 million "gift" to the developer, totaling approximately \$3.95 million, this means the total NET revenue to the city is inflated by 38%, and the

"annual" revenue (not the one-time construction-related monies) is inflated by 45%.

I have asked council if my math is correct REPEATEDLY, and not a single member has annotated, corrected, refuted, or rebutted my math, so I guess I am right.

For the Lee and Meadowbrook development, council has made TWO math errors, or at least two omissions. The first is in regard to parking. The proposal from the developer, the same one who got a sweet deal for TOH, requires covering most of the surface parking lot with "high-end" apartments . . . with a prime view of the drive-through at Wendy's. Between the new apartments and new street-level retail, the project proposes to attract 325 tenants and employees.

If just 75% of them own a car, they will consume most of the parking spaces in the existing garage, leaving only around 125 spaces TOTAL in the Cedar-Lee lot unassigned—a reduction of 75%. When I ask council members if they have seen a parking study on how this proposal would impact existing businesses, there is no reply.

Also at Lee and Meadowbrook, the developer says it will need some form of tax abatement. Right now, the city can offer 50% for 15 years (totaling \$11.25 million) or 100% for 15 years (\$22.5 million), but the developer is reported to need something that requires the school board to sign off, meaning it wants tax abatement for MORE than 15 years. With the developer receiving access to the land for next to nothing, and the parking garage already existing, when I ask council, "What does the developer need tax abatement for?" again there is no reply.

Last, we have the city's housing-infill initiative. Putting aside that the project is 10 years late, appears to have a glacial rollout, and implies Tammany Hall-style politics in regard to site selection, once again math seems to show a council with a casual attitude with PUBLIC monies.

Selling lots for \$100 each is not unheard of for an initiative like this—though the premise that a site where foreclosure and demolishes the *Heights Observer*.

continued on page 9

Heights Observer Election Policy

The *Heights Observer* will review election-related submissions with a goal of providing fair and equitable access for those seeking office.

Candidates for office are expected to identify themselves as such when submitting anything for publication.

Candidates' supporters and campaign representatives, and anyone writing about any candidate or election issue, are expected to disclose any personal or professional relationship they may have with any candidate, or with the subject of

their submission. These disclosures are intended to inform *Heights Observer* review, and will be disclosed to readers when relevant.

The *Heights Observer* will determine whether and when submissions will run in print, online, or both.

Contributions by and about candidates, and any election issue, are limited to a maximum of 400 words.

The *Heights Observer* does not endorse candidates, nor does FutureHeights, the nonprofit community-development corporation that publishes the *Heights Observer*.



# CH Historical Society emphasizes historic significance of Shaker Lakes

Nine CHHS associates

The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District's (NEORS) preferred plan regarding the Shaker Lakes, costing \$28.3 million, removes the historic Shaker dam at Horseshoe Lake, built in 1852, and replaces the entire lake with stream paths and riparian channels. Lower Lake, built in 1837 and more vulnerable to flooding, would then be dredged and its dam rebuilt with wider and higher armoring. If the present dam and wooden walkway at Green Lake is any indication, the marvelous sandstone facing on the present Lower Lake bridge and spillway would most likely be reduced or removed entirely, as we are told the new dam will look significantly different. This plan also seriously limits and alters flourishing wildlife habitats.

NEORS's alternative plan, costing \$34 million, would dredge both lakes, repair and reinforce both dams, and presumably retain more of the historic stonework of both the two dams and their stone-parapeted bridges. We are told that NEORS cannot justify this option's increased cost of \$6 million, though we understand it has a \$1 billion budget for future projects. We strongly urge an adjustment in NEORS's priorities.

Both Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights have been built-out since the 1930s, without substantive flooding issues at the lakes. Both cities are considering plans to upgrade their old sewer systems, and looking

for federal money to help defer the costs. If increased stormwater due to climate change can be diverted from the Shaker Lakes in the future, then it seems profligate not to preserve both the lakes and the historic stone infrastructure.

Our cities' home values are augmented by the fabulous aesthetic and recreational uses afforded by these prime assets—the Shaker Lakes. Surely more time and effort can be spent on obtaining financing, especially since we have already waited several years without a long-term proposal from NEORS. Now is not the time to embark on a plan that would destroy one lake and brutalize another, eventually becoming a detriment to one of the most marketable and beautiful features of our two cities.

We strongly urge preserving, to the highest level, the beauty and integrity of these habitats and historic dams, lakes, and stone spillways and bridgework. We owe it to our predecessors and posterity to preserve the environmental and aesthetic qualities of these lakes and dams. Let us not squander such remarkable inheritance.

*This opinion was signed and endorsed by Ken Goldberg, president of the Cleveland Heights Historical Society, and eight other current and former members of the society: Michael Madorsky, treasurer; William Hopkins, assistant treasurer; Stephen Hollowicki, secretary; Charles Owen, founder and trustee; Korbi Roberts, trustee; John Wheeler, trustee; Angela Bair, former trustee; William Barrow, former trustee.*

## How CH's sewer system is like a boat

Garry Kanter

Ever hear the one about a boat? "A boat is a hole in the water you throw money into."

The on-land equivalent of that is a sewer system—especially when your city has neglected the sewer system for decades, and has finally entered into a \$570 million consent decree with the EPA that will take decades to complete. ([www.cleveland.com/community/2021/05/federal-consent-decree-on-cleveland-heights-sewer-overhaul-will-stretch-out-over-many-decades.html](http://www.cleveland.com/community/2021/05/federal-consent-decree-on-cleveland-heights-sewer-overhaul-will-stretch-out-over-many-decades.html).)

The current Cleveland Heights City Council is strongly considering taking \$28 million of the \$38.8 million American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) windfall to apply toward that \$570 million.

It seems to be council's default position at this time.

Look, I'm all for functioning public sewage systems. And I recognize the need for the \$570 million consent decree.

But I'm *against* taking \$28 million, that could be spent to aid and assist our city and residents *today*, in order to marginally lower some future hypothetical residents' tax bills 30-plus years down the road. (I answered the city's online rank choice ARPA survey. There are problems with its format, so the results will also be problematic. Here's the link: [www.clevelandheights.com/1434/American-](http://www.clevelandheights.com/1434/American-Rescue-Plan-Act-Survey)

*Rescue-Plan-Act-Survey.*)

I'm sure any one of us could find great uses for the whole \$38.8 million that would help solve today's problems. (That \$38.8 million must be spent by the end of 2024.)

When interest rates are at historic lows, that's the time to borrow, not pay down principal.

We're already seeing the full-court press on this. I guess one or two council members imagine—as always—that they alone know what's best for us. And their supporters and enablers are posting on social media implying—as always—that it's a done deal, so we all better get in line and support it.

These are very large dollar amounts. They need to be considered thoughtfully—by the people who will have to live with the consequences—not as a so-called "emergency" by a city council that is on vacation for the whole month of July, then returns to run out its lame duck session.

Maybe the current city council members should leave the \$38.8 million for the next city council—and mayor—while they *finally* (hopefully) get around to proposing and considering the long-overdue charter and ordinance changes needed to operate our city on Jan. 1, 2022, as a mayor-council form of government.

*Garry Kanter resides in Cleveland Heights.*



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**We must change business-as-usual at City Hall. Find out how we'll do it. —>**

PAID FOR BY FRIENDS OF JOSIE MOORE





BENCHES continued from page 1

Two benches were installed at Noble Nela, two at the Noble-Roanoke Mini Park, and one at the Noble Neighborhood Library, where it complements an existing bench.

FutureHeights secured the funding and oversaw the installation of the benches in eligible areas with a Community Development Block Grant from the city of Cleveland Heights, and a donation from Heights Libraries. The group plans to install additional benches along the corridor when other funds are secured.

Phase 2 of the Noble-ity Project aims to have the benches reflect the unique history and culture of the neighborhood. Noble is home to people who have extraordinary stories: writers, athletes, health care workers, philanthropists, educators, volunteers, refugees, families, and friends. The

project plans to highlight their stories through prose and art painted on the benches, brightening the corridor with art and history, inviting pass-through shoppers, pedestrians, and residents alike to embrace the neighborhood's rich community—and inviting them to sit and stay a while.

Donations to help complete the Noble-ity Project can be made online at [www.ioby.org/project/noble-ity-project](http://www.ioby.org/project/noble-ity-project). All donations will be matched dollar-for-dollar through Sept. 30, thanks to the generous support of IOBY and Cuyahoga Arts & Culture.

To learn more about the Noble Road Corridor Planning Project, visit [www.futureheights.org/programs/planning-and-development/noble-road-corridor-planning-project/](http://www.futureheights.org/programs/planning-and-development/noble-road-corridor-planning-project/).

*Sruti Baz is deputy director of FutureHeights.*

## Where is the night in UH?

Anita Kazarian

Used to be we could sit outside at night and see stars, maybe not the Milky Way, but still, lots of stars. Where did they go? Where did the dark sky go? Since the 1990s, our municipal governments have neglected to keep up with a looming problem facing most of the Heights, outdoor light pollution.

Our elected officials aren't even aware of the growing dangers to health, safety and the environment of outdoor light pollution. This is an important quality-of-life issue for us.

University Heights' elected officials have a unique opportunity to ensure we will not contribute to growing health, safety and environmental problems. They can do this by writing outdoor lighting codes to protect us. Cities such as Flagstaff, Ariz., have codes already in place. Why not use them as models?

Why now? Why University Heights? I was driving on North Park Boulevard one night and my eyes went straight to three consecutive light posts because of the newest LED light in one. I'm no expert, but one had yellowish light (at the warm

end of the light spectrum). One had a bluish light, and the third had a powerful new LED blue-end-of-the-spectrum bulb system that obliterated the sky.

Outdoor light pollution is complicated. But it is one of the few pollution dangers that has a solution at the municipal level, at the University Heights level.

University Heights can become the area's model for responsible lighting. Isn't it bad enough we have the warm-end-of-the-light-spectrum streetlamps shining into our bedrooms at night? Imagine what it will be like if the new high-power blue-light-emitting diodes (LEDs) replace those bulbs? Do we really want to wear sunglasses at night?

The International Dark Sky Association reports, "Light in the blue part of the spectrum is the most significant contributor to sky glow. And many of Earth's inhabitants, including people, are particularly sensitive to this blue light. It disrupts the natural circadian rhythm of animals, insects and plants . . . and is correlated with a range of devastating diseases in people."

A *National Geographic* article stated: "An increased amount of light at night lowers melatonin production, which results in sleep deprivation, fatigue, headaches, stress, anxiety, and other health problems. Recent studies also show a connection between reduced melatonin levels and cancer. . . . [N]ew scientific discoveries about the health effects of artificial light have convinced the American Medical Association (AMA) to support efforts to control light pollution and conduct research on the potential risks of exposure to light at night. Blue light, in particular, has been shown to reduce levels of melatonin in humans."

We need to restore our night for many reasons. Does it mean we give up light? No. As humans we have been using light at night for at least 400,000 years and we are not about to give it up.

What we face in the 21st century is how to ensure this is done responsibly. University Heights can be a leader [in asking] how we use outdoor light responsibly. University Heights City Council needs to consider this question and pass codes that protect our health, safety and the environment from outdoor light pollution.

*Anita Kazarian considers University Heights her home of choice and has been active in many of the city's volunteer organizations. She wants to bear your thoughts about making University Heights a city of choice.*

# #1

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"We go for walks, we talk, and I'm able to meet lovely people. The warm, caring staff is just icing on the cake. I can't begin to say how comforting that is," says Lillian.

**Read the full story at**  
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# Seren on his experience and path to mayoral candidacy

Kahlil Seren

When I began serving on Cleveland Heights City Council six years ago, I could not have predicted that I would be running to be the first elected mayor of our city. But I could see as soon as I joined council that we needed a change. Since then, I have worked hard to push my colleagues and the administration to be more proactive, responsive, transparent, and bold. My legislative work has successfully produced policy changes that have made our city stronger. The example I've set on council has led to positive changes in how our government works and responds. But there is more work to be done.

When the voters passed Issue 26, creating this elected-mayor position, we called for change in a clear and commanding voice. We saw a need for strong action, clear accountability, honest communication with residents, and an administration that incorporates the values and priorities of the people in public decisions.

I am running for mayor because I believe that the people of Cleveland Heights need and deserve the substantive change that we demanded from our government—and I know that I am the candidate that is best equipped to deliver.

If you want to know what a candidate can do on behalf of Cleveland Heights, start by asking what we've already done for Cleveland Heights. I've dedicated my professional and civic life to making government work better for the people it serves. My record on city council and in county



Kahlil Seren

government, where I've served for a decade as the chief advisor to the Cuyahoga County Council on economic and community development, demonstrates that dedication.

That experience matters. My record of helping to manage a massive government transition at the county level, shaping a true 21st-century government, shows that my experience aligns with the specific challenges that Cleveland Heights will face as it begins this new path. My expertise in residential and commercial development at the regional level will help us become more competitive and attractive to new residents and businesses, and my commitment to equity will ensure that we extend that to every neighborhood and business district in the city. My success creating and implementing scholarship/mentorship, and workforce programming for youth, makes me an ideal partner with our schools, students, and teachers.

I am running to do something, not to be something. Learn more about what I want to do for Cleveland Heights at [SerenForMayor.com](http://SerenForMayor.com).

*Kahlil Seren is the vice president of Cleveland Heights City Council and a candidate for mayor in Cleveland Heights.*

## Resident and former 'Coventry kid' endorses Seren

Kenyon Farrow

It is with pleasure that I am endorsing City Council Vice President Kahlil Seren to become the first mayor of the city of Cleveland Heights.

The future of Cleveland Heights is important to me. I grew up in Cleveland's Kinsman neighborhood, but I spent a lot of time in Cleveland Heights at my grandfather's home; so my summers were spent catching frogs in the marshy fields that buttressed his street, and my winters were spent sledding with my sisters and cousins in Cain Park. In high school, when my family moved to the Superior and Coventry section of East Cleveland, I was one of the many kids dressed in black buying CDs at the Record Exchange and Record Revolution, or sitting for hours in the Arabica coffee shop on Coventry, or outside the Grog Shop. When I moved back to Greater Cleveland in 2020, after living primarily in NYC since 1999, I purchased a home on the very same street of my grandfather's home.

So when an incident happened last fall, with a person walking up my street with a military-grade weapon, I was confused and shaken. I e-mailed the entire city administration, demanding answers. Council Member Seren was the sole member of council

to respond, and he took time to communicate with me what was learned about the incident and what the city was doing.

I recently attended a neighborhood meeting with Seren, and as my neighbors and I had heated debates, Seren remained calm, steady, and was able to hear all of us. He didn't shirk from his own opinions, but made everyone feel heard and valued.

I also think Seren's track record of visionary, yet practical, policymaking in Cleveland Heights and Cuyahoga County is what we need. The next few years will be critical for Cleveland, Cleveland Heights, Cuyahoga County, and the state of Ohio; [we need] to elect leaders who are invested in issues such as housing, education, green energy, and a progressive vision of public safety, to make [this] a place where young people aren't made to feel like they have to leave in order to thrive. I was one of those young people 22 years ago.

I think that electing Kahlil Seren as mayor of Cleveland Heights, in our centennial year, is just the leadership we need to take us in the best direction for the next 100 years.

*Kenyon Farrow is a nationally recognized writer and activist on public health, LGBTQ rights and other social justice issues. A resident of Cleveland Heights, he's still just a Coventry kid at heart.*



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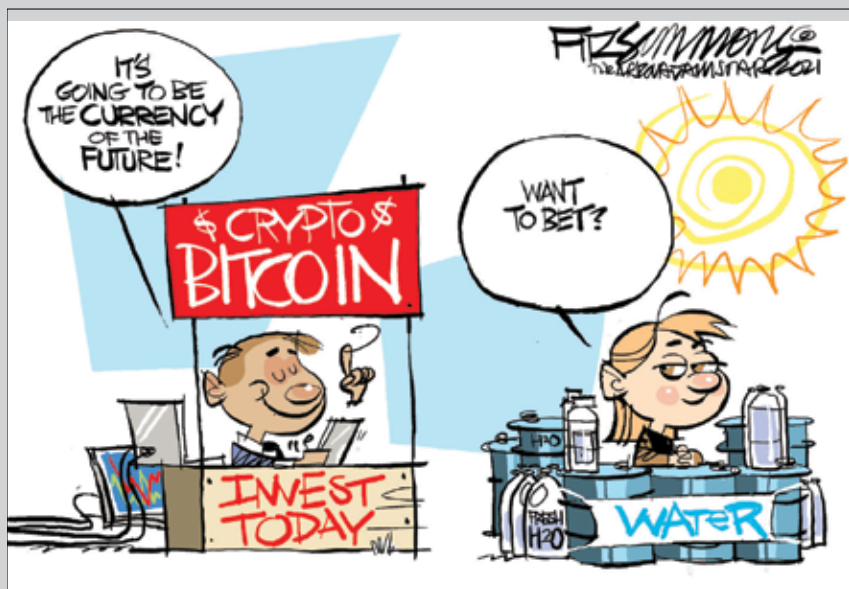
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MARKET continued from page 1

NGM is staffed by volunteers, and vendors are not charged for space. Vendors must provide their own tables or ground coverings, and be able to make change for their customers. There is no electricity or water on site.

At the market, shoppers likely will find the freshest produce outside of what they grow themselves. Most sellers harvest produce and flowers in the morning, and bring them to the market that same day.

Buyers should bring small bills and coins to facilitate purchases. Parking is free at the meters on Noble Road, and in the city parking lot across Noble Road from the NGM.

Ohio's COVID-19 guide for farmers markets in 2020 required sellers to avoid cross contamination between currency and food. NGM asks that sellers this season continue to follow that

guideline by, for example, using tongs to handle fresh fruits and vegetables, or by prepackaging produce. Participants are advised to wear a mask if they are unvaccinated. NGM follows Ohio's current mask and social-distancing guidelines.

NGM's primary goal is to foster community-building by bringing together people with common interests. At the market, folks share growing and cooking tips, stories about grandparents who grew their own food, and dreams of future gardens. NGM encourages these interactions and growing friendships to enrich the community.

For more information, visit [www.nobleneighbors.com/noble-gardeners-market.html](http://www.nobleneighbors.com/noble-gardeners-market.html). Any questions can be e-mailed to [nobleneighbors@gmail.com](mailto:nobleneighbors@gmail.com).

*Brenda H. May is one of the leaders of Noble Neighbors. Check out their story at [NobleNeighbors.com](http://NobleNeighbors.com).*

## 'Time is now' to positively impact environment

Barbara Danforth

I believe the science that our increasing carbon footprint is destroying the ecosystem of the earth, and that climate change is real. But trying to determine how, as individuals, we can develop an environmentally friendly lifestyle often seems overwhelming.

Several years ago, while visiting east and west Africa, I came to a fuller appreciation that clean water is a valuable and finite resource. When I returned home, I made a point of turning off the water while brushing my teeth and washing my hands, to save water.

When my husband and I landscaped our backyard, we included a rain garden. We learned that rain gardens remove pollutants from stormwater, recharge the groundwater supply, and are a natural habitat for birds and pollinators.

We carefully recycle plastics, glass, paper (although I think that we are making some mistakes, including things that should not be in the blue bag). I just leased a hybrid vehicle. And, we have become more aware of opportunities to make other changes, like adding solar panels to our roof for a renewable energy source.

Alone, these minor changes will make just a small dent in our carbon footprint, but imagine if 45,000 other people in Cleveland Heights made similar changes in their lifestyle to support our environment. Together we would make a difference.

As mayor, I will push the city toward the use of environmentally friendly strategies. One of my first actions will be to create an Environmental Task Force. We have residents with expertise in clean water, clean energy, solar energy, recycling, climate change, tree and green-space preservation. I want this task force to educate the city staff and residents about the implementation of simple, cost-effective, environmentally friendly strategies. I would like to see recommendations for specific policies that can be adopted for immediate and long-term reduction of our carbon footprint. Most importantly, members of the task force will be at the decision-making table for residential, commercial and other relevant projects, to provide advice and recommendations. An example of a possible strategy would be the encouragement of construction of all-electric "hybrid" homes powered by solar panels, as well as power from the grid.

Working together as individuals, and in concert with city operations, we can have a positive impact on our environment. The time is now, the need is urgent, and it must be a priority for our city.

*Barbara Danforth is a 22-year resident of CH, living in the Forest Hill Historical District. A candidate for Cleveland Heights mayor, she is the former chief prosecutor, city of Cleveland, and former CEO of YWCA Greater Cleveland.*

## Danforth's leadership is key skill for new mayor

Lee Chilcote

There are four candidates vying to be Cleveland Heights' first elected mayor. Each cites their particular expertise in civic engagement, government experience and managerial skills, all under the banner of "proven leadership." While expertise and strong, relevant experience are absolutely required, expertise and experience are simply not enough. Much more is needed, particularly at this time of transition.

To be an effective mayor of a city with a \$62-million budget and 440 employees, our first elected mayor must be able to truly lead and inspire our city staff and our community. In my experience, the most effective leadership approach for a local government leader is a focused combination of transformational and strategic leadership. Transformational leaders inspire their teams with effective communication and collaboration, initiating the path to success with collaborative goal-setting and encouragement aimed at raising professionalism, top to bottom. Strategic leadership includes the ability to express a strategic vision for the organization by motivating and persuading the team to acquire that same vision. Working with a new city administrator, our mayor must quickly create a new organizational structure and allocate limited resources.

As a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights and former member of

city council, I took it upon myself to formally interview two of the four candidates for mayor, Barbara Danforth and Melody Joy Hart. (Candidly, I did not interview the other two candidates on the basis of the stunning thinness of their résumés.)

What impressed and captivated me most about Danforth is her commitment and ability to be both a visionary leader and a hands-on mentor-coach to our employees—exactly the combination of leadership styles that work best. I know that she is also compassionate and forthcoming, a style that will resonate with employees and citizens alike, raising the morale of our staff and creating a forward-looking, optimistic attitude amongst our residents and business owners.

I have known Danforth for more than 25 years. I have observed her leadership style from near and afar as she held positions of responsibility and authority with city and county, as CEO of a statewide school with 1,000 employees and as CEO of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland. I urge Cleveland Heights voters to make certain they cast their ballot in this first-ever Special Primary Election [on Sept. 14], and that they cast that vote for Barbara Danforth.

*Lee Chilcote is a 50-year resident of Cleveland Heights. He served on city council, as a member and vice mayor, 1975-79. A longtime practicing lawyer, he currently serves as managing partner of Chilcote & Wright and is active in volunteer work in the community.*

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# We need to embrace sustainability

Melody Hart

Cleveland Heights is the tree city and is walkable and bikeable. Those things define us, and they are three of the things that attracted me to move here. The housing density, mix of land uses, and walkability of Cleveland Heights—not to mention our location among so many amenities—makes it a great place to live. We must preserve and enhance these land-use advantages while making the city greener and helping everyone transition to renewable energy sources.

Sustainability needs to be ingrained in the culture of the government. Everything we all do as a city or as individuals affects our sustainability.

Three of our city government buildings are already heated and cooled by solar power. Our Community Reinvestment Areas have incentives for green [LEED] buildings. Our sewer system will be rebuilt so that raw sewage is not released into freshwater streams. These policies make me proud of Cleveland Heights.

As a member of city council I have:

- Led the successful effort to modify the MetroHealth expansion to save some of the Millikin Woods.
- Advocated for newer, more environmentally friendly cars for our police department.

If elected mayor I would:

- Advocate to pass an ordinance banning the use of pesticides by the city.
- Develop a tree-canopy program to plant new trees on city-owned land and vacant lots.

- Ensure the forestry department is fully staffed and we have a regular pruning program for city trees, as well as offer residents training in proper pruning and care of trees.
- Maintain and enhance our walkability/bikeability to make it easier for residents to utilize these forms of transportation.
- Require all development agreements to honor sustainability goals of taking as few trees as possible and replacing those that are taken.
- Replace “gas guzzlers” with environmentally friendly vehicles, where possible.
- Consider setting up a sustainability committee, like Shaker Heights, to continually assess city practices.
- Prohibit unnecessary idling of any city vehicle.
- Consider establishing incentives for businesses to convert to renewable energy sources, as Foundation (formerly Motorcars) Honda did.
- Look at the juncture of the well-being and quality of life of the residents, economic impacts to the city and businesses, and land use and conservation.
- Look at the possibility of a circulator bus/vehicle to transport people between business districts.

Sustainability is a wholistic and long-term process. We need to embrace it.

*Melody Joy Hart is a current Cleveland Heights City Council member who is running for mayor. She has more than 35 years of experience in finance, and has held senior leadership positions in the private sector.*

# Mayoral candidate Hart has it all

Susan Efroymsen

I am supporting Melody Hart for Mayor of Cleveland Heights because she is the single candidate that checks all the boxes.

As part of my work on the Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM) Transition Subcommittee, I worked with Council Member Hart, who brought neighboring mayors together [for a forum] to discuss what leadership should look like, and I saw firsthand how she got the job done in a collaborative manner. This is her strong point and why she’s earned praise from city staff.

Rather than sounding off on an issue, she investigates and works behind the scenes to gather information and bring people together, a trait stressed at the forum. Heading the newly established executive branch will be challenging. The ability to execute and lead departments, while playing well with others, is Hart’s strong point. That’s how things get done.

Hart is also tops in the financial department—a quality emphasized and stressed as vital for managing a city successfully by every neighboring mayor. With years in the field, both private and public, at Quaker, Fisher-Price and Goodyear most prominently, she managed over \$5 billion in multi-national debt, and set up treasury and finance departments for transition, requiring management and negotiation skills along with her

expertise in money management. To pass any agenda, a mayor will have to prove the sense of the dollars and cents to get city council’s approval. Hart has experience leading people as well as the financial clarity to lead us with aplomb. Combine that with her capacity to listen and care, and Hart is exactly what Cleveland Heights needs, the total package. While working on CEM, I envisioned our first mayor bringing this total package to Cleveland Heights. Imagine a city led by someone lacking even one [part]! Hart understands the procedural and legislative changes that are necessary as we move from one branch of government to two—and there are many. Failure to get this right will be a failure for the city, and mean unnecessary delays. There is a big lift coming in establishing an executive branch. Hart has been involved since the beginning. Having researched and hosted a forum with the recently transitioned [to an executive branch] East Providence, R.I., Hart understands the cultural change that our city is poised to experience, and is the sole candidate with the management, financial and executive experience to lead Cleveland Heights into the next 100 years.

*Susan Efroymsen has worked on CEM and the CH Refuse and Recycling Task Force, and is on the Citizens Advisory Committee.*



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# How to make policy that benefits a whole city



**HEIGHTS OF DEMOCRACY**

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg

In the U.S., riches, influence and political power have been flowing upward, from workers to the wealthy, for at least four decades. The “trickle down” theory has proven to be a sham, creating unprecedented wealth and income inequality. This weakens not only

the economy, but democracy itself.

Cleveland Heights, unlike most residential communities, is something of a microcosm of the country. While most suburbs are racially and economically homogeneous, our city’s population is diverse. Cleveland Heights over time, however, has become quite segregated by neighborhood. As in the U.S. as a whole, our wealthiest areas are mostly white, while our poorest are more likely home to people of color. This is not unvarying: some African Americans reside in our mansion districts, and many whites live in the more distressed parts of town. Still, it

holds generally true.

In our June column, we suggested some small ways to address the glaring inequities between the Severance and Noble neighborhoods and the rest of Cleveland Heights. Improving conditions for those who have the least produces a safer, healthier and more cohesive community for everyone. Enhancements to the most desirable neighborhoods have no effect on distressed areas. But consistent, material improvements to struggling neighborhoods ripple out to the betterment of all.

Put another way, a better Fairmount Boulevard or Scarborough Road will not result in a better Noble district, but a better Noble district will lead to a better Cleveland Heights for residents on Fairmount and Scarborough, and throughout the city—and will even enhance the region beyond our city limits.

At its June meeting, the CH Planning Commission watched a brief presentation on “equity planning” by Kathryn Hexter of CHN Housing Partners. According to the American Planning Association, “planning for equity” is a way to seek social justice by redressing past harm, and by listening to all, especially those with the least power. Equity cannot be accomplished as an afterthought; it must be built into the planning process from the outset.

Equity is an established concept in city planning, but could the goal of a more just and inclusive community be infused through all of the city’s policies and practices? To elected officials, citizen commissioners and staff alike, shouldn’t the aspirational slogan “All are welcome” mean steadily increasing access, opportunity and safety for everyone?

What would it mean if economic

and racial justice were guiding visions across city departments, from planning to economic development, building and housing, communications, law, safety and the court? The recent appointment of the Racial Justice Task Force and new police department initiatives show some movement in this direction.

Environmental justice is essential to equity planning. It is no accident that the Arco dump was directly adjacent to the Noble neighborhood, not Cedar Fairmount. Correcting such blatant injustices is essential. Moreover, environmental sustainability is a second and equally important set of principles that benefit everyone, and should inform city policies and projects.

The city already plants tree-lawn trees, free of charge, for any homeowner who asks. Adding native plants to our median strips and parks would reduce mowing, improving air quality and providing wildlife habitat. Expanding our tree canopy, reducing stormwater runoff, purchasing hybrid and electric vehicles, converting city buildings (beyond the Community Center) to renewable power—all would help to mitigate the effects of climate change. (And how about restoring the native plantings in the Cumberland parking lot?)

Economic, racial and environmental justice, and environmental sustainability: these principles are the foundation for universal benefits. We hope they will guide our city into its second century.

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

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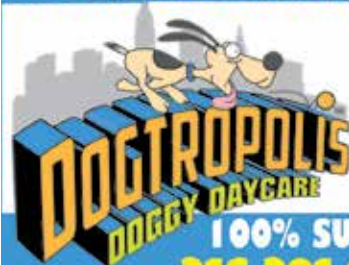
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LIBRARIES continued from page 1

face serious challenges, and every garden—of every size—makes a difference in migratory pathways and in local environments,” Hogan explained.

Designation as a habitat garden means a space provides five elements: food sources (fruiting plants and shrubs); a water source (such as butterfly puddlers or birdbaths); a place for cover and a place to raise young (such as mature trees); and the use of sustainable practices that support wildlife (no pesticides, mulching to minimize water needs, using native plants that require less extra water).

Pollinator-friendly gardens are an important natural resource because they play a vital role in supporting native bee species, which are crucial for healthy food crops.

Gardens also serve as living, changing, hands-on classrooms for kids and adults alike.

“Messy, fun and creative learning and literacy opportunities abound in gardens,” said Hogan. “Green spaces are wonderful for all kinds of programs, from exploring environmental topics about plants, animals or nature, to creative activities. They are also great for dynamic movement and relaxation activities.

“I’m excited to contribute to it and to help promote the great things happening, not only inside, but outside the library, too.”

In addition to the children’s garden at the Lee Road branch, Heights Libraries also has flower and vegetable gardens at its Coventry Village and Noble Neighborhood branches; the latter has been designated a pollinator garden by the local group Ecological Heights.

Heights Libraries offers garden-based programs that continue into the fall. Library visitors are encouraged to stop in and experience the gardens, and enjoy the bees, butterflies and flowers. The summer garden season will culminate with a Party in the Garden, for kids in kindergarten through grade five, on Thursday, Sept. 2, 4:30 p.m., at the Noble Neighborhood branch. Attendees will have the opportunity to hang out in the garden, learn about the plants growing there, and participate in energetic outdoor activities.

More information can be found at [heightslibrary.org](http://heightslibrary.org).

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



# Vigilance needed to make victory certain



THE COMMON GOOD

Susie Kaeser

In June the Ohio House passed the two-year state budget with a vote of 82-13, and the Senate followed, 32-1. The budget includes a new school-funding formula, two years of partial funding, and the end of deduction funding, which diverts state aid from public school districts to voucher programs and charter schools.

These were gratifying victories for public education, democracy, and the Cleveland Heights-University Heights (CH-UH) City School District. They will make the funding system fair and predictable, and, when fully funded, adequate and equitable.

After the Fair School Funding Plan was approved, statehouse allies recognized the effectiveness of advocacy by the Heights Coalition for Public Education and the League of Women Voters: Authentic testimony submitted by many, a constant stream of letters, e-mails, phone conversations and postcards, and pointed opinion pieces and letters to the editor added up. We were noisy, and never quit.

We were part of a statewide effort by public-education champions, social-justice advocates, and defenders of the Ohio Constitution. Our voices gave House Speaker Robert Cupp additional leverage to negotiate.

Last year, more than \$14 million in state aid went to private schools and charter schools, instead of the CH-UH students it was intended to support, leaving the district just \$7.5 million. This destructive practice of deduction funding has gone on for more than seven years. It has undermined the schools and damaged the community, driving up local taxes and igniting community division.

Under the plan, the state will directly pay for education outside of traditional public schools, and no longer force local districts to fund the education of children who don't attend their schools. It will provide relief to nearly every school district, but won't translate into a windfall of

new resources.

Under the formula, most districts will experience increases in state funds. The plan assumes it will take six years to phase in the increased support, after which the CH-UH schools will have received about \$18 million. If the legislature sticks to the plan over the next three biennial budget cycles, it will close the gap between 2021 funding levels and the levels projected by the new formula. It will be gradual, adding one-sixth of the new funds each year.

Even though school starts this month, school district leaders and the public still do not know how much state funding they will have to work with. Scott Gainer, the district's treasurer, is counting on a briefing in early August to provide an accurate estimate of state support.

As of mid-July, the simulations indicate that CH-UH will receive \$9.5 million for the upcoming school year, and \$10.8 million for the next. This is an increase from the \$7.5 million in state funds the district was able to use in 2021, after paying off deductions. It will take time to reach the \$18 million that the plan says the district deserves.

When fully funded, the plan will make state funding of the schools constitutional—a tremendous achievement. I am grateful to all of the participants in the legislative process who made a nearly impossible idea a reality, but this year's legislative victory will not be complete until the plan is fully funded.

Districts like ours that were hard hit by the voucher fiasco have the most to lose if the legislature does not provide the funding needed for quality education throughout the state. That is why we have to be there in two years to advocate for fair school funding in the next biennium.

We moved the legislature once. We certainly will need to do it again.

*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.*

CH COUNCIL continued from page 2

tion created the vacancy is ideal for constructing a \$200,000-plus home, making it likely the most expensive home on the street . . . this former realtor finds that hard to understand.

As someone who spent 19 years serving four terms on two boards dependent on property tax revenue, that these \$200,000-plus homes, built on "free" land, are reported to be tax-abated 100% for 15 years, in a city that talks about equity, seems to me a little bit unequal; every other homeowner is paying property taxes while these new residents pay nothing.

On top of that, it is reported

that the first developer the city has chosen to engage for this project, a religious nonprofit whose executive director previously sued the city, is also seeking ANOTHER \$550,000 in PUBLIC subsidies.

Are Cleveland Heights City Council members this frivolous with their own money, or just ours? It is my fervent hope that this November will usher in change, giving us council members who understand math . . . and respond to e-mail.

*Eric J. Silverman was a member of the CH-UH school board from 1994 to 2001, and from 2014 to 2017. He was a member of the CH-UH library board from 2003 to 2009.*

# Two candidates have 'clarity of vision' to prioritize sustainability and equity

Marc Lefkowitz

I am writing to express my opinion about the upcoming Cleveland Heights mayoral race, the first in the city's history. It is a historic moment that the city's first executive leader will need to face with demonstrative skills, including no small amount of vision and creativity when it comes to governing a small inner-ring suburb with diverse demographics in age, race, and economic standing.

Cleveland Heights has a lot of strengths, as identified by the city's brand study (trees, beautiful homes, walk- and bike-friendly streets), and "macro" challenges, such as a declining population in a region that has emphasized sprawl development and inequitable distribution of resources from the state to local governments and public schools.

Cleveland Heights has aging infrastructure in need of 21st-century solutions. The Biden administration is sending a signal that should encourage cities like Cleveland Heights to expand their definition of infrastructure to include people and their needs. The Biden infrastructure plan includes serious funding to address the inequities that sprawl and the state have left Cleveland Heights to struggle, on its own, to address.

Removing lead pipes that poison children's blood and cause developmental disabilities would be fully funded under the Biden plan. Investing in the removal of heat-producing, impervious surfaces that were overbuilt (hello, Severance)

would, too. "Green infrastructure" (trees, bioswales, rain gardens) will have a real, fighting chance in the form of billions of dollars coming to local communities thanks to the Biden administration, and that means that Cleveland Heights' mayor will need a plan (and need to revisit assumptions of the EPA's consent decree for stormwater conveyance) so that "green" or nature-based solutions will be built throughout the city (especially in areas that lack tree canopy). Even the current Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework prioritizes climate resilience and racial equity.

Climate change and equity are the two lenses through which Cleveland Heights will distinguish itself from the 58 other small suburbs—islands, really—in Cuyahoga County.

Climate resilience and equitable development are essential "infrastructure" that will help Cleveland Heights survive bumpy times and thrive into the unknown of a hotter, wetter, and more equitable future. For that reason, the only two candidates for mayor I'm considering, because of the strength of their work experience and clarity of vision around sustainability and equity, are Kahlil Seren and Josie Moore.

*Marc Lefkowitz is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights and a sustainability advocate. He has served on the city's Transportation Advisory Committee, on the board of the Home Repair Resource Center, and is currently a member of the Citizen's Advisory Committee. His son attends Heights schools.*

# Danforth has necessary practical experience

Dan T. Moore

In November 2019, the voters of Cleveland Heights voted to amend the city charter and directly elect a mayor, to provide the city with more centralized management and focused accountability. At the same time, voters provided for hiring a city administrator reporting directly to the mayor.

These changes acknowledge the role of the mayor as manager of a city with \$62.8 million in revenue (according to the 2019 Cleveland Heights Comprehensive Annual Financial Report), and as a leader of 433 employees (according to the same report) accountable for the effectiveness of the city's programs and services.

Immediately upon election, our new mayor must embark upon the search for an administrator who must be identified, properly interviewed, vetted and hired. Beyond filling that key position, it's critical that our new mayor bring to city hall a proven track record of leadership, with fluency in the language of business, fund accounting, politics and conciliation. We don't have the luxury of on-the-job training. Practical experience will be essential.

There are four people running

for mayor, but only Barbara Danforth has:

- Experience as a significant CEO: first, for a school system with 1,000 employees and a budget of \$62 million; second, for the YWCA of Greater Cleveland.
- Experience as an executive headhunter, which will help her hit the ground running and increase the likelihood she will hire the best possible city administrator.
- Experience on the social-service side of the law as chief counsel for the Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services, and experience in the criminal justice system as a prosecuting attorney and an assistant attorney general.

We are lucky to have a candidate with this level of experience willing to take on this job.

I urge the voters of Cleveland Heights to vote for Barbara Danforth on Sept. 14.

*A lifelong resident of Cleveland Heights, Dan T. Moore recently had the pleasure of cutting the ribbon on Cleveland Metroparks Wendy Park Bridge at Whiskey Island. Moore is an entrepreneur who has served on numerous nonprofit boards including those of Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland Metroparks and Cleveland State University.*



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## Cleveland Heights City Council Meeting highlights

JUNE 21, 2021

Council members present were President Jason Stein, Vice President Kahlil Seren, Craig Cobb, Mary Dunbar, Melody Joy Hart, Davida Russell and Michael N. Ungar. Also present were Susanna Niermann O'Neil, city manager; Amy Himmelein, clerk of council and finance director; and William Hanna, law director.

### Public comments

Gail Larson, co-chair of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Chapter of the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland, announced four upcoming candidate forums, including one on Aug. 12, 7 p.m., for the Sept. 14 Cleveland Heights mayoral primary. The forum will take place at the Cleveland Heights Community Center. The other three forums are for races on the Nov. 2 General Election ballot. Forum details can be found on Facebook, @LWVGCHights.

### City manager's report

All city meetings will return to in-person on July 1; video recordings will be made. At the Aug. 2 in-person city council meeting, all citizen comments must be presented in person.

### Police Chief Annette Mecklenburg's report

- A 25-year-old male was fatally shot on June 8 in Dennison Park. The alleged shooter received a shoulder wound, and has been jailed and indicted since his hospital release. Crimestoppers is offering a \$5,000 reward for help finding three unknown men being sought in connection [with the shooting]. Tips can be anonymous.
- Meet Your Police will resume in-person, [and take place] on the first and third Thursdays of each month.
- Police have increased patrols in city parks.
- Consideration is being given to a gun buy-back in Cleveland Heights.

### Council actions

Council passed on second reading:

- The issuance and sale of [approximately] \$1 million in bonds to pay for street recon-

struction, resurfacing and improvements; rebuilding Monticello Boulevard and Taylor Road; equipment for the Public Works Sewer and Forestry divisions; and mobile radios for the police department.

- The 2022 tax budget.

Council passed on first reading:

- Amendments to appropriations and expenditures in the 2021 budget.
- A resolution opposing parts of the Ohio Senate Omnibus Budget Amendment that would prohibit new construction and ongoing provision of publicly owned broadband networks, thereby harming the ability of Ohio's residents and businesses to participate in the 21st-century digital economy.

Receiving first readings were three ordinances:

- The first authorizes the initial use of funds received from the American Rescue Plan. Davida Russell, who prepared the legislation, detailed that some of the \$38.8 million would be used to "make whole" furloughed city employees. Also, \$2 million would be dedicated to the Noble area, \$2 million to the Taylor area, and \$1 million to needs in the rest of the city.
- A new chapter of the city code to deal with lead hazards, developed by Kahlil Seren.
- A new chapter of the city code, Tenants Right To Stay, prepared by Michael Ungar, to allow a tenant who pays all past-due rent and late fees avoid eviction.

LWV Observer: Blanche Valancy.

JUNE 28, 2021

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

### City manager's report

Staff is working on [determining] what is eligible for American Rescue Plan funding. A survey on the city's website gives residents an opportunity to look at and rate the pos-



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sibilities: [www.clevelandheights.com/1434/American-Rescue-Plan-Act-Survey](http://www.clevelandheights.com/1434/American-Rescue-Plan-Act-Survey).

### Council approvals

- Amendments to the 2021 budget to fund purchase of police vehicles, improvements to police facilities, and repair of the Coventry garage.
- An extension of the suspension of admission taxes on theater tickets through 2021.
- The purchase of eleven (11) 2021 Ford Utility Police Interceptors, at a cost of \$32,090.
- An agreement to provide a commercial tax exemption to Berkowitz-Kumin-Bookatz Funeral Home, at 1985 South Taylor Road, for an addition and upgrades. Even with the tax abatement, tax revenue to the schools and city will increase.
- A non-binding memorandum of understanding with Flaherty and Collins concerning the Cedar-Lee-Meadowbrook development.
- Authorization of a non-binding memorandum of understanding with Start Right Community Development Corporation for the redevelopment of single-family homes on vacant residential lots owned or controlled by the city. Kahlil Seren voted no because Start Right will need money (\$250,000) from the city, is inexperienced in building homes, and its executive director, Pastor Jimmie Hicks Jr., once sued the city to block the domestic partnership registry. Davida Russell countered that no other developers have presented themselves to work in the Caledonia and Desota areas. She reiterated her desire for a non-discrimination clause in the agreement, and her support for the LGBTQ community.

LWV Observer: Blanche Valancy.

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



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# UH Mayor Brennan to run for re-election



Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan.

COURTESY MICHAEL DYLAN BRENNAN

Kim Sergio Inglis

In a June 22 press release, and on his campaign website, *brennan4uh.com*, University Heights Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan announced that he is seeking a second term.

"It is amazing how far we've come in less than four years," Brennan stated in the press release, noting that he looked forward to taking his "positive campaign for continued change" to the residents of University Heights.

"For the first time in decades, we are building new homes," Brennan stated. "This year, we will break ground on a first-class town-home development on South Taylor Road. And what was once viewed as impossible is now within reach—the redevelopment of University Square.

Among the city's accomplishments under his leadership, Brennan cited the following:

- "We've fixed the city's Finance Department. By taking care of the people's money and using it prudently, we can continue to deliver high-quality services, while improving them to make the city more sustainable.
- On day one, we began restoring the Fire Department. We replaced a 28-year-old ladder truck, purchased a new ambulance,

improved staffing and training, and reopened the Fire Prevention Bureau.

- We established the Office of Community Policing. In July 2020, we established a citizens advisory committee where police and citizens work together to review and update use-of-force and de-escalation policies. These initiatives make University Heights a safer place to live.
- We built the city's first bike lanes.
- We paved streets that hadn't been resurfaced in over 20 years.
- We made special pickups available to order online.
- We updated our monthly printed newsletter to an e-news, and we raised the city's profile on social media.
- Most importantly, we persevered through the pandemic. Together."

"University Heights is not just a collection of 'beautiful homes,'" Brennan stated. "There's now a new sense of community and progress. We feel it on weekend mornings at The Walt, when neighbors gather for coffee. We feel it at the Summer Concert Series, the parade, the pool, and neighborhood events. We feel it with the new synagogue building coming to South Green Road."

UH voters elected Brennan as the city's mayor in November 2017.

The filing deadline for candidates in the UH mayoral election, on Nov. 2, is Aug. 4. As of this writing, one other candidate has filed to run for UH mayor—Barbara Blankfeld, a member of University Heights City Council.

A Sept. 30 candidate forum, sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland, Heights Chapter, will focus on the UH mayoral candidates, and will take place at the University Heights Library, at 7 p.m.

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

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## Seren stresses ‘effective and efficient’ leadership

Benjamin Sperry

In many ways, Kahlil Seren has the kind of background and career trajectory one might expect for someone running for Cleveland Heights mayor. He has lived most of his life in Cleveland’s eastside suburbs; he studied law and public policy at Cleveland State University’s (CSU) Levin College of Urban Affairs; he has accomplished years of public policy work, first at a progressive-leaning think tank, then for Cuyahoga County Council; he has served on Cleveland Heights City Council for the last six years; and he currently is the city’s vice mayor. A race for mayor seems the logical next step.

But in other respects, Seren, 42, departs from convention. He has been exposed to a variety of different worlds. For example, he was raised by an out lesbian couple who named him for Kahlil Gibran, the Lebanese-American writer and poet. His biological mother is black; his stepmother is white. He is bi-racial and identifies as black. His education included everything from [attending] the hard-pressed primary schools of East Cleveland to the well-funded Beachwood middle school and high school, with a stop at private Gilmour Academy along the way. He was profoundly shaped by summer experience at Circle Pines, which he described as a “commune-style, pacifist” camp in Michigan.

Seren’s first job in government came in 2003, drafting correspon-

dence in the office of then Cleveland mayor Jane Campbell. Later he moved to the Mayor’s Action Center, where he researched and responded to constituent complaints. “That was really valuable experience,” Seren recalled. “Residents need us to help resolve problems when things are falling through the cracks in government.” While finishing his bachelor’s and master’s degrees at CSU, Seren worked at Policy Matters Ohio, a Cleveland-based policy research institute, on issues such as the state budget, taxation, and wage theft. Since 2011, he has been a policy advisor at Cuyahoga County Council. His portfolio includes economic development, community development and workforce development.

Should he become mayor, Seren would focus on “creating a city government that is effective and efficient.” Additionally, he has three other priorities. The first would be equitable economic and workforce development “diversifying the tax base so we can spread out contributions to our civic infrastructure.” The second would be a “holistic” approach to public safety that goes beyond just “investigation and punishment.” And third, he would offer “comprehensive support for homeowners” that would include “aggressive housing enforcement.”

*Benjamin Sperry is an educator, historian, and writer. A Cleveland Heights resident since 1996, he is a friend and neighbor of Kahlil Seren.*

## Danforth will prioritize Noble neighborhood

Tonya Horn

On Sept. 14, the residents of Cleveland Heights will go to the polls to vote [in a primary election] for our first mayor. My vote will be for the person who will make the Noble neighborhood and the Noble Road Corridor Planning Project a priority.

As a transplant from Omaha, Neb., I intentionally sought Cleveland Heights as a place to make home because of its heartbeat, eclectic vibe and diversity. In 2002, I chose the Noble neighborhood because of the commitment from city leaders to revitalize the area with its first effort, Greyton Court Townhouses, off of Noble Road between Greyton and Nelaview roads. I purchased a townhome, phase one of what was to be three phases—but two and three never happened. Fast forward to the housing crisis of 2008–09, and Noble neighborhood is one that has yet to recover.

I often reference Cleveland Heights as a tale of two cities, with the north side being the forgotten, neglected and ignored part of town. If you haven’t been to that area of our city in years, I urge you to take a quick drive through, to understand this characterization.

As a member of Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM), I had the

opportunity to visit other neighborhoods in the Heights that were beautifully inviting and thriving. It was an eye-opening experience. As a result, I began to speak out about the neglect that was apparent on the [north] side: poor city services, lack of customer service from city hall, lack of economic development, litter, crime and more.

I want to be excited about the possibility of the Noble Road Corridor Planning Project, but after hearing the first discussions, I’ve tempered my expectations. I give kudos to FutureHeights and the Noble Road Corridor Steering Committee (I’m a member of the latter) for creating the opportunity to give residents hope.

In my opinion, Barbara Danforth has the vision to know this is an important project; she has the skill set to make this happen; and she’s given me her promise that it will be a priority for her. She has my vote!

*Tonya Horn has lived in the Noble neighborhood for 19 years. She is a member of Citizens for an Elected Mayor, serves on the Noble Road Corridor Steering Committee, and has worked in diversity and inclusion for more than 22 years, in higher education and corporate sectors.*

## Seren has essential skills and vision to be mayor

Earl Pike

After robust debate and a definitive vote, we, the citizens of Cleveland Heights, have the opportunity to directly elect the chief executive who will guide our city. We are fortunate to have excellent candidates, each of whom brings different strengths to the contest, and we could be well served by any of them.

But, I think we would be best served by Cleveland City Council Vice President Kahlil Seren. Having served on council since 2015, Seren is thoroughly knowledgeable about Cleveland Heights government, policy, initiatives, planning and history, and will be able to

govern as mayor from day one. Seren has the progressive worldview that so many of us in Cleveland Heights subscribe to, but he is also a pragmatist, working toward inclusive compromise to get things done. His is a calm, reflective voice, even when there is discord—he possesses the kind of thoughtfulness Cleveland Heights needs most right now.

Candidates will often talk about their vision for a community. But vision without action is just an aspiration. Candidates will also sometimes talk about their ability to take decisive action, but without a vision that guides that action, we may end up just going in circles.

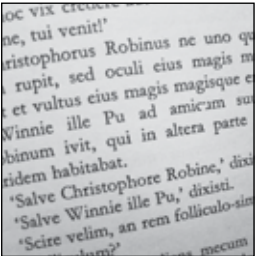
A vision for our city, along with practical and proven ability to implement—Seren has both, which makes him the ideal choice for our first directly elected mayor.

I hope that you will join me, state Reps. Janine R. Boyd and Terrence Upchurch, state board of education member Meryl Johnson, former Cuyahoga County Council president Dan Brady, current Cuyahoga County Council President Pernel Jones Jr., Cuyahoga County Council members Sunny M. Simon and Yvonne M. Conwell, and many others in supporting Kahlil Seren for mayor of Cleveland Heights.


*Earl Pike, a nonprofit director, has been a Cleveland Heights resident for 25 years.*

# Observe!

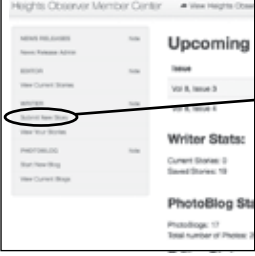
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# MetroHealth expansion underway; e-mail updates available

Nancy Lesic

As the MetroHealth System begins construction on its Behavioral Health Care Facility at Severance Circle, hospital officials invite residents and businesses to sign up for e-mail project updates.

"We are excited about expanding our work in Cleveland Heights with this \$42-million addition to our Cleveland Heights campus," said Stanley Miller, manager of community and government relations. "We are committed to being a good neighbor, and keeping you updated about this project and all our Cleveland Heights operations. We have benefitted from our conversations with the community so far, and want to continue this dialogue. We want this project to be a source of pride for everyone."



The MetroHealth Behavioral Health facility in Cleveland Heights is under construction, with an anticipated fall 2022 opening.

MetroHealth's new facility is expected to serve the mental-health and addiction-services needs of people throughout Cuyahoga County.

"We also believe it will enhance Cleveland Heights," Miller noted. "We believe this is the right project,

the right time and the right place for this much-needed facility, and we are committed to doing it the right way."

Miller said the hospital system will be transitioning to e-newsletters in the coming months, and asked interested parties to sign up for these notifications at [clehtsbh-center@metrohealth.org](mailto:clehtsbh-center@metrohealth.org).

"Should there be any changes or unanticipated updates that might impact the neighborhood, that might require a more immediate alert, we are looking to build out our e-mail database to give residents and neighbors timely information," Miller said.

MetroHealth and its contractors will try to minimize any inconveniences to neighbors, said Miller. He invited neighbors to contact him, at 216-571-1152 or 440-592-1302, with any questions or concerns.

"We appreciate everyone's support for this project, and ask for patience as we work to bring needed, quality behavioral health services to Greater Cleveland," he said.

Miller provided the following construction updates on the facility, which is expected to open in fall 2022:

**Hours of construction:** Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to

5 p.m., with potentially some occasional work on Saturdays.

**Noise:** Always part of construction, noise impacts will depend on location.

**Progress:** Contractors are laying the concrete foundation, and work is progressing on the stair and elevator towers. Also underway is the structural steel work, which is expected to last for a little over two months. A new ambulance lane is being created around the perimeter of the project.

**Traffic:** Severance Circle traffic may be impacted, with perhaps one lane closed at times. When this occurs, someone will be assigned to handle traffic control.

**Parking:** Most of what had been MetroHealth's east parking lot is closed during construction. Space remains for people using the emergency department, visiting hospital patients, making pharmacy pickups, or needing ADA parking. There are also ADA spots in the lot on the west side of the current building.

**Leadership:** MetroHealth hired Bev Lozar as executive director of behavioral hospital operations, and she will be based on site during construction. Lozar has more than 30 years of hospital experience in senior executive positions with the Cleveland Clinic, St. Vincent Charity Medical Center, and Windsor Laurelwood Behavioral Health Center. She has handled other expansions, and has extensive experience in the behavioral health arena. She is also a registered nurse.

For more information about the project, go to [www.metrohealth.org/behavioral-health-services/cleveland-heights-behavioral-health-expansion](http://www.metrohealth.org/behavioral-health-services/cleveland-heights-behavioral-health-expansion).

Nancy Lesic is owner of Lesic & Camper Communications. MetroHealth is a client.

## Millikin neighbors make revived playground a gathering place



Families congregate, play, talk, enjoy the outdoors, and one another's company at the new Millikin Playground.

Robin Koslen

Once upon a short time ago, in 2019, a group of neighbors living near the former Severance Millikin Elementary School decided that the neighborhood needed a spiffed-up playground and an attractive place for neighbors to gather. They formed the Millikin Neighborhood Group.

The old Millikin school occupies a unique spot in Cleveland Heights. South of the school, many of the residents are Orthodox Jews. North of the school, residents comprise the usual mixture one finds in many Cleveland Heights neighborhoods: young, old, black, white, lots of little kids, and multigenerational homes.

The Millikin Neighborhood Group believed that the school playground and its surrounding woods could become a place in Cleveland Heights where families and friends could gather.

In the last two and a half years, the group has been busy. Its members enhanced a once-meager playground with equipment and toys, planted and maintain a pollinator garden, successfully fought to maintain the woods surrounding the school, partnered with Heights High art students

to create a mural, and hosted many neighborhood events.

With help from FutureHeights, Cuyahoga Arts & Culture, the CH-UH City School District, Heights Libraries, Reaching Heights, Heights Arts Collaborative, Karamu House, MetroHealth System, and Neighborhood Connections, the group accomplished its mission.

This year, the Millikin Neighborhood Group is focusing on family-friendly events at the playground. Hip-hop dance instructors have taught dance moves to a diverse group of people. Yoga in the playground will be offered several times this summer. Musicians, singers, and artists are part of the scheduled events, along with neighbor-led activities, such as tie-dying, making natural dyes, and meditation.

The Millikin Playground organizers seek to reflect the diversity of Cleveland Heights. For more information about the playground and its calendar of events, join the Millikin Neighborhood Group's Facebook page, or send an e-mail to [millikin1700@gmail.com](mailto:millikin1700@gmail.com).

Robin Koslen is a mom, grandma, Cleveland Heights resident, retired teacher, part-time activist, and full-time rebel.

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| Clark Atlanta University        | Marietta College                         | United States Army                    |
| Cleveland Institute of Music    | Miami University                         | United States Naval Academy           |
| Cleveland State University      | New York Film Academy Los Angeles        | United States Navy                    |
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| Denison University              | Northwood University                     | University of Cincinnati              |
| DePaul University               | Notre Dame College                       | University of Detroit Mercy           |
| DigiPen Institute of Technology | Ohio University                          | University of Illinois                |
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The Class of 2021 combined to receive more than \$13.9 MILLION in college scholarship offers.

Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education

Meeting highlights LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER CLEVELAND

JUNE 15, 2021 – work session Board members present were President James Posch, Dan Heintz, Malia Lewis and Beverly Wright. Jodi Sourini attended virtually. Also present were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby and Treasurer Scott Gainer.

College and Career Task Force recommendations

The task force has 34 members, comprising students, educators, parents and community members. For the past year, the task force has been collecting data and exploring programs related to college and career readiness that are relevant to district students and programs. The task force recommends implementing curriculum activities, for pre-K through grade 12, that expose students to career technical education (CTE) offerings, and colleges and universities in Northeast Ohio.

Superintendent Kirby said that it would be desirable to track graduates and collect data concerning program outcomes. CTE teachers contact and poll their students six months after graduation.

LWV Observer: Rosemarie Fairman.

JUNE 29, 2021– work session President James Posch was absent. All other board members were present, as were the superintendent and treasurer.

Online learning recommendations

For use in blended learning (a combination of online and in-person teaching), the board approved an online platform, the Tiger Virtual Academy (TVA), for the 2021-22 school year, for students who wish to continue with virtual learning. The providers for TVA will be Lincoln Legacy’s Ohio Online for kindergarten through fifth grade, and Edgenuity for grades six through 12. TVA students will work asynchronously at their own pace, with one teacher for every 125 students. TVA students will participate in state assessments.

Academic update

Superintendent Kirby discussed initial data on the impact of the pandemic on outcomes in school districts across the state. In general, chronic absenteeism and instructional loss are increasing. The district is addressing these issues through its summer programs, and will be monitoring and providing support throughout the upcoming academic year.

Blended learning policy

Assistant superintendent Paul Lombardo gave the third reading of policy 2370.01, on blended learning, which the board approved unanimously. The Ohio Revised Code requires a board policy for districts that intend to use blended learning.

LWV Observer: Kathy Petrey.

JULY 6, 2021 All board members were present, as were

the superintendent and treasurer.

Update on academic goals

Superintendent Kirby shared results of learning trends that were targeted for support and showed improvement. She noted improvements for kindergarten through second-grade students in the Springboard Collaborative, a reading support program.

Resolution on systemic racism

The board approved a resolution, Regarding the Educational Imperative of a Comprehensive Understanding of Systemic Racism. The board considers this resolution to be profoundly important; details about the resolution, as well as a link to video of the reading and board discussion, are accessible from the district’s home page, at www.chuh.org. James Posch said this resolution was needed because of proposed state legislation HB 322 and 327, which would limit what teachers can present concerning the history of racism. He claimed the proposed legislation would handcuff curriculum and not teach real history. Malia Lewis said HB 327 limits teaching current events, which would limit understanding of the present world and threaten democracy. Dan Heintz stated that democracy requires disagreement, and facing parts of history that are uncomfortable is necessary. Superintendent Kirby said she was proud to serve a district that proposes such a strong resolution.

Treasurer’s report

Scott Gainer stated that the state budget presents an entirely new funding program. It ends deduction funding for vouchers, but still presents issues in education funding. The legislature increased monies for vouchers, and education funds are only assured for the two-year state budget period. The board expressed concern about phasing in monies previously deducted over six years when only the first two years of funding are secure. Heintz noted that state policies are normalizing the use of public money for private education. In Ohio, 90 percent of students attend public schools, and 10 percent attend private schools. The budget directs 25 percent of public tax dollars to private education and 75 percent to public schools.

In-person public meetings required

Posch announced that, as of July 1, 2021, Ohio law requires all public meetings to be in person. Board members attending virtually would not be paid for their attendance, and would be unable to comment or vote on board actions. He requested continuation of video for later viewing.

LWV Observer: Rosemarie Fairman.

Documents for all board meetings can be accessed at www.chuh.org/BoardofEducation.aspx. Video of board meetings are available on the district’s YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/CHUHSchools).

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# RoxArts event to benefit the Tamir Rice Foundation



COURTESY ANDREA C. TURNER



COURTESY ANDREA C. TURNER

A student outside of the art supply collection box on Roxboro's campus.

Andrea C. Turner

Tamir Rice was one of the community's own—a former fourth-grader at Roxboro Elementary School in Cleveland Heights. In 2014, he was struck down at the young age of 12 by a Cleveland police officer.

On Saturday, Aug. 21, 7:30–10 p.m., RoxArts will partner with the Tamir Rice Foundation ([www.tamir-ricefoundation.org](http://www.tamir-ricefoundation.org)) and SPACES ([www.spacescle.org](http://www.spacescle.org)) to host an art-supply drive at an intimate backyard event in the Ambler Heights neighborhood of Cleveland Heights.

All event proceeds will support the mission of the foundation named in Rice's honor: investing in the growth and enrichment of all children through after-school programs in arts and culture, allowing them to express their truth to improve their lives as they grow into young adults.

Attendees are encouraged to bring donations of new or gently used art supplies and other materials for creative endeavors. Donated items will go to incarcerated youth at the Cuyahoga County Detention Center, and to the Tamir Rice Afrocentric Cultural Center. They will be used to support the artist-in-residency at SPACES, and the Tamir Rice Foundation's partnership with the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Detention Center's Downtown Education Center.

The RoxArts adults-only event will feature live music by local band Grandview. Tickets are \$25 per per-

son, or \$15 with an art supply donation. Beer, wine, and light snacks will be provided. The event location will be revealed upon ticket purchase. To purchase tickets, visit [www.roxarts.org/upcoming-events](http://www.roxarts.org/upcoming-events).

There are other opportunities to donate supplies to the project. Four galvanized-steel collection bins, including one on the Roxboro school campus, are located throughout Greater Cleveland. Cleveland artists Antwoine Washington, James Quarles and Davon Brantley painted the bins, which were repurposed from a SPACES art exhibit, with designs that celebrate Rice's life. The other three collection bins are located at Toby's Plaza in University Circle's Uptown neighborhood, in front of SPACES on Detroit Avenue, and at Robinson G. Jones Elementary School on West 150th Street, which Rice attended after leaving Roxboro Elementary.

RoxArts members and supporters recognize that systemic racism, discrimination and oppression have existed in local academic institutions and arts organizations, including RoxArts. As an organization, RoxArts now stands committed to further changing the status quo by rooting out these inequities. To read RoxArt's diversity, equity, and inclusion statement, visit [www.roxarts.org](http://www.roxarts.org).

*Andrea C. Turner is a board member of RoxArts and the owner of ACT One Communications, LLC, a marketing communications consulting firm based in Cleveland Heights.*



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What’s going on at your library?

**Coventry Village Branch**  
1925 Coventry Road, 216-321-3400  
Monday, Aug. 9, 4 p.m.  
*Journey North: Exploring the Life Cycle of Monarch Butterflies and the Role of Citizen Science.* Via Zoom, outreach staff from the University of Wisconsin Arboretum will discuss the life cycle and migration of monarch butterflies, as well as the importance of citizen science projects, such as “Journey North,” in tracking wildlife migration patterns. Hosted by Heights Libraries Zoom: Meeting ID: 898 9374 0269.

**Lee Road Branch**  
2345 Lee Road, 216-932-3600  
Thursday, Aug. 26, 3 p.m.

*A Sweet Send-Off to Summer.* Let’s say goodbye to summer by hanging out, eating ice cream, and asking the important question: Which sundae toppings will you choose? Kosher and vegan options will be available; call with other dietary questions. For grades 6–12; registration required. This is an outdoor program, weather permitting.

**Noble Neighborhood Branch**  
2800 Noble Road, 216-291-5665  
Tuesday, Aug. 10, 12 p.m.  
*Open Mic Night for Teens.* Teens are invited to discover their own voices, and connect with other young creatives, at open mics hosted with Lake Erie Ink. Participants can read a finished piece of writing, or share something they’ve been working on—or wrote on the spot. There will also be poetry books on hand, to read aloud and draw inspiration from.

**University Heights Branch**  
13866 Cedar Road, 216-321-4700  
Friday, Aug. 20, 11 a.m.  
*Summer Story Time @ Walter Stinson Park.* Children ages 6 and younger, along with their caregivers, are invited to bring their own blankets, chairs, and strollers to this program in the park. Gather by the gazebo to enjoy stories, rhymes, songs and dancing.

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Cleveland Heights – University Heights Public Library Board

Meeting highlights



JUNE 21, 2021

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

Financial and investment report

Total cash balance across the operating accounts, Bauer Fund accounts, and investment accounts was \$20,337,230.47. Comparing financials for May 2020 and May 2021, the dire revenue predictions did not come to fruition during the pandemic, and the library’s financial situation is slowly returning to normal.

Board resolutions

- Approval of a contract to remove asbestos from the Coventry Village branch basement.
- Approval of a license renewal for Alert Media, the emergency-notification system that delivers emergency announcements to staff.
- Amendments to the board bylaws. Three changes were adopted: using “Here for you, wherever you are,” as the tagline of the library; including a board ethics statement previously approved; establishing that dates and times for board meetings would be set in January of each year.

Personnel report

- Human Resources Manager Laurie Marotta shared the quarterly summary YTD report.
- Job vacancies created by the 2020 pandemic crisis are being filled. Nineteen positions have been filled, including promotions for six staff members.
- Employees received a 3 percent wage or lump sum increase in January 2021.

Director’s report

- Friends of the Heights Libraries will have a large book sale in August. Due to a backlog, book donations are not being accepted at this time.
- The library celebrated Pride Month and Juneteenth with activities and displays.
- The library director asked if board members were interested in a resolution to make Juneteenth a paid holiday for library staff. The board decided that staff should have a paid holiday this year, and Juneteenth will be recognized as a paid holiday in future years.
- All are invited to the Coventry PEACE Park Design Jam on Sunday, June 27, to help Heights Libraries design the new park and playground.
- The city repealed the 6 p.m. juvenile curfew in Cleveland Heights business districts at the urging of the library board.
- The Library Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Task Force continues to meet. The task force is crafting a Diversity Vision/Statement and has chosen a list of priorities to work on in 2021.

- Dementia-friendly training for the community is planned for June 24.
- The library will be closed for staff development day on Sept. 24.
- Two Heights librarians, Steve Sanders and Amia Wheatley, were selected to participate in Library Leadership Ohio 2021.

Public service report

- The spring local history series concluded with popular May programs on Cleveland Heights history.
- Passport application services have been restarted in Meeting Room A at the Lee Road Library.
- [Employee] Ann MacNamara conducted Facebook Live Appy Hour and Tech talks. Sessions are recorded and available on the library’s YouTube channel.
- The Coventry Collaborative Garden is again registered with The Ohio State University Extension, and Divina Koonce is garden advisor this season. Maintenance Technician Leroy Hamby rebuilt the garden bed. Lettuce, beans, onions, tomatoes, spinach, sunflowers, cucumbers, basil and peppers are growing.
- Noble Neighbors organized the annual We Are Noble weekend. Youth Services Associate Monica Wilson rode the Book Bike to the event and gave away free books provided by Friends of the Heights Libraries. The library set up two tables of giveaways indoors during the three-day celebration.
- The University Heights Library had a 48-years-overdue Bob Dylan record returned at the end of May, which has turned into a viral news sensation, covered by more than 75 news outlets.
- Outdoor story times at Lee Road Library continued, with strong attendance in May. Starting in June, these weekly story times will move to the Fairfax Elementary School grounds. Board President Dana Fluellen asked for information on how the library is supporting schools in session this summer. Library staff are conducting story times and activities in schools. A list of activities will be shared with the board.

LWV Observer: Elizabeth M. Tracy.

Library board meetings are livestreamed, recorded, and available on YouTube on the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library Channel: [www.youtube.com/channel/UCMiWVeT7atVyO\\_sPm-dUUf6A](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMiWVeT7atVyO_sPm-dUUf6A).

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# Dobama announces reopening and expansion



**Mariah Burks**, Dobama's new director of engagement.



**Darius Stubbs**, Dobama's new director of programs.

The season closes with "Life Sucks." This remix of Chekhov's timeless classic, "Uncle Vanya," asks some of life's thorniest questions and challenges the notion that "life sucks."

Earlier this year, Dobama hired two new, part-time, permanent staff members: Mariah Burks as director of engagement, and Darius Stubbs as director of programs.

Burks is a Cleveland native, whose work has mainly been seen at Cleveland Play House (CPH), where she will play the titular role of "Antigone" next spring. Burks is an alumna of the Case Western Reserve University/CPH M.F.A. acting program, and a graduate of Bowling Green State University's musical theatre program.

Darius Stubbs is a poet, playwright, performer, vocalist, and educator who has lived and worked in Cleveland since 2006. He has collaborated in the creation of more than a dozen original performance pieces, from performance art to fully staged productions. He was featured in *Scene* magazine's "Cleveland People" series, and received the Greater Cleveland Community Shares Rising Activist Award in 2016. He is also the vice chair of the board of TransOhio, a nonprofit dedicated to education and advocacy to better the lives of transgender Ohioans.

Dobama has more than doubled the size of its board of directors as part of the its "Love and Respect Document," focused on anti-racism and creating a culture of authentic inclusivity. Board members are representative of small businesses, teachers, artists, nonprofits, law firms, financial institutions, and more. This new board will oversee the creation of Dobama's next strategic plan, navigate its reopening, and usher in a new era of growth for the theatre.

Dobama's full seating renovation is intended to improve audience sightlines by changing the orientation. Instead of a three-sided, thrust configuration, the new seating will be in a semicircle that almost entirely faces the stage head-on. The new seating system will allow for additional ADA accessibility, more front-row seating, and access for additional cleaning, to align with increased health and safety protocols.

COVID safety protocols for performances will continue to be examined in the coming months, and announced to audiences later this fall.

For more information about Dobama's upcoming season, call the box office at 216-932-3396 or visit [dobama.org](http://dobama.org).

*Colin Anderson is director of production at Dobama Theatre.*



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## Heights Arts celebrates community and reimagination

Megan Gallagher

Heights Arts has been working to connect its community with the many literary, visual, craft and musical artists who make Northeast Ohio rich with creative energy. Now, as it begins its 21st year, the organization is looking ahead to future decades. Over the last year, as Heights Arts and the rest of the world waited for a return to “normal,” its board of trustees assembled a group of stakeholders, comprising board members and respected community members, to create a Reimagination Task Force.

The task force engaged a consultant to assist with the process of reaching out to supporters and community members, to help determine the direction of future programming.

With its roots in public art, Heights Arts’ first project, the Coventry PEACE Arch, still stands today in Coventry PEACE park.

Cleveland Heights visitors and residents can view other public art projects around the city, thanks to Heights Arts. They include the Coventry Village benches and fences, the mural on the back of the Cedar Lee Theatre building, and the mosaic installed in collaboration with the former Heights Youth Club at the building at the corner of Washington Boulevard and Lee Road (now the site of Christ Community Church).

Its latest public art installation is a multi-disciplinary project, in collabo-



Heights Arts public art projects over the years have included the Coventry Arch, youth center mosaic, and the mural on the back wall of the Cedar-Lee Theatre.

COURTESY HEIGHTS ARTS

ration with Heights High students, Heights Arts Haiku Death Match poets, and Heights Libraries. The project, in which students responded with visual art to original haiku, is installed in the form of poetry squares, outside the Lee Road and Coventry Village libraries.

Heights Arts operates a store featuring local art and crafts, and offers four group and four individual exhibitions per year. It presents community concerts, and poetry events through its Random Acts of Art and Ekphrastic poets and artists talk series. While this programming is robust and varied, Executive Director Rachel Bernstein looks forward to hearing ideas from residents and artists, to further improve how Heights Arts is meeting the

needs of its community.

“We are very excited to begin this reimagination process,” said Bernstein. “While we were disappointed to suspend our regular programming during the pandemic, it allowed us to take time we might not have had to think about how we can find ways to engage as many people as possible through our programming. And we are looking forward to hearing from a diverse population of not only our steadfast supporters, but those who don’t know us and have never experienced our programming. This will help us identify any barriers that might have kept people from engaging with us in the past, and will help us shape our programming to include them in our future.”

The “Barriers to Art” surveys include both a community member and an artist survey. The surveys will be open to area residents and artists through mid-August, then refined to engage a broad response from communities throughout Greater Cleveland. Once the results are compiled, Heights Arts will then begin work to determine next steps throughout its 2021–22 fiscal year. For more information, visit [www.heightsarts.org](http://www.heightsarts.org).

*Megan Gallagher has always been a lover of the arts and is excited to celebrate them in Cleveland Heights, working in marketing for Heights Arts. Contact Gallagher at [marketing@heightsarts.org](mailto:marketing@heightsarts.org).*

## Lake Erie Ink recognizes summer staff

Eli Millette

Lake Erie Ink (LEI) is honored to have had the help of three creative individuals this summer. They are Melanie Moore, an AmeriCorps volunteer with the Greater Cleveland Neighborhood Centers Association; Sofia Ayres-Aronson, an intern for the Summer in the City program coordinated through John Carroll University’s Center for Service and Social Action; and Elana Pitts, a summer intern from Hiram College.

Asked why she chose to work with LEI, Ayres-Aronson cited the community, and “the atmosphere of optimism and collaboration.”

Moore noted, “When community members or youth come here, they’re enthusiastic about being here.”

Pitts, who previously had been an LEI participant, and published poet, returned in a leadership role this summer.

Amy Rosenbluth, LEI’s executive director, enjoys bringing back former participants and mentoring them as they become adults. Despite being a youth-serving organization, LEI takes every opportunity to support creative



Melanie Moore and Sofia Ayres-Aronson, along with Elana Pitts (not pictured), worked with LEI this summer.

COURTESY LEI

people in the community, especially those who already have a connection to the Cleveland Heights-based nonprofit.

“Having a supportive space gives kids the go-ahead to take creative risks,” Rosenbluth said. “Youth need opportunities to express who they are and how they fit in their world.” LEI believes those opportunities do not stop being necessary during the transition to adulthood, and strives to support young creative professionals seeking their way in the world.

*Eli Millette works as the communications and outreach director at Lake Erie Ink. He lives in Cleveland Heights.*

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ELECTION continued from page 1

Voter registration for the Aug. 3 Special Election closed on July 6.

The League of Women Voters (LWV) has published a Special Primary Election Voters Guide, containing candidate and voting information, which has been distributed throughout District 11, including locations in Cleveland Heights and University Heights.

#### **Tuesday, Sept. 14: Non-partisan Primary Election for Cleveland Heights Mayor**

Other Cuyahoga County municipalities (e.g., Cleveland) also have a mayoral primary on this date. This is the first time for Cleveland Heights, as it transitions to a mayor-led form of government from a city council-city manager form.

The Cleveland Heights mayoral primary is nonpartisan. As such, there are no separate Democratic and Republican races or ballots. The top two vote-getters, of the four candidates, will move on to the Nov. 2 General Election ballot.

An LWV Voter Guide to the CH mayoral candidates on the Sept. 14 ballot is included as an insert in this August issue of the *Heights Observer*. The candidates are: Barbara Danforth, Melody Joy Hart, Josephine Moore, Kahlil Seren.

Voter registration for the Sept. 14 Primary Election will close on Aug. 16.

#### **Tuesday, Nov. 2: General Election and Special Election for Ohio's 11th Congressional District in the U.S. House**

The Democratic winner and Republican winner of the Aug. 3 primaries will be on the Special Election ballot for the 11th Congressional District.

The Nov. 2 General Election ballot will include local elections for:

- Cleveland Heights Mayor: The

two candidates receiving the most votes in the nonpartisan Sept. 14 primary will be on the ballot.

- University Heights Mayor: There is no primary for this nonpartisan race. The filing deadline for candidates is Aug. 4.
- Cleveland Heights City Council: There are six candidates for four seats. The candidates are: Lee Barbee II, Craig Cobb, Tony Cuda, Anthony Mattox Jr., Davida Russell, Allosious K. Snodgrass. (The filing deadline for candidates was June 16.)
- University Heights City Council: The filing deadline for candidates is Aug. 4. There will be three seats on the Nov. 2 ballot.
- Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education: The filing deadline for candidates is Aug. 4. There will be three seats on the Nov. 2 ballot.
- East Cleveland Board of Education: Part of Cleveland Heights is in the East Cleveland School district, so some CH residents will vote in this race.

Voter registration for the Nov. 2 General Election will close on Oct. 4.

An LWV Voters Guide for these local races will be included as an insert in the October issue of the *Heights Observer*.

Complete information on elections, ballots and candidates, including candidate responses to a set of questions, can be found at [www.vote411.org](http://www.vote411.org). Election information can also be found on the websites of the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections, <http://boe.cuyahogacounty.gov>, and of the Ohio secretary of state, [www.ohiosos.gov](http://www.ohiosos.gov).


*Maryann Barnes is co-chair of the Heights Chapter of the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland.*

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# Close proximity



SONGS AND  
STORIES

David Budin

You can't really see it, but one of the houses my father grew up in is just out of view in the picture of two kids swinging at Coventry PEACE Park this summer. The house is technically in the upper left corner. Some of it might be visible, if not for a tree or large bush in front. It's a few houses back from the Coventry library, on Washington Boulevard.

My father moved there with his family when he was about 4 years old. The next year he started kindergarten at Coventry school, right across the street, the site of the PEACE Park now. My father went all the way through Coventry school, Roosevelt Junior High and Heights High, as I and my brothers did, and as my kids did. (Well, our younger brother went almost all the way through Roosevelt, but they tore the building down when he was halfway through ninth grade. Though they let him get out first. Of course.)

So, the year my father started attending Coventry school, 1925, was the same year the Coventry library was built. It's still standing and still in

use. And, amazingly, it still has the exact same distinctive smell that it did when I started using it, when I was about 4.

My mother started working there when I was in second grade, as secretary to the head of the library system, Miss Lynch. I remember her name because of the time my mother told someone on the phone, "I'm sorry, Miss Lunch is out to lynch."

At lunch time, when I was in elementary school, I would walk over to the library and my mother would give me some money—maybe 30 cents—and I would walk to either Merit Drug, right across the street, or Coventry Drugs, at Coventry and Mayfield, for a cream cheese and jelly sandwich or a hot dog (probably 15 cents), and a drink (probably 10 cents). And then I'd splurge with the extra nickel on a pack of baseball cards or Bonomo's Turkish Taffy.

My mother lived on Coventry when she went to Roosevelt and Heights. She was still in junior high when she first met my father and they started dating, and never dated anyone else (until after my father died). When they were in high school, my mother worked at a dentist's office above Coventry Drugs. (The term "Coventry drugs" would take on a new meaning in the 1960s, when I hung out there, but that's a different story.) My father worked at the fish market halfway up Coventry, where the original Big Fun started out.

During the Depression, my father's



The author's grandchildren at Coventry PEACE Park.

family had to move out of the big house on Washington, and they moved a few times, but always stayed in that neighborhood. They lived in a house on Coventry, north of Mayfield (a few yards from where my father is buried). They lived in one of the two apartment buildings on Mayfield at Coventry, where, 20 years later, I would ride the elevators up and down during the time I subbed for a kid on his *Plain Dealer* route. And they lived on Belmar, two blocks east of Coventry.

During World War II, my father served in the Navy and my mother rode a train out to California, where he was stationed (in between trips to the Philippines on a troop transport ship), to get married. After the war, they returned to Cleveland Heights and lived in a house on Belmar, where I spent my whole childhood. We lived in one house for my first 15 years and then moved next door, where my parents continued to live long after I left home at 18.

My daughter-in-law teaches at Heights High and my son coaches there. And when my grandchildren—those kids on the swings—go to Heights High, they'll be the fourth



Two houses on Belmar Road, in which the author once lived.

generation at that school.

All of the places where my parents lived and worked as kids are still standing—the buildings are, anyway. The day after I took that picture of the kids, I visited Belmar and took that picture of the two houses I grew up in.

The chicken wire is long gone from the house on the right. When we were kids, my mother installed chicken wire around the entire upstairs porch, assuming, I guess, that we were planning to walk along the railing. It never really occurred to me to do that, but, I don't know—some other kid might have wanted to.

The other thing I notice is that when I lived in those houses, there was a big maple tree in the front yard of the house on the right, and no trees in front of the other house.

Things do change around here, but pretty slowly.

*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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20

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