Heights Tree People plants 1,000th tree

Josie Moore

On Oct. 5, Heights Tree People (HTP) planted its 1,000th tree. The volunteer group, which began planting trees—for free—in Cleveland Heights and University Heights in 2019, planted the red oak at Cleveland Heights High School, near the corner of Cedar and Lee roads, inside the school property’s fence.

The location for this milestone tree was chosen intentionally. Henry Caine, great-grandfather of HTP co-founder Laura Marks, was a local leader who, in the early 1890s, supported the extension of the Cedar Road trolley line from Coventry Road to Green Road. However, at the corner of Cedar and Lee stood a large elm—six feet in diameter—that was slated for removal to make room for the trolley.

Although the Heights community supported the extension of the trolley line, residents—in true Heights fashion—turned out to protest the planned tree removal. As a result, both Cedar Road and the trolley line were rerouted, and the elm tree was preserved.

Heights Arts’ Holiday Store opens Nov. 3

Cameron Gorman

From Nov. 3 to Dec. 30, the entire Heights Arts space at 2175 Lee Road will be transformed into a festive gift shop featuring the work of more than 120 artists, creators, musicians, and authors. The Heights Arts Holiday Store showcases the unique talents present in the Northeast Ohio region.

A nonprofit organization that has supported thousands of artists, musicians, and poets since 2000, Heights Arts is known for providing one of the most extensive collections of artist made art and craft in the region. Many shoppers look forward to shopping this “big-box” alternative, where one can find one-of-a-kind items that make thoughtful gifts.

“Discover a holiday shopping experience like no other at the Holiday Store at Heights Arts,” said participating artist Bahareh Ghahremani. “With a curated selection of locally crafted treasures, each item tells a story of our vibrant community. It’s a place where art, culture, and the spirit of the season come together to create lasting memories and meaningful connections.”

Whether shoppers are looking for glass, cards, paintings, or toys, the Holiday Store has something for everyone—and for all types of celebrations. Holiday Store favorites include ornaments, jewelry, and textiles, in addition to sculptures, books, ceramics, CDs, and more.

“The holidays are a wonderful time to shop for handmade creations,” noted jewelry artist Sarah Bullington. “When you are shopping for someone special, there really isn’t anything more special that you can buy than something that is handmade.”

The Holiday Store will host a members-only preview on Nov. 3, 5–6 p.m., then will open to the public 6–8 p.m. that evening.

This year, Heights Arts will also offer the opportunity for businesses and organizations to participate in Community Partner Nights for more personalized shopping experiences and special member discounts for their guests.

“The Holiday Store at Heights Arts is going to have some of the most playful and interesting fine crafts and arts that NEO has to offer,” said multimedia artist Hope Hickman. “They really do a terrific job at curating the work, making it a must-go for holiday shopping.”

For more information, including a listing of participating artists, visit www.heightsarts.org.

Lead actors in Heights High’s fall show are (front row, from left) Mickie Lewis-William, Asia Burke, Sofia Paulovic, Dominque Blude, Harper Walker, Henry Dyck, (back row, from left) Gia Wyland, Anna Kenealy, Hugh Davis, Ruby Tugeau, Jaylen Rajeswaran and Jordan LaShore-Yelder.

Heights High presents ‘Addams Family’ musical

Diana Drushel

Heights High will present performances of “The Addams Family - A New Musical Comedy” on Nov. 3, 10 and 11, at 7 p.m., and on Nov. 5 at 4:30 p.m.

The show will feature more than 200 high school students performing in two casts and in the pit orchestra, and managing backstage operations. Nearly 40 middle-school students will sing in the chorus.

The show’s themes of family, culture, and managing backstage operations.

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The train wreck at Noble Station

Mike Bier

The recent Noble Station train wreck is the result of failure on several levels. The proposed affordable housing development didn’t travel far, and its slow derailment was painful to watch. The sequence of events started when an out-of-state developer, TWG Development, approached the Cleveland Heights administration with an offer to purchase city-owned land at the corner of Noble and Woodview roads to build a new 22-unit affordable apartment building.

Cleveland Heights City Council, in December 2022, unanimously passed an ordinance authorizing the mayor to execute a purchase agreement with TWG.

Cleveland Heights-based Start Right Community Development Corporation (CRCDC), TWG’s partner in the project, then fumbled the opportunity to secure community buy-in—a fundamental role of any CDC. At a minimum, it further diminished the OFHA funding. All participants limped away with nothing accomplished.

Noble Station is a textbook example of how not to manage an affordable housing development. Sadly, affordable housing is always (unnecessarily) controversial; the mayor may have had expected resistance.

Stamping approval on an unsolicited offer to buy a city-owned parcel, which council unanimously did, was not the way to go.

As it did for many previous development opportunities elsewhere in Cleveland Heights, the city should have solicited input from the Noble community, issued a Request for Proposal to multiple qualified developers, selected the best proposal, then worked with the developer and the community throughout the development process. This is not the high-speed route, but it is fair and effective to citizens and the developer, if properly done.

The mishandling of the Noble Station opportunity is a sad setback for a community that would benefit from new, high-quality affordable housing. At a minimum, it further diminishes the image of affordable housing and our city leadership. At worst, TWG may have to return to OFHA for the cost tax credits, valued at more than $1 million, which is highly unusual in the world of affordable housing.

Ohfa will no doubt think twice about awarding another project in Cleveland Heights. As for TWG, let’s hope that it isn’t preparing litigation papers to serve City Hall.

Mike Bier is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights and has been developing affordable housing for more than 20 years.

About the Observer

The Heights Observer is not a conventional 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 on www.heightsobserver.org or Cleveland Heights is welcome to contribute regularly, occasionally or even just once.

Is there something you think should be covered in the Heights Observer? If so, please write it on your own, or with friends, neighbors or colleagues. Our volunteer editors will make sure it’s ready to publish, and contact you with any questions.

If you’re writing a news article, it should be clear and factual. If you want to express an opinion, submit it as a letter to the editor, not a news article. Either way, make sure it’s about something specific to our two cities. And try to keep it under 500 words.

To make a submission of any kind, go to our heights backing 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 216-319-1435 or e-mail info@futureheights.org.

Articles to be considered for December publication must be submitted by Nov 6. We publish some articles online only.

CH council needs a Hatch Act

To the Editor:

CH City Council, sadly, needs a Hatch Act.

For those who are not familiar, the Hatch Act, a federal law passed in 1939, limits certain political activities of federal employees, including elected and appointed officials.

The law’s purposes are to ensure that government programs are administered in a nonpartisan fashion, to protect government employees from political coercion in the workplace, and to ensure that employees are advanced based on merit and not based on political affiliation. By all measures, it is a long-needed law.

The law applies to all federal employees and certain members, this is not the case.

Paul S. Greenberg

Cleveland Heights

Read the latest Heights election-related opinions online at www.heightsobserver.org.
All kids deserve safe schools

Ellen Euclide

As a lifelong Catholic and an alumna of Catholic schools, I am heartbroken by the policy announced this month by the Cleveland Diocese [regarding sexuality and gender identity]. Kids deserve safe schools. Whether [kids] are just figuring out their own identity or have a family member who is trans or queer, these policies do nothing more than exclude and hurt them. Just hearing the news has re-injured so many former Catholics who already felt excluded, and it will be the last straw for others.

We have some wonderful Catholic schools in the Heights where loving, pastoral teachers educate students of all faiths and backgrounds. They've been put in a terrible position and it's important that all of us who grew up in these schools will speak up.

Catholic and care about the LGBTQ community speak up.

Ellen Euclide and her wife moved to the Lee Road area because they love being able to walk to the library. They've been Cleveland Heights residents for five years and hope to stay for many more.

The Diocese failed to consult parents, educators, students, or psychologists in creating this, and instead have handed down hateful rules on something in which it has no expertise or moral standing to speak on. Jesus taught humility, and the bishop should have humbly consulted people with real, lived experience, and listened to how something like this would affect the families and children who have entrusted their education to the Diocese.

People of every language and life experience have contributed to our Church's vibrancy and life for thousands of years. This is what needs to be celebrated, not feared and hidden away.

Mayor Seren should leave the Catholic Diocese alone

Alan Rapoport

Mayor Seren proposes a Cleveland Heights government attack upon a religious institution. He wants government to do battle with the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland. This battle would be intended to advance gay rights.

The Diocese has adopted new policies in its Cleveland Heights schools. They will bar LGBTQ expression, use of preferred pronouns, pride flags, and same-sex couples at school dances. Parents voluntarily place their children in these schools. They obviously prefer such policies; otherwise, they would place their children elsewhere. But Seren believes children need “protection” from these Diocese policies and from their own parents. So, he proposes to make the policies illegal.

Religious organizations are exempt from provisions of the city’s “fair practices” law. Mayor Seren wishes to end that exemption. He wants new punitive laws. These laws would declare that the Diocese policies harm a “protected class.” The city then could police the Diocese. Violations of these laws would be determined administratively by the government.

The city’s so-called “Fair Practices Board” could levy large civil penalty fines against the Diocese.

The only surprise is that Mayor Seren has not yet proposed levying fines on the parents.

The U.S. Constitution bans an establishment of religion. It does not explicitly mention the “separation of church and state.” However, that phrase expresses a generally accepted concept. It is understood by most Americans that a proper political distance should be maintained between religious organizations and the state. Governments must not take official actions to advance or promote religion. But neither should government punish religions. They should avoid even subtle forms of coercion.

Such forms of coercion could include officially sponsored social pressure that discourages acts of faith. It certainly would include potential monetary penalties that Mayor Seren favors. A religious community would be required by law to conform; otherwise, it would suffer government persecution.

Seren effectively urges adoption of a civic religion. This civic religion would condemn and punish continued on page 19
Because for six weeks I saw a broken crosswalk sign laying by the sidewalk in a major business district in our city.

Because I’m seeing residents and neighbors losing their faith in government as the most basic City services aren’t getting done well.

Because when people reach out to our local government, many don’t get a response that meets their needs.

Because a government that was supposed to become more transparent has instead become more closed off.

Because as a member of the group that led the change of our form of government, I want to see what our residents overwhelmingly voted for: a transparent government that gets things done. And this requires not only an elected mayor but also a strong legislative branch that is a check-and-balance on our administrative branch.

I am running for City Council because I believe in Cleveland Heights. I know that we have what it takes to be a first-class city.

We deserve an action-oriented, data-driven, and transparent City Council that will hold City Hall accountable for providing best-in-class City services that improve our daily experience of living here.
CH should fund repairs on public property

Robert Jefferis

I live in Cleveland Heights and received an advertisement for a water-line protection program for covered repairs, i.e., insurance. A diagram in the ad illustrates coverage from the edge of the homeowner’s property to the home, not from the water main to the home, which leaves me in a quandary.

In Cleveland Heights, the mayor maintains a “policy” that repairs are the homeowner’s responsibility to the curb, or, practically, from the mains to a home, for both water and sewer. This means that the lines on public property, between the edge of the homeowner’s property and main, are the homeowner’s responsibility. Thus, according to the diagram in the ad, they are not covered by its water-line protection program.

Basic city services have declined in Cleveland Heights. Utility providers, including the city, have shifted the burden of repairing aging infrastructure to the homeowner, first from the meter to the property line, and now, according to the “policy,” from the property line to the curb. This is not in the interest of citizens, but rather throws them under the proverbial bus, [making them responsible] for repairs to lines on public property.

City point-of-sale inspections do not include water lines or sewer lines, which are not readily visible to new homeowners. The liability for repairs to either the water or sewer lines can be significant, especially to young new buyers who can ill afford the cost and are not aware of the city’s policy. The cost for repairs to aging infrastructure could be spread through the city’s taxing power or through insurance. Now, neither seems to apply, and when such a repair is needed, an individual homeowner can get the short end of the stick.

CH City Council is complicit. Council could pass an ordinance which makes the city responsible for repairs on public property, moving [the homeowner’s] responsibility from the curb back to the property line. If council members really want to act in the interest of the citizens, an ordinance would move responsibility back to the meter. [The city has] the expertise and market power for these types of repairs. Now, citizens facing breaks in lines are forced to act and absorb the costs as individuals, while city officials hide behind the “policy.”

I know when I go to the polls this November I will be voting for change on Cleveland Heights City Council.

Robert Jefferis is a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights who cares about the city.
Cinderella’s Prince Charming is serving ten years in the pen. Belle’s house is overrun with little monsters. Alice has been hitting the caterpillar’s pipe a little too hard lately, and Snow White’s husband has shacked up with the three little pigs. Now she’s keeping up appearances as the fairest in the land... with the help of a little girdle and a lot of hair dye, and trying to keep Belle from draining the royal booze reserves and Cindy from inhaling the banquet table...

Once upon a time, things got a little naughty.

State will not award any new performance-based EdChoice vouchers. The bad news is that income-based vouchers are no longer about helping low-income people, and their use and cost are growing exponential-ly. While access to performance-based vouchers is shrinking, access to income-based subsidies is growing. Not only is the scholarship amount greater than what public school students receive, the full amount—$8,400—is now available to any household with income below 450 percent of the federal poverty level, or $135,000 for a family of four.

The new state budget set aside more than $1.05 billion for private school student will be educated at taxpayer expense, without public oversight. The quality of education is way too complex to reduce to five stars based primarily on standardized test results, and standardized tests are not adequate for making the high-stakes judgments that are tied to report card data. The folly of using test scores to judge quality was evident in 2021, when 8,275 schools in 426 districts earned a failing designation. This dismal record prompted lawmakers to change their evaluation system, limiting this status to school districts where 20 percent or more of students qualified for Title I services and that had two consecutive years of low test results. This year 412 schools in 77 districts carry this failing label.

The state will not award any new performance-based EdChoice vouchers. This change of status means the state will not award any new performance-based EdChoice vouchers in our school district this year. The 1,743 local students already benefiting can renew their subsidies through 12th grade, regardless of the district’s current label, and as long as they live in Ohio. The Ohio has two EdChoice programs. The first was approved in 2005 as a way to rescue kids from failing schools. In 2014 (the state) approved EdChoice Expansion, this time to aid low-income students. EdChoice vouchers have drained more than $21 million of local tax-payer money out of our school district since the first 73 vouchers were awarded in the 2013-14 school year. Last year 1,924 students, most of whom had never attended a public school, received vouchers.

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ORGANIZATIONS YOU KNOW & TRUST
ENDORSE GAIL & JIM

GAIL
Cleveland Heights Teachers Union, Local 795
The Matriots

Cleveland Heights Democrats
Cuyahoga County Progressive Caucus
Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund
North Shore AFL-CIO Federation of Labor
Cleveland Building & Construction Trades Council
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 38

JIM
Cuyahoga Democratic Women’s Caucus
UAW Northeast Ohio Community Action Program
Laborers Local 860

YOU CAN VOTE FOR UP TO 3 CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES
MAKE 2 OF THOSE

☑️ GAIL LARSON
☑️ JIM PETRAS

Paid for by Friends of Gail Larson & Jim Petras for Cleveland Heights.
When is an ‘emergency’ actually an emergency?

Deborah Van Klee and Carla Rautenberg

In August, when Cleveland Heights Mayor Kabhill Seren proposed Ordinance 132-2023 creating a city arts commission, some resident artists and leaders of arts organizations reacted with alarm.

On first reading, the ordinance was referred to the Administrative Services Committee, which subsequently held a public hearing in October. There, the mayor described his vision of the commission, stressed that its role would be strictly advisory, and hinted at the possibility of arts funding sometime in the future. By the end of the hearing, members of the public in attendance seemed mollified.

One of the reasons cited for concern about the ordinance was this phrase, attached at the end: “It is necessary that this Ordinance become immediately effective as an emergency measure for the preservation of the public peace, health, and safety of the inhabitants of the City of Cleveland Heights.”

For those who don’t closely follow government proceedings—and even many of us who do—such terminology when uniformly applied is nonsensical and can actually be upsetting. How could the words “immediately effective” and “emergency” not imply that the proposed law would be enacted too quickly to allow for community input?

Legislating is supposed to be a thoughtful, deliberative process, not a speedy race to the finish. The Ohio Revised Code Section 705.15 states, “No ordinance, unless it is declared an emergency measure, shall be passed until it has been read on three separate days.” In Cleveland Heights, where council meets twice a month, that would take at least six weeks.

An emergency measure, on the other hand, goes into effect immediately and—in some cases—cannot be repealed by the voters.

ORC 705.15 states that the three-readings requirement can be lifted only by a three-quarters vote of the legislative body to suspend the rules. Many Ohio cities, perhaps most, speed up the legislative process by overusing a combination of suspending the rules and passing ordinances as “emergencies.” For example, a study by the excellent Cleveland Documenters group found, “Between January 2020 and May 2021, Cleveland City Council voted to suspend its own rules and shorten the legislative process 99.5 percent of the time.”

In 1912, voters added the ability for citizens to initiate or repeal legislation to the Ohio Constitution as a democratic reform. It is legitimate for certain kinds of ordinances to be passed as emergencies, but used injudiciously, emergency legislation is deeply anti-democratic.

In stating that many situations are emergencies when they clearly are not, it is also simply dishonest. Ironically, when he was a council member, Seren argued for infrequent use of emergency declarations. Now that he is mayor, however, his law department endorses emergency legislation to virtually every piece of legislation that comes before council.

At the committee hearing concerning the arts commission legislation, the mayor eventually offered to remove the emergency language, if that would reassure concerned community members. That was the right thing to do, but despite almost all legislation having originated with the mayor since he took office, he hardly bears sole responsibility for the situation. A weak and compliant council has routinely suspended the rules and provided the five votes to pass almost every ordinance on an emergency basis. We fear this practice may survive him as mayor.

We urge residents of Cleveland Heights to contact their council member and leaders of arts organizations. Beware of any legislation to the Ohio Constitution as a democratic reform. It is legitimate for certain kinds of ordinances to be passed as emergencies, but used injudiciously, emergency legislation is deeply anti-democratic.

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Council approved a change order for Ohio, which will save the city $10,000 and Washington project was amended for report indicating that the Saybrook, Silsby, Saybrook, and Washington project. A memorandum of understanding (MOU), approved by council in 2022, allowed University Heights' community investment corporation (CIC) to take title of the building next to City Hall is going to mediation on Oct. 26. The service department reported that SCS Consultants will begin a recycling study the week of Nov. 6 in response to the new ordinance. The mayor read the city engineer's departure of Amanda Ventura. The law department reported that eminent domain litigation regarding the building next to the building department, due to the sudden departure of Dennis Garcia and the planned departure of Amanda Ventura. The mayor also expressed concern that changes in council membership since the 2022 MOU might derail redevelopment of University Square after years of negotiations. Weiss and Rach reiterated their support for redevelopment. Council actions Council approved a tentative agreement similar to that reached with the police, with Service Department Laborers Union $60. Council authorized a two-year contract with the Cuyahoga County Board of Health. Council authorized transfer of funds from the general fund to the opioid distribution fund. Council authorized submission of a joint application with Cleveland Heights and East Cleveland to NOACA for work on the Taylor Road corridor, including the Cedar-Taylor intersection. A study for the four-mile project completed in 2019, called for enhanced sidewalks and bike lanes. Council members raised several issues, including the need for a crosswalk, availability of street parking, and coordination among the developer, Cleveland Heights, and the Taylor Road Business Association, which no longer exists. Council authorized bidding for 2023 fall tree planting. The service department wants to plant 118 trees, at a cost of $59,000, by March 2024. Heights Observer: Marilyn Singer.
Hamilton is new UH City Hall receptionist

Mike Cook

Lynnesha D. Hamilton. Her name is Lynnesha D. Hamilton. And there’s a million things she hasn’t done, but just you wait. Just you wait.

Staff at University Heights City Hall have been waiting for weeks for a new front desk receptionist to arrive, and on Oct. 16, Hamilton joined the team.

“We love the ‘Hamilton’ musical puns, and we love the fact that Lynnesha is here,” said Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan. “More importantly, University Heights residents are going to love having a live person answering the phones and greeting them at City Hall.

“Lynnesha is smart, she works hard, and she’s really personable. We are fortunate to have someone of her caliber on board in this new position.”

Hamilton comes to UH City Hall from Bright Beginnings, where she was the community outreach specialist for the Northeast Ohio region. She previously worked for the Warrensville Heights Police Department as a dispatcher.

Hamilton is also the co-owner of Fifty-Fifty Comix Publishing.

Hamilton has volunteered for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District PTA, the Gearity Professional Development School PTA, and the Shaker-Buckeye Development Center.

“Lynnesha is experienced, personable, and extremely capable,” said Deanna Bremer Fisher, the mayor’s executive assistant on special projects. “We are thrilled to have her join the team at City Hall, and I’m certain the residents of University Heights will enjoy meeting her, too.”

When City Operator Rob Marciniak retired from the Service Department in April, after 33 years, the position evolved from phone operator to front desk receptionist.

Mike Cook is the communications and civic engagement director for University Heights.
Russell joins state task force

Suzanne Zilber
Gov. Mike DeWine has appointed Cleveland Heights Council Member Davida Russell, a school bus driver, to serve on the newly formed Ohio School Bus Safety Working Group.

“I feel honored to be a voice for everyone who drives a school bus around the state,” said Russell, the only school bus driver appointed to the group.

DeWine announced the creation of the working group following the death of a Clark County 11-year-old who was killed when a vehicle collided with his school bus.

“There is always more that can be done when it comes to the safety of children, and I believe we have an obligation to take a holistic look at the safety of our school buses,” said DeWine. “This group’s review will be thorough, focusing on many different aspects of transportation safety.”

“I started driving a school bus on Feb. 9, 1981, after being laid off from General Motors, when jobs were scarce during the Reagan years,” recalled Russell. “I drove babies, children and adults for the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities for 35 years, until [its transportation department continued on page 19

TREE PEOPLE continued from page 1
remained, standing as an emblem of the Heights’ sense of activism and its commitment to preserving the natural environment. (Today, the elm is long gone; it was an old tree, even then.)

HTP honored this history on Oct. 5, while also looking forward to the future—to the myriad benefits this red oak will provide in the coming decades, and to a new chapter for Heights Tree People, as the group takes the next step in its development to become an independent nonprofit organization.

In recent months, HTP has received multiple grants to help fund its work. One such grant, from Future Heights, is funding critical young-tree care for dozens of trees recently planted on Nela View Road. As part of that neighborhood’s housing re-development effort, the city of Cleveland Heights planted 45 trees on the street’s tree lawns, and HTP planted two—one each in the front yards of two homeowners who contacted the group to request them.

In partnership with Heights Libraries, HTP received a Healthy Urban Tree Canopy grant to plant an urban mini-forest behind the Coventry PEACE Campus building. (This grant is supported in part by the residents of Cuyahoga County.)

HTP is still accepting requests for the fall planting of free front-yard trees in Cleveland Heights and University Heights. To request one, visit heightstreepeople.com or e-mail heightstreepeople@gmail.com. The group usually continues its work until Thanksgiving, and can plant trees until the ground freezes. If HTP is not able to get someone’s tree planted in the fall, that request will be first on the schedule for spring planting.

To request a free tree-lawn tree from the city of Cleveland Heights, call 216-661-3717 or e-mail pwd@clevelandheights.gov. University Heights residents should e-mail apennington@ universityheights.com or call 216-932-8331 to request a tree-lawn tree.

Josie Moore is a Cleveland Heights resident, mom, and partner. She is passionate about environmental sustainability and community building, and is a member of Heights Tree People.

Sometimes it’s good to be flaky

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A Celebration of Karel Paukert
Friday, November 17, 2023
6:30 PM

RSVP in advance at stpauls-church.org

Join us for an evening to honor the former Cleveland Art Museum Curator of Music and St. Paul’s own Artist-in-Residence. Paukert has been part of the St. Paul’s community for nearly 45 years. Featured in the concert will be former students of Karel’s from around the country. All are invited and welcome at this milestone celebration of our dear Karel. A dessert reception will follow the concert. Suggested minimum donation is $25 per person. Additional financial gifts in honor of Karel go to benefit the Friends of Music of St. Paul’s.

Cleveland Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

SEPT. 18, 2023
Council members present were Melody Joy Hart (president), Craig Cobb (vice president), Janine Boyd, Tony Cuda, Gail Larson, Anthony Mattos Jr., and Davida Russell. Also present were Mayor Khalil Seven and Law Director William Hanna.

Public comments
Four people spoke in favor of, and 10 spoke against, the proposed Noble Station low-income apartment project proposed for 2.9 acres of city-owned property at Noble and Woodlawn roads. Among those in favor were Ryan Kelley, representing the developer, and Janine Hicks Jr., executive director of Start Right Community Development Corporation. Kelley promised that the developer is committed to dialogue with the community and would manage the building for at least 15 years. Hicks admitted he had not pushed to require community meetings. He urged council to approve the development and make a commitment to economic development in the Noble area. Those opposing the project criticized the proposal for being crowded into two acres, with no mailroom, no community space, an inadequate playground, insufficient parking, small apartment sizes, and no assurance that anyone will protect vulnerable residents. They also cited the rushed presentation, isolated public input, and the developer’s poor Better Business Bureau rating.

Noble Station vote
Council voted against approving the agreement with TGW Development for the proposed Noble Station project at 2228 Noble Road. Mattos and Boyd voted yes; the other council members voted no.

Jimmie Hicks Jr., executive director of Start Right Community Development Corporation, stated that the Noble area is “a tough neighborhood” but that the residents are “still going on with their lives.” He urged council to approve the development and make a commitment to economic development in the Noble area. Boyd said she changed her vote to yes when she discovered Start Right CDC was a partner in the development.

Twenty-two people spoke in favor of, and 26 spoke against, the vote. Among those in favor were Melody Joy Hart (president), Craig Cobb (vice president), Janine Boyd, Tony Cuda, Gail Larson, Anthony Mattos Jr., and Davida Russell. Also present were Mayor Khalil Seven and Law Director William Hanna.

Public comments
Four speakers who supported restoration of Horseshoe Lake urged council not to pass appropriation legislation for the design phase of the new urban park around the restored Doan Brook stream. They advocated seeking grants as an alternative to maintain the lake. Cuda said he had left to go to city hall to arrange an appointment with inspector services, urged automating the process. Another resident claimed city staff was unresponsive and suggested computer applications to track contracts and responses. A discussion revealed that the automation of constituent relations was being developed and will be available soon.

Mayor’s report
The U.S. Justice Department has awarded the city a $300,000 grant to assist with programs with Cleveland Peacemakers Alliance, a violence-interruption and mental-health agency that has had success in other jurisdictions. Partners in this endeavor will include the CH-UH City School District, Heights Libraries, and the county board of health.

Horseshoe Lake
With Russell abstaining, council authorized agreements among Cleveland Heights, Shaker Heights, and the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORSD) for NEORSD to proceed with the Doan Brook restoration near Horseshoe Lake Park and the amenities agreed upon and funded by the two cities. Shaker Heights passed this legislation last week. Cleveland Heights’ cost will be approximately $168,327.

Other council action
Council approved submission of a joint application with University Heights and East Cleveland to the Northeast Ohio Area Wide Sewer District (NEORSD) for NEORSD to proceed with the Doan Brook restoration near Horseshoe Lake Park and the amenities agreed upon and funded by the two cities. Shaker Heights passed this legislation last week. Cleveland Heights’ cost will be approximately $168,327.

Committee of the Whole
Despite a history of volatility, council agreed to reinstate member comments, if concise and relevant. Comments will be limited to about four minutes, with the president reminding speakers to wrap up, if necessary.

Cleveland Heights 2023 Fiscal Year Budget
Council established a policy of providing access to menstrual products to detainees in the Cleveland Heights jail.

Committee reports
Council President Hart announced that council members may now e-mail department directors directly, with a copy going to the mayor.

Committee of the Whole
Council heard a presentation of the proposed Aquatics Feasibility Study to be conducted by ODP Group. The mayor discussed Cumberland Pool’s repair needs, which may take longer...
COMMUNITY NEWS

CHGT and partners work to restore Caledonia ravine

Catalina Wagers

In 1991, thanks to the dedicated efforts of then-council member Barbara Boyd, Cleveland Heights secured a 99-year lease on a neglected parcel—used, in part, as dumping ground—in the Caledonia section of the city and converted it into a park. Today, it’s known as Barbara H. Boyd Park.

The property straddles Cleveland Heights and East Cleveland, with a southern border flanked by a stunning gorge carved by West Nine Mile Creek. Years of neglect and illegal dumping diminished the ravine’s health and resilience.

In May 2021, the Cleveland Heights Green Team (CHGT) became aware of the ravine’s condition as it canvassed opportunities for green-space beautification within the city limits.

Since then, CHGT has partnered with community leaders from both East Cleveland and Cleveland Heights, and with organizations that include the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORSD), Bluestone, Heights Tree People, and the Trust for Public Land (TPL), to develop a comprehensive plan to restore the ecological balance of the ravine and to invite community members to become active stewards and beneficiaries of this natural asset.

According to CH Council Member Davida Russell, “The condition of the ravine is a microcosm of the problems that neighborhoods in the northern part of the city experience due to systemic underinvestment and disinvestment in the community. We can do better, and we need to do better.” In the case of the ravine, Russell suggested that pervasive illegal dumping in a residential zone happens because ordinances are not enforced and there is no public oversight.

Studies suggest that, in addition to the well-documented physical and mental health benefits of green-space access, property values can increase up to 20 percent for homes adjacent to or fronting a “passive park” area.

“The framework for this project is rooted in the intersection of environmental and social justice,” explained Roy Larick, a leading expert in urban environment issues and founder of Bluestone. “We recognize that the ravine’s condition and its adjacent green spaces are deeply intertwined with social and economic factors impacting the community. In addition to regular clean-up efforts by a group of committed volunteers, our most important work is done in partnership with, and involvement of, the community.”

continued on page 19

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At 100, architect Madison looks back

Carol Skoglund

Chapter Q of P.E.O. International will present “An afternoon with Robert Madison and Leon Bibb” on Saturday, Nov. 11 (Veterans Day), 2 p.m., at Forest Hill Presbyterian Church. The program is free.

Madison and Bibb, who are veterans, authors and friends, will discuss Designing Victory, A Memoir, written by Madison, a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, with Carlo Wolff. The memoir captures a century of Madison’s personal stories, revealing American culture and his struggles to overcome racism while developing iconic structures in Cleveland and around the world. Madison recently celebrated his 100th birthday.

Born in Cleveland in 1923, Madi-

son studied architecture at Howard University before serving in World War II. When he returned to civil-

ian life in 1946, Madison earned a B.A. in architecture from Western Reserve University, an M.A. in ar-

chitecture from Harvard University, and completed additional studies as a Fulbright Scholar at l’Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Madison went on to open the first African American architectural firm in Ohio, in 1974.

“I am honored and tickled to spend the afternoon with P.E.O.,” stated Madison, “and I know just how impor-
tant a woman’s education is in the lives of others. My mother graduated from Morris Brown College in Atlanta—an extraordinary accomplishment for a Black woman, or any woman, born in the late 19th century. She was a tremen-
dous influence in my life.” Bibb, a Vietnam Veteran, Emmy

Award-winning journalist, and nar-

rator of the audiobook version of Designing Victory, is the author of short stories and poems. Bibb will read one of his selections before diving into an intimate conversation with his friend.

The program will begin with musical guests Jason Fuh, baritone, and Judith Ryder, pianist, performing two opera selections by Verdi as a gift to Madison, who loves opera.

A reception will follow. Guests will have an opportunity to purchase books from Appletree Books at the event and have their book signed by Madison.

Registration is required for the event, and a livestream will be avail-
able. To learn more and register, go to eventbrite.com and enter Robert Madi-

son. Forest Hill Church is located at 3031 Monticello Blvd. in Cleveland Heights.

Donations are welcome. They will help support women’s education through P.E.O.’s educational projects.

P.E.O. International, organized in 1869, is a nonprofit philanthropic edu-
cational organization where women celebrate, educate, and motivate other women to achieve their high-
est aspirations. P.E.O. maintains six educational projects in the form of grants, scholarships, awards, loans, and stewardship of Cottey College. P.E.O. has helped more than 122,000 women pursue educational goals by providing more than $416 million in educational assistance. Learn more at www.peointernational.org.

Carol Skoglund, president of Cleveland Heights’ Chapter Q of P.E.O. International, has been a resident of Cleveland Heights since 2000.

Pauline has always been passionate about educating and giving people the tools needed to succeed. As a professor, analyst, Certified Financial Planner and recent Crain’s Eight Over 80 honoree, she has impacted many and continues to inspire and inform as a volunteer and philanthropist.

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Cleveland Heights – University Heights Public Library Board
Meeting highlights

Board members present were Max Gerboc (president), Vika Tsimbrick (vice president), Annette Iwamoto (secretary), Patti Carlyle, Dana Nuslen, Tyler McTigue, and Melissa Sitta-Schwartz.

Presentations
Kathryn Semo, Northeast regional liaison of the Ohio Auditor of State’s office, presented to Debbie Hermann, fiscal officer, an Award with Distinction to CH-UH Public Library. This award is presented for excellence in financial reporting related to the Comprehensive An-
nual Financial Report, and compliance with applicable laws for the 2022 fiscal year. This award recognizes clean, accountable govern-
ment, representing the highest level of service to Ohioans.

Sheryl Banks, communications manager, reported on the monthly mobile pantry at the Lee Road Library. The pantry began in May 2019 at Coventry Village Library. It is a volun-
teer-driven service with only two or three staff members. With COVID, drive-in distribution became necessary, and the pantry was moved to the Lee Road Library. The library offers this service, as the poverty rate in this service area is high. 16 percent of Cleveland Heights, 12 percent of University Heights, and 39 percent of East Cleveland residents live in poverty. In 2003, the pantry served 2,016 individuals. Residents age 17 and younger represent 25 percent of those served.

Financial report
Incomes earned the highest rate of return since 2007—5.52 percent. Revenue is good. All taxes have been received. Two new grants are coming in. Youth Services was awarded a MyCom Partners Support Grant of $1,500, and the library was awarded $34,426 from the Cuyahoga County Healthy Urban Tree Canopy Program, the Heights Tree People will create an urban mini forest behind the Coventry PEACE Building.

Public service report
Despite a two-week shorter duration for the 2023 summer reading program, total entries increased by 80 percent, 50 percent, and 91 percent compared to 2022, and the number of unique participants in-
creased by 91 percent. This represents a return to pre-COVID participation levels. The summer program ended with a total of 1,373 registra-
tions.

Director’s report
Heights Libraries is currently seeking a new trustee. Information for prospective board members can be found at https://heightsli-
brary.org/locations/heights-libraries-board.

The board:
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• Accepted the budget for MyCom and tree
• Approved purchase of replacements for
• Approved a resolution supporting the free-

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Meet the panelists

Susannah L. Rose, PhD
Vanderbilt University Medical Center
Biomedical Ethics

Claire Hughes, PhD
Cleveland State University
Education

Betsy Rosenblatt, JD
Case Western Reserve University
Law

Meet the panelists

This panel discussion features professionals from the Cleveland area, who use Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the way they work and do business. The panelists will address the potential, promise and challenges of implementing AI in their workplaces. A Q&A session with the panelists will follow the panel discussion.

This panel is open to the public, free will offering.

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Learn more about Fairmount’s November 12th panel discussion. Scan the QR code.

Cleveland Heights – University Heights Board of Education

Meeting highlights

SEPT. 19, 2023 — work session

Board members present were Beverly Wright (president), Dan Heintz, Carla Lewis, James Pasch, and Jodi Sourini. Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby was also present.

Superintendent’s report

Kirby said the just-released state report cards would be discussed in-depth at a later time, but noted that the district met or exceeded state standards at 10 of the district’s 11 schools, with only the virtual school falling short. The third-grade reading score is above the state average and the district achieved a star rating of five on gap closing.

Strategic plan updates on goals 1 and 2

Two of staff members presented a PowerPoint update on Goal 1 Student Outcomes and Goal 2 Education Approach.

For Goal 1 Outcomes Target Data Progress, they reported that for third-grade reading, 87 percent of students were on track toward the goal of 100 percent; for proficiency on state tests, 44.4 percent were on track toward the district goal of 87 percent. Sixty-five percent of ninth-graders have earned Algebra One credits toward the goal of 90 percent. The district’s graduation rate goal is 95 percent; the class of 2023’s graduation rate was 90.3 percent, up from 88.9 percent for the class of 2022. College enrollment for 2022 graduates was 49 percent. The goal is that 90 percent of all students will pursue college or a viable career.

For Goal 1 activities on educational services, curriculum and instruction, college and career readiness, and principal leadership, the presenters reported actions taken in the past school year and plans for this school year. For special populations, they noted that the district met 25 of 46 indicators in the special populations state report card as well as five out of six gap-closing indicators. Much of this success is attributed to co-teaching work.

Likewise, the presenters reported actions taken and upcoming plans for Goal 2 activities for curriculum and instruction, college and career readiness, equity training, social-emotional learning and academic support, special populations, and positive behavior supports. In reporting college and career readiness, the presenter noted that 41 percent of AP (Advanced Placement) test-takers scored 3 or higher on at least one exam.

Ohio Board of Education

The board tabled a resolution created to prepare for significant changes in the Ohio Board of Education under Ohio House Bill (HB) 33, because HB 33 was under a restraining order and the board wanted more information to perhaps render the resolution.

School spotlight: Roxboro Middle School

Rebekah Shipp, Roxboro Middle School principal; Dylan Dzahl, dean of students; and Michelle Watson, administrative support, updated the board on the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) program instituted schoolwide this year. The vision for PBIS at Roxboro Middle School focuses on clearly teaching behavior expectations in all common areas and classrooms. The PBIS team uses Tiger Lost, to be available in school stores Oct. 6, as part of its incentive structures for positive behaviors; these include being on time, being prepared, doing work, and behaving well.

Superintendent’s report

A Music Task Force Committee is being formed to address concerns about the music program, including lack of student involvement. In mid-October, a survey will be posted on the district website for parents and community members. An application to serve on the committee will also be posted and available for two weeks. The committee meetings will start in early November.

Treasurer’s report

Treasurer Gaster explained indirect cost rate, certificate of achievement, and certificate of transition. Indirect costs refer to expenses not specific to a particular grant, contract, or project. The district applied for and received $196,000 for indirect expenses for fiscal year 2023. In 2022, the district received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 24th consecutive year. The treasurer has prepared a certificate of transition for his successor, to ensure a smooth transition if the treasurer is suddenly unavailable to serve.

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UH Symphonic Band wraps up year with free concerts

Edward Siess

The University Heights Symphonic Band (UHSB) announces three free concerts for the remainder of 2023, including its annual free Fall Formal Concert at JCU’s Dolan Science Center.

The University Heights Symphonic Band (UHSB) announces three free concerts for the remainder of 2023, including its annual free Fall Formal Concert at JCU’s Dolan Science Center.

The lead cast members all commented on the camaraderie that has deepened in the midst of dance rehearsals, line work, and blocking practices. 

Sophomore Abs Barkle noted, “I generally like to play the weird characters, so to play Uncle Fester is very natural.”

“The Addams Family is a spooky show for the spooky season! It is going to be an incredibly fun show that is not to be missed,” said Jesse Lange, vocal music director and the show’s producer. “It has a healthy message for students and adults, and uses our deep talent pool in the high school and middle schools.”

Senior Anna Kenealy, who plays Morticia Addams, said “The audience should look forward to all the fun songs, the family’s ambience, and the great costumes!”

The show will be performed in the Heights High auditorium. Tickets—$8, $10 and $12—are available online only, at www.clevelandheightsschools.com. (No tickets will be sold at the box office.) For additional information, call 216-320-3106.

Diana Drudel is a 2011 Heights High graduate and the parent & community liaison for Cleveland Heights High School.
I’m talking about Coventry—again

This is a picture of the backs of a lot of people’s heads; and me, up in front, apparently trying to find my place in my notes, at last year’s talk at the Coventry Village Library.

David Budin

I was talking to a guy at a party, a couple of weeks ago, a guy who owns a business on Coventry Road. Someone else walked over to us, and the guy I was talking to introduced me to them, and said about me, “He writes for the Heights Observer about Coventry.”

I know that’s the perception some readers have, because I do write about some aspect of Coventry’s history (usually as it relates to my own) fairly often. And I guess that’s why the Heights Libraries’ Coventry branch asked me to speak about the history of Coventry last year, around this time.

Library staff originally thought that as many as 25 people would show up for my talk, so they planned to use a meeting room downstairs. Then, when reservations started coming in, they added a few more chairs. Then, when more came in, they decided to hold the presentation upstairs, in the main reading room, and they planned on about 50 . . . Anyway, 84 people showed up.

The next day, the library asked me if I would do it again, in about a year from then. I said, “Oh—you mean for the three people who wanted to come last night, but couldn’t?” Well, I am doing it again. It will take place on Thursday, Nov. 2, at 7 p.m. So, if you’re reading this after that date (of which there’s a very good chance), and you didn’t know about it already, and you would have been interested in attending, well . . . maybe next year.

And, by the way, if you did attend last year, and you read the description of this year’s talk in the library’s bulletin, and you think, because the bulletin’s blurb implied, that I might be covering new topics this year, and that’s the only reason you’re interested in coming, you might want to do something else that night. It will be pretty much the same as last year’s. And, no, I’m not going to make up a new story for you. History is history.

And this presentation is the whole history of how Coventry Village formed, and why. And when I say the whole history, I’m talking about going back to the beginning of the city of Cleveland, because Cleveland Heights grew out of that; and then the origins of Cleveland Heights, because Coventry was an important part of the city’s early development.

So, I go through all of that, and up to the present. In about an hour. With about 80 projected pictures. And maybe some jokes, if any occur to me. (But no songs. Those are different kinds of events.) When I was in the middle of my talk last year, standing in the library’s main reading room, telling my story, I remembered that, as a 7-year-old Coventry Elementary School student, I used to come to that very room after school on Tuesdays for story hour. Possibly ironic. But maybe not, because, I mean, I’m still in the neighborhood. And I’m a storyteller.

My mother worked at that library for several years when I went to Coventry School. She was the secretary for the head librarian, Nell Lynch. I remember only a few things about that. One was that on a nice autumn day in second grade, when they let us out for morning recess at about 10, I thought it must be lunch time, continued on page 19
non-believers. The Fair Practices Board would be its Inquisition. The new religion would affect adversely Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and members of other religious communities who do not agree with the mayor. It would be an unconstitutional establishment of religion. It would be an official expression of intolerance.

What Mayor Seren proposes is improper and offensive. Any candidate for CH City Council who agrees with him should be remembered for that at election time.

Alan Rapaport, a longtime resident of Cleveland Heights, served on CH City Council (1986–89) and as council president/mayor (1982–87).

CHGT continued from page 13

Recently, engineers from NE-ORSID assessed the ravine’s structural health.

Participants in the 2023 Healing our Waters: Great Lakes Conference, held in Cleveland Oct. 12 and 13, conducted a tour of the ravine focused on the connection between underserved communities and environmental health.

The Lake Erie Protection Fund is supporting a feasibility study for improving ravine water resources. TPL chose Caledonia Elementary School, located at the top of the ravine, as the site of its first Community Schoolyard in Ohio.

“The project will not only benefit the students but the entire community, as the playground will be accessible to all after school and on weekends,” said Kaela Geschke, Parks for People director at TPL Ohio. “We see this playground as a catalyst for meaningful and scalable change. Green spaces that are designed by the students and neighbors foster community ownership. They tend to be more widely used, leading to cleaner and safer surroundings. They enhance the community’s well-being and quality of life while protecting habitats and ecosystems. In this scenario everyone wins.”

The Community Schoolyard will be completed in 2024.

Catalina Wagers is a resident of Cleveland Heights in 2021. She is involved with several citizen-led organizations in Cleveland Heights.

SONGS & STORIES continued from page 18

and I walked over to the library to get money from my mother to buy my lunch at the Merit Drug lunch counter. (Merit Drug became Ace Drug, and that seven-eleven soda fountain became the original Tommy’s restaurant.)

I guess it thought it was lunch time because (1) I was always hungry, (2) I never had any idea of what time it was, and (3) I never listened to anything that the teachers said, so I wouldn’t have known what the next activity was; I just knew they were opening the doors and letting us out, which was all I ever cared about.

Another thing is that one time, Benjamin Spock—then author of pop-music history.

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