Heights Observer June 1, 2023

UH Charter Review Commission proposes 10 amendments

Stephen Warbaheim

Last summer, University Heights City Council passed an ordinance to create a Charter Review Commission (CRC) for only the third time since the city’s founding in 1941. Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan chose four CRC members, and each council member chose one, bringing the total to 11 commissioners. The CRC, which met twice a month for 10 months, proposes the following 10 charter amendments:

Gender Neutrality: The CRC recommends a charter amendment that would replace gendered terms and language throughout the city’s charter with gender neutral and gender-inclusive terms and language. This proposed amendment would correct the charter’s long-standing sexist, androcentric language and replace it with language that communicates and promotes a more inclusive city and government.

Eliminating Term Limits: CRC recommends an amendment to eliminate term limits for elected officers of University Heights. Currently, the charter limits elected officials to serve no more than three consecutive four-year terms, or 14 consecutive years whether elected or appointed. This term-limit provision was approved by voters in 1995, when the national movement in favor of term limits reached its peak. However, since the 1990s, term limits have proven to be detrimental—rather than helping to energize the economic and community development of Cleveland Heights and University Heights, and raises critical operating funds for the organization. This year’s event will take place at the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes, where guests will partake of music, dancing, and a selection of delicious food and drink from some of the Heights’ top culinary establishments. With enchanting live performances and art from local artists, including Robin VanLear, there are sure to be delights and surprises around every turn.

At the benefit, FutureHeights will honor John Zagara as FutureHeights’ Person of the Year.

“John has always been a steadfast advocate and supporter of our community,” said FutureHeights Board Chair Julie Sabroff. “We are happy to commemorate both his and his family’s many years of service to our community, operating Zagara’s Marketplace.”

A free shuttle service will be provided for guests from the Shaker Heights Board of Education parking lot to the Nature Center’s entrance. Limited street parking will also be available. The celebration will take place rain or shine.

By attending this event, guests help support FutureHeights’ many programs, which include community leadership development, grants for neighborhood projects, outreach and support for local business owners, and other revitalization projects. FutureHeights also produces and distributes the Heights Observer and sponsors the annual Heights Music Hop Festival.

To learn about sponsorship opportunities, and to buy tickets, visit https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/summernightdream.

Joy Roller is a FutureHeights volunteer and has been a Cleveland Heights resident since 2004.
Heights Community Congress will be missed

Alan Rapoport

After 50 years, Heights Community Congress (HCC) ended its existence on Feb. 18. We should consider what could have happened to Cleveland Heights without it.

HCC now receives justly deserved compliments for its consistent commitment to fair housing. But it did other good work during the 1970s and 1980s.

It helped Cleveland Heights survive as an open and integrated community. There was legitimate concern then that Cleveland Heights could not handle integration well and that “white flight” would result. HCC sought to make new residents welcome while also making existing residents comfortable in, and committed to, Cleveland Heights.

HCC strongly supported neighborhood organizations. Thanks to this support, organizations such as Coven-

try Neighbors and Oxford Neighbors became effective and credible. People of different backgrounds learned to work together and live in the same city. HCC gave them confidence in the future of Cleveland Heights.

HCC sponsored planning groups of citizens from all parts of Cleveland Heights. Their members exchanged ideas about planning and development. But more than that, these groups helped create a social fabric. They brought people together so they could network.

The Heights Heritage Home & Garden Tour was more than a mere fundraiser for the HCC. It was a major social event and an opportunity for many to learn about the fantastic history of Cleveland Heights.

It was a public relations success that made Cleveland Heights seem special and desirable.

Cleveland Heights City Hall hired many talented members of the HCC staff. It also co-opted HCC by developing parallel and identical programs. Some in the city administration thought they had made the HCC irrelevant. But CH City Council continued its financial support of HCC with annual community development block grant awards. The very existence of HCC was noted as important by successive city councils.

Times have changed. Groups like FutureHeights have taken over some roles formerly played by HCC. And City Hall continues to operate programs that HCC once offered. So maybe it is time for the HCC to declare a victory and pass away gracefully. It played an important role. It should be remembered fondly.

Alan Rapoport, a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, served on CH City Council (1986-98) and as council presi-
dent (1989-90).

Horseshoe Lake plan is ‘act of vandalism’

To the Editor:
The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District revealed its plan for what’s left of Horseshoe Lake on May 1, and they deserve credit for being frank about what they want to do.

They want to dig out the north end of the dam, so far intact, bring the two branches of Doan Brook together about where the dam was, and direct the jointed stream along a carefully engineered slope through the trees below as far as Lee Road.

The brook’s banks will be flattened into an artificial flood plain 16 feet on a side to prevent erosion. Sixteen feet is about the width of a lane of traffic—the bulldozed stream is going to look a lot like the Clark Freeway that residents fought to a standstill 50 years ago.

At the end of their presentation to Cleveland Heights City Council, the planners noted the stream would be designed to flood its low banks higher and higher in small to large rainstorms, then drain after the downpour. Effectively, then, our lake will become a retention basin, though the sewer district originally told us the lake had no value for flood control.

They call this plan a restoration, but there is nothing natural about it, and nothing is being restored. It’s a colossal act of vandal-

ism.

Peter Zicari

Cleveland Heights

Horsebox thanks city for its bike-friendly efforts

To the Editor:
For the second year in a row, CH City Council named bike month “Mary Dunbar Bike Month” in Cleveland Heights.

On city council, I advocated for making Cleveland Heights more bicycle friendly. Cleveland Heights was declared a bronze-level bicycle-friendly community by the League of American Bicyclists (LAB). To attain this distinction, Cleveland Heights had to meet criteria in the five E’s:

- “Equity”—we provided courses at school to teach bike skills and safety.
- “Education”—we held bike rodeos at many schools to meet this standard.
- “Encouragement”—we held group rides around the city, to inspire residents to ride bikes.
- “Equity”—we provided courses at Heights High for people to learn bicycle skills and safety.
- “Evaluation”—we applied to LAB for recognition as a bicycle-friendly community.

Trust me, I could cite here many more examples of our efforts toward bicycle friendliness.

I helped to achieve silver-level recognition before leaving office, and hope that someone will lead the way in the future.

I want to thank city council for recognizing this particular effort, and am confident about Cleveland Heights continuing work toward bicycle friendliness.

Thank you all for remembering me, and one of my major contributions to the city of Cleveland Heights.

Mary Dunbar

Hanover, N.H.

CH council must learn the art of compromise

To the Editor:
The May 1 Cleveland Heights City Council meeting has not only confirmed the sad state of our current city government, but also that being an elected official in this town is the last retirement job I would pursue.

The circus, as the council presi-
dent described the meeting, was interrupted with hammering gavels, endless snide remarks, and verbal personal attacks. As if that wasn’t enough, the council president even physically attempted to turn off the microphone of another council member.

This was not a circus. It was a display of mature individuals acting like immature children. For the sake of our city, this conduct cannot continue.

The council was unable to fill one vacant council seat, can’t seem to agree on procedural issues, and any hope of agreeing on six Charter commission members helped create a social fabric. They brought people together so they could network.

The Heights Heritage Home & Garden Tour was more than a mere fundraiser for the HCC. It was a major social event and an opportunity for many to learn about the fantastic history of Cleveland Heights. It was a public relations success that made Cleveland Heights seem special and desirable.

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The Heights Observer is not a conven-
tional newspaper; it is a nonprofit publication for residents of Cleveland Heights and University Heights.

The Heights 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. Writers in University Heights or Cleveland Heights is welcome to contribute regularly, occasionally or even just once. If there is something you think should be covered in the Heights Obs-
er, it is our policy to print it on our 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. And try to keep it under 500 words.

To submit a submission of any kind, go to www.heightsobserver.org and click on “Member Center” at the left.

For information about writing style, article length, etc., click on “Become an Observer” at the left. For questions that aren’t answered there, call the FutureHeights office at 216-320-1423 or e-mail info@futureheights.org.

Articles to be considered for the July issue must be submitted by June 12. We publish some articles online only. We also publish an e-newsletter each Tuesday.

Steve Rowsey

Cleveland Heights

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Letters Policy

The Heights Observer welcomes letters to the editor that are submitted elec-
tronically, along with the writer’s name, phone number and e-mail address, to www.heightsobserver.org/members.

CH council must do better and embrace diversity

Tonya Horn

I watched in utter disappointment the behavior that occurred during the May 1 Cleveland Heights City Council meeting. Unfortunately, this is NOT the first time.

You hear about outrageous antics at council meetings across the country on YouTube and other social media outlets, and this came to mind as I witnessed some of our council members in action.

The lack of respect, the power control (efforts to turn off another member’s mic, the uncontrollable gavel banging, the yelling), and the tone that exist among some of the members are unfortunate and embarrassing.

Do better. We are watching you.

As a public figure, I would hope and ask that the council find a way to behave in a respectful and mature manner, agree to disagree, and keep it moving. After all, this is what most adults expect of minors and their children.

A topic of the meeting, most important to me, is the Charter Review Commission (CRC).

As Council Member Davida Russell read the ordinance and expectations for the selection of the CRC members, she stressed and re-stressed the importance of diversity and representation. “Council shall make a good faith effort to ensure that the commission is broadly reflective of the diversity of this city. Taking into account important considerations, including but not limited to geographic diversity, diversity of race/ethnicity, age, gender, sexual identity, and orientation.”

The law director confirmed that this is the expectation that the council should follow.

It is expected that council put forth efforts to make sure that all sides of the city have representation.

As we all should know, representation matters. It provides a voice for those who would not otherwise have one, and that can’t happen if there is no room at the table for those often disenfranchised, as those of us on the North side of the city have been for decades. It’s about inclusion, not popularity.

We have a number of African Americans on this council, and this should be a priority.

I hope that it is, but from this meeting, I’m not sure. I gave my vote to each of them who ran, because of the expectation that they would represent the entire city and not just advocate for the status quo.

I applaud those members who fight for us every day and make sure our needs are heard and met. [The fact] that some members didn’t vote because they are frustrated and upset that their [CRC] candidate did not have enough votes is eye-opening.

Council members Russell, Larson, and Cuda voted “no” because the diversity clause in the legislation was not considered, and the agreed-upon process to collaborate and build consensus on all nine applicants didn’t seem to be followed.

The motion by Cuda to go back into executive session and finish this work shows a willingness to compromise and problem-solve.

All council members, not just some, need to speak up and make sure that there is a slate of diverse candidates as described in the ordinance.

If there is a lack of representation, they need to go back to the drawing board to make sure the Charter Review Commission is diverse.

Tonya Horn is a concerned Noble neighborhood citizen and was a member of the Citizens for an Elected Mayor campaign.

She is a FutureHeights board member.

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She is a FutureHeights board member.

The opinion expressed here is her own.

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New air-quality monitors raise pollution awareness

Alice Jeresko

The first week of May was recognized as Air Quality Awareness Week in Cleveland Heights. Each weekday (the city’s website) featured a short video with Mayor Seren, along with facts about different air quality topics. (All of the news releases are available at www.clevelandheights.gov/304/City-News-Update-Archive.)

It was announced on day five that Cleveland Heights has installed five air-quality monitors that display data in real time. Their locations can be viewed at https://map.purpleair.com/1/mAQI. Their locations can be viewed at https://map.purpleair.com/1/mAQI.

The air quality-sensing data is recognized as Air Quality Awareness Week outreach, “Residents can help reduce idling time further AND help the city save money on fuel by waiting until their blue recycling carts are completely full before placing them on the curb for pick-up.”

I’m glad the city is moving forward on several initiatives, and keeping residents informed.

Whether you completely agree or not, we can all play a small part in making a big difference.

Alice Jeresko is an environmental advocate who founded Quiet Clean Heights to help raise awareness of the health, hearing and environmental impacts of gas leaf blowers in residential neighborhoods.
Democracy—who ever said it was easy?

Deborah Van Klee and Carla Rautenberg

When the two of us agreed to collaborate on this column, we didn’t stop to think where it might lead us. Certainly, we hardly imagined we’d still be writing it eight years later! A couple of things directly inspired us. The first was a series of discussions (and the ultimate success) we shared with a small group of citizens dedicated to stopping privatization of Cleveland Heights’ water service. The second was having experienced the Democracy Day public hearings held by Cleveland Heights City Council in 2014, 2015 and 2016. We realized that people are interested in democracy. They like it, they generally want more of it, and, given the opportunity, they have important things to say about it. You can learn more at Cleveland Heights’ 10th Annual Democracy Day, which will be held at City Hall in Council Chambers on June 7 at 7 p.m.

Devoting an hour or two once a year to democracy isn’t a bad idea, but it’s a tiny drop in the bucket. In fact, achieving and keeping genuine democracy makes continuous demands upon many—perhaps most—citizens. No one ever promised self-governance would be easy.

On Democracy Day, community members gather to enumerate some of the reasons Cleveland Heights voters endorsed the We the People Amendment to the U.S. Constitution back in November 2013. Just re-introduced in the U.S. House, HJR-54 succinctly states that, counter to several Supreme Court decisions, corporate entities are not persons entitled to constitutional rights, and money does not equal constitutionally protected speech; as long as powerful corporations grab rights intended for individuals, and the wealthy buy speech intended to be free, democracy is illusory.

These issues impact not just federal and state governments, but municipal ones as well, with the creeping usurpation of local authority and the continual drive to create “greater efficiencies” via outsourcing, which privatizes gains while continually charging the public more, usually for worse results.

With “Heights of Democracy,” we try in our small way to support democratic action at the local level. In our very first column, we proposed addressing such questions as: How have grassroots efforts by Heights individuals and groups promoted civic involvement and democracy in our communities? What local governance practices might elicit increased and more effective citizen participation? How is our local autonomy enhanced or limited by state and federal policies and economic priorities?

Just as we must adhere to the Heights Observer’s rules and style guide to produce a readable column, conducting functional city hall meetings entails following certain rules and procedures. Some are enumerated in the city’s charter and ordinances, others, such as those laid out in Robert’s Rules of Order, are universally recommended for running productive meetings.

Council has not yet mastered Robert’s Rules, and it is true that the 1921 Cleveland Heights City Charter is not sufficient or even adequate in 2023. However, as we wrote in March 2022, and repeated in August:

“[A] charter review process initiated so early in our new government’s tenure would be a grievous misuse of time and effort.” Sadly, our fears have turned out to be an understatement.

Sometimes it is necessary to work within a system to learn when and how to change it. Mayor Seren understands our system far better than any current council member. As a result, along with the majority on council (prominently including council President Hart), the mayor is running circles around the minority. It’s an ugly and unproductive process, pure politics and miles from effective governance.

By the time you read this, a Charter Review Commission will probably—finally—have been appointed. When, however, that commission ultimately submits its recommendations, they will not be binding. Council may accept or reject any of them, and/or add others.

We foresee a long and torturous road before anything is put before the voters. And none of it, alas, has to do with hiring and retaining staff, delivering city services, or moving Cleveland Heights forward. At this time, it’s a giant distraction we can ill afford.

See you at Cleveland Heights Democracy Day on June 7!

Deborah Van Klee and Carla Rautenberg are writers, editors and longtime residents of Cleveland Heights. Contact them at heightsdemocracy@gmail.com.

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The common good on display

Susie Kaeser

On April 28 the Cleveland Orchestra was performing works by Anton Dvorak, one of my favorite composers. On that same night, a combined performance by the Heights High Symphony and Symphonic Winds had “Feeling Good” and “Bohemian Rhapsody” on their playlist. Heights High and Severance Hall are equidistant from where I live, and both are luxurious spaces. I chose the Spring Finale Concert at Heights.

I’m never disappointed by these concerts. Music directors Daniel Heim and Nicholas Marzuola crafted a creative program, and the students looked like they were having fun. They played with confidence and ease. A vocal performance by Libby Warren was magic, and Micah Belcher’s senior solo on trombone was skilled. The audience was enthusiastic and receptive, and I had the added good luck of winning the 50-50 raffle.

In Cleveland Heights, we are surrounded by cultural opportunities. Unlike large swaths of Ohio, we don’t have to rely on our high school for entertainment, but it’s a wonderful choice! No matter where you live in Ohio, our public schools are special venues for community life. Heights High was just that kind of place that night.

I enjoyed sitting in an auditorium full of my fellow residents, sharing an experience and connecting with strangers. The students entertained us, and we showed them that they are important members of our community. The concert provided audible evidence that our teachers and kids are doing their jobs. My kids graduated from Heights in 2000 and 2003, but I feel like these young musicians are my kids, too.

The audience roared with support at the end of the performance when the graduating seniors were invited to the front of the stage. A joyful thunder burst into tears as the four years of a music-centered high school experience came to an end for her son. They were tears of gratitude, pride and also sadness as the inevitable separation and transition into adulthood takes place. She will undoubtedly be back next year to support the new crop of musicians.

We have a system of public education because we all benefit when our youth thrive. While this feels like an abstraction, attending a school event makes it tangible. Because public schools are designed to include everyone, they help unite our diversity and celebrate our shared self-interest and responsibility for each other. It’s a good reminder of what the common good looks like and means.

This month the Ohio legislature is in the final stage of crafting the biennial state budget. It has a chance to finally bring desperately needed increases in state funding to the system of public education that we are part of. Legislators could finally carry their fair share of the cost of providing high-quality education to schools throughout Ohio. If the House version of the budget survives, our district will have an increase in state support of more than $1,200 per student. It would really make a difference!

Public education used to be a popular nonpartisan idea, but the legislature’s supermajority seems determined to put individualism ahead of the common good. Lawmakers are holding the education of 1.4 million public school students hostage so that 169,000 private school students, most of whom attend a religious school, can have the public pay for this unaccountable luxury.

Both Senate Finance Committee Chair Matt Dolan and Senate President Matt Huffman are products of private education. They are key players in the budget process. Call them now and tell them to make public education their funding priority. Urge them to visit their local public schools to see why.

Susie Kaeser moved to Cleveland Heights in 1979. She is the former director of Reaching Heights, and is active with the Heights Coalition for Public Education and the League of Women Voters. A community booster, she is the author of a book about local activism, Resisting Segregation.
There are So Many Reasons to SAVE HORSESHOE LAKE

1. Horseshoe Lake is an irreplaceable asset. Once it is gone, it is gone forever.

2. Horseshoe Lake makes our communities more vibrant.

3. Horseshoe Lake has been enjoyed by generations of families.

4. It’s a nationally registered historic site.

5. It’s a vital habitat for wildlife and a key migrating point for birds.

6. Our communities have said clearly we want to save Horseshoe Lake.

7. The Sewer District’s plan would permanently destroy Horseshoe Lake.

8. The Sewer District has not listened to residents or worked to compromise.

9. The Sewer District admits to having no plan to pay for their proposed park or maintenance and could cost millions.

10. There is another option that would save the lake – The Horseshoe Lake Restoration Plan. It’s safe, controls stormwater, and costs the same as the Sewer District’s plan that destroys the lake.

And we sent demand letters to Shaker Hts. and Cleveland Hts. requiring them to fulfill their obligations to maintain and preserve the Lake.

Learn more at SaveHorseshoeLake.com
Summer Worship
7:45 a.m. | Holy Eucharist
9 a.m. | Holy Eucharist (ASL) Outdoor service, inside for rain
10:30 a.m. | Holy Eucharist (livestreamed)

Bluegrass Eucharist
9 a.m. | June 4, July 9, and August 13

Summer Worship
7:45 a.m. | Holy Eucharist
9 a.m. | Holy Eucharist (ASL) Outdoor service, inside for rain
10:30 a.m. | Holy Eucharist (livestreamed)

2747 Fairmount Boulevard, Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44106

UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS NEWS

University Heights City Council
Meeting highlights
APRIL 17, 2023

Council members present were Michele Weiss (vice mayor), Barbara Blankfield, Christopher Cooney, Justin Gould, Brian J. King, and John P. Rach. Also present was Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan, Clerk of Council Kelly McConnell, Finance Director Dennis Kennedy, and City Engineer Joseph Ciuni.

Mayor’s report
Mayor Brennan reported that voluntary overtime for members of the Service Department has been authorized because all members will be involved with riprap removal. University Heights has joined Cleveland Heights in welcoming the Heights post-faure. Applications for the Memorial Day parade are available, as well as workshops to help the participants. On June 11, Greenway Partners will sponsor a community bike ride. The resolution supporting home rule for common-sense gun laws has been referred to council’s Safety Committee. Because he has sponsored the resolution, the mayor asked the committee to change the date of its scheduled May 1 meeting, as he has a conflict due to a prior commitment.

Jason Gould resigns
Council Member Jason Gould, who is moving to North Carolina, announced his resignation from council, effective immediately after the conclusion of the April 17 council meeting.

NOPEC service
Tony Ramos of NOPEC discussed electric service aggregation for University Heights residents. The cost will be about half of what the utility is offering per kilowatt hour. Opt-in will be automatic. Natural gas rates will be determined separately. NOPEC’s website has further information. A Green Community Choice option is available for a minimal increased cost. Council would have to pass legislation to make University Heights a Green Community Choice city, but residents can choose the option individually.

Council actions
Council authorized bidding for street resurfacing on Miramar Boulevard, Ashhurst and Laurenhurst roads, and Claridge Oval. Prior to the vote, City Engineer Ciuni presented an inventory of needed street repairs and resurfacing. Council raised concerns on discrepancies between budgeted amounts and projected costs, which Ciuni attributed to increased costs of materials and labor. Council members pointed out other inaccuracies, such as the amount of roadway included, which Ciuni claimed had been corrected. Any of the streets to be considered for bids in the approved authorization can be removed, but addition of other streets would require additional legislation.

Council approved a bid from Extreme Land Care Landscaping for the yard abatement program, authorized the purchases of 10 Fire Department mobile radios, and two new police vehicles (with trade-ins of seven police vehicles to offset the expense), and approved participation in the ODOT road salt contract.

Council authorized extension of recycling-processing services with Kimberly Company, and extension of the solid waste disposal agreement with BFI of Ohio. These ordinances were passed on emergency because of the new recycling ordinance, details of which are still being worked out.

Safety Committee report
The city may receive a grant for two license plate readers. Chief Rogers will update the committee on the cost of having these on every light pole. The committee is looking at regional grant initiatives for including mental health professionals as part of the police and fire departments. The committee will watch closely what Shaker Heights has piloted. The grants are highly competitive.

Council actions
Council assigned John Rach to the position on the Community Improvement Corporation board that was vacated by Jason Gould. Council approved the purchase of cloud server service from Software Solution in an amount not to exceed $19,110. This purchase, a one-time cost, will provide better security and allow for easier systems updates.

Council authorized execution of the “Spalding Leasing Office Lease Extension” to lease Suite 105 at 2245 Warrensville Center Road from June 1, 2023, through May 31, 2024, at a cost of $1,638 per month. The space has fixed offices and conference rooms that will be available for use by anyone in city government or on council.

Council approved a contract for a 2023 pavement-marking bid with Pat Flowers Inc., for an amount not to exceed $56,131.15.

LWV Observer: Marilyn Singer.

MAY 1, 2023

The mayor was not present, nor were council members Christopher Cooney and John P. Rach. All other council members were present, as were the clerk of council, law director, finance director, and city engineer.

Public comments
A resident spoke regarding traffic and speed issues at the corner of Silsby and Edgerton roads, and asked the city to study traffic at the intersection.

YouTube streaming
City council meetings are now streaming live on YouTube.

LWV Observer: Marilyn Singer.

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LWV Observer: Tanya Swan.
Men turn out for MetroHealth’s annual health fair

Angela Townsend

The MetroHealth Minority Men’s Health Fair enjoyed a large turnout at the Cleveland Heights Medical Center on April 27. The event offered education and free screenings for more than 30 health issues prevalent in minority men, including prostate cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, skin cancer, and mental health concerns.

Though the health fair was geared toward men of color, all were welcome to the event, which also was held at the health system’s Main Campus and Ohio City Health Fair.

James Elder, 66, of Cleveland Heights, was attending his first Minority Men’s Health Fair.

“I knew about it for a while, and this was the first time I decided that I’d better show up,” said Elder, who was there to get some health screenings as he could. “I want to find out how healthy I am, or if there’s any issues I need to know about.”

D. Hayes, 54, of South Euclid, took advantage of several health screenings, including prostate and dermatology. After the recent deaths of two close friends, Hayes said he is even more conscious about staying on top of his health.

Charles Modlin, M.D., the health fair’s founder and MetroHealth’s medical director of Equity, Inclusion and Diversity, said he is confident the event saved lives.

“The Minority Men’s Health Fair empowers men to know their risks and take control of their health, so they can live to the fullest,” said Modlin.

Among the many sponsors who helped make the 16th year’s Minority Men’s Health Fair a success were First Energy Foundation, Saint Luke’s Foundation, and KeyBank. They were joined by community partners who set up tables to offer health-related education and services. In addition, several hundred volunteers from MetroHealth and the community made the event possible.

Angela Townsend is a senior writer in the Department of Marketing and Communications at The MetroHealth System.

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Cleveland Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

APRIL 17, 2023 - regular meeting

Council members present were Melody Joy Hart (president), Craig Cobb (vice president), Janine Boyd, Tony Cuda, Gail Larson, and Anthony Mattos Jr. Davida Russell was not present. Also present were Mayor Khalil Seren, Clerk of Council Addie Larson, and Law Director William Hanna.

Public comments

Paul Volpe, representing the Seaweed Action Group (SAG), asked the city to prioritize Seaweed’s redevelopment and work with SAG. He asked that the city hold a public meeting with the city and public meetings to solicit feedback on the concept developed by SAG. Two other residents spoke about Seaweed’s redevelopment.

Council actions

The Cleveland Heights City Council established an Indigent driver’s license program. The Council authorized a three-year, $155,831 contract to UA’s West side office for construction manager at risk services. The northeast Ohio Regional Storm Water Management District presented an update on the Horseshoe Lake project. Its stormwater-management goals are to control surface flooding, increase storage, and increase water quality. They showed diagrams of recommended stream channel and possible landscape integration and amenities. A 200-foot pedestrian bridge over the Deep Brook Valley will be re-established.

Charter Review Commission

New resolutions to appoint CRC members were presented for adoption on first reading, but then tabled as the required five votes were unattainable. Three council members, Tony Cuda, Davida Russell, and Gail Larson objected—not because they opposed any particular candidates, but because they felt the composition of the commission would be insufficiently diverse.

Council actions

Council made several appointments and reappointments to the city’s Architectural Board of Review, Landmark Commission, and Citizens Advisory Committee. The Council authorized an agreement with a local engineering firm for design services related to sanitary sewer rehabilitation loan and down-payment assistance programs. The agreement runs through April 30, 2025.

Council authorized submission of the Community Development Block Grant application for calendar year 2023.

The Council established an Indigent Drivers’ License Program Fund, refunding money from within the Special Revenue Funds. Council expressed support for Ohio Sen. Matt Huffman’s SB 97, which redefines nonprofit owner-occupants and specified nonprofit housing organizations be permitted to use nonprofit loan funds for the purchase of one-to four-unit foreclosed residential properties.

Committee of the Whole

A representative of Stadbaude, the city’s CRA (Arts and Rescue Plan Assn) consultant, discussed the types of projects that could qualify for CRA funds. Projects de-
GardenWalk CH celebrates community with annual tour

Judi Miles

Since 2019, its inaugural year, GardenWalk Cleveland Heights (GWCH) has presented an annual, free, self-guided tour of dozens of gardens in Cleveland Heights. This year’s tour will be held, rain or shine, on Saturday and Sunday, July 15 and 16, from noon to 5 p.m. each day.

Gardeners regularly evolve their gardens. It is the same with GardenWalk. Each year, the event’s coordinators seek to keep the tour fresh, reflecting lessons learned and suggestions from hosts and visitors.

This year’s GWCH will feature approximately 35 gardens, many clustered in close proximity. This number of gardens, fewer than in previous years, was a community that cared.” And Sosnowski put it, “Beauty announces care to live here. My spiritual value is that people care about the city and money. It was done hoping that all who see the beauty feel welcomed in a city whose motto is All are Welcome.”

Both Kious and Sosnowski believe that like attracts like. As Sosnowski put it, “Beauty announces that people care about the city and care to live here. My spiritual value is that when I make my city prosper, then I, too, will prosper.”

The public is encouraged to visit with the many generous and creative host gardeners at GardenWalk Cleveland Heights 2023. Participating gardeners will have a colorful sign on their tree lawns on tour days. No tickets are needed for this free, self-guided tour. A planned ad in the July issue of the Heights Observer will list the participating gardens, and they will also be posted online at gardenwalkclevelandheights.com.

Judi Miles is a 26-year resident of Cleveland Heights’ Noble-Monticello neighborhood. An attorney, she happily volunteers with GardenWalk, having been inspired to garden by her father. She loves corny gardening puns.

At this garden, part of last year’s GWCH, vegetables grow in raised beds. In its founding, Janet Kious, a longtime Cleveland Heights resident and visionary gardener, launched GWCH to bring a sense of vibrancy to the community. She asked private- and public-space gardeners to open their yards and community gardens to curious and interested visitors. Kious’s intent was to prove that, by “filling the flower planter with beautiful flowers,” it would be evident that “this was a community that cared.” And she believes caring can be contagious. Barb Sosnowski is a gardener who has been involved with GWCH since its first year, and shares Kious’s vision. She has volunteered and been a host gardener, and has been instrumental in beautifying public and commercial spaces north of Mayfield Road; those, too, have been featured in previous tours.

Barb Sosnowski is a gardener who has been involved with GWCH since its first year, and shares Kious’s vision. She has volunteered and been a host gardener, and has been instrumental in beautifying public and commercial spaces north of Mayfield Road; those, too, have been featured in previous tours.

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Peter has always been passionate about living, working, and volunteering in University Circle.

From his lifelong work as an astronomer to his recent work in pottery and everything in between, Peter is always searching for new things to explore.

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Seniors define their own way of living and find the inspiration that makes them come alive with the peace of mind that our staff is available 24 hours a day should help be needed.
FutureHeights announces development opportunity

Hilary Schickler

FutureHeights, the nonprofit, community-development organization serving Cleveland Heights and University Heights, is accepting applications to renovate/develop two single-family homes as part of its FutureHomes program.

The application deadline is Monday, June 26, at 4 p.m.

The houses, located on Rossmoor and Englewood roads, each feature three bedrooms and were built in the 1920s and 1940s, respectively.

The properties will be open for walk-throughs on Friday, June 16, and Saturday, June 17, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day; or by appointment.

Established in 2019, the FutureHomes program has so far overseen the purchase, rehab and sale of 22 homes, in low- to moderate-income neighborhoods, with the aim of promoting fair housing practices and increased owner-occupancy rates.

“Cleveland Heights has an amazing housing stock that brings value to the city,” noted Kristine Pagsuyoin, FutureHeights executive director. “The FutureHomes program helps to protect our housing with an eye toward revitalization and increasing value, while providing opportunities for homeownership.”

The program’s homes are ideal—in size and price—for first-time homebuyers, or those who might want to downsize.

FutureHeights is committed to preserving and protecting the housing stock of Cleveland Heights, where the architectural features of many homes are of both historic and aesthetic significance.

Its FutureHomes program is part of FutureHeights’ effort to increase and support homeownership, and maintain and improve the quality of life in the Heights.

Applicants may be asked to make a formal presentation to the FutureHomes and Revitalization Committee.

Applications and program details can be found online: www.futureheights.org, or by calling the FutureHeights office at 216-230-1423, ext. 104.

Completed applications can be e-mailed to hschickler@futureheights.org, or sent to FutureHomes, c/o FutureHeights, 2843 Washington Blvd., #105, Cleveland Heights, Ohio, 44118.

Hilary Schickler is the FutureHomes and Revitalization director for FutureHeights.

This three-bedroom home at 2124 Rossmoor Road is located near Heights High. It currently has one full bath and a newer two-car garage. Renovation is to include a new half bath.

The other three-bedroom home, at 901 Englewood Road, has 1.5 baths, an attached garage and a large backyard. Oxford Elementary School is within walking distance.

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Horseshoe Lake supporters demand cities save it

Ken Callahan

On April 20, Friends of Horseshoe Lake (FOHSL) issued demand letters to Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights, claiming that the cities have failed to follow the terms of the lease agreement for Horseshoe Lake and make necessary repairs to restore the dam and lake.

FOHSL is working with the law firm Mansour Gavin to keep the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORSD) from destroying the dam and lake.

"Horseshoe Lake is leased to Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights by the city of Cleveland, and the Sewer District’s plan to destroy the lake is in direct violation of several of the stipulations within that lease, including an agreement to not disturb any existing conditions, which would include the dam and lake, [to] dredge and clean the lakes, and to be responsible for any improvements necessary to maintain the park," said Anthony Coyne, an attorney specializing in land use issues.

NEORSD concluded two years ago that the Horseshoe Lake dam could not be replaced, and the only solution was to remove the dam and convert the lake to a floodplain.

FOHSL has been working with the engineering firm TRC to develop a Horseshoe Lake Restoration Plan that manages stormwater safely, addresses environmental issues, and saves the historic dam and lake while costing the same as the [NEORSD plan].

The cities and the Sewer District have not responded to FOHSL's request that they consider its plan, leading FOHSL to issue the demand letters on behalf of taxpayers in the Heights.

The letters demand that Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights cease any and all activities being performed to remove Horseshoe Lake or its dam, and take immediate steps to enforce the terms of the lease and restore and repair the dam and the lake.

The letters asked the cities to respond within 10 days. The cities requested an extension.

“We hope that the demand letter will open the door for FOHSL, than beneficial—to good government.

Law Director Appointment: Because the law director has a fiduciary relationship with the mayor and the council, this commission recommends that the mayor have the right to appoint the law director, subject to council’s approval. The CRC believes that this strikes an appropriate balance of power between the mayor, who already possesses the power to appoint administrative officers, and the council, which has the power to reject such appointment(s) if it so desires. The CRC recommends additional language which vests the power to remove the law director in the mayor and the council, upon a vote of the majority.

Recall Elections: The CRC recommends amendments to the Charter so that the removal of an elected officer by recall election so that the removal of an elected officer by recall election results in a vacancy.

Council’s Presiding Officer: The CRC is recommending amendments to the charter that would reduce the number of signatures required on petitions for initiatives and referenda. The proposed amendment would reduce petition signature requirements by calculating them based on the total ballots cast in the city's last regular municipal election rather than the percentage of registered voters in the city.

Anti-discrimination: The CRC recommends an amendment stating that the city shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or partnership status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, pregnancy, citizenship status, caste, tribal affiliation or any other classification protected by applicable federal, state, or local law, unless reasonably necessary to normal operations and having a substantial relationship to job function and responsibilities.

The CRC planned to deliver its final report to the clerk of council May 31, and will present its report to city council on June 5. On June 20, council will vote on which amendments to place on the Nov. 7 ballot.

To review the CRC’s report in its entirety, go to www.charterheights.com, click on Citizen Committees, and scroll to Charter Review Commission.

Stephen Wortham, a 58-year resident of University Heights, chairs the city’s Charter Review Commission.

Russell presents two-session Pathway to Homeownership

Denise Shepherd

Realizing the dream of homeownership is exciting but challenging, especially in today’s real estate market. The chances of success depend greatly on partnering with the right lender, real estate agent, and housing counselors.

To help Heights residents achieve this dream, Cleveland Heights Council Member Davida Russell is sponsoring a two-part Pathway to Homeownership series, on June 8 and 10, and has convened a group of community-minded organizations and neighborhood partners to participate.

The first session will take place on Thursday evening, June 8, 6-8 p.m., with the second session scheduled for Saturday, June 10, 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The location for both is Disciples Christian Church at 3663 Mayfield Road in Cleveland Heights.

The sessions, which are free and open to the public, will enable attendees to learn the how-to’s of buying a home from professionals who can help.

Topics will include how to get pre-approved for a mortgage, and how to find other financial resources.

With the correct personal documentation, some who attend may be able to begin the process of applying for a loan at the Saturday session, with one of the mortgage lenders who will be at the session.

Participating organizations are:

- NID Housing Counseling, a U.S. Housing and Urban Development-approved organization
- Re/Max Traditions and The Sweeney Group of Keller Williams Greater Metropolitan real estate services
- Heights Home Repair Resource Center
- Start Right Community Development Corporation
- Other community-minded banks and lending institutions, including PNG, KeyBank, United Purpose Mortgage, DollarBank, Huntington, Third Federal and US Bank.

Denise Shepherd is a Realtor and a member of the Sweeney Group of Keller Williams Greater Metropolitan Real Estate Brokerage. She lives in Cleveland Heights with her husband and two children. Shepherd and her team, Amanda Hill, another Cleveland Heights resident, have been helping first-time homebuyers in the Heights and neighboring communities.
Cleveland Heights – University Heights Board of Education

Meeting highlights

APRIL 18, 2023 – work session
Board members Beverly Wright (president), Dan Henry, Melia Lewis, James Posch, and Jodi Souvini were present, as were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby and Treasurer Scott Gainer.

GEAR UP overview
GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) exposes students to careers, opportunities, counseling, college visits, and academic goals setting for post-secondary education. GEAR UP begins in seventh grade and continues through high school. Students are followed for one year past high school graduation. The students participate in field trips and spring and summer programs. GEAR UP also coordinates with other district programs.

Seniors and their families receive help in completing college applications, and learn about financial aid and completing FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) forms. They can visit regional colleges and universities to learn about the programs and scholarships they offer. GEAR UP also facilitates a jobs, careers, and trades day to help students make connections with employers.

Tri-C College Credit Plus partnership
College Credit Plus, a long-standing partnership between the district and Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C), offers college credits to high school students, and provides them with pathways toward earning an associate’s degree while they are in high school. Students can begin taking classes at Tri-C in ninth grade. By their senior year, some students will be at Tri-C full time.

LWV Observer: Robin Koolen.

MAY 2, 2023 – work session
All board members were present, as were the superintendent and treasurer.

‘School climate’ overview
The superintendent gave an overview on school climate, beginning with a May 2022 survey by the Institute for Educational Sciences, followed by statistics for the district. She and the administrative team then presented steps taken, and initiatives being considered, to improve the school climate.

Kirby presented data from the past seven years. The greatest challenge in the middle-school population is disobedient or disruptive behavior. This trend is attributed to school closings and online learning during the COVID crisis. The superintendent, Board President Wright, and seven union members met and agreed to enhance teacher and staff training, revisit the possibility of metal detectors, use a monthly summit meeting for discipline review, meet quarterly as required by the Office of Civil Rights, provide reresher training on de-escalation, and revisit alternative educational models for students with severe social-emotional learning (SEL) behavioral needs.

Safety planning
Paul Lombardo, assistant superintendent, presented the threat assessment management plan developed to provide authority, tools, and information to anticipate and prevent violence at all locations. George Perkas, director of business and operations, presented information about the Ohio K-12 Safety Grant Program, which provides a total of $1 million in grants—$100,000 to each school in the district. The Crisis Prevention Institute has trained staff to de-escalate situations. The city of Cleveland Heights (provides) two police officers to the district one during the day and one at night.

Social and emotional supports
Felisha Gould, assistant superintendent, described the social and emotional supports currently in the schools. Social workers and counselors provide SEL lessons, facilitate small-group and individual counseling sessions, assist with developing and implementing behavior plans, and support teachers in managing difficult behaviors.

Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS)
Paul Roocks, student services coordinator, presented the MTSS to align academic, behavioral, social and emotional learning, and mental-health supports to benefit all students.

Root cause analysis (RCA)
Karen Liddell-Anderson, director of student services, presented the climate RCA of the secondary schools. For the RCA, committee members agreed on a task, followed the four-step RCA consensus-based process, determined underlying sources of issues, proposed solutions, and determined next steps.

They identified three root causes:
• Community partnerships and wrap-around services that could offer support services and resources for the emotional needs of students are lacking.
• Not all school-level staff are trained in conflict resolution and de-escalation techniques. Not all students are taught conflict resolution skills.
• The Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework has been inadequately executed across district schools.

An elementary school climate RCA will be conducted in May.

Board comments
Board members agreed that the middle schools need immediate attention. School climate problems need work and will not change overnight. Beverly Wright said the culture must be changed, and it is the responsibility of both the community and the schools.

LWV Observer: Rosemarie Fairman.

LWV observer reports published at www.heightsobserver.org often contain more details, especially for meetings covering complicated material.

Documents for all school board meetings can be accessed at www.chuh.org/BoardofEducation.aspx. Board meetings are livestreamed at www.youtube.com/CHUSchool, and recorded for later viewing.
Meeting highlights

April 17, 2023

Board members present were Vice President Vikas Turakhia, Secretary Annette Iwamoto, Pat Carlyle, Dana Fluxen, Tyler McTigue, and Melissa Soto-Schwartz. Max Cerboc was not present.

Board actions

• The board authorized:
  • An agreement, not to exceed $939,544, with Independence Construction for the Noble Neighborhood Library additions and renovations.
  • Milhane Management to perform most of the repairs at the University Heights Library. Five other vendors will also provide repairs.
  • An April 23 public sale at the Noble Neighborhood Library of surplus items, including tables, chairs, bookcases, and display racks.
  • A lease with two new tenants at the Coventry PEACE building: Encore Employment Services and People’s Choice Payday Services.
  • An amendment to the Drug-Free Workplace Policy to include legalized medical marijuana use as prescribed by a licensed medical practitioner.
  • A one-time bonus of $2,000 to Ty Emerson, who temporarily filled the vacant continuing education position (Jan. 9 through March 19) while continuing to fulfill his responsibilities in the circulation department.
  • The creation of three new staff positions: staff training and development coordinator, human resources coordinator (full-time), and administrative assistant.
  • Funds to reconfigure space to accommodate the three new staff members.

Security report

Security Services Manager Kevin Eichols provided a review of incident reports. During the last quarter of 2022, there were 44 incidents. Nine of them were directly attributable to a group of teenage boys. Incidents have been taken and incidents are now district. The teams review the current status of the library’s financial resources.

Specialty teams report

• Approximately one-third of library staff now work part-time.
• A one-time bonus of $2,000 to Ty Emerson, who temporarily filled the vacant continuing education position (Jan. 9 through March 19) while continuing to fulfill his responsibilities in the circulation department.

Public service report

AARP volunteers helped 220 people with their tax returns.

The Coventry Village Branch marked the start of Dayton History Month with a well-attended American Sign Language story-time.

Meetings scheduled for April 23 will launch the program.

WV Observer: Judith Beeler.

Information about the library board, board meeting minutes, and audio recordings of board meetings can be found at https://heightslibrary.org/locations/heights-library-board.
Library expands summer reading program

Sheryl Banks

This summer, with the help of a $29,900 grant from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), Heights Libraries will expand its summer reading program.

According to the ODE, its Libraries Accelerating Learning (LAL) grant is designed to “expand learning opportunities for students in prekindergarten–grade 12. Awardees will use the funding for programming that supports student learning, particularly in literacy, with the goal of accelerating learning for students who have been most impacted by the pandemic.”

Heights Libraries was among 32 Ohio libraries to receive funding from the LAL grant. Other recipients include Cleveland Public Library, Cuyahoga County Public Library, Columbus Metropolitan Library, and Euclid Public Library.

Heights Libraries will use the grant to support and expand the summer reading and learning resource programs it offers to children 18 and younger through a nature-focused community literary initiative.

The library will kick off summer reading with a party in the Coventry PEACE Park on June 7, 6–8 p.m. This year’s summer-reading theme, “Adventure Awaits,” was inspired by the children’s book Outside, You Notice, by Erin Alladin, which celebrates nature both lyrically and scientifically. Its themes inspire the hundreds of STEAM- (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) and literacy-based free library programs on tap throughout the community from June 1 to Aug. 11.

“Thanks to the LAL grant, we’ve been able to broaden this year’s summer reading program to incorporate a shared reading of an ‘anchor book’ and incorporate innovative STEAM experiences so our kids can apply their literacy skills to new, project-based disciplines,” said Youth Services Manager Sam Lapides.

“That’s a fancy way of saying that we’re going to explore science and nature this year by using one book as a jumping off point for lots of fun, creative, and science-based learning opportunities that will help kids not just avoid learning loss over the summer but actually make progress, all while having a great time.”

With a goal this big, Heights Libraries can use some help—that’s why it has partnered with the CH-UH City School District.

In addition to providing literacy expertise, the schools also serve as a setting for library programming and outreach. Each elementary school invited library staff to visit in May, to encourage participation in summer reading. Kindergarteners, in particular, benefitted as every kindergartner in the CH-UH school district received a copy of Outside, You Notice, whether they signed up for summer reading or not. Library staff have also been invited for the third consecutive year to provide some of the programs at the annual CH-UH Schools Tiger Camp (a summer learning camp hosted by CH-UH schools).

Other summer reading partners include The Anderson Center at Maximum Accessible Housing of Ohio, Art House Cleveland, Cleveland Heights Green Team, University Heights Green Team, Cleveland Heights’ Parks & Recreation Department, the Cleveland MetroParks, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Lake Erie Ink, Organic Connects, and Green Noble.

Full details about summer reading can be found at heightslibrary.org.

Sheryl Banks is the communications manager for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System.
**UH Summer Concert Series is back—bigger and better**

Mike Cook

Bigger, better and more eclectic than ever, the University Heights Summer Concert Series returns to Walter Stinson Community Park on Thursday, June 15, at 7 p.m., and runs weekly through Aug. 17.

**June 15 — Rubix Groove.** Last seen at The Walt last summer, Rubix Groove returns to play songs from a new EP, “Live from Akron Recording Company.” An eight-member band led by lead singer Shannon Hogarth, Rubix Groove plays funk and blues.

**June 22 — The Ladies Night.** The original all-male tribute to pop divas, The Ladies Night will make its University Heights debut this summer. These five dudes aren’t afraid to wear their love for Britney Spears, Katy Perry, Taylor Swift, or Lady Gaga on their pink glittery sleeves.

**June 29 — University Heights Symphonic Band.** UHSB performs a wide repertoire of music—film scores, Broadway selections, and popular music—at concert halls, amphitheaters, music festivals, and other venues throughout the year. On June 29, UHSB will perform its annual Patriotic Show at John Carroll University.

**July 6 — OPUS 216.** Equally versed in classical and non-classical styles, OPUS 216 has created a niche experience for high-level performances that can cover any genre, from classical to hip-hop. You haven’t heard “Cleveland Rocks” until you hear it performed by a classical quartet.

**July 13 — Apostle Jones.** This eclectic group has spent the last few years setting stages ablaze, thanks to an energetic live show rooted in soul and blues infused with rock and roll. Apostle Jones has wowed fans with live shows that are part party, part revival—with a whole lot of shakin’ going on.

**July 20 — Carlos Jones and the PLUS Band.** The legendary Cleveland reggae band returns to University Heights for the fourth time. The band’s soulful rhythms and heartfelt vocals have made it one of Cleveland’s top draws for more than a decade. It retains the record for attracting the largest crowd to ever see a show at The Walt.

**July 27 — UHSB and ‘Horse Feathers.’** UHSB returns to JCU for its second summer show. Stick around after the concert for the Marx Brothers’ classic film “Horse Feathers,” in which Groucho, Huxley University’s new president, accidentally hires bumbling Chico and Harpo to help his school win the big football game.

**Aug. 3 — Pop Fiction and ‘Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade.’** One of Cleveland’s hottest cover bands, Pop Fiction makes its University Heights debut. With a new Indiana Jones movie hitting theaters this summer, it’s the perfect time to rewatch the classic “Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade.”


**August 17 — Yiddishe Cup.** Summer isn’t complete in University Heights without a performance by local favorites, the legendary Klezmer and Motown band Yiddishe Cup. New York Jewish Week opines, “Yiddishe Cup is a wildly funny amalgam of Mickey Katz, Spike Jones, and Jerry Lewis.”

Mike Cook is the communications and civic engagement director for University Heights.
From start to finish, teens write and publish anthology

Teen editors and contributors in June 2022, celebrating the publication of the sixth annual Teen Anthology.

Julia Pentasuglio

Last fall, a young group of dedicated writers, the Lake Erie Ink Teen Editorial Board, opened their computers to begin creating Lake Erie Ink’s annual Teen Anthology, a project in which all creative and editing decisions are made by teen writers and editors.

The board is preparing to publish its seventh annual anthology, Keys & Locks. It invites the community to celebrate its release at Lake Erie Ink on June 7, 5:30–7:30 p.m., where the teen writers and poets will share their work.

What happened between last fall and now to turn the haphazard ideas of Northeast Ohio teens into a polished anthology, overflowing with commanding metaphors, distinguished rhymes, and dutiful punctuation?

Choosing a theme that would inspire writers without limiting creativity became the editorial board’s first task. Though they wrestled with endless combinations of words and phrases, the editors landed on the theme “Keys & Locks.” The editors then created posters, flyers, and even bookmarks to spread the word to young creatives that they could become published authors and artists. By winter, the editors had received more than 200 pieces; the editing process could finally begin.

Together, the editors carefully examined each piece of submitted work to make any necessary adjustments to the prose or poetry to be published. The board wrote a 16-line poem that attempts to describe the diversity of thought and emotion represented in the anthology.

The anthology’s chapters are based on the four stanzas of the poem: “Rejection Inspires,” “Obstacles Prevent,” “Hope Perseveres,” and “Dreams Actualize.” In the final line of the poem, the editors asked the writers, “Where did you find the key?”

A response to that question came as the editors found that each piece of writing or art revealed a new layer to the collective voice of Northeast Ohio teens.

Each teen used their work to find new keys, unlock new doors, and ultimately uncover the secrets of a community of creatives. The writers felt powerful, heartbroken, hopeful, and angry—all at once—so the editors chose not to hide these beautifully contradicting emotions, but to house them in their anthology.

Keys & Locks resembles a journal for not one teen, but for all teens who may be dealing with lost keys and locked doors.

Julia Pentasuglio is a high school intern at Lake Erie Ink and a member of Lake Erie Ink’s Teen Editorial Board.

Height Arts mounts two summer shows

Cameron Gorman

Heights Arts is greeting summer with two new gallery shows, opening Friday, June 16.

Group Show: the annual artist showcase drawn from entries made through the Heights Arts website, presents new work from five featured creators.

Spotlight: Paula Damm highlights the work of Ohio-born fiber artist Damm.

Featured in Group Show are a diversity of artistic disciplines, including abstract paintings with cold wax by Sawsan Alhaddad, colorful layered monoprints by Bruno Caisano, photographs of Lake Erie by Yiyun Chen, composite photos by Donald Penn, and bentwood-based sculpture by Charlotte A. Lees.

“Art should inspire a sense of wonder and reflection,” said Lees. “I am constantly exploring new vocabulary, and to create a complex technique to expand my artistic vocabulary.”

“My work addresses the different ways that seemingly small pieces of ourselves can be celebrated in their significance, beauty and uniqueness,” said Damm.

Both exhibitions are curated by the Heights Arts Exhibitions Community Team. Comprising Northeast Ohio artists and arts professionals, this volunteer team lends its perspective to the process of developing and presenting exhibitions. Many are working artists themselves; they act as community liaisons while providing Heights Arts staff with expertise in their respective disciplines. The team always includes two interns from Cleveland Heights High School as part of an initiative to train the next generation of artists and curators.

The exhibitions open at 5 p.m. on June 16, and run through Sunday, Aug. 13. Admission to the opening reception is free, but those interested in attending should RSVP at heightsarts.org. Heights Arts is located at 2175 Lee Road in Cleveland Heights.

Cameron Gorman (cgorman@heightsarts.org) is the assistant director for Heights Arts.
A small circle of friends

David Budin

June of 1967 meant the end of many things for me, and also new beginnings. For one thing, it was the end of school. The rest of my Heights High class graduated that June, but I left two or three weeks earlier. I was done.

I had been trying to quit since, well . . . kindergarten—literally—but I started my campaign in earnest when I was in ninth grade at Roosevelt Junior High. Of course, it didn’t happen till I turned 18, in late May of my 12th-grade year (though I waited another week, till all Heights Choir activities were completed). It also meant the end of one of the main music groups I had been in since sixth grade, a folk trio with two friends, Steve and Marty (I’m leaving out all last names, and some first names, here). We had performed together for all those years. Steve had gone to college a year earlier, but the group didn’t officially end till we all left town. Marty went off to college. I took off for New York. Though we’d been in this folk music trio together, when we continued our musical careers I did rock music, Steve went into bluegrass, and Marty became a conductor of orchestras and choruses performing classical music, mostly in the Cleveland area. Then Steve started playing jazz, which, as a retired veterinarian, he still does in the state of Washington. And I returned to folk music.

The rest of my close inner circle of friends scattered.

For all of June ’67, I played at a folk club in Chautauqua, N.Y., attended a folk festival in upstate N.Y., and some first names, here). We had performed together for all those years. Steve had gone to college a year earlier, but the group didn’t officially end till we all left town. Marty went off to college. I took off for New York. Though we’d been in this folk music trio together, when we continued our musical careers I did rock music, Steve went into bluegrass, and Marty became a conductor of orchestras and choruses performing classical music, mostly in the Cleveland area. Then Steve started playing jazz, which, as a retired veterinarian, he still does in the state of Washington. And I returned to folk music.

The rest of my close inner circle of friends scattered.

For all of June ’67, I played at a folk club in Chautauqua, N.Y., accompanied on wind instruments by my friend and classmate Walt. In July we opened for Linda Ronstadt and the Stone Pones for five nights at La Cave in Cleveland, and in August we played a club in Dayton. Then Walt went to college in Arizona. After I moved to NYC and started recording and producing for a record label, he joined me there for a few months, playing on some recordings, before returning to Arizona. He came back to Cleveland Heights for several years, but gravitated back to Arizona, where he still lives, creating visual art and playing music professionally.

My girlfriend all through high school went to college and soon began an intimate relationship with one of her professors, effectively ending our relationship. She then started following some semi-famous Indian guru, who advised her to change her name and go with him, and many other of his followers, to Kansas. She now lives in a hot area of Southern California. Until about a decade ago, I talked to her every few years and she always seemed a little confused. Nice, but confused.

Another friend, classmate and former bandmate, Tom #1, also quit high school. He became a junkie and, according to another friend and classmate, John, Tom #1 is, or was, living under a bridge in Phoenix, dealing, or maybe not, with mental-health issues. At least he had sense enough to move to a warmer climate.

That guy, John (who, when we were in high school, used to talk in his sleep, quoting Shakespeare), became an author and speaker and moved to New England. You may have read one or more of his books.

Another friend, classmate and former bandmate, Tom #2, started out engaged in various shady dealings I won’t delineate, but in the early ’70s he discovered the Hindu religion, which seemed to replace that other stuff in his life. He’s still involved with Hinduism and appears happy, dividing his time between the Pacific Northwest and Hawaii.

A friend, Phil, with whom I played in bands in high school and beyond, remained a professional musician, and then a comedian and actor. He became a successful voice artist and songwriter in L.A., working on several children’s TV shows. Then, at 50, he started school to become a cantor, a career he has enjoyed, in a large L.A. synagogue, for the past 20 years.

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WRC prepares for British Invasion of choral music

David Gilson

“One by Land, Two if by Sea”—the British are coming!

The final concert in Western Reserve Chorale’s (WRC) 31st season will welcome a British invasion of choral music, featuring compositions and lyrics derived from the expansive history of the choral traditions from the British Isles.

Featuring music by Ralph Vaughan Williams, John Rutter, Thomas Morley, Edward Elgar and others, in their interpretations of texts written by Shakespeare, Robert Louis Stevenson, Edward Lear, and even Lennon & McCartney, the concert will take place at Church of the Gesu in University Heights on Sunday, June 4, at 3:30 p.m.

WRC will share songs of the land, whether “Over Hill, Over Dale” (a setting of Shakespeare’s Midsummer Night’s Dream), or the sun setting on the silver shores of the Northern Land as set by Edward Elgar. There will be songs of those who “sail the ocean blue” (Gilbert and Sullivan), and Vaughan Williams’ setting of the folk song “The Dark-Eyed Sailor.”

The chorale will take either the high or low road to Scotland, to the shores of Jonathan Quick’s “Loch Lomond,” then catch the boat to the “Isle of Skye” (in a setting of the Scottish folk tune now known as the theme to the “Outlander” television series). Perhaps you’ll catch a whale of a tale in a sea shanty from down under, or be carried away by the antics of “The Owl and the Pussy-cat” sailing away in their beautiful pea-green boat.

David Gilson is the artistic director of the Western Reserve Chorale and director of music at Church of the Saviour UMC.

There were about 1,000 kids in my class at Heights High. They all have stories. Everyone does. But the ones of those who were teenagers, and, especially, musicians, in the late 60s, it seems, may be a little stranger.

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.

JIM MYERS

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