Border visit informs Oct. 14 immigration forum

Jim Hogg

When something feels very important, even if it’s very far away, one sometimes has to see it in person. That’s why 15 members of Forest Hill Church’s Presbyterian (FHC), flew to El Paso, Texas, in February, to discover what immigrants encounter at the U.S.-Mexico border.

“The trip was a profoundly impactful experience for all of us,” said Stephen Sedam, a member of the church’s Immigration Task Force. A week-long stay revealed realities that made the visitors “toggle between despair and hope,” he added.

Hosting the group was Caly Fernandez, executive director of Pu- entes de Crasto (Bridges of Christ), in Hidalgo, Texas. Fernandez’s energy, leadership and compassion endeared her to the group so much that they invited her to FHC.

There, on Saturday, Oct. 14, 2:43 p.m., Fernandez will share her first-hand border experiences in a community forum, “Compasionate Justice for Immigrants Now!”

Joining Fernandez, to offer his perspective on the immigration process, will be Pastor Abraham Barber, who led the visitors through the Matamoros Refugee Encampment, just across the border in Mexico.

“There, many hundreds of migrants wait their turn to present themselves to U.S. authorities for asylum,” explained task force member Jeff Smith. “Their squalid living conditions make the trip very difficult.”

The event will be held in the Heights Community Center, 2843 Washington Blvd., #105, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118.

Hosted by the church, FHC will provide a light lunch and refreshments after the forum.

DoObama presents Halloween Fest

Mariah Burks

Witches! Warlocks! Wizards! Load up your ears.

On Saturday, Oct. 21, 4-7 p.m., Dobama Theatre will present its third annual Heights Halloween Festival, in conjunction with the city of Cleveland Heights and the Cedar Lee Special Improvement District.

The free, family-friendly event will extend along the Cedar Lee Business District, and will include the traditional Candy Crawl, where participating businesses will hand out candy to trick-or-treaters. The festival’s center of events will be located in Lot #48—the small parking lot just across Meadowbrook Boulevard from Callaloo Cafe.

Activities will include character meet-and-greets, where families will have a chance to take photos with well-known and beloved characters; balloon twisting; and face painting.

Festival signage will provide a seasonal backdrop for family photos—capturing this year’s Halloween memories.

The event also will include performers, giant puppets, games and prizes, a live DJ and a dance floor.

Heights Libraries seeks new board member

Sheryl Banks

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library is accepting applications for an open board position, with applications due by noon on Friday, Nov. 17. The new board member will replace Max Gerboc, who is rolling off the board after serving his term.

“Being on the board is an integral part of our community,” said Heights Libraries Director Nancy Levin. “Serving on the board is one of the best ways a citizen can serve the Heights community, by helping guide the vision of the public library. It’s a commitment—service is seven years—but the rewards are also big. It’s a chance to make a positive, long-lasting impact on one of the greatest public service agencies in the area. Public Libraries offer necessary and free services to all, and being a part of that is incredibly rewarding.”

Applicants are strongly encouraged to attend an in-person informational meeting about library board service on Wednesday, Nov. 15. To RSVP, send an e-mail to nlevin@heightslibrary.org.

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education will interview candidates on Tuesday, Dec. 5, at 7 p.m. Each interview will last roughly 15 minutes.

The following criteria are used in making an appointment to the library’s board of trustees:

• Consideration will be given to a diversity of interests, a balance of...
Join a community of volunteers

Brenda Bailey

When we choose to volunteer, we expose the inner voice to the world. I believe in this cause; I support this candidate; I believe my neighborhood needs this service. Doing so naturally connects you with others with whom you feel the same way. And just like that—you’ve built a community.

You meet new people or see others in a new light. You uncover local history and meet civic and business leaders. Your understanding of the Heights as a living, growing entity becomes clearer. And if you’re anything like me, you’ll soon be hooked.

Through FutureHeights’ CrowdSourced Conversations, you’ve told us that you feel invested in this community. I would like to challenge you to reach out to our neighbors, to stretch your comfort zone, to learn and grow along with us.

Cynics may think of volunteerism as free labor—giving something without getting anything. As a lifelong volunteer, I have never walked away from an experience feeling empty—exhausted, yes, but never depleted. Whether I was mentoring or devised a solution to a problem, or created something tangible, the experience changed me, gave me something I didn’t have before.

While volunteering, you can learn new tools, gain valuable experience, and build your resume. You may meet new people or see others in a new light. You uncover local history and meet business leaders. Your understanding of the Heights as a living, growing entity becomes clearer. And if you’re anything like me, you’ll soon be hooked.

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In the past month or two, Crain’s Cleveland Business published no fewer than four articles and opinions about the importance of arts to the future of Greater Cleveland. “Investments in artists pay dividends for regional economy,” by Jeremy Johnson; “Businesses that value innovation should support creativity of local arts scene,” by Fred Bidwell; “To thrive, Greater Cleveland needs to integrate art into all aspects of life,” by Jennifer Coleman; and “Region buoyed by abundance of talent, creativity,” by Grant Segall.

Many lifelong residents take for granted our vibrant arts and music scene, or, worse, don’t take advantage of it all. Cleveland has arts institutions such as the Cleveland Museum of Art and Cleveland Orchestra that have few peers on the planet, yet it is a medium-sized and livable city in which gaining access to these institutions is enviably easy, and where the moderate cost of living lets a broader population enjoy the “finer things” (as well as the delightful gritty things).

At the same time that these grand institutions play their leadership roles here and internationally, a host of local arts organizations have been doing their part to bring the arts to everyday life. Together, these grand and grassroots assets add up to a special opportunity in Northeast Ohio, both for our quality of life and for our economic future.

I was incredibly privileged to work for the Cleveland Museum of Art for 30 years, spanning its 75th and 100th anniversaries, and to have been a founder and two-time president of Heights Arts, which will turn 25 in 2025.

The essential premise of Heights Arts, coming out of a citizen-driven visioning process that the city of Cleveland Heights conducted in the late 1990s, was that—as a community that was home to more working artists, musicians, arts educators, and arts professionals than any other city in our region—Cleveland Heights should be a place where the arts are a major power source in everyday life. Indeed, the Heights’ prime location and creative population place it in a unique competitive position within, and even beyond, our region. There’s great potential here, but we have to do something with it.

From different perspectives, each of the Crain’s articles noted that living with the arts is much more than a way to add beauty and inspiration to your own life—it can inform creative problem-solving and innovation in many spheres, it can teach the value of focus and discipline toward high craft in whatever you do, and, ultimately, it can produce tangible economic benefits in addition to all the valuable intangibles.

Heights Arts and other organizations large and small across our region have worked hard to champion the “creative life.” For Heights Arts in particular, that has meant establishing a long-running gallery and shop on Lee Road, organizing musical and literary events, managing public art projects, and more—helping artists find broader audiences, helping Heights residents discover great art, and creating innovative new ways to bring creators and audiences together, such as, to cite one example, the “Ekphrastacy” series wherein local poets write and perform works inspired by art in Heights Arts exhibitions. It’s always revelatory.

Take full advantage of local arts resources, whether your interest is literature or nonfiction or poetry, or music or theater or performance in any genre, or visual art in all its diverse forms. Whether it’s creating art or appreciating it or some of each, make the arts a part of your life. You won’t be sorry, and neither will the city where you live, nor its economy.

Greg Donley is a longtime Cleveland Heights resident and a founding board member of both Heights Arts and FutureHeights.

Greg Donley

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Greg Donley is a longtime Cleveland Heights resident and a founding board member of both Heights Arts and FutureHeights.
Cleveland Heights residents deserve good governance

Jeanne Gordon

From the moment I got involved with Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM) in 2019, I have been thinking about what makes a good city council, a productive municipal government, an efficient city hall. I know there are educated professionals who spend their professional time contemplating and learning about these things; people who seek Master of Public Administration degrees, study municipal government, and generally do actual professional work in this area.

I am a Cleveland Heights resident—none of those specific professional degrees or concentrated studies—but I’m a resident who thinks our city government can strive to meet best practices for good governance.

When thinking about good and effective governance, I came upon a definition from medical consultant Don L. Arrwine, who studied the topic. He determined that effective governance is efficient, allows respectful conflict of ideas, is simple, is focused, produces good outcomes, preserves community assets, and leads to enjoyment and personal rewards for stakeholders (residents).

I agree with his definition of effective governance. I would add that, at the municipal level, effective governance is also open and transparent. There is a palpable desire among CH residents for effective governance in this city. It was felt and heard when the amendment to the city charter to provide for an elected mayor overwhelmingly passed. It is evident today with citizens attending council meetings wanting to be included in discussions about development initiatives such as Noble Station.

I believe Cleveland Heights government should continuously work to provide good governance for its citizens. To that end, I believe that council should engage in best practices with regard to open meetings and Sunshine Laws, provide for equitable access to council meetings, require a budget process and financial reporting that allows for department-level detail on expenditures and revenues, and limit the use of emergency legislation.

This interest in effective, open and transparent governance is what drove me to join CEM in 2019. It is what made me decide to apply for the open council seat earlier this year. And, ultimately, it is what made me decide to run for council this year.

I don’t think the work is done—I don’t know if striving for efficient governance is work that is ever completed or done. I am not certain that one person or one council can ensure that. But I would like to try to deliver Cleveland Heights residents the good governance they deserve.

Jeanne Gordon is a candidate for Cleveland Heights City Council. A 27-year resident of Scarborough Road, Gordon is a tax attorney who has served on the boards of Citizens for an Elected Mayor, Friends of Build CLM, Nature Center at Shaker Lakes, and more.

CH needs servant leaders like Hart

Tom Nobbe

When I first met with Melody Hart in 2021, to learn more about her run for mayor of Cleveland Heights, she struck me as less a politician and more of a servant leader.

I knew she was involved in many social justice issues, including canvassing in the Noble neighborhood with volunteers from Greater Cleveland Congregations in a successful effort to call banks to account for at-risk properties they owned on otherwise well-kept streets. I was also aware of her work with her husband, Gary Benjamin, in rescuing a Haitian refugee from detention at a local ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) refugee center and hosting him in their home until he was able to secure employment and housing.

Melody’s calm and unassuming presence might make one wonder what she is doing in the sometimes rough-and-tumble world of city government. Yet, Melody has proven her mettle as Cleveland Heights City Council president. She is tenacious in her efforts to get things done, while at the same time constantly pushing to get council members to work as a team.

In addition, her deep knowledge of finance and budgeting, honed over years working as the chief financial officer at a number of large corporations, has brought an extremely valuable skill set to city council.

I believe Melody’s quiet, effective servant leadership is what city council needs at a time when Cleveland Heights is still emerging from the effects of the pandemic and still adjusting to an elected mayor.

Melody Hart is the right leader in the right role at the right time. Instead of burnishing her own political résumé, she has the best interest of all Cleveland Heights residents in mind.

I urge my fellow residents to vote for Melody Hart this November.

Tom Nobbe is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights.
Cleveland Heights council president urges unity

Melody Joy Hart

This council has been a very productive council. In 2022, we passed about 183 legislations and we are on track this year for about the same amount. The council has moved the city forward quickly in many ways and has a good legislative and budgetary record.

A few accomplishments include:
- Unprecedented budget hearings over five days resulting in a more diligent process, resulting in a more thorough understanding by council.
- We passed major legislation such as the Buy-To-Stay extension. Cedar Lee Meadowbrook Development and the starting of construction, the lead-free homes initiative; making city fringe benefits fairer for LGBTQIA+ employees, banning conversion therapy; enacting and enacting a Charter Review Commission.
- We have had two council vacancies to fill under the new 44-day time limit and we succeeded on the first and failed on the second, so the mayor appointed a replacement on the second.
- What has not been productive is council relations. We should only focus our time and attention on what helps the residents, not on other council members. As leaders, each of us is responsible for our actions and our collaboration and treating each other with respect.

Council is a body, not a basket of separate individuals. Our focus for our residents’ benefit is to act like a body—to be Team Cleveland Heights. I am happily on that team and challenge all my colleagues to work with me as Team Cleveland Heights.

As we move forward, we need to complete the allocation of ARPA funds and form some specific rules of engagement. Put in place specific rules was voted down by this council, but all council members have now committed to holding that discussion. That is all part of coming together to work as a body.

I will continue to work to be a cohesive body—Team Cleveland Heights—and to make the city a better place, moving us forward into a strong future.

Melody Joy Hart is the Cleveland Heights City Council president. She has 35 years of experience in finance as an executive, and is a certified public accountant, certified in treasury and in financial planning and analysis. She is running for re-election to CH City Council this November.

Cleveland Heights City Council needs change

Jennifer Wintner

I am adding my voice to [those of] other Cleveland Heights residents who have expressed frustration with a city council that is failing procedurally and substantively.

The council president’s lack of leadership has resulted in council operating without formal rules or procedures, voting on legislation without sufficient information, refusing to address major issues facing the community, and exhibiting uncivility.

CH City Council doesn’t have formal processes for meeting, or researching, drafting, and discussing legislation. Former council member Josie Moore took the initiative to write and circulate a draft of policies and procedures for council to discuss and work from. The draft is thoughtful, logical, and sensible. Rather than lauding Josie’s effort and thanking her for doing the foundational work, the council president berated her and refused to have discussion of the documents.

The administration typically delays sending packets of information on legislation until the week-end before the [Monday] council meeting. Thus, council often lacks sufficient time to research matters contained in the legislation. Yet, the council president allows votes to occur on the administration’s schedule. Why doesn’t she defer votes until the following meeting if the administration does not provide sufficient review time?

Additionally, city staff with subject-matter expertise rarely are made available at council meetings. Why does the council president think it is in the best interest of the city to have council vote on matters without being fully informed?

Issues such as Severance, infill housing, and Noble Station aren’t getting [the] attention from council they need. Why don’t council and [its] committees regularly address those topics? Why isn’t council, under the council president, pressuring the administration to conduct a thorough inspection of Severance and cite the owner for code violations? Why doesn’t council, under the president, make it feasible for capable individuals and developers to acquire and redevelop some of the 300-plus city parcels while poorly thought out projects languish? Why is city council, under the council president, only now getting involved with the Noble Station project?

Council member Gail Larson and council candidate Jim Petras offer hope for city council. Gail has proven to be hardworking and committed to advancing sound public policy during her council tenure. Jim offers a positive alternative to the council president; professionally, he has proven his leadership skills through consensus building.

Gail and Jim understand the city’s important issues and can address them. Please vote for Gail Larson and Jim Petras.

Jennifer Wintner has lived in Cleveland Heights for more than 20 years. She is a member of the Severance Action Group. The opinion expressed here is her own.
Candidates should endorse SAG’s vision for Severance

Larry Nowak

Namdar Realty purchased Severance Town Center in 2016, and, like many other struggling and distressed malls that Namdar owns, Severance’s occupancy and condition has continually declined—except, notably, for the independently owned Dave’s Market and the Home Depot. Otherwise, the face of Severance is one of many empty storefronts (most notably the former Walmart and Regal Cinema buildings) and a sea of pothole-filled parking lots.

This deteriorating property in the center of Cleveland Heights has begun to adversely impact surrounding areas and to attract vandals, most recently those who trashed the interior of the former Walmart store.

True to its business model, Namdar profited from the rent paid by the remaining businesses, spending as little as possible on maintenance, and nothing on creative redevelop-ment planning that would attract additional businesses and residents to the community. It sold the parcel under Home Depot for more than it paid for the entire property in 2016. The sale of any additional parcels could well preclude the possibility of having an integrated, holistic and creative solution to the redevelop-ment of Severance.

Namdar’s neglect contrasts with the creative redevelopment of former malls into multi-use sites around the country, including those now being attempted by neighboring cities: in Shaker Heights, the Van Aken District; in University Heights, University Square; and, perhaps in Richmond Heights, Belle Oaks.

Since 2021, the Severance Action Group (SAG) has been urging the city to acquire control of the Severance property and has sought action by the city to plan for its redevelopment, along lines SAG has suggested and that both city council and the mayor previously endorsed for its future under new ownership.

A redeveloped Severance could be not only an asset to Cleveland Heights but also a regional model.

In the short term, the city should be enforcing all codes that apply to Severance. The city administration and city council should direct the city’s Board of Control, perhaps in conjunction with its Planning Commission, to oppose by any effort by Namdar to further subdivide and sell off the Severance parcels it still owns.

SAG urges residents to ask city council candidates to clearly state their position regarding the city’s role in opposing further sales of parcels, pursuing site control and promoting the redevelopment of Severance, and to support those candidates who en-dorse this approach.

To contact SAG, send an e-mail to info@severancerediSCovered.org.

Larry Nowak is chairman of Severance Action Group.

Resident initiative takes on CH’s vacant home problem

Mike Reilly

Do you ever imagine what it must be like to live next to a vacant, dilapidated, and rat-infested home for years and, in some cases, a decade or more? Walk in that neighbor’s shoes for a minute. For years, they’ve called the city for help. They’ve attended council meetings and complained, only to be thanked for their concern. They’ve received endless campaign literature addressing the “housing problem.” They even voted for Mayor Seren, hoping for the change that was promised.

But that abandoned house still sits there. To make matters worse, the neighbor gets a city violation notice telling them to fix their uneven sidewalk.

Since 2008, the city of Cleveland Heights has addressed the housing problem with no action-able plan in place. It’s endless studies and listening campaigns. Meanwhile more than 500 vacant houses continue to fester in our city, property values drop, and tax dollars are lost to the tune of $2 million (500 homes x $4,000 in average property taxes) per year.

Where there is a heavy concentration of vacant houses, there is a corresponding impact on retail. Consider Fairmount Boulevard and South Taylor Road vs. Noble and Greenway roads. Other examples would be South Taylor and Blanche roads, Cedar and Taylor roads, and Coventry Road. All these areas are ghost towns from 20 years ago.

The solution is simple. I have created a new initiative to work with the city’s Housing Department: R.A.T.H.—Residents Against Terrible Housing.

Modeled after M.A.D.D. (Mothers Against Drunk Drive-ing), R.A.T.H. is an action-oriented enterprise. Our group will identify vacant houses in designated neighbor-hoods and alert the Housing Department.

Then we will post a R.A.T.H. sign in the front yard and get neighbors to join in a nuisance abatement suit against the offending house. We then take the house/owner to court, win the judgment, place a lien on the property, and then foreclose. The house goes on the market and whoever buys the property is expected to clean it up, pronto.

I have executed this action successfully three times in Forest Hill, where I live. It works. It’s simple. Most importantly, it brings hope to those residents who feel abandoned by their city.

For more information visit www.projectrath.com, follow the progress on our homes, and watch our signs pop up throughout our city.

Mike Reilly grew up in Cleveland Heights and is a longtime resident of Forest Hill. He is the founder and owner of Reilly Painting Inc., which was started in 1974.
Community comes first

Deborah Van Klenf and Carla Rauten-berg

To say that Cleveland Heights Mayor Kabihl Seren has not, to date, embraced community in- volvement in civic matters would be an understatement. Locked office doors and a police officer at the reception desk in City Hall were early warning signs. Withdrawal of administrative staff support for resident volunteers serving on various boards and commissions was another red flag.

The Cleveland Heights Green Team, HeightsTree People, Sever- ance Action Group, and various groups in the Noble and Caledo- nia neighborhoods are just a few examples of community members whose civic efforts have been rejected or ignored by the mayor. In last month’s column, “Who owns Cleveland Heights?” we suggested that a community land trust (CLT) could protect certain parcels for specified community purposes in perpetuity. Property could be acquired from the county land bank, through tax foreclo- sure purchase, or even donation.


The introduction states, “Be- yond the permanent affordable housing provision, CLTs deserve more attention for the potential to advance a more equitable so- cietal transformation through a greater share of land coming under community control. Community control in the context of CLTs means placing current and future residents at the center of deci- sion making about neighborhood needs.” Keating and his co-authors conclude, “Through community control, CLTs provide long-term shelter security by rejecting specu-

lation and minimizing its impact on lower-income communities and households of color.”

Like anything else, a CLT must be done right to be success- ful. Without a strong foundation of community involvement—including mandated and significant inclusion of land trust residents on its board—a CLT would be subject to the whims of politi- cians and changes in city admin- istration. Land trusts are forever; mayors are not.

To avoid serving entrenched agendas, a Cleveland Heights CLT would have to be a stand-alone nonprofit rather than a subsidiary of any existing organization.

From the start, any profes- sional staff would need to be augmented with resident support on many levels, including by com- munity members serving on the board (with some board positions eventually to be filled by land trust residents, as affordable housing is built and purchased).

The CLT would have to work closely with the Cleveland Heights Community Improve- ment Corporation (CIC) at City Hall, which, among other things, can operate as a city land bank of sorts. That would require a healthy, mutually respectful ongo- ing relationship between the CLT and any city administration.

Building a thriving commu- nity land trust would demand the commitment of a broad swath of citizens, and we believe Cleveland Heights residents are more than equal to that task. It would also require a mayor who is not afraid to give up a measure of control, believes in the collective wisdom of the community, and recognizes the creative potential inherent in struggle and collaboration.

Although we do not endorse spe- cific candidates in this column, we definitely want to see a thriving city government that reflects both the lived reality and the aspirations of this wonderful community. When you vote in November, we hope you will keep in mind the importance of electing a legislative body that is sufficiently indepen- dent to be an effective counter to the executive power of the mayor.

Deborah Van Klenf and Carla Rauten-berg are writers, editors and long- time residents of Cleveland Heights. Contact them at heightsdemocracy@gmail.com.
Budget victory doesn’t guarantee public school funding

Public schools in Ohio are funded by the state and with local resources raised from voter-approved tax levies. For nearly three decades this important state-local partnership has been out of whack. The legislature has not held up its end of the deal—it isunderfunding the public system, forcing increases in property taxes and making private education a funding priority. Public schools and private schools are in the same line item in the state budget and are in direct competition for public funds.

Fortunately, public education scored a victory in the state biennial budget that took effect on July 1. Lawmakers retained the Fair School Funding Plan, a cost-based approach to defining state spending needs, and increased its investment in the plan by about $1.6 billion over two years. If they make the same investment in the next budget, school funding could finally pass constitutional muster. Lawmakers also increased funding for categorical aid, which includes expenditures for each student living in poverty or with disabilities, as well as for English-language learners and gifted students.

But vouchers won, too. More than $1 billion was set aside to pay for private school tuition. What if that funding went to public education—the option that is mandated by the Ohio Constitution? The base cost is the amount of funding that every public school student is guaranteed regardless of where they live. In the new two-year state budget, legislators set the base cost at $8,400, up from $6,010 in 2020. Both the local and state contribute funds to meet the base cost. The local contribution depends on the wealth of each school district. The state contributes a larger share to poorer districts.

Because the income level of Cleveland Heights and University Heights residents and the value of real estate are relatively high compared to many districts, the state will contribute $1,264 to the base cost for each Heights student for the next two years. Increases in categorical aid will increase state spending per Heights student to $13,175 in fiscal year 2023, up from $8,023 in the last budget. Based on enrollment of about 4,700 students, the Heights district can expect $44.3 million in state funding in this fiscal year and $45 million in 2025. Last year the state contributed $11.5 million to the CH-UH budget.

More state funding means fewer levies. According to Scott Gainer, the CH-UH school district’s treasurer, at current spending levels the district will have a positive funding balance until 2027. The last levy was passed in 2020 to fill a deficit created by the law requiring districts to pay part of the cost of vouchers. The end of deduction funding, the infusion of federal COVID funds, spending cuts, and an increase in state spending mean the 2020 levy is projected to last five years longer than initially predicted.

The hard-fought victory that increased state spending on public education came at a cost. Public education was held hostage by Ohio Senate President Matt Huffman’s insatiable desire to make private education at public expense an entitlement. He won. The budget includes funds for five voucher programs, universal access to EdChoice income-based vouchers, and a $500 minimum tuition subsidy even for families with incomes 10 times the federal poverty level. EdChoice and charter school tuition are both set at a maximum of $8,400.

When lawmakers increase the state investment in public education, it stabilizes funding, benefits local taxpayers and strengthens public education. Greater state support should be the norm, not a tradeoff for something noxious, expensive, unaccountable and outside of educational norms!

There is no guarantee that, when the legislature’s latest income-tax cuts reduce revenue, lawmakers will prioritize public education and uphold their constitutional obligation to fund it. We can’t confuse a short-term funding victory with long-term security for our cornerstone of democracy—public education. We have to keep fighting.

Susie Kaezer is the former director of Reaching Heights, and is active with the Heights Coalition for Public Education and the League of Women Voters. She is the author of a book about local activism, Resisting Segregation.
Illustrator to appear at UHFD

Paul Combs, the illustrator of the Sprinkles the Fire Dog book series, will read and sign books at the 2023 University Heights Fire Department Open House on Sunday, Oct. 8.

The open house will run from noon to 3 p.m. at the Fire Department, attached to UH City Hall, and will include tours of the station, food, and fun family activities.

Combs will read the book at 12:30 p.m. and again at 2:30 p.m. The books Sprinkles the Fire Dog and Sprinkles the Fire Dog 2—Making a Difference will be available for purchase at the event.

The theme of national Fire Prevention Week 2023 is “Cooking safety starts with YOU.” At the open house, attendees will learn about fire safety in the kitchen and at outside grills.

Sprinkles the Fire Dog is an inspirational story about a little puppy from a big city who dreams of one day becoming a fire dog. To achieve that dream, Sprinkles must overcome his physical limitations, the critical corner mutts, and his own self-doubt. This is a story about setting goals, putting in the work, and turning dreams into reality.

Paul Combs, illustrator of the Sprinkles the Fire Dog series, will sign books at the UHFD.

To achieve that dream, Sprinkles must overcome his physical limitations, the critical corner mutts, and his own self-doubt. This is a story about setting goals, putting in the work, and turning dreams into reality.

Combs is an illustrator, retired firefighter, and author of three books. The reading and book signing is presented in partnership with Fire Engineering magazine.

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

RE - ELECT COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Melody Joy Hart

Cleveland Heights City Council

Melody Joy Hart is always working with residents to get things done at city hall. As Council President, she has used her experience as a CPA to oversee a balanced budget while investing in our roads, housing, EMS services, and economic development. A champion for residents, Melody created programs to help residents fix their homes and strengthened rules to hold absentee landlords accountable to us. We can count on Melody to fight for our values and deliver results.

Endorsed Democrat

Experienced • Delivers Results • Progressive

Endorsed by:
- Cuyahoga County Democratic Party
- Cuyahoga Democratic Women's Caucus
- Cleveland Stonewall Democrats
- United Auto Workers Region 28
- County Executive Chris Cordonnier
- State Representative Amanda Ebert
- County Council Vice President Cherry Stephens
- Mayor Karl Carey—City Council President
- Ohio CASA
- Representative Anthony Dovis
- Rep. Shaker Heights
- State Representative
- City Council Majority Member and Former President Malia Lewis—Former City Council Member, Mayor Alex Rogus—Former Council Member, Mayor Mike Linacle—Mayor Michael Breen of University Heights—Anne L. Bell, Leading Activist
- Barbara Anderson-Charlton, Chair for Cleveland's LGBTQ+ Riverfront Coalition: Peter & Rachel Begala, Harvey Goodman

Learn more or connect at MelodyJoyHart.com
University Heights City Council Meeting highlights

AUG. 15, 2023 - special meeting

Council members present were Michele Weiss (vice mayor), Brian J. King, Threse Marshall, John P. Fasli, Shari Dao, and Min Weisser-Christopher. Cooney was not present. Also present were Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan, Clerk of Council Kelly Thomas, Law Director Luke McConville, and Finance Director Dennis Kennedy.

Council actions

Council approved the planning commission’s recommendation for Dress Homes’ demolition of the existing home at 2519 Clover Road and site plan for a new home.

Council amended the ordinance for storage of rubbish behind the rear building line. An ordinance to eliminate the residency requirement for membership on the ARB (Architectural Review Board) was originally on the agenda for a vote, but disagreement over whether the ordinance was needed or advisible ensued among council members and the mayor, so it was presented on first reading only.

Council accepted a grant from the Ohio Arts Council for the 2023 Fall Fest.

Council approved a quote from Starfish Computer Corp. for another month of service, not to exceed $5,500.

Council approved the fire department seeking bids for firefighter medical examina-
tion services to improve worker safety. Robert Parks noted that ARPA funds were available for first-responder grants. A wellness initiative passed in 2013, but no funding was available.

Council authorized hiring bankruptcy law firm Bricklin & Greydon to represent the city in bankruptcy proceedings. Chief Robert Perko noted that ARPA funds were available for first-responder grants. A wellness initiative passed in 2013, but no funding was available.

Council approved a payment to the Waterstone Medical Building for a building inspection. As the owner refused to work with the city to correct violations, the city prosecutor issued a criminal complaint. The owner was found to be responsible for 122 citations, fined $122,000, and could face up to 18 months in jail. Jill kinase has been revoked pending correction of the violations to the satisfaction of the city.

The former Wiley middle school building failed state fire codes and 18 state building codes. After some work, the building was corrected and the inspector noted that ARPA funds were available for first-responder grants. A wellness initiative passed in 2013, but no funding was available.

Council approved the planning commission’s recommendation for Dress Homes’ demolition of the existing home at 2519 Clover Road and site plan for a new home.

Council approved a change order, not to exceed $8,000, for the 2023 Road Program to cover tree damage on Ashurst Road in the Aug. 24 and 25 storms.

Council approved extending the jail contract with the Solon Police Department for three years at the standing rate.

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Cleveland Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

AUG 21, 2023

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

Mayor’s report
Mayor Seren described the need for a sustainable funding source if the city becomes responsible for sidewalk repair and replacement.

Council actions
Council approved allocation of $5,000 to FutureHeights, to cosponsor the 2023 Heights Music Fest.

Council confirmed the mayor’s appointment of Danny R. Williams as city administrator.

Committee reports
Public Safety and Health Committee: Boyd reported work on legislation to update youth mentoring and diversion programs.

Council members sought clarification of the planning commission, then considered the planning commission's recommendation of a development agreement by council. Council authorized a contract with Noter Consulting to prepare a climate Action and Resiliency Plan, at a cost not to exceed $199,100.

Sept. 5, 2023

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

Public comments
Four residents expressed opposition to the proposed Noble Station affordable housing development, criticizing the design and the lack of public meetings. They urged the city to create a development plan for the east side of the city and clean up the already existing area.

State Rep. Juanita Brent warned that upcoming redistricting might remove Cleveland Heights from her district.

Several commenters, including representatives of businesses and local residents, addressed the needs of the Coventry Village Business District. They thanked the mayor and council for recent attention to the district’s needs, and expressed concerns about pedestrian safety, cleanliness of streets and the city-owned parking garage, business vacancies, and littering. They asked for APFA funding approval and efforts to attract new businesses and support existing businesses.

Mayor’s report
Mayor Seren reported that supply delays have delayed completion of the walkway rebuild until the beginning of November.

City administrator
The mayor swore in Danny R. Williams as city administrator.

Council actions
Council approved a public services plan for the Coventry Village Special Improvement District, funded through assessments on identified properties. The total five-year cost will be $391,804.

Committee reports
Boyd said the Housing Committee heard a report on Housing Department personnel, including filling of four vacant positions.

Reporting on the Community Relations and Recreation Committee,Russel announced several upcoming community health and social support events and programs. The committee is working on legislation for a Youth Advisory Board, and a partnership with Youth Opportunities Unlimited.

Larson reported that the Municipal Services and Environmental Sustainability Committee has tabled the sidewalk repair and replacement program in response to Mayor Seren’s recent attention to the street’s needs.

Mattox reported that the upcoming Planning and Development Committee meeting would include discussion of the Noble Station project.

Boyd reported that the Public Safety and Health Committee would hold a hearing on the proposed marijuana products legislation.

Hart announced that council would meet in September to develop council rules.

Committee of the Whole
Council members sought clarification of the approval process for the proposed Noble Station legislation, including meeting dates for the Planning Commission, Architectural Board of Review, and council’s Planning and Development Committee.

Cleveland Heights City Council meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at City Hall, 2401 Park Boulevard. All are welcome to attend.

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Childhood friends reunite on Compton Road

Susan Lobe Wood

On Sept. 8 and 9, a Cleveland Heights neighborhood hosted a reunion of those who grew up on Compton Road, between Mayfield Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard, in the 1950s, ’60s and ’70s.

Compton-roaders think of Compton Road as being like no other—it seemed special. Kids grew up together, played together, walked school together, took part in exploration. Perhaps there were other streets like Compton. But, 20 or so people who grew up on Compton during those years, along with their spouses, thought it special enough to hop on a plane or drive a day’s distance and come back to Cleveland Heights.

Some current and former residents kept in touch over the years; it didn’t take more than one person asking about another to generate the idea of a street reunion.

The reunion organizers conducted eight months of research (using city directories to match memories to houses and last names) and hours of social media sleuthing to reach out and find former residents. On Friday evening, Sept. 8, reunion-goers gathered at the Edgewood home of a former Compton resident. Although name tags proved helpful, it was remarkable how easy and natural it was to reconnect. The next day, everyone met on Compton Road and walked the street. Current residents were primed for this—they’d been advised a month earlier that there would be a group walking the street and perhaps knocking on their doors.

Indeed, some did connect with the current residents of their former homes, and had the opportunity to walk through their old homes and share their memories.

Later that day everyone met at the Costanzo home—still in the family after all these years—where Daryl Costanzo and another former Compton resident, Scott McDonald, hosted an afternoon repast.

In all, 47 people attended the reunion, some traveling from as far as the West Coast, and one—Bill Wang, whose father had a store on Coventry for many years—making the trip from Hong Kong.

Susan Lobe Wood, 75, is a longtime CH resident who was born and raised—and raised a family—here. Along with Nissi Wang, Diane Baker, and Anne Lobe Whitney, Wood helped organize the reunion.
Author and Disney animator credits CH upbringing

Kevin Geiger

My career in the arts and animation has taken me from Cleveland to China. Although I reside half a world away in Taipei, my upbringing in Cleveland Heights continues to influence my life and inform my work.

Growing up in Cleveland Heights came with many advantages that I once took for granted but increasingly appreciate with time. One of my favorite things is to show my overseas friends satellite views of our family home on Corydon Road, where all you can see are trees. Nothing was more wondrous than simply stepping out my front door to mine has shown that my immediate area has eyes on the street.

The diversity community of Cleveland Heights exposed me at an early age to various ethnicities, orientations, cultures, and perspectives—fostering my ability to travel through and live in different parts of the world, flexibly and durably. That melting pot sparked my awareness as a global citizen while affectionately anchoring me to my childhood home.

Of course, the proximity of world-class educational and cultural institutions—including my alma mater, the Cleveland Institute of Art—served as a launch pad for my burgeoning interest in the arts, my career with The Walt Disney Company in Burbank and Beijing, and my current endeavors as an independent author and content producer in Taipei.

My latest children’s book, Grandpa Groundhog, is based on an unlikely relationship that formed between my Dad and a large groundhog that took up residence in the backyard of our Cleveland Heights home a few years ago. I remember Dad grumbling, “Look at that guy. He acts like he owns the place!” And I imagined the groundhog having the same observation about my Dad. Dad and I thought any more about what to do. An older woman, a neighbor I’ve seen before, came into my view and we went up to the little boy and started talking with him. I stood there with Jax and, within two minutes, from out of the house across the street came a lady and her daughter, holding an infant. "Call 911,” the lady said to her daughter. I took Jax inside and went back out to the sidewalk, where half a dozen women were now gathered. The mother wasn’t aware the toddler bolted away from the group, the lady was the first on the scene ran after him, saying, “No, no, no,” and brought him back.

A few minutes later, the first police officer to arrive was a detective in an unmarked car. He picked up the little boy, held him in his arms and walked west on the sidewalk, in the direction the child had come from. At each house he stopped and asked the boy, “It this your house?” Three or four houses down the way, the boy said yes, and the detective and boy went to the front door and knocked. By that time, four or five more CH police cruisers had arrived.

The mother wasn’t aware the child had taken off. The detective returned and said the mother was beside herself that this had happened. A couple days later, I encountered the boy and his mother on the sidewalk. His name is Joseph.

Kevin Geiger (www.kevingeiger.com) is an award-winning artist, author, producer, entrepreneur and former Cleveland Heights resident, with more than three decades of innovation in arts and entertainment, including 15 years with The Walt Disney Company.

‘Eyes on the street’ in Cleveland Heights

Lee Batdorff

A favorite saying of Jane Jacobs, author of the 1961 book The Death and Life of Great American Cities, was “eyes on the street,” which is the activity taking place in city streets that keeps the movement and security of the street intact. A recent incident on the sidewalk in front of the house next door has shown that my immediate area has eyes on the street.

One morning I went out the front door to unhook our dog, Jax, who was in the backyard, and return him indoors via the driveway and front door. Though I had just left the house the same way a couple minutes earlier, this time there was a toddler alone on the sidewalk in front of our east-side neighbor’s house. I halted and held Jax firm on the leash. For a few moments I stood wondering what to do about this little boy on the loose. I couldn’t go up to toddler with rambunctious Jax on leash and expect to help.

Then, I was saved from thinking any more about what to do. An older woman, a neighbor I’ve seen before, came into my view and we went up to the little boy and started talking with him. I stood there with Jax and, within two minutes, from out of the house across the street came a lady and her daughter, holding an infant. “Call 911,” the lady said to her daughter. I took Jax inside and went back out to the sidewalk, where half a dozen women were now gathered. The toddler bolted away from the group, the lady was the first on the scene ran after him, saying, “No, no, no,” and brought him back.

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Lee Batdorff moved to Cleveland Heights from Akron on Aug. 14, 1966, the Sunday The Beatles played the old Cleveland Municipal Stadium.
CH’s Jaycox pens his story of hope; donates proceeds

Cindy Fink
Cleveland Heights resident Kemp Jaycox has published his memoir, A Race Against Time: A Memoir about MS, Love, Loss and Life Lessons.

Sales of the book will benefit the Forest Hill Presbyterian Church Environmental Sustainability Fund, and the Accelerated Cure Project for MS.

Jaycox, age 50, was busy leading an active life of sports, travel, volunteering and working in his environmental/sustainability career. Then, a bout with a stomach virus caused his immune system to overreact, resulting in a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis at the age of 30. Now, 20 years later, in a race against time as his body shuts down and makes the simplest task impossible, he is intent on telling his life story to offer hope to others.

“Everyone has different challenges in their lives,” said Jaycox. “The most important message I hope to convey to readers is to persevere despite your challenges and circumstances.”

Jaycox’s story is rooted in an unrelenting disease, and in tragic deaths and unfathomable grief he experienced in his formative years. Facing circumstances that might have crushed him, Jaycox has instead learned lessons of courage and survivorship. He has found the resilience and perseverance needed to chart a new purpose and meaning for his life. At once heartbreaking and comical, tragic and joyful, Jaycox’s memoir reminds readers that life is precious and fragile. His hope is that others can find inspiration and resilience from learning his story, and chart a purpose and meaning against whatever odds they face.

All book-sale proceeds will be shared between Forest Hill Church, which Jaycox and his family have been members of since 2010, and the Boston-based Accelerated Cure Project for MS, dedicated to accelerating research efforts to improve diagnosis, optimize treatments and ultimately cure the disease.


Cindy Fink has lived in Cleveland Heights for more than 15 years, and works in communications. She has been married for 19 years to Kemp Jaycox.

Heights Observer launches Facebook page

Bryce Beard

The Heights Observer now has its own Facebook page, www.facebook.com/theheightsobserver.

The main goal of the page is to establish an online community that connects with Heights Observer readers and Heights residents. By following the Heights Observer, residents will connect to local stories, events, and perspectives.

The Heights Observer has always been dedicated to keeping Heights residents informed and engaged; its Facebook page is intended to be an additional tool to promote and support community connections.

Launched on Aug. 10, the Facebook page is already connecting with local groups.

It provides a space where community members can come together to share their thoughts and engage in meaningful discussions with fellow residents. Whether you’re a longtime member of the Heights or new to the area, the page welcomes everyone to join in the conversation.

As technology continues to reshape the ways in which we interact with one another, the page provides an opportunity for readers to engage with the Heights Observer in a new way.

FutureHeights, the nonprofit organization that publishes the Heights Observer, is always looking for volunteers to assist with its events and programs, including delivering the monthly edition of the Heights Observer. If you are interested in volunteering, contact the FutureHeights office (216-320-1423) to learn more.

As a FutureHeights intern, Bryce Beard developed and currently maintains the Heights Observer Facebook page. He is a junior at Gilmour Academy and participates in speech and debate, cross country, and yearbook club. He is interested in journalism and law.

I believe in Cleveland Heights.

You deserve an action-oriented, data-driven, and transparent city council that is focused on improving your daily experience of living here.

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE
We need a city government that is the standard bearer of best practices.

CITY SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE
We must provide best-in-class City services and well-maintained City infrastructure.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
We need a multifaceted strategy to strengthen and enhance all eleven of our business districts.

HOUSING
City Council must play a vital, active role in protecting and improving of our city’s housing stock.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY
City Council must be a knowledgeable manager of our City’s resources to ensure our long-term financial health.

I am ready to get to work to achieve an effective and responsive Cleveland Heights City Council.

LEARN MORE

gordonforclehts.com
jeanne@gordonforclehts.com

GET A YARD SIGN!
CH resident offers tips on low-impact leaf cleanup

Alice Jeresko

In the fall, Heights neighborhoods fill with noise, dust, and invisible toxic emissions as crews or residents use gas-powered equipment in an attempt to remove every fallen leaf.

Some residents, however, are finding ways to reduce carbon emissions and noise, in keeping with the city of Cleveland Heights’ commitment to climate action.

Fadi Kdayssi owns an historic home on nearly one acre, set 100 feet back from Fairmount Boulevard. Mature oaks buffer the home from weather and traffic noise. Its brick walls are two-feet thick, with triple-layer windows set in stone trim. Yet, even with windows closed, leaf-blower noise intrudes from hundreds of feet away.

Kdayssi’s professional expertise in sound and video recording may make him especially sensitive, but the sound of two-stroke gas leaf blowers is both high decibel and low frequency—qualities that make sound more penetrating, over longer distances.

A hands-on property owner, Kdayssi strives to limit the effects of noise and pollution on his serene, park-like property. He’s used a super-quiet electric leaf blower since 2014 to clear his long drive and walkways. He does his own leaf cleanup in sections, using an electric blower, tarp and rakes for efficient collection with minimal blowing. Kdayssi claims his corded Toro Power Jet is quiet enough to use without hearing protection. He’s currently searching for an electric mower compatible with the batteries and chargers used in his other equipment.

For smaller yards, capable and affordable battery-powered mowers and blowers are easy to find. Kdayssi notes that corded models are a good zero-emissions option if a home has well-placed outdoor outlets.

Homeowners who hire professional lawn-care services can ask for quieter, cleaner options that also protect the health of the workers.

Transitioning to electric tools is just one aspect of sustainable lawn care. The American Green Zone Alliance (AGZA.net) provides training and certification in low-impact lawn care for companies and institutions.

Another organization, HealthyYards.org, offer practical advice for homeowners. For example, rather than being blown off a lawn prior to mowing, fallen leaves can be mulched-mowed in place—requiring one pass to clear the yard and walkways.

Over the past two years, Dobama has served more than 10,000 Heights community members with its Halloween Fest, bringing residents together for a safe and memorable event.

In case of rain, the Halloween Festival will move to Sunday, Oct. 22, at the same time and location.

For additional information, visit www.dobama.org/events.

Mariah Burks is the director of engagement at Dobama Theatre. For more information on its 2023-24 season, visit www.dobama.org.

DOBAMA continued from page 1

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DOBAMA continued from page 1

In the fall, Heights neighborhoods fill with noise, dust, and invisible toxic emissions as crews or residents use gas-powered equipment in an attempt to remove every fallen leaf.

Some residents, however, are finding ways to reduce carbon emissions and noise, in keeping with the city of Cleveland Heights’ commitment to climate action.

Fadi Kdayssi owns an historic home on nearly one acre, set 100 feet back from Fairmount Boulevard. Mature oaks buffer the home from weather and traffic noise. Its brick walls are two-feet thick, with triple-layer windows set in stone trim. Yet, even with windows closed, leaf-blower noise intrudes from hundreds of feet away.

Kdayssi’s professional expertise in sound and video recording may make him especially sensitive, but the sound of two-stroke gas leaf blowers is both high decibel and low frequency—qualities that make sound more penetrating, over longer distances.

A hands-on property owner, Kdayssi strives to limit the effects of noise and pollution on his serene, park-like property. He’s used a super-quiet electric leaf blower since 2014 to clear his long drive and walkways. He does his own leaf cleanup in sections, using an electric blower, tarp and rakes for efficient collection with minimal blowing. Kdayssi claims his corded Toro Power Jet is quiet enough to use without hearing protection. He’s currently searching for an electric mower compatible with the batteries and chargers used in his other equipment.

For smaller yards, capable and affordable battery-powered mowers and blowers are easy to find. Kdayssi notes that corded models are a good zero-emissions option if a home has well-placed outdoor outlets.

Homeowners who hire professional lawn-care services can ask for quieter, cleaner options that also protect the health of the workers.

Transitioning to electric tools is just one aspect of sustainable lawn care. The American Green Zone Alliance (AGZA.net) provides training and certification in low-impact lawn care for companies and institutions.

Another organization, HealthyYards.org, offer practical advice for homeowners. For example, rather than being blown off a lawn prior to mowing, fallen leaves can be mulched-mowed in place—requiring one pass to clear the yard and walkways.

Over the past two years, Dobama has served more than 10,000 Heights community members with its Halloween Fest, bringing residents together for a safe and memorable event.

In case of rain, the Halloween Festival will move to Sunday, Oct. 22, at the same time and location.

For additional information, visit www.dobama.org/events.

Mariah Burks is the director of engagement at Dobama Theatre. For more information on its 2023-24 season, visit www.dobama.org.
A triumph of harmony: 10th annual Heights Music Hop

Kasia Bufford

The 10th annual Heights Music Hop proved an unequivocal success, uniting music lovers of all ages for a night of exceptional performances.

With the streets alive with melodies and a diverse crowd in attendance, the event showcased the unifying power of music in a vibrant community.

FutureHeights extends its deepest gratitude to the city of Cleveland Heights and to all of the Music Hop sponsors for their invaluable contributions, acknowledging that the event's resounding success would have been impossible without the wholehearted participation of cherished local businesses.

Kasia Bufford is the Heights Music Hop manager at FutureHeights.

Unlock your chance to shape the future of Heights Music Hop. Scan this QR code to take part in 2023 Attendee Survey, and let us know about your experience at the 10th annual Heights Music Hop.

The crowd for Apostle Jones.

The crowd for AJ and the Woods at Voodoo Brewery.

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Heights Observer October 1, 2023
Meeting highlights

AUG 15, 2023 - work session
Board members present were Beverly Wright (president), Dan Heintz, Malia Lewis, and James Posch. Josie Sosnowski was not present. Also present were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby and Treasurer Scott Gainer.

Strategic plan presentations
Staff members presented updates on strategic plan goals three, four and five, along with plans for the coming school year.
Goal 3: Family and Community Engagement, Partnerships and Communications. Supervisor of Communication Cathleen Cavanaugh, Supervisor of Community and School Partnerships Lisa Hunt presented the update. Actions from the last school year (2022-23) included marketing approaches, newsletters to parents, Community Learning Centers for Noble and Oxford elementary schools, more community partnerships, and support for parent groups. Plans for the upcoming school year include social media ambassadors at the high school, school brochures, more newsletters, Mental Health enrollment expansion, a family resource center, and increased staff support.

Goal 4: Value Professionals and a Culture of Excellence: Safety, Quality, Diversity and Collaboration. Paul Lombardo, assistant superintendent for human resources and operations, presented the update. Actions for the past year included inclusive hiring techniques, threat assessment team meetings in each school building, a Grow Your Own program to support advancement of current employees, a partnership with Howard University, increased certified staff of color, and a focus on retention. Plans for the coming year include increased staff support for managing students’ behavioral needs, measurement of retention goals by building, increase of certified staff of color by 30 percent, increase of student athletes with a GPA of 2.5 or higher, a focus on staff wellness, and a search for Grow Your Own program financial support.

Goal 5: Operation Resources: Finance, Technology and Facilities. Lombardo and Treasurer Gainer presented the update. Past school year actions included a 10-year roof and facility plan, HVAC evaluation, maintenance prioritization, preventative maintenance, replacement processes and equipment planning, bus driver recruitment, cyber security, improved communication of district finances, and state-level advocacy. For the coming year, goals include master facilities plan implementation, a positive cash balance through 2023, more public communication of finances, monitoring voucher litigation and its impact on the district, and continuance of last year’s programs.

IWV Observer: Judith Weaver.

SEPT 5, 2023 - regular meeting
All board members were present, as were the superintendent and treasurer.

Public comments
Gregory Nachman, career tech-engineering tech teacher at Heights High, a parent, and teachers union steward, requested clarification of the number of situations in the last six months that concerned teacher behavior during discipline events or fights. Because only one of 26 actual events was addressed during a recent teacher training, he said more training was needed.

Candidates for Heights University City Council Jonathan Barrett, Mischa Miklas, and Alicia Sloan each expressed support for the city school district and a more collaborative relationship between the city and school board.

Employee retention
The board accepted a “voluntary resignation due to job abandonment” (employees failed to show up for work) Lewis said this was the second time this year the board had to accept such a resignation, due to staff turnover and mental health concerns.

Spotlight - GaceMNY - Security
Issues Professional Development School Principal Patrick McNichols detailed the school’s current GaceMNY certification process and the overall GaceMNY curriculum. He emphasized the importance of beginning GaceMNY education as early as preschool.

School lockdown
Superintendent Kirby reviewed events that resulted in the declaration of a Cleveland Heights Police Department (CHPD) calling a level-three school lockdown on Aug. 30. Fortunately, the concern did not materialize into a real threat, but because of anxiety from the event, a calamity day was called on Aug. 31. The district is following up on the incident in accordance with the student code of conduct, and continuing to work with the CHPD.

Student dress code
Review of feedback versions for the school dress code will take place Sept. 11 with final recommendations provided for adoption.

Treasurer’s report
Cramer attended an Ohio Ethics Commission meeting. School finance officers must uphold the Ohio ethics law.

High school swimming pool use
The board discussed public use of the Heights High pool, which continues to be a community concern. The Athletic Department manages the pool. The board campaign for the high school renovation had implied that the pool would be available for community use. However, impediments exist to the city reviving a community pool pass, including additional costs for insurance, pool supplies, and chemicals.

IWV Observer: Rosemarie Farman.

Documents for all board meetings can be accessed at www.chuh.org/BoardofEducation.aspx. Board meetings are broadcasted at www.youtube.com/CHUHSchools, and recorded for later viewing.

Cleveland Heights – University Heights Board of Education

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FREE ESTIMATES
Library kicks off reading program for kids

Sheryl Banks

On Aug. 5, more than 3,000 Northeast Ohio library fans, and library staff from the nine Cuyahoga County library systems, packed the Great Lakes Science Center (GLSC) to officially kick off the countywide Cuyahoga Reads reading challenge campaign.

Admission to GLSC was free that day, and representatives from every Cuyahoga County library system, including Heights Libraries, were on hand to explain the program, sign up young readers for the challenge, and distribute nearly 5,000 free books to families.

“We had a great time, and it was so fun and inspiring to see so many kids getting excited about reading, especially in the book giveaway line,” said Kaela Swee-ney, Heights Libraries strategic projects manager, who coordinates the literacy program at Heights Libraries along with Youth Services Department staff.

Heights Libraries’ version of the campaign, called Heights Reads, will continue for more than a year, through December 2024. Participants in kindergarten through grade 12 can sign up for the challenge at heightslibrary.org, and win prizes every 20th day of reading, with the goal of encouraging them to keep reading throughout the year, not just during the library’s summer reading program.

“Some kids really fell behind in their reading skills during the pandemic, which has an impact on their ability to learn effectively in any subject area,” said Heights Libraries Youth Services Manager Sam Lapides. “Kids love a challenge, so we’re hoping that they’ll keep up with their good reading habits all year with this program.”

The program is funded by the Ohio Department of Education’s Libraries Accelerating Learning grant, which is designed to help libraries create or expand literacy programs for Ohio’s pre-K through 12th-grade students.

Sheryl Banks is the communications manager for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System.
Olie’s Gift & Ship opens on Lee

Brenda Bailey

A fresh approach to gifting and shipping has arrived in the Cedar Lee Business District, at 2313 Lee Road, near the corner of Lee and Silsby roads.

Olie’s Gift & Ship, which combines a gift store with shipping services, celebrated its grand opening in September.

Owners Jason Davis and his wife, Anco Davis, brought the concept of a gift/shipping shop to Cleveland Heights, moving their online-only business from Atlanta in search of a better life for themselves and their toddler, Olie.

They had seen a similar business on a visit to Seattle, and imagined opening such a store themselves, one day.

“We have a small space, but we want to do a lot here,” said Jason.

“We’re here to provide quality products and friendly service at a great price.”

Customers can bring to the shop items to be shipped, as well as purchase greeting cards and gifts for all ages.

In addition, an online store, at https://oliesgift.com, enables customers to order products online for in-store pickup. The online storefront contains an expanded selection of products that are not all available in the store.

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Primoz on Cedar creates a Cooper-themed pizza

Cooper the Chicken

Since I came to life at UH City Hall in 2019, I have been dreaming of this moment. Thanks to my new friends at Primoz Pizza. I now have a pizza named after me.

The “Mr. Cooper” is available at the Primoz Pizza location in University Heights, at 13890 Cedar Road. Drop by in person to order one, or call 216-273-6704. If you’re super tech savvy, like me, you can order online at primozpizza.com.

What does my namesake pizza taste like? Like University Heights itself, the Mr. Cooper pizza is a rich mosaic of many different ingredients. The sum is greater than the individual parts. And it’s delicious.

It starts with garlic butter sauce. Then, Primoz pizza makers add their signature cheese blend. Next, the Mr. Cooper is topped off with yellow onions, jalapeno and red peppers, sausage and chicken.

(When you get your first one, post the pic on social media, so I may share in your enjoyment. Tag @university_heights_ohio, and @primozpizza on Instagram)

Cooper the Chicken, the brand ambassador for University Heights, wrote this article. (He may have had some assistance from Mike Cook, the city’s communications and civic engagement director.)
Surrealist small talk: on the art of collaboration

Cameron Gorman

Through Oct. 15, visitors to Heights Arts have the opportunity to view a collaborative artistic effort, Collaborage. Inspired by surrealism, Collaborage was produced through the collaboration of four groups of multidisciplinary artists.

A brief conversation with two of the artists, Alison Miltner Rich and Meryl Engler, who worked on separate teams—and with poet Vince Robinson, who participated in a September poetry event inspired by the exhibition—provides a look at the collaborative process behind the work, in the artists’ own words:

“[My team] worked in mixed media,” said Miltner Rich, “so we all could collaborate in a way we felt comfortable.”

“I am primarily a woodcut printmaker,” said Engler. “Over the years I have accumulated multiple scrap pieces, extra prints, and artist proofs. For Collaborage, I really wanted to challenge myself to collage and manipulate my past pieces.”

Robinson commented, “The collaboration offered an opportunity to observe, among other things, natural intelligence and artificial intelligence (A.I.) operating in the same space. Although I didn’t work directly with A.I., I did deal with its influence on the finished pieces of art.”

“It was really fun to respond to each other’s work,” Miltner Rich noted, reflecting on her team’s dynamic. “I had no idea where I was going to go until I saw the previous work. Then I had to figure out where to go, but also how to try and keep the three pieces cohesive so they went together.”

An art teacher, Miltner Rich added, “I actually worked on it in front of my students, and they enjoyed seeing each step and what I did to it. It’s important for students to see their art teachers as working artists.”

“I found ways to write around circumstances,” said Robinson. “Part of my poetry was flowing into my consciousness as I was exiting a flight.”

Asked about their takeaways from working collaboratively, Engler said, “I actually worked on it in front of my students, and they enjoyed seeing each step and what I did to it. It’s important for students to see their art teachers as working artists.”

“Part of my poetry was flowing into my consciousness as I was exiting a flight.”

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“Finding meaning in the obscure was perhaps the lesson carried forth,” said Robinson. “I have learned about repurposing pieces and how to work with new materials.”

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“I am going to have my students work in a similarly collaborative style,” said Miltner Rich, “because the process made me work outside of my comfort zone, which was good for pushing my creativity.”

Cameron Gorman is the assistant director for Heights Arts. Contact her at cgorman@heightsarts.org.
What we love about Cleveland Heights (according to you)

David Budin

There are at least three Facebook groups focused on Cleveland Heights, and of which I’m a member. In one of the groups, another member asked, “What do you love about Cleveland Heights?” And, answering her own question: “I’ll start: I love my neighborhood. The people are great, the housing is interesting to look at, and I can walk for so many errands!”

Then, more than 75 other people commented. I’m simply going to present some of the comments, with all names omitted, to remind us of what we like about the city. (I know there are people who have some less-positive opinions about certain aspects, too—but that wasn’t the question.)

“Cleveland Heights is a wonderful mix of people and variety of housing. It’s interesting to walk around and see the hustle of Coventry, Cedar/Lee, but then also see the beautiful residential areas tucked between. We have lots of parks near us and it’s close to downtown. I love Cleveland Heights.”

“Beautiful historic housing, 10 minutes to tons of cultural arts in University Circle, 10 minutes to Lake Erie, wide selection of restaurants and bars, gorgeous parks.”

“Walkable. Feels like it’s safe for Trans people like me.”

“This is the first place I’ve lived where it truly feels like a community. I feel like I’m part of something.”

“Beautiful historic housing, 10 minutes to tons of cultural arts in University Circle, 10 minutes to Lake Erie, wide selection of restaurants and bars, gorgeous parks.”

“I love that Cleveland Heights is truly an economically diverse community. Only 7% of American cities are (NPR) and I feel so lucky to live in one.”

“I love that I live in the ‘city,’ but my street is so quiet and still in the mornings that I feel like I’m in the middle of nowhere. There’s so much wildlife around my house and I love it.”

“I love the diversity, the history, the architecture, and the schools. The unique neighborhoods and their identities. I love our parks and public spaces.”

“All of the wonderful pollinator gardens popping up all over our city.”

“Love how kind, inclusive, and welcoming our neighbors are! That was one of the biggest asks continued on page 23
only, and less time, fuel, and noise. Mulch mowing adds protective soil cover and organic matter to the lawn. Fall leaves can also be collected with mower bag attachments, lawn sweepers, or with rakes and tarps, and placed under trees and in beds as mulch.

How can homeowners maintain lawns and collect leaves with less noise and pollution? To consider this question, Quiet Clean Heights and the University Heights Green Team are planning a November forum. Attendees will be invited to share their tips and tricks for managing autumn leaves. For more information and updates—including the still-to-be-determined forum date—visit www.quietcleanheights.com, or send an e-mail to quietcleanheights@gmail.com.

Alicia Jeresko is an environmental advocate who started Quiet Clean Heights to help raise awareness of the health, bearing, and environmental impacts of gas leaf blowers in residential neighborhoods.

OLIE'S continued from page 20
at the store.

"Once we can handle the basic things, we hope to expand our selection, create ways for customers to save more money, and provide more convenient and requested services," said Anco. "For right now, it's just me and my husband, so we are trying to keep things simple."

Store hours will be limited initially, but the owners plan to expand them.

For more information and updates, visit the store's website, follow Olie's on Instagram, or send an e-mail to hello@oliesgift.com. The store is located at 2313 Lee Road.

Brenda Bailey, the volunteer coordinator at FutureHeights, has been a Cleveland Heights resident since 2020.

songs & stories continued from page 22
we had when looking to buy a house.

"The tree canopy on most streets, Forest Hill Park and Cumberland Pool. The architecture, the progressive people and environment, the proximity to cultural places like museums and botanical gardens, Coventry, the top-notch library system."

"Our small businesses are as diverse as they are dynamic!"

"I love that I can bike and walk to cool businesses."

"Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District and the teachers who love and teach our kids!"

"I love the charm of old houses. I love how walkable my neighborhood is. I love having a library, coffee shop, pharmacy, and great restaurants right at the end of my street. I love that my community embraces and celebrates our LGBTQ neighbors. I love that there are so many dogs."

"Three miles from world class healthcare!!! We are all going to need it, one way or another!!!"

"My neighbors are amazing people. We all care about each other and spend time together. Very grateful."

"I love the command my kiddos have in their city! So much they can walk to! Parks! Music lessons, school, friends, pool."

"I love walking the neighborhoods year-round to see the rotating flowers and landscape! And the variety of architectural styles of old homes. So much good food nearby! I love my 100-year-old house."

"The cultural and socioeconomic diversity and knowing my LGBTQ friends are safe & relatively comfortable here in our little progressive neighborhood."

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.

www.heightsobserver.org Call 216-320-1423 to find out how you can advertise your business for $29/month

OLIE'S continued from page 20
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