‘Paint the Town’ at FH’s July benefit

Rhonda Davis-Lovejoy and Chris Jacobs

FutureHeights invites everyone to celebrate its 22 years of community engagement at this year’s annual benefit party on Saturday, July 13, 5-9 p.m. The party will embrace the Heights’ entertainment and restaurant scene, highlighting the theme Paint the Town!

Set against the beautiful campus of John Carroll University and its Dolan Center for Science and Technology, the party will feature unique drinks and appetizers from The Fairmount and hors d’oeuvres from Saroj & Carlos. Along with specialty cocktails and delicious food, there will be music, dancing, a silent auction, a concert by Apostle Jones, and an opportunity to mingle with residents and leaders of Cleveland Heights and University Heights and celebrate efforts to improve our cities with neighbors from around the Heights.

Continuing its annual tradition of recognizing those who make a difference in the Heights community, FutureHeights will honor John Emerman and Tatyana Rehn of Stone Oven Bakery as FutureHeights’ ‘Persons of the Year.’ Under their ownership, Stone Oven has been more than just a bakery; it’s a much-beloved community gathering place. (Emerman and Rehn recently sold the business to new, local owners.)

FutureHeights is looking to the future and continued, positive change as it builds on the successes of the past two decades. The benefit will support the nonprofit’s Heights-focused programs, including the Heights Observer, Neighborhood Mini-Grants, Crowdsourced Conversations, Neighborhood Leadership Workshops, FutureHomes housing revitalization, and the much-loved annual Heights Music Hop.

To purchase tickets to the event, visit www.futureheights.org/events/2024-annual-benefit/

Rhonda Davis-Lovejoy and Chris Jacobs are co-chairs of the FutureHeights Board of Directors.

FutureHeights names Bailey and Brown as its interim leaders

Brenda Bailey
Bob Brown

While FutureHeights restructures and develops its next strategic plan, the board of directors is pleased to announce that Brenda Bailey, currently FutureHeights’ volunteer coordinator, has been named as the interim manager, and Robert (Bob) Brown, former FutureHeights board president, has agreed to serve as the interim executive director.

The board recognizes Bailey’s attention to detail and enthusiasm for the Heights—qualities that have been invaluable in building the nonprofit community development

Reaching Heights names Penick new director

Josie Moore

Reaching Heights is excited to introduce the newest addition to its leadership team, Erica C. Penick, who joins the organization as executive director.

Penick brings with her a wealth of experience and a commitment to equity, community, and service, and is no stranger to the world of nonprofit management and leadership. With a proven track record as a C-Suite professional and advisor, Penick has expertise in revenue generation, donor cultivation, funding alignment, strategy, branding, and communications. Her skills in identifying improvement opportunities and implementing effective solutions have helped numerous organizations achieve their objectives.

Penick’s commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion is evident. She believes in fostering dialogue, promoting education, and dismantling exclusionary practices to ensure that everyone’s voice is heard and valued. With a core value of equity for all in the CH-UH district, Reaching Heights knows its work and mission are in capable, principled hands.

Penick earned a Bachelor of Arts and Science degree in human resources management from Cleveland State University before earning her Master of Science in human resources management from Case Western Reserve University. Penick also has experience in leadership development and diversity, equity, and inclusive practices.

Penick knows the Heights—and the importance of cultivating a strong, engaged community—will always be the foundation of service to our community.

Continued on page 11
Consider smaller, upscale grocer for Cedar Fairmount

Miri Schuman

Growing up in Cleveland Heights, I have fond memories of shopping at Russo's Fairmount store. Like many long-time residents, I feel a sense of sadness seeing it vacant. Seeing it occupied by Dave’s Supermarket, which doesn’t quite cater to the local market around Cedar Fairmount, was disappointing for Cleveland Heights, as I don’t mean to come off as a snob, but shouldn’t we aim for an upscale grocer that fits into a smaller footprint, catering to the residents nearest to Cedar Fairmount?

As someone with experience as a former commercial real estate broker, I believe finding the right fit is crucial for ensuring a store’s profitability any sustainability as a tenant in this space. An outlet grocery doesn’t seem like the right fit here.

I disagree with the notion that the Heights doesn’t need another grocery store. Previous failures don’t negate the possibility of success in that location. Russo’s was successful for many years, and I’m unsure why it closed. Despite the challenges, retailers like Heinie’s have thrived by adapting to market changes and meeting community needs.

Cedar Fairmount is a densely populated residential area, with a growing number of health-conscious and younger residents. A store that residents can walk to, perhaps with a café for remote workers, would be ideal given the premium on parking in the area.

Regarding the request for city support for the uplift, while I understand the property owners’ perspectives, I believe there is a way to finance options themselves. It would be helpful to see a detailed breakdown of their contributions to the community over the years, beyond just owning the property and the [former] grocery store.

Considering their potential re-returns in a few years, securing a loan using their own capital appears more appropriate than seeking public subsidies. Sharing their profit and loss statements from both the building and the [Russo’s] grocery store they owned in that space could provide a fuller context for evaluating any potential support from the city and ought to be made transparent to the public from which they’re requesting a grant.

I’d like to see them share about their engagement and philanthropy with the city over their tenured involvement with that building. They might also consider selling the property to a developer that does have the funding to provide for the uplifts needed.

Miri Schuman, an executive leader, coach, and consultant, is a civic-minded, longtime resident of the Heights (with the exception of a dozen years in N.C.). She is happy to be back!

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Letters/Opinion

Tonya Horn

On May 20, Cleveland Heights City Council approved TWG’s affordable apartment development, Nobility Court (once known as Noble Towers). Since the community first learned about the development, it has been shrouded with controversy and opposition. This May 20 council meeting was no different. A packed room (the usual early opposers and first-time resident attendees) brought opposition statements, emotions, and disappointment on many levels and for many reasons.

The intentional and orchestrated effort implemented to shut down this project came too late. Each council member’s voting decision was made, after countless meetings, presentations, and discussions since 2023.

Intentionally, from the start, the project and process excluded engaging the community. Beginning in the fall of 2023, I and others attended meeting after meeting (city council, review board), speaking up, and speaking Eloquently, we were adamantly opposed. The council listened and voted to oppose the plan.

TWG returned, requesting an opportunity to do better, to make it right. City council approved, and I supported it, to the dismay of some. I had willingly participated in the focus group to provide input and be a part of the process. We have come a long way to get here and, being a part of the focus group, my mind and perspective changed.

My initial concerns still exist and can’t be addressed by TWG—blighted and dilapidated apartment buildings up and down Noble Road, the need for amenities, restaurants, a pharmacy, other businesses; a needed facelift for existing businesses; support of infill housing that will increase property values; and [increased] safety for the area. Despite this, I support the project. I see it as a start, a segue to more to come.

There is a crisis in this country for affordable housing. This is a start for Cleveland Heights to address this problem. It can’t be only in the city’s Noble area that affordable housing exists. As developers come to our city and want to build, the city council must request and require mixed-income housing, as this project is, throughout the city. Cleveland Heights can no longer continue to be a tale of two cities.

To the city administration, the mayor, and city council: The momentum you have created for a better community on the north side of Cleveland Heights must continue, not just for city council. You have heard our voices—our needs and wants—loud and clear. Transparency and communication are necessary and needed. Put action behind the plan by creating an inclusive and equitable city that we all desire to see.

To Cleveland Heights residents: Let’s be strategic in this needed effort to become a destination community. We need to show up—not at the 11th hour, expecting our voices to be heard—but from the beginning. Attend meetings and become engaged. Be informed, re-search, and ask questions. We must hold the city and council accountable. There is much work to do to regain trust. Let’s not just do it, but do it well if we aren’t at the table initially.

Tonya Horn is a DEI practitioner and a longtime resident of the Noble neighborhood. She advocates for Cleveland Heights. She began her involvement with Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM).

Put Wiley to use

To the Editor:

John Jansen’s opinion, “What’s up with Wiley?” (Heights Observer, April 24), is important.

Wiley School sitting essentially vacant does citizens no good.

Having recently been the beneficiaire of a $53 million investment to function as swing space for high school students during the renovation of Heights High, Wiley can and should be put to more constructive use.

It’s the newest of the three middle schools in the district. Mr. Jansen points out that Wiley’s size of 147,893 square feet meets state guidelines for middle-school students. The Monticello and Roxboro schools currently in use total 237,932 square feet and exceed state standards by 40%.

As stewards of the community’s resources, the CH-UH school board should consolidate students at Wiley and offer Monticello and Roxboro for use by developers who will convert them to multi-family occupancy. Both are two-story Georgian architectural forms with a geometry that has proven highly desirable in Northeast Ohio for such adaptive uses.

Wiley, on the other hand, is a one-story facility with a geometry not suited to housing subdivision, and therefore has no value for such a conversion.

William Elberhard, AIA, IIDA University Heights

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Heights Observer June 1, 2024

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FREE EVENTS

JUNE 29
2nd Annual Pride in the Park

JULY 12-14
47th Annual Cain Park Arts Festival

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MAY 30-JUNE 9
The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee
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Check out our new website!
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more shows to be announced soon!
Gas lawn equipment is a danger to health and climate

Alice Jeresko

Quiet Clean Heights—a grassroots advocacy campaign that seeks to raise awareness of the health, hearing and environmental impacts of gas leaf blowers in residential communities—applauds Cleveland Heights Mayor Kahlil Seren’s support for Air Quality Awareness Week (May 6–9), as well as the city’s Lawnmower Exchange Program, in which 90 Dewalt electric blowers will replace residents’ gas blowers.

Gas-powered lawn equipment is a significant source of greenhouse gas. Our biggest source of direct, local emissions are natural gas furnaces, water heaters, and stoves. With warm weather, lawn maintenance equipment emissions take over. Gas leaf blowers, or blowers of any kind, used to be rare. Commercial lawn care services with large, powerful and loud gas-powered equipment have become increasingly common in our neighborhoods over just a few years.

Communitywide firing up of gas lawn equipment coincides with warm, sunny weather—conditions in which ground-level ozone is formed—and warm seas are getting longer. Ground-level ozone is a powerful respiratory irritant that also affects vegetation and climate. Coupled with carcinogenic hydrocarbons and all manner of other pollutants stirred up by powerful blowers, it’s a real health hazard for the crews, neighbors, postal workers, bicyclists and pedestrians exposed to invisible air contaminants. Two-stroke engines used in gas leaf blowers are many times more polluting than gas mowers, and dramatically more polluting than passenger vehicles equipped with air-pollution controls. Gas leaf blowers affect our quality of life and right to clean air in and around our homes. Air quality is regulated at the regional level, and there are no EPA monitors in Cleveland Heights. But pollutants from gasoline combustion can be released undetected and in relatively high concentrations in local hotspots. Air contaminants are regulated nationally to protect human health and the environment. Regulated compounds, including carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), can be emitted as very fine PM2.5 particle sizes. This tiny particle size allows them deep into the respiratory system, evading body defenses, to enter cells and the blood stream. Research is clear: PM2.5 contaminants are responsible for serious cardiovascular and respiratory disease, and are a major cause of death worldwide.

Cuyahoga County is not meeting EPA standards for ground-level ozone. Our Air Quality region is likely to be put in “serious non-attainment” status this August. EPA also tightened the standard for PM2.5 in March of this year. Other communities, counties and states have enacted restrictions or bans to reduce or eliminate gas leaf blowers.

This relates to global climate change and our community Climate Action and Resiliency Plan. Gas leaf blowers are not essential to lawn maintenance. Throughout the summer, crews use them to blow grass clippings and edging dirt out to streets and storm sewers. There is no excuse.

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

Alice Jeresko

for many years, having served on the Planning and Development Committee, the Housing Committee, and as a board chairperson. Brown also served as an interim executive director for the MidTown CDC in Cleveland. The board is thankful that Brown has volunteered his expertise during this important time of transition.

Rhonda Davis-Lovejoy and Chris Jacobs are co-chairs of the FutureHeights Board of Directors.

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School district has a building glut

John Janssen

The CH-UH Board of Education (BOE) needs to develop a comprehensive facilities plan to efficiently manage its aging infrastructure. The CH-UH school district owns 14 buildings:

- Monticello Middle: built 1947, 1,342,111 square feet. As of Jan. 13, 2023, 245 square feet per student.
- Wiley: built 1964, 147,819 square feet, 612 students.
- Monticello Elementary: built 1930, 126,780 square feet, 526 students, 241 square feet/student.
- Roxboro Middle: built 1931, 111,152 square feet, 767 students, 193 square feet/student.
- Boulevard: built 1974, 91,537 square feet, 281 students, 183 square feet/student.
- Gardner: built 1927, 65,800 square feet, 235 students, 202 square feet/student.
- Fairfax: built 1974, 59,000 square feet, 302 students, 195 square feet/student.
- Gearity: built 1954, 104,716 square feet, 303 students, 309 square feet/student.
- Noble: built 1922, 74,350 square feet, 377 students, 197 square feet/student.
- Oxford: built 1928, 61,400 square feet, 247 students, 249 square feet/student.
- Roxboro Elementary: built 1920, 55,600 square feet, 231 students, 241 square feet/student.
- BOE building: built 1960, 31,903 square feet, 0 students.
- Delisle Options: built 1974, 59,000 square feet, 114 students, 318 square feet/student.
- Millikin: built 1953, 54,680 square feet, 0 students.

In addition, the school district offers preschool to 110 students, and Tiger Virtual Academy has 66 students (as of Jan. 13, 2023). Total district enrollment was 4,909. That works out to 273 square feet/student.

Per the 2022 Ohio School Design manual (OSDM), the recommended square-foot-to-student ratios are:

- Elementary school (pre-K through fifth grade): 104-125 square feet/student.
- Middle school (sixth through eighth grade): 110-131 square feet/student.
- High school (ninth through twelfth grade): 156-180 square feet/student.

At the high end, assuming an average of 156 square feet/student across building types, CH-UH needs 266,824 square feet of classroom space. Under state guidelines, the district has an excess of 54,414 square feet; 40% of the available classroom space in the district.

CH-UH previously reviewed its high school and middle school needs and, based on that review, rebuilt the high school then partially renovated Roxboro and Monticello middle schools. At that time, the BOE committed to examine elementary schools.

It is time for both a review of elementary classroom needs and of the district's other under-utilized and non-academic buildings, including Millikin (closed but used for storage and trades), Wiley (closed), and Delisle (special programs and district offices annex).

The district is supporting a glut of real estate with no plan for its use or disposal going forward. The district's taxpayers are funding the maintenance and upkeep of buildings that, on average, exceed 70 years of age and provide more space than is needed.

The BOE must act quickly to implement a plan for managing the district's facilities. State guidelines for space per student and the cost of maintaining older facilities almost certainly mean that the board will need to close buildings. While closing a building (or five) will be politically unpopular, the community elected the board to make hard decisions and ensure fiscal responsibility to maximize the benefit of scarce resources to the students.

Hurry.

John Janssen, Heights High alumni (class of '84), is chair of the CH-UH Lay Facilities Committee.

Robert Berger

Cleveland Heights is not the only city where community development grants can be abused by developers and landowners for personal gain. This is a national issue. Other cities, however, have attempted to minimize this abuse by providing transparency to residents by instituting the following measures:

- Publish detailed information on the grant application process, eligibility criteria, and selection process. This allows residents to understand how grant decisions are made.
- Create an online portal or database listing all community grant recipients, project descriptions, and award amounts. This provides public access to see how funds are allocated.
- Hold public meetings and hearings to get community input on priority areas for grant funding. Resident engagement increases transparency in decision-making. Require grant recipients to report regularly on project progress and expenditures. Publicly sharing these reports holds grantees accountable.
- Implement limitations on indirect costs for certain grants to ensure maximum funding goes to community projects (instead of) administrative expenses. This safeguards the grants’ intended purposes.
- Conduct audits and publish findings to identify any issues with grant fund usage or reporting accuracy. Implementing an audit recommends and district allows residents to compare what the district offers through financial aid and similar resources. Of course, by Edward Jones are issued by banks insured by the FDIC and therefore are subject to investment risks, including possible loss of principal. Payments and rates can change. Contact your Edward Jones financial advisor for additional information. Subject to availability and may be offered through a Edward Jones the CD values are subject to interest rate risk such that when interest rates rise, the prices of CDs can decrease. If CDs are sold prior to maturity, the investor can lose principal value. FDIC insurance does not cover losses in market value. Early withdrawal may not be permitted. Yields quoted are net of all commissions. CDs require the distribution of interest accrued but not yet paid) per depositor, per insured depository institution, for each account ownership category. Please visit www.fdic.gov or *Annual Percentage Yield (APY) effective 05/15/24. CDs offered by Edward Jones are bank-issued and FDIC-insured up to $250,000 (principal and interest). ACD terms are offered by Equitable Life Assurance Trust Company of America (EQUA) and sold and administered by Edward Jones. Call or visit your local financial advisor today.

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continued on page 11
Fixing music: time, money and local priorities

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

Susie Kaeser

Time and money are always scarce in public education. This scarcity constrains what is possible and forces everyone from the classroom to the superintendent to see priorities, often at the expense of what people value or what is effective.

This seems to be what is at play as Cleveland Heights-University Heights school leaders examine how to make music a higher priority for our school district and a bigger part of the school day.

Music cannot be an afterthought or considered a luxury if this part of the curriculum is to really support the learner. Like reading and math, music requires daily practice to gain mastery. A longstanding concern is that our middle-school instrumentalists enter high school with half as many days of instruction as students in neighboring communities. It’s time to change our district priorities.

On May 2, I attended the board of education’s (BOE) work session where Tasia Robinson and Karen Lidell-Anderson delivered the report of a stakeholder committee that examined the root causes of diminished opportunities and shrinking enrollment in music. The report, which can be seen in the BOE section of the school district’s website, (www.chuh.org/BoardofEducation.aspx), consists of a list of 91 causes and a 10-point list of remedies. How the district uses time and money are the centerpiece to this case for improving opportunities and engagement.

Sadly, two state policies—vouchers and testing—are exerting pressure on the district budget and on the use of school time. The superintendent, who will take the report and propose a course of action for the district to implement, will have to balance local priorities and state demands.

Prior to 2021, the state required local school districts to pay part of the cost of private-school vouchers. Our district was hemorrhaging $9 million a year for this. Facing a dire budget shortfall, the district cut the teaching staff in the arts. At the May board meeting, Board President Jodi Sourini expressed her regret; it’s a policy she would like to take back. The impact on elementary music has been severe. Finances also ended co-teaching of middle-school instrumental music and required music personnel to take on duties unrelated to music.

Ohio’s punitive testing requirements and judgmental report cards put school districts on the defensive and hijack the use of time and money. Test score-boosting activities nudge our music in scheduling decisions. These are just a few of the ways music is allowed to fade.

Music learning was especially vulnerable during COVID. It was hard for kids to learn to play the recorder or start a musical instrument in fourth grade from home, and it was impossible to be a part of any kind of ensemble for most of two school years. We are still recovering from that interruption. Federal funds made it possible for our district to concentrate on helping students recover from COVID-induced learning losses. Now it’s time to invest in lost learning in music.

Cleveland Heights likes to call itself a home to the arts, and we have always taken pride in our school district’s vocal and instrumental music programs. As a community we must support our local leaders in making music education a priority. The root-cause report recommends specific ways to invest in personnel, increase time, and remove scheduling barriers so that music education can more fully engage our students in this fundamental part of their development.

We don’t need the state to set our priorities. This is still our choice.

Susie Kaeser
A desirable place to live

Deborah Van Klief and Carla Rautenberg

For decades, we’ve heard from Cleveland Heights officials that we need new, well-heeled residents to expand our population and, with it, the city’s tax base. The current mayor and most council members have hatched into this idea as well. Cleveland Heights’ population peaked in the early 1960s at a little over 61,000. Sixty years later, the 2020 census counted just 42,175 residents—due to smaller family sizes, loss of jobs in the region, and white flight, among other things.

In addition to population shrinkage, since the 1980s cities like ours have experienced drastic cuts in federal and state funding. Thus, the past three decades have seen a tightening of municipal budgets and corresponding reductions in staff and programs.

Looking to restore lost population as a fix for financial duress can lead to a focus on the presumed needs, tastes and preferences of the people the city seeks to attract, with less attention to serving and retaining those of us who are already here. Besides, is this aspiration even realistic?

We think not, and Joanna Ganning of Cleveland State University agrees: “[Population growth is] the wrong goal. . . . For Cleveland and other Shrinking Cities, improving quality of life for the people who have chosen to live here has to take priority.” (“Population growth isn’t the path to change, Northeast Ohio needs,” Crain’s Cleveland Business, Dec. 11, 2012.)

Planning, Ganning explains, is often “based in hope and ideology rather than reality. The result? Decades of wasted spending on projects designed to attract outsiders, who rarely come and less often stay, especially if the flow of public subsidies stops.” (Emphasis ours.)

A more recent truism is that climate refugees will bolster our population. The Great Lakes states, with access to abundant freshwater, are often identified as “climate havens” for those fleeing rising sea levels, hurricanes and heat.

But Kate Yoder of Grist points out that our part of the world is hardly immune to the effects of climate change, as we discovered last summer, when smoke from Canadian wildfires made the air here dangerous to breathe. In addition, “[w]ith dam failures and overflows from combined sewer and stormwater systems common, the region is unprepared to handle the volume of water now coursing in.”

Yoder cites a report from the National Climate Assessment, stating, “There’s not yet enough data to ‘make a strong statement’ on how climate change might drive migration to the Midwest.” Instead, scholars believe that people who must relocate may move to safer places within their home regions. (“Why ‘climate havens’ might be closer to home than you’d think,” Grist.org, Nov. 20, 2023.)

We doubt that the thinly veiled gentrification schemes continually promoted by our elected officials will work any better now than they have over the past six decades.

Expecting our city’s population to rebound to baby boom levels may be a pipe dream, but the one thing that could draw newcomers is to improve the quality of life for current residents. That will require superb public services, such as actually enforcing housing codes, and resolving resident complaints promptly, in addition to revitalizing neglected neglected neighborhoods, restoring the tree canopy, and upgrading parks and recreation facilities—all with an eye on climate adaptability and social and economic equity.

A city dedicated to the well-being of its people is a desirable place to live. If we can achieve that, others will want to join us.

REMEMBER: Join the 11th Annual Cleveland Heights Democracy Day Public Hearing on Thursday, June 13, at 6 p.m., in Council Chambers at City Hall. For details, consult the city calendar or contact Greg Colender at 216-335-2184 or ohio@movetoamend.org.

Deborah Van Klief and Carla Rautenberg are writers, editors and longtime residents of Cleveland Heights. Contact them at heightsdemocracy@gmail.com.
University Heights City Council Meeting highlights

APRIL 15, 2024 - regular meeting

Council members present were Michele Weiss (vice mayor), Christopher Conney, Brian J. King, Theresa Marshall, and Win Weizier. John F. Rach and Shari Szas were excused. Also present was Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan.

Council actions

Cuyahoga County has approved three engineering firms for the Warner Center Road resurfacing project between Cedar Road and Fairmont Boulevard, and requested the city’s input before choosing a firm. Council voted to allow the county to select any of the approved firms.

Council passed an ordinance, which was amended with updated cost calculations, allowing Wallaer Umbrella Group to perform design and construction administration work for the 2024 street repair program.

Council authorized a routine transfer of funds from the general fund to other funds and a specific transfer for the YABP property.

Council accepted the quote for a new generator for the police and fire departments.

Council authorized an attorney engagement after an oral agreement with James Climer and Mazanec, Raskin & Ryder Co. LPA to represent the mayor and city in litigation brought by an unrepresented individual, in an amount not to exceed $15,000.

Council authorized the city’s participation in the Ohio Department of Transportation’s 2024 road salt contracts.

Council accepted the bid of RS Landscaping for the 2024 yard abatement program.

Staff reports

Service Director Allen Pennington reported that, so far, 904 households have opted in for the automated recycling program.

Committee reports

The Committee of the Whole toured the city of Brooklyn’s municipal center. The committee will meet the first week in May to review RFQs (requests for quotes) for construction of new police and safety offices.

First Energy tree trimming

Wendy Zale, First Energy’s external affairs manager and liaison between the city and First Energy, reported that First Energy had concluded most of the tree trimming needed to protect its lines, but any resident who has an ongoing problem can contact the call center directly or go to the mayor’s office.

JW Observer: Marilyn Singer

MAY 6, 2024 - regular meeting

Council Member John Rach was not present. The mayor and other council members were present.

Mayor’s report

The city’s first sustainable home fair on April 21 was successful, with about 100 people attending.

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Heights Observer June 1, 2024
University Heights welcomes ‘Beautiful Home’ nominations

University Heights’ 2025 Beautiful Home Awards nominations are underway. Throughout the summer, and no later than Sept. 15, residents are invited to nominate homeowners who exhibit an outstanding investment in their property in a variety of award categories.

The Beautiful Homes Committee, a group of residents appointed by the mayor, reviews the nominees, and winners are announced at the annual University Heights Civic Awards in the fall.

With the exception of current committee members, anyone can nominate a house for consideration, as long as it’s not for sale. Self-nominations are also welcome.

“For more than 60 years, University Heights has recognized homeowners who have done an outstanding job in maintaining their homes, enhancing the city’s neighborhoods, and enabling a sustainable and vibrant community,” said Deanna Bremer Fisher, chief of staff for the city of University Heights.

The city experienced a significant jump in community participation last year, boasting 41 nominations and 25 winners, compared to 26 and 17, respectively, in 2023.

The committee’s goal is to build on that momentum and raise more awareness heading into this year’s process. As part of the effort, the committee seeks to continually refine the program, ensuring it is inclusive, informed and thorough. There are a variety of award categories, some of which focus on curb appeal, front door and entryway design, environmental sustainability, landscaping, and, more recently, one that honors homeowners who have shown consistent upkeep of their home and grounds for 20 years or more.

Many feel the Beautiful Home Awards adds an important component to the community.

Shana Washington, who won the “Two-in-a-Row” category this past year, said she feels the program “encourages others to take pride in the beauty of their homes.”

Another 2024 award winner, Elizabeth Blunck, stated, “It helps build a more vibrant community. It celebrates that everyone experiences beauty and nature in different ways!”

To nominate a home, and view the full list of categories and criteria, visit www.universityheights.com/nominate-beautiful-homes.

Information about volunteering to serve on the Beautiful Homes Committee or other boards and commissions is available at www.universityheights.com/volunteer/.

Hartley Bramhall Loe is a resident of University Heights and serves on the city’s Beautiful Home Committee. She presented the 2024 Beautiful Home Awards, and looks forward to participating in this year’s civic awards ceremony.
Lake Erie Ink’s summer programs invite teens to unplug

Janae Bryson

This summer Lake Erie Ink’s (LEI) programs offer teens the opportunity to disconnect from their devices and create in real time with real people.

LEI creates spaces where teens can amplify their creativity and connection through summer camps and workshops for sixth- through 12th-graders that feature storytelling in its many forms.

Content Creators, July 8–12, 1–4 p.m., $125:
At LEI’s Content Creators camp, teens are empowered to become the next generation of storytellers and digital content creators.

Through hands-on activities, workshops, and group projects, participants will dive deep into the fundamentals of storytelling, script development, and creative content creation. Whether it’s crafting a short film, crafting engaging social media content, or producing a podcast, this camp equips teens with the tools to bring their ideas to life and share their creativity with the world.

Have You Heard? Teen Podcasting Workshop, July 8–9, 5–8 p.m., free:
Teens who have a passion for audio storytelling will love this intensive workshop where they will learn the art of gathering sound, conducting interviews, scripting, and producing their own nonfiction audio stories.

The results are powerful narratives that reflect the lives and communities of the participants, showcased in a special exhibition at the close of the workshop.

Poetry in the Park, Thursdays, June 13 through July 18, 6:30–8 p.m., free:
This program encourages teens to express themselves through original poetry, engage in open mic sessions, and participate in creative writing workshops. It’s a chance to let emotions flow freely, and find solace and inspiration in being outdoors.

Pride Outside: LGBTQ+ Voices, Mondays, June 10 through July 22, 6:30–8 p.m., free:
Pride Outside offers a safe and inclusive space in which teens can explore and express their creative writing talents.

Through workshops, group discussions, and public art, teens not only hone their storytelling skills but also contribute to a vibrant collection of LGBTQ+ literature, amplifying their voices and experiences in a world that often tries to silence them.

Through its summer programs, LEI provides teens with an opportunity to unplug, embrace the transformative power of creativity, and find new ways to tell their stories.

To register, or to inquire about available scholarships, go to https://lakeerieink.org/teens/.

Janae Bryson is the marketing coordinator at Lake Erie Ink
Cleveland Heights City Council
Meeting highlights

APRIL 15, 2024 - regular meeting

Council members present were Tony Cuda (president), Davida Russell (vice president), Craig Cobb, Gail Larson, Anthony Mattox Jr., and Jim Petras. Mayor Kahlil Seren was also present.

Council actions
Council passed a resolution supporting U.S. Senate Bill 3681, the Preparing and Retaining All (P4A) Education Act.
Council authorized an agreement with Strategic Structure Investments LLC for a loan of $100,000 under the city’s Storefront Loan Fund Program to help renovate storefronts at 2201 North Taylor Road. The repayment period is five years.

LWV Observer: Blanche Volancy.

APRIL 25, 2024 - special meeting

All council members were present.

Council vacancy appointment
Council held a 45-minute executive session to consider the appointment of a public official. In public session, council appointed Jim Posch to the vacant council seat. Mattox voted no. Nine council members voted in favor.

LWV Observer: Jill Tatem.

MAY 6, 2024 - regular meeting

Jim Posch was not present. The mayor and all the other council members were present.

Public comments
Five residents spoke in favor of the Nobility Court project, and one in opposition.

Four residents commented on the city’s Noble Corridor planning project, stressing the need for new businesses and improvements to existing businesses and apartment buildings.

Linda Smolicky, Charter Review Commissions (CRC) chair, announced a public meeting on May 21 for public comments on the draft recommendations, which will be posted on the CRC section of the city’s website by May 15. She thanked the city for supporting the CRC’s work.

Mayor’s report
Mayor Seren commented that high-quality affordable housing is needed, thanked Start Right CDC and TWG Development, and encouraged the community to comment on the proposed TWG Nobility Court project. He also committed to investing in the Noble-Nade district, the funds received from the sale of the property, if it is approved. The mayor described the goal of Grove More May, replacing last year’s No More May, as a way to replace all or some turf grass with pollinators, rain gardens, or other productive plants.

Parks and gardens
Kelly Leidbetter, director of Parks and Recreation, described the status of several facilities projects, including the Cedar Lee, Coventry, and Lennox garages, Can Park repairs and upgrades, and repairs of cracks at Cumberland’s main and toddler pools, which will open for the season on June 3.

Council actions
Council authorized increases of $473,022 to the 2024 budget.
Council authorized an agreement with Wadie Trim Inc. for engineering services for the sanitary sewer outfall on South Taylor Road at a cost of $150,200.
Council authorized several purchases for public works, including a 2024 Ford F-350 DRW cab chassis and a 2024 Ford F-250 super cab at a cost of $140,710, and a Global M3 mechanical street sweeper at a cost of $115,459.
Council authorized several purchases for the police department, including ten 2023 Ford hybrid police utility vehicles at a cost of $475,409, upfitting equipment (lights, sirens, controller, inmate transfer enclosures, computer mounting hardware, and wiring) for the vehicles at a cost of $131,775, and in- and portable radios for the vehicles at a cost of $73,012.
Council approved the County 911 Plan as adopted by the Cuyahoga County 9-1-1 Program Review Committee, and approved a new provider selection of Euclid Mayor Kirsten Holzheimer-Gail to serve on the committee.
Council recognized May 10 as National Provider Appreciation Day to honor childcare providers.
Council acknowledged receipt from the Cedar Lee Special Improvement District of a five-year public services and improvements plan and returned the plan without comments or changes.
Council voted to support U.S. House Bill 82 (the Social Security Fairness Act), which seeks to eliminate the government pension offset and the windfall elimination provision related to retirees’ Social Security benefits.

Council member comments
For the Municipal Services and Environmental Sustainability Committee, Council Member Larson announced that cameras will be installed to monitor illegal dumping in the Caledonia Ravine.
Council Member Russell announced that another tenant-landlord law session will be offered on June 29 at the Noble Neighbor Library.

Committee of the Whole
Council members discussed Cuda’s draft provisions for council participation in economic development projects. Cuda characterized the goals as providing a roadmap for council to consider proposed projects, avoiding surprises, and working with the administration. Mattox suggested that it is important for council members to be educated about current city economic development processes, roles, and responsibilities. Cobb stressed the need for flexibility since each project is different.

LWV Observer: Jill Tatem.

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LWV Observer: Jill Tatem.

Concert series
The Whiskey Kings. Robins is a 25-year resident of Cedar Fairmount.

CONCERT SERIES continued from page 1

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GRANTS continued from page 5

Lack of transparency implies something to hide; having something to hide is a breeding ground for unsubstantiated conspiracy theories. Now is the time for Cleveland Heights to institute these measures as policy and procedures for our Office of Economic Development.

Robert Berger is a retired career counselor and a 25-year resident of Cedar Fairmount.

by day, and by night she’s a rock star. Monica Robins & The Whiskey Kings have been rocking Cleveland since 1998 with classic rock hits of the last four decades, and more. This show, presented in partnership with NOPEK, marks their first concert in University Heights.

June 27 – University Heights Symphonic Band. John Carroll University is the summer home for the UH Symphonic Band. Its first summer concert of 2024 will be the band’s annual Patriotic Show and traditional “Salute to Service” at the Hamlin Quad. Founded in 1970, the UH Symphonic Band is a wind ensemble sponsored by the city of University Heights.

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

LWV Observer: Jill Tatem.

Concert series continued from page 1

Proactive communication, public participation, expenditure transparency, auditing, and controlling overhead costs have helped cities administer community grants openly and provided accountable to residents.

Cleveland Heights residents have been kept in the dark too long about our grant funded programs.
CH’s Yates pens tribute to her husband

Patricia Cangelosi-Williams

The Centers for Disease Control has declared the increasing number of friends and family engaged in caregiving a public health issue. In a new book, *Love is an Action Verb: A Caregiver’s Journey*, Dr. Melodie Yates of Cleveland Heights tells her own story about caring for her husband of 50 years, Dr. Richard Yates, who has progressed deeper into Alzheimer’s disease over the last 16 years.

Throughout that time, Yates wrote poems as a relief and a release, and explained, “My poetry was the mechanism for survival, regeneration, and expression of emotional angst.”

In addition to poetry, the book offers journal questions and an exploration of caregiving. Yates’ book is available at local stores and libraries, and online. Yates is available for presentations, and can be contacted at melodieyates.author@gmail.com.

Patricia Cangelosi-Williams is a 50-years-pluss resident of Cleveland Heights, and a community activist, ASL interpreter, and former business owner.

It’s bicycling season in the Heights

Ángel L. Reyes-Rodriguez

Heights Bicycle Coalition (HBC) and its community partners hosted and supported several events during National Bike Month in May, including Bike to Work Day fueling stations, the annual Ride of Silence, community forums, bike and pedestrian counts, and community rides. The city of Cleveland Heights issued a resolution declaring May as Mary Dunbar Bike Month.

With warmer weather and longer days, June is an excellent time to build on that momentum. HBC is hosting and supporting several events this month, and invites everyone to come out to ride.

Information regarding dates and locations can be found at www.heightsbyciclecoalition.org/ and on HBC’s social media pages (https://linktr.ee/heightsbyciclecoalition).

HBC’s Tuesday Bike Rides season starts on June 4, with rides every other Tuesday through October. These are slow-paced rides around the communities served by HBC/Cleveland Heights, University Heights, Shaker Heights, and South Euclid. Each ride starts from a different location, and the routes are accessible to riders of all abilities. Cyclists meet at the starting point at 7 p.m. The June 4 ride will start at Victory Park in South Euclid, and the June 18 ride will set off from the Cleveland Heights Community Center.

Cedar Lee Bikes in Cleveland Heights leads monthly bike rides on different location, and the routes are accessible to riders of all abilities. Cyclists meet at the starting point at 7 p.m. The June 4 ride will start at Victory Park in South Euclid, and the June 18 ride will set off from the Cleveland Heights Community Center.

Cedar Lee Bikes in Cleveland Heights leads monthly bike rides on the messy house, the big decisions left unmade and the daily drip of decay we witness.”

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Celebrate middle-school filmmakers at June 16 screening

Lance Godard

Building Heights, a cornerstone nonprofit in Cleveland Heights, proudly presents the fourth-season screening of Heights Middle School Shorts (HMSS) at the Cedar Lee Theatre on June 16 (Father’s Day), at 6:30 p.m.

Initiated in 2020, HMSS is more than a film camp; it’s a launchpad for young creatives in the Heights community. Supported tirelessly by the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District, HMSS has grown into a pivotal opportunity to nurture the filmmakers of tomorrow.

While the young filmmakers are currently in the throes of production, the screening audience should expect to take in exciting dramas and heartwarming tales of friendship and adventure.

These stories, crafted with the guidance of industry professionals such as Cynthia Booker, an Emmy-winning journalist, are poised to dazzle and move audiences with their originality and emotional depth. This year, HMSS celebrates Antonio Harper’s homecoming. A distinguished HMSS alum turned Hollywood director and producer, Harper’s journey from Heights student to film industry professional embodies the dreams HMSS strives to ignite.

“Returning to HMSS isn’t just a homecoming for me,” Harper said. “It’s a chance to give back to the place where my cinematic dreams took flight. I remember the eager faces of young filmmakers, just like I was, ready to tell their stories to the world.”

One of the first HMSS film instructors, Harper went west to pursue his dreams in Los Angeles, at the company he founded with his partner, Abby Burton, West 10 G Productions.

Don’t miss this inspiring event. Join the young filmmakers on the red carpet to celebrate their achievements. To secure tickets, and learn how to contribute to the success of future filmmakers, visit https://heightsmiddleschoolshorts.org.

HMSS is fostered by partnerships with the Tabor Family and the Greater Cleveland Urban Film Foundation. Building Heights believes in the transformative power of the arts. Its mission is to nurture young minds and foster an environment where creativity can flourish. Through HMSS and other initiatives, it provides the tools, guidance, and support necessary for young talents to explore and excel in the cinematic arts.

Lance Godard is a 25-year resident of Cleveland Heights, co-founder and vice president of Building Heights, and co-founder of Heights Middle School Shorts.

Russell and Costello to host free Legal Aid advice clinic on June 29

Kim Sergio Inglis

In a press release, Cleveland Heights City Council Vice President Da- vida Russell announced that she and Judge J.J. Costello will collaborate with the Legal Aid Society (LAS) of Cleveland to host a LAS Brief advice clinic on June 29, as part of the Russell’s ongoing Tenant Landlord Series. The event aims to offer tailored legal guidance and support to individuals facing civil legal issues.

The clinic will take place on Sat- urday, June 29, 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., at the newly reopened Heights Librar- ies Noble Neighborhood Branch.

The program will begin with a session on tenant-landlord rights led by Judge Costello. Attendees will then have the opportunity to engage with 14 volunteer attorneys specializing in housing, family law, consumer rights, estate planning, and expungement inquiries, supported by the law firm Squire Patton and Boggs.

“We’re committed to ensuring access to justice for all members of our community,” said Russell. “This partnership with the Legal Aid Society will empower individuals by providing the knowledge and resources they need to navigate complex legal matters.”

For more information, contact Russell at councilwomanrusselgmail.com.

Kim Sergio Inglis, Heights Observer editor, adapted this article from a press release.
Vince Reddy

Weather-wise, Greater Cleveland seems to avoid the extremes other places endure. Though we sometimes experience weather-related problems, like short-term travel limitations or skies that remain gray for weeks on end, we are unlikely to experience a storm like Katrina, or Buffalo's Blizzard of '22.

Despite our great weather, however, we are not immune to other forms of disaster, and the foreclosure crisis that underlaid the Great Recession of 2007–9 is among the worst we have experienced. Though the crisis affected the entire United States, some places, including Greater Cleveland, were hit harder, and within those places, some neighborhoods suffered more than others.

The Broadway-Slavic Village neighborhood of Cleveland was sometimes referred to as the epicenter of the crisis, but our neighbor, the city of East Cleveland, fared as poorly or worse. No community in Cleveland or its inner suburbs escaped, and in Cleveland Heights, the neighborhoods of the far north, “Greater Noble,” seemed among the most affected. During the worst years, vacant properties, disrepair, and lawlessness proliferated. It could be argued that most homes in the northern neighborhoods had near-zero market value at the time, and the number of demolitions that took place over a few years gave the impression of a community being dismantled.

Perhaps surprisingly, and despite persistent challenges, CH's north side of today looks much better than the one of 10 years ago. There are many reasons, including overall improvement in the regional real-estate market, the waning of the foreclosure crisis, and the work and narrative-building of local institutions such as Noble Neighbors (www.nobleneighbors.com) and Home Repair Resource Center (https://hrrc-ch.org/). Notably, Greater Noble experienced a slight increase in population between 2010 and 2020.

An analysis of Greater Noble’s population,

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This article’s definition of Greater Noble matches the area served by Noble Neighbors, which, per Brenda May, one of the organization’s founders and leaders, encompasses the five census tracts that touch Noble Road (tracts 1401, 1403.01, 1403.02, 1404 and 1405).

For Slavic Village, I looked at the census tracts that most closely match the boundaries of the city of Cleveland's Broadway-Slavic Village statistical planning area, and, though the 2020 tract boundaries don’t precisely match those of the previous censuses, they are very close.

The numbers in the table, of course, were also affected by phe-
nomena other than the foreclosure crisis, and there are other kinds of information that are useful in assessing the damage it caused. The as-of date for the 2020 census—April 1 of that year—fell at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic; thus, the numbers do not provide insight into the effects of that crisis. A seeming oddity like Lakewood’s significant population loss over the 20 years could possibly be partly explained by that city’s rapid gentrification. Despite their limitations, the numbers have a lot to say.

The map shows Greater Noble outlined within Cleveland Heights and the city of East Cleveland immediately to its left. The highlighted Cleveland neighborhood is Slavic Village.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census is the source of the table information, which was drawn from the decennial censuses mentioned above. Except for Cleveland and Greater Noble, the places on the map are identified by their initials.

Recently retired from LAND studio, Vince Reddy is a 27-year resident of Cleveland Heights. He was the city’s zoning administrator from 1996 to 2005.
Hawkins retires from Reaching Heights

Mazie Adams

After 18 years at Reaching Heights, and the last 10 as its executive director, Krista Hawthorne has embarked on her well-deserved retirement.

"Krista has led Reaching Heights with a clear and intuitive understanding of our role in our community and alongside our public schools," remarked Board President Josie Moore. "She brought a steady hand, kind heart, and thoughtful perspective to every service performed, relationship nurtured, and connection forged."

"Krista is a champion for our schools, students, and families," said CH-UH school district Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby. "She has been a supportive force that has worked to provide our students with outstanding experiences, to build bridges among partners and to keep pushing the district to be its best. She has given her time and heart to the work and we are a better district because of her commitment. I celebrate her for her leadership on Reaching Heights and wish her the very best in her next adventure!"

Because of her steady leadership, Reaching Heights has successfully weathered significant trials, including the effect that state testing had on classrooms and the impact of COVID on the entire community.

"Moore noted, "Krista shepherded us through an exceptional moment of history, guided us to face challenges, understood what each moment asked of us, and moved us forward with a renewed commitment to our values of equity and service."

"Krista had to remodel the organization and she gave new meaning to community ownership for our schools," said former Reaching Heights Executive Director Susie Kaeser. "She had the connection to the schools, the determination and the confidence to do it!"

Commenting on her time with Reaching Heights, Hawthorne said, "The staff of RH has a great vantage point to observe, learn from, and work with everyone involved in the education of Heights students and the leaders of our city governments, faith organizations, and local nonprofits. I loved the process of determining the ways RH could contribute to enriching students, supporting teachers, and connecting the community to our public schools."

"Of critical importance to me for the future of Reaching Heights is the ongoing effort to dismantle systemic racism which is a barrier to education that each of us allows to continue if we are not continuously working to eliminate it. Reaching Heights exists to ensure all Heights students have access to the best education we can offer them. Raising awareness and changing behavior to end systemic racism is essential to fulfilling the purpose of Reaching Heights."

The Board of Reaching Heights bids a fond farewell to Hawthorne, who has led the organization with calm and thoughtful insight, a dedication to the Heights public schools, and a fierce passion to bring every student a high-quality education.

Mazie Adams is a lifelong resident of Cleveland Heights, a supporter of the Heights schools, and a member of the Board of Directors of Reaching Heights.

Register for ODA’s free summer camp

Daa’iyah Rahman

Open Doors Academy’s (ODA) free summer camp will return to Cleveland Heights this summer.

ODA invites learners in grades K-8 to enrol in its camp at Monticello Middle School to participate in a unique blend of academics, arts, and physical activities designed to prevent summer learning loss and foster individual growth.

The camp operates Mondays through Thursdays (not Fridays), and participants can choose one of two sessions:

• Session 1: June 10 through July 3 (camp closed June 19; no camp July 4).
• Session 2: July 8 through July 25.

The camp program comprises:

• Educational Focus: Each day is packed with activities spanning literacy, arts, STEM, sports, health, and leadership, tailored to be age-appropriate and engaging.
• Excursions and Partnerships: Scholars will not only learn on campus but will also explore new ideas at local attractions and through collaborations with over 10 local organizations.
• Meals and Transport: Nutritious breakfast and lunch are provided daily, with free transportation options available from selected schools to Monticello Middle School.

• Family Engagement: ODA values the power of family involvement and offers workshops and events to integrate families into the educational journeys of their children.

Spots at ODA’s free summer camp fill up quickly. Visit www.opendoorsacademy.org/programs/enrollment for more details, and to register.

ODA works to protect, inspire, nurture, and challenge youth to reach their full potential. For additional information, send an e-mail to summercamp@odacle.org.

Daa’iyah Rahman is the marketing and advancement manager for Open Doors Academy. Outside of work she spends the majority of her time performing with Black Tulip dance collective, attending shows in Cain Park, and enjoying her three dogs and fiancé.
Heights Observer June 1, 2024

Student transportation costs

A purchase order for transportation was needed to address a shortfall of what had been budgeted. Treasurer Gainer said the district spends approximately $900,000 annually to transport students, mostly special education students. Sources said the district spends more money transporting non-public school children than the district’s school children.

Jeffrey Johnson resignation

The board recognized the expiration of Jeffrey Johnson, a respected and admired principal who is leaving Monticello Middle School for a position at Cleveland State University.

Superintendent comments

The district is holding focus groups for teachers and staff to discuss ways to better serve and support employers. Teachers are receiving training for the new math curriculum. Three district teachers will be trainers for the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) summer institute. AVID is a professional support and training institute for teachers nationwide.

Treasurer’s “Three Things” presentation

Gainer’s “Three Things” presentation involved public records. The Ohio Revised Code public records act sets the legal requirements for keeping and disclosing public records. Public records information can be found on the district's website.

State education issues

Malia Lewis denounced efforts by the Ohio legislature to downgrade professional requirements for teaching jobs in Ohio Senate Bill 168.

LWV Observer: Paula Goodwin.

Documents for all board meetings can be accessed at civil.org/BoardOfEducation.aspx. Board meetings are livestreamed at www.youtube.com/CIVUESchools, and recorded for later viewing.

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LWV Observer: Paula Goodwin.

Documents for all board meetings can be accessed at civil.org/BoardOfEducation.aspx. Board meetings are livestreamed at www.youtube.com/CIVUESchools, and recorded for later viewing.

Student transportation costs

A purchase order for transportation was needed to address a shortfall of what had been budgeted. Treasurer Gainer said the district spends approximately $900,000 annually to transport students, mostly special education students. Sources said the district spends more money transporting non-public school children than the district’s school children.

Jeffrey Johnson resignation

The board recognized the expiration of Jeffrey Johnson, a respected and admired principal who is leaving Monticello Middle School for a position at Cleveland State University.

Superintendent comments

The district is holding focus groups for teachers and staff to discuss ways to better serve and support employers. Teachers are receiving training for the new math curriculum. Three district teachers will be trainers for the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) summer institute. AVID is a professional support and training institute for teachers nationwide.

Treasurer’s “Three Things”

Gainer’s “Three Things” presentation involved public records. The Ohio Revised Code public records act sets the legal requirements for keeping and disclosing public records. Public records information can be found on the district’s website.

State education issues

Malia Lewis denounced efforts by the Ohio legislature to downgrade professional requirements for teaching jobs in Ohio Senate Bill 168. The Ohio Historical Society must approve the destruction of public records.

LWV Observer: Paula Goodwin.

Documents for all board meetings can be accessed at civil.org/BoardOfEducation.aspx. Board meetings are livestreamed at www.youtube.com/CIVUESchools, and recorded for later viewing.

#1 Roofing

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216-319-0430
Cleveland Heights – University Heights Public Library Board
Meeting highlights

APRIL 15, 2024

Board members present were Vikas Turakhia (president), Annette Iwamoto (vice president), Darla Fleckner, Tyler McGraw, and Halle Tumbure. Pam Craigley and Melissa Soto-Schwartz were not present. The meeting lasted 45 minutes.

Presentation
The board was at the HUC (Heights Knowledge and Innovation Center) for a presentation/demonstration until 7 p.m.

Financial report
The board approved the financial and investment report for March 2024. Fiscal Officer Deborah Hermann reported a decrease in revenue this month from state taxes, which is not unusual for this time of year, but is of concern if the decrease persists over several months.

Board actions
The board:
• Approved technology fund expenditures for servers and laptops.
• Approved a 2024 amended permanent appropriation totaling $121,610.22.
• Approved an extended leave request for one staff member.
• Approved a salary grade move into a management level position for the strategic projects manager, noting the position’s principal grant-writing role for the entire Heights Libraries and the accumulations over the past two years of additional duties similar to those of other public service managers.
• Recognized the retirement of Human Resource Manager Laurie Moraito and her many contributions to the library during 22 years of service.

Personnel report
Sabrina Appalks was hired as the new human resource manager. Positions are now posted for the Noble Neighborhood Library.

Director’s report
Director Nancy Levin thanked staff for their planning and participation in all the eclipse events. They provided fascinating programs, distributed glasses, and helped with the crowds on the day of the eclipse. Many people experienced the eclipse at all three library locations.

National Library Week was celebrated April 8–12.

New public printers are being installed at all branches. Compliments have been received at the University Heights branch on its color printer.

The library’s free-speech policy was reviewed. Heights Libraries does not endorse any speech made by outside groups in its meeting rooms. This includes political, social, religious, and partisan groups, as well as groups that advocate or advance controversial ideas or disparage others. The provision of meeting room space to a group is not an endorsement of the group, its beliefs, or its speech.

Suggested $5 donation at the door. Your donation makes Cleveland VegFest possible.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS:

THE CLEVELAND VEGAN SOCIETY PRESENTS:

SATURDAY, JUNE 22 11AM-5PM
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*FREE ADMISSION*

www.heightsobserver.org
Heard is library’s first maker-in-residence

Connie Shultz presents Lola and The Troll.
Saturday, June 8, 11:30 a.m.
Lee Rd Library
at
Coventry Village Branch
registration required for kids ages K–6. Join Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Connie Schultz as she presents her debut picture book, Lola and the Troll, an inspiring story about a young girl who decides to bravely stand up to a bully, Schultz, the author of two memoirs and the novel, The Daughters of Erinтон, lives in Cleveland with her husband, Sherrod Brown, and their rescue dogs, Franklin and Walter. They have four children and seven grandchildren. A book signing will follow the presentation. Registration required at heightslibrary.org.

What’s going on at your library?

Coventry Village Branch
1925 Coventry Road, 216-331-3400
Tuesday, June 4, 3 p.m.
Read to a Chicken.
One of our chicken friends will be visiting the library to listen to children read stories. Each child may register for a 10-minute time slot with a backyard chicken. For those in grades K-6. Registration required at heightslibrary.org.

Lee Road Branch
2345 Lee Road, 216-931-3600
Saturday, June 8, 11:30 a.m.
Connie Shultz presents Lola and The Troll.
Join Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and best-selling author Connie Schultz as she presents her debut picture book, Lola and the Troll, an inspiring story about a young girl who decides to bravely stand up to a bully, Schultz, the author of two memoirs and the novel, The Daughters of Erinтон, lives in Cleveland with her husband, Sherrod Brown, and their rescue dogs, Franklin and Walter. They have four children and seven grandchildren. A book signing will follow the presentation. Registration required at heightslibrary.org.

Noble Neighborhood Branch
2860 Noble Road, 216-591-5665
Wednesday, June 12, 6:30 p.m.
East Side Pride Book Discussion.
Read with pride this summer! This book discussion group is for people who identify as LGBTQIA+ or want to explore LGBTQIA+ stories and experiences. The group meets at The Bottle House, 2050 Lee Road, the second Wednesday of each month. Registration begins two weeks before each event. This month’s title is Light from Uncommon Stars by Ryka Aoki.

University Heights Branch
15866 Cedar Road, 216-331-4700
Friday, June 28, 3 p.m.
Decorate a Piñata at the Walt!
Come decorate your own piñata at Walter Stinson Park with colorful tissue paper and other craft supplies, and fill it with small toys, trinkets, candy and messages using supplies provided by the library. Save your piñata for a party this summer, for some outdoor fun at home, or give it as a gift to a friend. The base of the piñatas will already be made; this program’s purpose is to decorate, fill and finish a piñata project. Registration is limited to 12 participants (due to supply) and will take place at Walter Stinson Park, 2301 Fenwick Road, under the gazebo. Register at heightslibrary.org.

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Rain
It has definitely
I enjoy meeting new art
LaSaundra Robinson in her studio.

Shannon Morris
LaSaundra Robinson, an accom-
artist that inspires me. Henry Taylor,
What artist(s) most influ-
What is your biggest chal-
What do you most enjoy
I wouldn't say that there
What artist(s) most influ-
I love

Artful presents Batrachomyomachia

The Earth has become uninhabitable. The last escape ship from Earth (Seattle, to be exact) arrives to its new home planet centuries after all the others. The pilots are not prepared for what they find there. LAST SHIP TO PROXIMA CENTAURI asks us to examine 21st Century America through the lens of futurist neo-colonialism, 2000 years after the end of Must See TV.

Who takes on the role of “outsiders” in this new world? The planetary tables have been turned. But is the new order on Proxima any better? The author relentlessly pulls on these threads while the action of a hard-landing on a distant planet plays out.

The biggest challenge I face is being a single mom and a caregiver with not a lot of support. Having lupus steals my energy, but whenever I can I’m out here trying my best to move forward with my art and this amazing art community we have in Cleveland.

Why are rainbows a common theme in your work? Rainbows for me are a symbol of going through some sort of storm or trouble in your life and making it to a better time—a goal or dream that you may have.

What do you most enjoy about curating the Juneteenth exhibit? I enjoy meeting new artists. It is exciting to meet a new artist that maybe has never shown their work before, and experiencing that first-time excitement with them is awesome.

How has curation of the exhibit influenced your own work? Seeing all the different work that comes in and all the different styles and techniques are really inspiring.

Why is ARTFUL where you choose to do your work? I love my studio at ARTFUL because it is definitely a place you can grow as an artist. There is an amazing community of artists that are always willing to help and give you feedback on whatever you’re doing or working on. And being a mom of special needs kids I definitely needed a place that is accessible.

Your studio is between Jacqui Brown and John Martin, also longtime ARTFUL resident artists. Have you formed a bond strengthened by your diverse backgrounds? It has definitely been a plus having Jacqui and John as studio neighbors. I would say we help each other the most. They are like my work friends now that I don’t have a traditional job.

The Juneteenth exhibition will be open through July 26’s PEACE Pops event, 6-9 p.m. The gallery is open on Wednesdays, 4-6 p.m.

Shannon Morris is the executive director of ARTFUL Cleveland, and a lifetime resident of the Heights.

Artful presents Batrachomyomachia

The first two performances will be at the newly renovated Brownhoist Ballroom, at 4403 St. Clair Ave. in Cleveland, Aug. 23 and 25. This summer, ARTFUL is at it again—producing another community-designed theater piece through a series of workshops and summer youth camps. Batrachomyomachia—an Homeric epic, which translates as the battle between the frogs and the mice—is this year’s theme.

The camps and workshops begin in mid-July, and the schedule will be posted by mid-June on ARTFUL’s website, https://artfulcleveland.org. For information, send an e-mail to artacts_cv@outlook.com.

Interns model prototypes of frog headpieces for this summer’s production.

Robin VonLear
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Already, high-school interns are working together to create prototypes for the murine and frogish headpieces, armor and other props that will bring to life this humorous epic.

The first two performances will be at the newly renovated Brownhoist Ballroom, at 4403 St. Clair Ave. in Cleveland, Aug. 23 and 25. The final performance will take place in UH’s Walter Stinson Park on Sept. 29.

Robin VanLear is a member of ARTFUL at Coventry PEACE Campus, and founder and former director of community arts at the Cleveland Museum of Art. VanLear and her artist husband, Jean Rhinehart, are 34-year residents of Cleveland Heights.

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Cleveland OH 44113

LAST SHIP TO PROXIMA CENTAURI
BY GREG LAM

The Juneteenth exhibition will open on Sept. 29.

For Tickets & Info:
www.heightsobserver.org
20 www.heightsobserver.org

Heights Observer June 1, 2024
Heights Observer June 1, 2024

Feinberg Gallery’s summer season has opened

The concepts for the featured works are built on the foundation of both artists’ individual BFA thesis presentations, then reimagined and integrated to create an immersive experience for viewers.

“I am so excited to feature Liana and Thomas’ work, and capture the energy their collaboration will bring,” stated Michelle Barnicky Stachnik, the gallery’s curator.

“The Feinberg Gallery wants to exhibit artists in all phases of their careers. This show will highlight the artists’ transition from student to working artist. Releasing the entire space to their concepts will be invigorating and something entirely new for the gallery.”

It will be the first full-immersive installation in the Feinberg Gallery featuring artists’ use of familiar, ordinary objects to draw in the viewer while challenging how one identifies with those objects when they are used or placed in a different context.

The exhibit is part of an ongoing collaboration between Cain Park and CIA, as both institutions strive to keep the arts in the Greater Cleveland land Area relevant, accessible, and thriving.

All Feinberg Art Gallery exhibits are free to the public. Throughout the Cain Park summer season, the gallery opens one hour prior to all performances in the Alma Theater and Evans Amphitheater, and will remain open through intermission.

For more information on Cain Park exhibits and events, visit www.cainpark.com or call the box office at 216-371-5000.

Cain Park provides experiences in the performing arts and arts education. Comprising multiple venues in a one-of-a-kind historic outdoor setting, Cain Park has been owned and operated by the city of Cleveland Heights since 1938.

Jessica Rosenblatt, marketing specialist for Cain Park, has worked with the city of Cleveland Heights since 2013.

mbkpf.is the culmination of Dobama Theatre’s Young Playwrights Program, which teaches playwriting to students across Northeast Ohio. This year-round education program is taught by professional playwrights and theater artists. The wide-ranging resources available include classroom residencies, virtual workshops, instructional videos, and a fully adaptable curriculum based on grade level. These resources provide the necessary tools for interested students to submit 10-minute scripts of any genre for consideration for the festival.

Once students submit their original plays, every play is read and scored by at least three adult judges with experience in writing, theater arts, and/or education. This year more than 65 judges contributed to the scoring process.

MBKPF was created in honor of Dobama co-founder Marilyn Bianchi. An actress, teacher and director, Bianchi passed away in 1977 after battling cancer. During her last five years she did the work she loved most—encouraging children to discover their own voices, self-worth and creativity through theater. Bianchi’s family and friends established this festival in her name, to continue introducing kids to the joys and rewards of live theater and to celebrate the creativity of young writers.

Plays to be produced this year were written by Nathan Balk, Mia Barefoot, Lauren Bonst, L’Execea Cannon, Gloria Chasney, Griffin Connaway, Eliyott Garcia, Mia Hart, Katie Scheff, Sachi Shah, and Thomas Richards V, with honors being awarded to plays by Olivia Airgood, Avighn Asur, Timothy Denysyuk, and operated by the city of Cleveland Heights since 1938.

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Dobama presents annual Bianchi Kids’ Playwriting Fest June 7–9

Emily Polcyn

The 46th Annual Marilyn Bianchi Kids’ Playwriting Festival (MBKPF) will honor 24 young playwrights the weekend of June 7, 8, and 9. More than 250 students in grades 7–12 submitted plays to this year’s MBKPF, which is the oldest event of its kind in the nation.

MBKPF is the culmination of Dobama Theatre’s Young Playwrights Program, which teaches playwriting to students across Northeast Ohio. This year-round education program is taught by professional playwrights and theater artists. The wide-ranging resources available include classroom residencies, virtual workshops, instructional videos, and

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Jessica Rosenblatt, marketing specialist for Cain Park, has worked with the city of Cleveland Heights since 2013.
You’re living in a small town

I’ve joined the ranks of school volunteers (which I highly recommend). I did it at every school my kids attended (I was even a “room mother”), and this past semester I started at Fairfax Elementary School, where my grandchildren, Westin and Baxter, attend school. I was working with a class of fourths- and fifth-graders on a writing project.

A few weeks ago, I was at my son and daughter-in-law’s house, looking at the pictures of that class in my grandchildren’s Fairfax yearbook. I was pointind out various kids and asking my son if he knew them. He had connections to several of them or their parents. I pointed to one kid and said, “This guy seems really creative.” My son said, “You know who this is, right? That’s Lucy Smith’s [not her real name] son.”

I hadn’t known that (though when he said it, I realized that the boy looked a lot like his mother). Lucy and my daughter-in-law are friends since they went to Heights High. Plus, I’ve known Lucy’s mother—this kid’s grandmother—since our own children were toddlers.

This kind of thing is pretty typical of all of us who grew up in a community and stayed there. At a recent lacrosse game, in which 9-year-old Westin was playing, I started talking to the mother of one of her best friends. I knew that family’s last name—a not-very-common name—and told the girl’s mother that I had known a guy with that name when I went to Heights High. I asked her if my old friend might have been her husband’s relative. She said yes, he’s his uncle, his father’s brother. Then I asked if she was also from Cleveland Heights. She said she was, and my son, standing nearby, pointed out that she had grown up on the street where my son and his family live now, and that her mother still lives in the house this woman grew up in.

I asked the woman what her name had been before she got married, which I often ask, to see if I know people’s parents or other relatives, because having lived here all my life, plus, my parents having grown up in Cleveland Heights, there’s a decent chance that I will. As soon as the woman said her last name, I recognized it—and her—from when she was 8 and in my daughter’s elementary school class, 30 years ago. As soon as I got home, I pulled out their school yearbook from that year, and there was this woman and my daughter on the same page, the woman looking just like her own daughter does now.

There’s a girl on Westin’s swim team, the Heights Tigersharks, of which my son, Dan, is the coach. And this is really a full-circle thing: I remember this girl’s mother, when she was a child, on Dan’s Little League team, of which her father was the coach.

When my kids were going to Heights High, my wife and I would go to football games, where we could sit in our stands and see the results on the scoreboard. Sometimes our son Dan, who now plays for the Tigersharks, was there. I would look around the room at the other parents and often see people I sat in those classrooms with when we were students at Heights. (Well, when they were students at Heights, and I was just there—but, still, I found the experience meaningful.)

When my kids were teenagers and we would take them to concerts at Cain Park, they learned that, at intermission, they needed to get money from me and then get away from me immediately and head right to the concession stand without me, because they knew I’d never make it there. Every three steps, I’d run into someone else and talk to them. And I would almost never get to the rest-room—which I really wanted to do. So, anyway, two things come to mind. One is that I find it really gratifying when I run into people who used to be little kids that I knew (when I was already an adult), who now have little kids of their own. And the fact that they’ve chosen to live where they grew up, and that a lot of those kids now know each other, are big bonuses.

And the other is that while Cleveland Heights has a population of about 44,000, and it’s in the

continued on page 23
HEARD continued from page 19

The maker-in-residence this fall will be Cleveland-based Tahm Lytle, a multidisciplinary artist whose work is deeply rooted in their identities as a Black and Latine queer artist-activist. Lytle will be focused on printmaking during their time at the STEAM Lab. Lytle’s residency will run Sept. 1 through Oct. 31.

Details about Heights Libraries maker-in-residence program can be found at heightslibrary.org. The STEAM Lab is located in the HKIC Building, at 2340 Lee Road.

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

DOBAMA continued from page 21

Tessa Okuh, Sophia Petrovic, Rithvik Prakash, Lilith Schmidt, Katherine Sheeran, Sophie Tomaszweska, Sophia Vovos, Mae Wallace, Charlotte White, and Jonathon Wysochanski.

The produced plays will be directed by Chennelle Bryant-Harris, Rachel Gold, Brooke Myers, Cali Prakash, Lilith Schmidt, Katherine White, and Jonathon Wysochanski.

Tickets for the Marilyn Bianchi Kids’ Playwriting Festival’s Opening Night Benefit are $5. The benefit takes place on Friday, June 7, at 7 p.m.

Admission is free for the performances on Saturday, June 8, at 2 and 7 p.m., and Sunday, June 9, at 2 p.m.

Reservations can be made by calling 216-932-3936 or visiting www.dobama.org.

Emily Polcyn is a resident associate director in arts administration at Dobama Theatre.

middle of a Greater Cleveland with a population of more than two million, situated right next to the city of Cleveland, it still feels like a small town, mainly because a lot of people stick around, and a lot of people know a lot of other people here.

David Budin is a freelance writer for national and local publications, the former editor of Cleveland Magazine and 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.

HEARD continued from page 19

sion to start a maker-in-residence program and connect with artists who understand the intersection of art and technology. We are really looking forward to seeing what Alex creates." Residents can meet Heard in the HKIC STEAM Lab this summer to learn more about their work and try out Heard’s soft-sculpting technique at open studio hours on Thursdays, June 13 through Aug. 8, 1-5 p.m.

Heard will also teach four public programs during June and July. The maker-in-residence this fall

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(Ballot on pg. 19)

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SONGS & STORIES continued from page 22

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