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THE LAKEWOOD OBSERVER

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Gerald Stanley Lee

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Volume 21, Issue 13, July 2, 2025

Brian F. Ventura Announces Candidacy For Lakewood City Council At-Large

by Nicholas Ventura

Brian F. Ventura has formally announced his candidacy for Lakewood City Council At-Large, driven by nearly three decades as a dedicated resident and a deep passion for the city's future. He is committed to fostering transparent governance, effective policies, and a brighter, more equitable Lakewood for all residents.

Ventura's campaign is built on integrity, empathy,



and a profound understanding of community needs, believing strong leadership comes from service and collaboration.

"Raised in a blue-collar family, watching my father and grandfather as 407 Teamsters, with my dad as a union steward, instilled in me the unwavering importance of fair treatment and a strong sense of community responsibility. This background deeply influences my commitment to equitable practices for all working families in Lakewood," states

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Kyle V. Robinson For Ward 2 Lakewood City Council

by Kyle Robinson

I've lived in Lakewood for nearly a decade, first as a renter on the Gold Coast and now as a homeowner on Cliffdale Avenue. I'm an attorney, a small business owner, and I was recently appointed by Mayor George to the Lakewood Citizens Advisory Committee. But more important than any title are my values and what I plan to stand for as a representative of Ward 2.

My path here wasn't easy. I struggled through high school and didn't have a clear direction early on. But through hard work and the support of others, I found my footing. I graduated from Kent State,



went to law school in Michigan, and became a licensed attorney in New York. Eventually I returned to Ohio and started my own legal education business out of my apartment in Lakewood. That business now serves professionals in 38 states and employs members of my own family.

Lakewood has played a big role in my journey. It's not just where I live, it's home. I'm running for council because I want to give back to the community that gave me so much. I want to fight for more affordable housing, help our most vulnerable neighbors, support small business, and be the kind of representative Ward 2 deserves: present, responsive, and ready to work.

I believe serving on City Council means being thoughtful, informed, and engaged. It requires asking the right questions, going to the right departments, and doing the

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Board Of Education Moves Forward With Sale Of Franklin

by Christine Gordillo

Lakewood City Schools is moving forward with the sale of the former Franklin School building following a public auction and consideration by the Board of Education. The Board held a special meeting on Thursday, June 26, to vote on the sale of the building to Inner Peace Cleveland, a local organization dedicated to supporting adults with disabilities and their families. The motion was approved [4-0] (board member Colleen Clark-Sutton was traveling and was not able to attend).

The Franklin building,

which formerly housed the Franklin School of Opportunity (FSO) became vacant following FSO's relocation to Lakewood High School. With the building no longer serving a purpose for the District in its current state, the District pursued the sale of the property through a public auction held on June 23.

The auction drew interest from eight different groups and concluded with the highest bid of \$775,000 submitted by David Fox, director of operations at Inner Peace Cleveland.

Inner Peace Cleveland (www.innerpeacecleveland.com) is an organization committed to advancing the well-being and independence of adults with disabilities by providing life skills training, job readiness programs, family support, and inclusive community engagement. Inner Peace has indicated it will preserve the Franklin building structure while making improvements aligned with its mission.

"The Franklin building has long served as a place for growth and opportunity, and we're excited that its next

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In Person Preview On July 12 Hixson's Treasures Auctioned

by Katherine Isenhardt

Rachel Davis Fine Arts Auctioneers announces the sale of the collection of Hixson's Flower Barn on Saturday, July 19, 2025 at 9:30am.

In-person Preview for the auction will be held at Hixson's, on Saturday, July, 12 and Tuesday through Friday, July 15-18 from 10:00am-4:00pm. The auction is online only, and the catalog can be previewed online at www.racheldavisfinearts.com

after July 5th. Hixson's is located at 14125 Detroit Road. For additional information please call Rachel Davis Fine Arts at 216-939-1190.

Bill Hixson brought joy and beauty to his community year after year, becoming a cherished figure locally and internationally. His artistry, mentorship and holiday magic have left a lasting impression and will continue to inspire for

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Have You Heard Of Laska Lakewood?

by Heather McCormick

Laska Lakewood is an up-and-coming Community Market being held "by the community, for the community." Laska is held biweekly on Sundays and is growing rapidly as word spreads throughout Lakewood and Northeast Ohio. When attending the market, located at Cordova and Madison in Lakewood, one can expect to find treasures of all kinds. Vintage cloth-



ing, one-of-a-kind paintings, miscellaneous yard sale goodies, live henna, bubbles, and more. There will be music, food

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Welcome New Police



Left to right: Chief of Police Kevin Fischer and new patrol officers, Christina Meyer, Terry Lowther and Mayor Mayor George, who had just given them the oath of office. Congratulations and welcome to both of you!

LAKEWOOD OBSERVER TURNS 20

Where Has The Time Gone?

by Debra O’Bryan

The Lakewood Observer is celebrating 20 years of providing a free paper to our fine city this fourth of July. It was started as an online forum to discuss the “Bogus Blight” that was initiated to take and demolish residents’ homes and displace over 1,500 people from affordable rental units for a shiny new object, promised by a small group of residents and politicians.

Those old enough may remember the demand for a Cheesecake Factory, and even more importantly a “Pants store.” Yes, you read that correctly, that was the big issue in town pitting neighbors against neighbors. In 2004, Lakewood gained the national spotlight when our former Mayor Madeline Cain appeared on 60 Minutes to defend the planned project proposed for the west end of Detroit Avenue. Residents won the argument when the eminent domain issue was placed on the ballot.

What we discovered throughout



From a t-shirt from the battle over the West End.. the ordeal was that Lakewood needed a paper, both online and in print that helped residents see all sides of a debate. A way for critical thought to come into play. A paper written and produced by the residents and business owners who

actually have a vested interest in the city.

Hence, Civic Journalism was started in Ohio, right here. Not a paper that bends to the will of corporate sponsors or non profit agendas, but a source of information about all aspects of Lakewood by the people who care about their city. Whether it’s a devoted teacher sharing the latest outcome of a ballgame, a neighbor down the street writing about his passion for gardening, a business celebrating success, or the hard discussions about changes being made to the city we love. We continue to be a source for groups and individuals to get their message out.

When we started, we had no idea that we would be losing our hospital to yet another ill-conceived plan, or that our schools would become monetized. But people had, and do have a chance to discuss these issues, and document them for history. We still feel that it’s important to do so. Whether people learn from it or not remains open. It’s all

here in these pages that we put out twice a month as a community service. A gift to the residents from a handful of Lakewoodites to the rest. Thousands have written and taken part. It’s humbling.

I just want to say a huge Thank You to all of our advertisers who make it possible. The pages we print have always depended on you. AI is changing the way we receive information. It will become harder to find veracity in what we read and see with our own eyes. The Lakewood Observer will continue to strive to bring you facts along with opinion to assist in navigating our future. We will be launching a new website this summer to support this very idea.

From day one, we continued to encourage all to take part of this now award-winning project that has a life of its own and chronicles the vibrant city we call home. As Robert Hunter said, “What a long, strange trip it’s been.” Happy Independence Day Lakewood! *Keep your speech free.*



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lakewoodartsfest.org

Lakewood Arts Festival congratulates
The Lakewood Observer
on your 20th Anniversary of
keeping Lakewood *in the know!*



Your Independent Source for Lakewood News & Opinion

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 **Lakewood Observer**

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If you’d like to help this history-making 20-year-old project continue to publish the words, stories and images of fellow Lakewoodites follow the QR Code to the Member Center and sign up at www.lakewoodobserver.com/members.

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Isn’t it time you joined this effort to report community news while preserving our history?

THE MAYOR’S CORNER

Addressing The Recent Power Outages

by **Meghan George**
Mayor/Safety Director, City of Lakewood

For this edition of the Mayor’s Corner, I am sharing a letter I sent last week to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) with Councilmen Kazy and Slife of Cleveland. As many of you have experienced personally, FirstEnergy Corporation’s performance on behalf of the people of Lakewood in the recent past has been an utter failure. Just last Friday, service from FirstEnergy went down once again, with the outage affecting over 10,000 and some losing power for well over 24 hours. While the Ohio Legislature has prevented cities from having any direct power to force action by public utilities, as mayor, I have been advocating for Lakewood and applying pressure to First Energy, PUCO, and other elected officials to address this situation. I also urge any of you that have experienced outages to make direct complaints to PUCO as well. The more voices the better. I will keep our Lakewood community updated on our progress ongoing to address this situation.

CONTACT INFO FOR PUCO:
Call Center (800) 686-7826
<https://puco.ohio.gov/help-center/contact-us>

June 27, 2025
Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO)
180 E. Broad St.
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chair French and PUCO Commissioners:

As an Ohio public utility, FirstEnergy has been entrusted with one of the most important duties to people of this great state – ensuring that they have safe, reliable, and fairly-priced access to electricity. For the past year, FirstEnergy has fundamentally and repeatedly failed in that duty, with frequent and widespread power losses across the near west side communities of Cuyahoga County

in Cleveland and Lakewood. These losses are not explained by weather, acts of God, or any other excusable factors. They are clearly the fault of FirstEnergy’s corporate ineptitude and apathy.

As the elected officials representing over 100,000 constituents who reside in these densely populated communities, we demand that PUCO:

- Launch a full investigation into the chronic failure of FirstEnergy to provide power as required to our communities, especially in times of greatest need;
- Report out to the public on the condition of FirstEnergy infrastructure that is supposed to serve our communities; and
- Enforce the duties placed on FirstEnergy to provide reliable power to the public.

The chaos and damage caused by FirstEnergy’s failures are real. They involve matters of life and death and affect the economic viability of those we represent. Vulnerable seniors become trapped in high rise buildings every time they must go without air conditioning and elevators on scorching summer days. Businesses collectively suffer tens of millions of dollars in lost revenue and waste when forced to close their doors and send their employees homes because they have no power to operate. Our brave first responders are forced to scramble to deal with avoidable blackout induced crises in addition to real emergencies not induced by FirstEnergy’s failures.

Each of the undersigned has made numerous direct communications and complaints to FirstEnergy officials over the past year regarding this inexcusable situation. Our outreach has been met only with platitudes, excuses, dodging, empty promises, and general corporate

apathy. Your board was also made aware of this situation in a previous letter sent on January 15th of this year, which was met by silence. The frequency and severity of these outages over the past year demands your urgent attention and swift action. We are all aware that local government has zero public power to force action by FirstEnergy, so we are demanding that PUCO use its authority and address FirstEnergy’s utter failure to serve our community.

During and following each of these outages, our respective offices have received hundreds of calls, emails, and messages from our constituents demanding action. We eagerly await a response with a statement as to how PUCO will use its exclusive authority to hold FirstEnergy accountable for this inexcusable situation.

Meghan F. George, Mayor, City of Lakewood

Brian Kazy, Council Member – Ward 16, Cleveland City Council
Charles Slife
Council Member—Ward 17
Cleveland City Council

CC: Governor Mike DeWine, State of Ohio
Mayor Justin Bibb, City of Cleveland
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LAKEWOOD OBSERVER

Broken Promises And A Boon For Billionaires: Antonio Votes Against Republican State Budget

by Casey Rife

Senate Democratic Leader Nickie J. Antonio (D-Lakewood) issued a statement after the Ohio Senate voted to accept conference committee changes to House Bill 96, the state operating budget last week.

“Instead of supporting working families and creating an Ohio that is truly the heart of it all, the Republican majority created a budget filled with broken promises,” said Leader Antonio. “Broken promises for low-income and hard-working Ohioans: farmers, shop clerks, librarians, teachers, bus drivers, first responders, ride share drivers and so many more.”

This budget cuts taxes for the wealthiest residents of our state, gives away \$600 million in Ohioans’ unclaimed funds to sports franchise owners, underfunds our public schools by billions, provides no meaningful property tax relief, and threatens Med-

icaid coverage for over 700,000 Ohioans.

It also slashes critical funding across the state for public health, lead abatement programs, clean water, food banks, public libraries, and food banks.

“Make no mistake— this is a Republican budget with an agenda clearly outlined to reward the wealthy and well-connected through tax credits, vouchers, and the giving of funds to sports facility owners using Ohioans’ unclaimed funds, without requiring the wealthy to pay their fair share,” said Leader Antonio.

For the first time since 2001, not a single Democrat voted in support of the state operating budget. Ohioans deserve better.

House Bill 96 now heads to Governor DeWine for his signature. He may still line-item veto provisions of the budget.

Casey Rife is the Communications Director for the Ohio Senate Democratic Caucus.

Don't Let Lakewood Lose A Park: Franklin School Park Is Beloved

by Brittany Brocker

For the past few decades, on any given day if you drive past the lush grassy field and playground at Lakewood’s The Franklin School of Opportunity, on the corner of Lewis Dr and Franklin Blvd, you see children laughing and playing on the playground, kids practicing baseball and soccer in the field, and residents chatting and connecting on its benches. This area has always functioned as a park and community space. These green areas for play and connection are the glue that binds a community. Forging connections in our communities and being in green spaces have direct measurable impacts on our mental and physical health. Playgrounds and parks are invaluable gems to communities. Their worth simply cannot be overstated. The city has admirably done its part to protect and extend the park space of Lakewood by fashioning pocket parks out of any available strip of open land. Outside of Franklin is a readymade park that’s already part of the fabric neighborhood, which the city is willing to assume ownership and maintenance of for the benefit of the community.

The Franklin School of Opportunity (FSO) program has moved to the Lakewood High School building. Since the announcement of the FSO program’s

relocation, residents and city representatives have pleaded with Lakewood school board members and superintendent to keep this precious park accessible to the public by transferring ownership, management, and maintenance to the city of Lakewood. The city of Lakewood has expressed interest and enthusiasm in purchasing the property. The Lakewood school board and superintendent remain unmoved. Sadly, the Lakewood school board has slated the building and property for auction this coming Monday 6/23. The city of Lakewood has requested that the Lakewood school board split the parcel. Half would be maintained as a park for the community, which it is currently being used as, and the building would be for adaptive reuse. Despite the obvious community benefit, the Lakewood school board has chosen not to do this. Instead, the full property is to go to the highest bidder at public auction this coming Monday, unless members of the community reach out the school board and show how invaluable this park is to our community. Before June 23rd, please tell the school board and superintendent Lakewood residents cannot afford to lose this community space.

Brittany Brocker is Lakewood resident and parent.

Board Of Education Moves Forward With Sale Of Franklin

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chapter will continue that legacy,” said Nora Katzenberger, president of the Lakewood Board of Education. “We’re grateful to have found a buyer that is dedicated to making a meaningful contribution to the Lakewood community.”

Added Fox: “Inner Peace Cleve-

land is honored to bring our mission to Lakewood. We are committed to investing in the community and transforming the Franklin building into a welcoming space that supports individuals with disabilities and their families.”

For more information about Lakewood City Schools, visit <https://www.lakewoodcityschools.org/>.



For Chance At \$15K Scholarship Talented Lakewood Teen Crafts Duck Tape Prom Attire

by Tara O’Malley

Ohio’s own Delano Yeung has been named a finalist of the Duck® brand 25th Annual Stuck at Prom® Scholarship Contest. The friendly competition challenges high school students to handcraft their dream prom dress or tux using Duck Tape® for a chance to win sizable college scholarships.

Hailing from Lakewood, Yeung stood out from nearly 150 entries by making a suit of armor stylized as a tux, which took 16 rolls of Color Duck Tape® and 135 hours to craft. Drawing inspiration from his mother and her Polish ancestry, the armor symbolizes protection from bullying that she experienced as a child due to her heritage. The suit is comprised of several armor pieces, like a contoured breastplate, a mesh-like vest woven from individual rings of Duck Tape® and accessories, including a lance, saber,

belt, hobby horse and cravat with the Polish emblem.

“I consulted with an armor expert as part of designing my suit and selecting the elements to include,” Yeung said. “In addition, there is a subtle heart cross detail around the belt and saber sheath and the tux itself, which is composed of five hearts, a reference to the fact that I am the second of five brothers.”

Competing for one of two \$15,000 cash college scholarships, Yeung made it as a top 10 finalist, but now it’s up to the public to decide who will be crowned the winner of the Stuck at Prom® Scholarship Contest. From now until July 9th, the community can visit the 2025 Stuck at Prom® finalist gallery to vote for their favorite prom dress and tux fashions. Winners—one dress and one tux as well as runners-up and judges’ choice —will be announced around July 16th.

Kyle V. Robinson For Ward 2 Lakewood City Council

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homework so you can speak clearly and accurately to residents. People deserve more than surface level answers. They deserve honesty, clarity, and leaders who take the time to understand the issues and communicate them effectively.

When I needed help in my life, people were there for me. I want to be that person for Lakewood. If a storm knocks down a tree in your yard, I want you to feel like you can call me. If you’re unsure how to navigate city services, I want to be your first call. Running my own business gives me the freedom to be available, and that kind of presence is what I believe the job requires.

I’m also a proud product of public schools. I know what it means to be given a second chance, and I’ll always support our public schools and the teachers who make them great. Every student deserves the opportunity to succeed, just like I had.

Lakewood is at a turning point. Right now, five of the seven current

council members were either appointed or ran without opposition. That’s not real choice for voters. We need more people involved and more voices at the table. Local government should belong to the community, not just a few people making decisions behind closed doors.

I believe everyone should earn their seat by connecting with residents and earning their trust. Experience is important, but leadership also means fresh ideas, asking the right questions, and doing the hard work to move things forward.

I’m not running to play it safe. I’m running to work hard for the people of Ward 2. I’ll show up. I’ll listen. And I’ll fight to make Lakewood better for everyone.

I would like to earn your vote and would be honored to have your support. You can learn more about me and my campaign at kyleforlakewood.com.

Sincerely,
Kyle V. Robinson
Candidate for Lakewood City Council, Ward 2

LAKEWOOD OBSERVER

Buyers Beware When Purchasing A Used Vehicle

by Tonya Sams

Buying a car is a big purchase and consumers should be extremely mindful when it comes to buying a used car. The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland has some advice on what consumers should think about before heading to the nearest used car dealership.

The first thing that should be considered is the consumer’s budget.

“You can do some research ahead of time for the cars that are available,” said Bilal Mozaffar, a Staff Attorney in the Economic Justice Practice Group at Legal Aid. “You can also ask beforehand what the out the door price is before heading to the dealership.”

It’s also important to learn about the dealership’s reputation by searching the Ohio Attorney General’s Consumer Complaint database and the Better Business Bureau (BBB) to learn if any consumer complaints are pending against them. Google and social media platforms are also helpful tools for customer complaints or reviews.

Rather than getting financing at the dealership, consumers should consider getting a more affordable loan

from their bank or credit union.

Used car buyers should always test drive the car and take it to a mechanic to have it checked out before purchasing it.

“If you get any pushback from the dealership, just be assertive and let them know that not allowing a mechanic to look at the car is non-negotiable,” said Bilal.

Consumers should also bring someone with them to the dealership to watch the transaction and be sure to review the buyer’s guide, which should be visible on the car.

Used car buyers should be aware that they are not guaranteed the same legal protections as those purchasing new cars.

“The Lemon Law doesn’t apply to most used cars, so you need to know the history of the vehicle and what’s covered,” said Kristen Nawrocki, a Paralegal in the Economic Justice Practice Group at Legal Aid. “If you’re purchasing the vehicle “as is”, there’s no warranty. The moment you sign the contract, drive off the lot, and something breaks, you are fully responsible

for all repairs or issues that arise. The seller or dealer are not obligated to fix anything or offer a refund.”

Dealerships do offer add-ons such as warranties, service contracts, and Guaranteed Asset Protection, also known as GAP coverage, but these are not always beneficial to the buyer.

“The main thing to know is that you don’t have to be pressured by the dealership to purchase these add-ons,” said Bilal. “Oftentimes you could get them

from your regular automobile insurance company and they are a lot cheaper.”

If you need assistance with a consumer issue, call Legal Aid at 888-817-3777, or complete an online intake at lasclev.org/apply. You can also attend a Legal Aid Brief Advice Clinic. For a full list of dates and times visit: lasclev.org and click the “Events” tab.

Tonya Sams is the Development & Communications Manager at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

Brian F. Ventura Announces Candidacy For Lakewood City Council At-Large

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Ventura. He emphasizes the need for new perspectives and innovative ideas, pledging to advocate for robust community input to ensure every Lakewood resident has a voice.

If elected as Council At-Large, Ventura will prioritize:

Enhanced Safety and Public Services: Strengthening initiatives and improving accessibility. This includes full support for investing in and expanding our police and fire infrastructure, directly supporting the brave men and women who protect our community, and focusing on solutions that enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety through improved crosswalks, signal timing, and visibility at intersections.

Affordable and Sustainable Housing: Championing diverse options and finding solutions to help our seniors and working-class families stay in their homes.

Strategic Development: Actively supporting existing small businesses by fostering an environment for job creation through streamlined processes and access to resources. This also includes effective traffic management to ensure easy access to local

businesses and commercial areas, helping attract and retain new businesses.

Brian’s qualifications stem from a robust professional background as a solutions-driven Information Systems Engineer with extensive experience in business intelligence and project management, adept at leading cross-functional teams and implementing process innovations. This is complemented by his personal dedication to community well-being, notably through his past work on the 11 Foundation, a non-profit assisting adolescents with acquired traumatic brain injuries.

Ventura is prepared to apply his analytical rigor and compassionate advocacy to address Lakewood’s challenges and seize opportunities. His campaign focuses on community engagement and responsive leadership, aiming to foster a resilient and thriving city. He looks forward to connecting directly with residents in the coming weeks and months.

For more information, visit www.venturaforcouncil.com or connect on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/VenturaForCouncil/>.

In Person Preview On July 12
Hixson’s Treasures Auctioned

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generations.

Step into a winter wonderland as we celebrate the enchanting legacy of Hixson’s Flower Barn, a beloved Cleveland institution since 1953. Join us for a once-in-a-lifetime auction featuring a treasure trove of Christmas delights and nostalgic wonders.

The auction will feature over 25,000 Christmas ornaments, including exclusive signed pieces created by Bill Hixson for the White House Christmas celebrations, each with its own story to tell. A diverse array of stained glass windows, chandeliers and noteworthy furniture. Over forty Holiday trees, artfully decorated by Bill Hixson will be included in the auction. Showcasing a vibrant mix of colors and designs, themes include Irish and Spanish motifs, roses, fruit, Santa, peacocks ,nautical elements



Bill Hixson signing one of his ornaments. A few signed ornaments will be auctioned.

and more. The sale will also include Hixson’s personal Christmas tree from his home.

Among the highlights is the iconic sixteen foot tall Raggedy Ann, a beloved figure that has greeted customers with a smile since the 1960’s. This charming doll even made a cameo in the classic Christmas movie, “A Christmas Story.”

Bike Lakewood To Offer
A FREE Bike Valet At Lakewood Summer Meltdown

by Cassandra Organ

Bike Lakewood is excited to offer a FREE bike valet for the second year in a row at Lakewood Summer Meltdown on Saturday, July 19, 2025 from 4-10pm. Skip the car and the stressful hunt for parking - ride your bike down to enjoy the day's festivities! We will be located in the small parking lot between Dave's Cosmic Subs and City Center Park on Detroit, and we will have volunteers monitoring the bikes for the duration of the event. Come on down, chat with us, and take advantage of this FREE community service!



COVE
Community Center
Department of Human Services



**BACK-TO-SCHOOL
RESOURCE FAIR**

Saturday, July 26, 2025

10 AM - 1 PM



Cove Community Center
12525 Lake Ave.
Lakewood, OH 44107
(Parking is located at the corner of Clifton and Cove)

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Celebrating Over 20 Years of Free Speech and Intellectual Diversity in Lakewood, Ohio: www.lakewoodobserver.com

LAKEWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY EVENTS

by Lisa Calfee

Barbara Steffek-Hill Five-Star Matinee - “Duel in the Sun” (1946)

Sunday, July 6, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. (145 minutes)
Main Library Auditorium
This 1946 psychological Western film stars Jennifer Jones, Joseph Cotten, Gregory Peck, Lillian Gish, Walter Huston, and Lionel Barrymore.

Meet The Author - “Cleveland’s Riverside Cemetery” by Jamie Lynne Owens

Wednesday, July 9, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.
Main Library Auditorium
Riverside Cemetery on Pearl Road was established in 1876, seven years after Lakeview Cemetery. Author Jamie Lynne Owens is a fifth-generation staff member of Riverside Cemetery and has committed herself to the historic preservation of this Cleveland landmark. Books will be available for sale and signing at the event.

Terry Meehan Film Series - “Sweet Smell of Success” (1957)

Saturday, July 12, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. (96 minutes)
Main Library Auditorium
Join Terry for his Film Noir of the Fifties series with “Sweet Smell of Success” starring Burt Lancaster and Tony Curtis. Stick around afterwards for a great discussion.

Meet The Author- Poet’s Night Readings by Cora McCann Liderbach, Stephanie Ginese, Dar Montonaro, Haylee Schwenk and Michelle Tackla

Wednesday, July 16, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.
Main Library Auditorium
Enrich your Wednesday night with poetic reflections from five local writers. Books will be available for sale and signing at the event.

Literary Cleveland Presents: Poetry Open Mic

Saturday, August 2, 2025 from 12:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m.
Main Library Front Porch during the Lakewood Arts Festival
Enjoy poetry readings featuring experienced poets, participants from the writing groups and inspired festival goers. We encourage everyone interested in sharing their own poetry to sign up at our table during the festival.

Children’s And Youth Services

by Jeffrey Siebert

Color Our World Summer Reading Club

Friday, May 9, 2025 through Monday, August 11, 2025
For all children and youth from birth up to those entering Twelfth grade. Read for fun and rewards. Participants will be entered into weekly drawings for prizes and gift cards. Readers can check in online or in person. Come to the library and check in halfway through and receive a reward. All finishers select a new book to keep.

Just Baby ‘N Me

For You and Your Birth to 24-Month-Old Baby
Main Library - Mondays- 10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.
Wednesdays - 10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m.
Thursdays - 10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
Madison Branch - Thursdays- 11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Just Baby ‘N Me is a lap-sit story time ideal for babies from birth through early walkers. No registration is required.

Pre-school Story Time

Main Library - Tuesdays: 10:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.
Wednesdays: 11:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.
Madison Branch - Thursdays: 10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
For You and Your 2 to 5-Year-Old Pre-schooler. Children and their parents will enjoy stories, movement and songs for thirty fun filled minutes. No registration is required.

Pajama Party

Mondays: 6:00-6:30 p.m.
Tuesdays: 6:00-6:30 p.m.
For You and Your 2 to 6 Year-Old Child. Put on your pajamas, bring along your favorite stuffy and join us as we wind down for the night with books, movement and songs. No registration is required.

Family Weekend Wonders

Main Library- Fridays and Saturdays at 10:30 a.m.
Madison Branch- Fridays at 10:30 a.m.
Drop in to the Library’s special weekend story time. Family Weekend Wonders is offered every weekend throughout the year and features a different theme each week followed by a craft. No registration is required.

Magic is Art

Friday, July 11, 2025 at 3:00 p.m. in the Main Library Multipurpose Room
For the whole family. Learn how magic is an art form and be amazed as Mr. Zap draws a picture of an animal you were just thinking about. With fast-paced magic and loads of audience participation, this show is fun for all ages.

Illustration Creation

Main Library Activity Room - Thursday, July 10,2025 at 4:00 p.m.
For students in kindergarten through second grade. In this picture book art program, each program will feature a story from a children’s book illustrator followed by an art project inspired by the story. No registration required.

ArtVenture for Teens and Preteens

Main Library Activity Room - Saturday , June 14, 2025 at 3:00 p.m
Madison Branch Youth Program Room - Tuesday, June 12, 2025
Designed for artistic teens and pre-teens, this program invites participants to create an artistic masterpiece each month. At the end of each program, all completed artworks will be displayed in the Library.No registration required.

Bricks and Books

Main Library Activity Room - Wednesday, July 9, 2025 3:00pm
For Students in Kindergarten through Fifth Grade. In this hands-on experience, kids will use Lego building bricks, gears, and figures to design and construct .

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THE PRESIDENT’S PAGE

Happy Independence Day Neighbors!

This year, as we celebrate the birth of our nation, I am reminded of a quote attributed to Benjamin Franklin as he exited the Constitutional Convention.

Influential patriot Elizabeth Willing Powel is said to have asked, “Well Doctor, what have we got – a republic or a monarchy?”

Franklin’s reported reply? “A republic, if you can keep it.”

Now more than ever, maintaining our republic requires all of us to actively participate in our democratic process and protect and exercise our rights and freedoms. As daunting as that can be at the state and national level, I thought it would be uplifting to share some of the ways we are keeping our freedoms here in Lakewood.



Freedom of Speech: Members of Action Together Lakewood Area exercise their 1st Amendment rights each Friday over I-90.

Freedom of Speech

You don’t have to look far to see Lakewoodites exercising their freedom of speech. Each Friday, just look up as you drive into Lakewood on I-90, or recently you may have seen a rally supporting federal workers and services marching from the Lakewood Social Security Office to the Lakewood Post Office, or no doubt you’ve noticed other grassroots efforts using yard signs to promote their points of view. The freedom of speech is alive and well in our community.

Freedom of the Press

Did you know that this issue marks the Lakewood Observer’s 20th anniversary? Founded before most residents and organizations were active on social media, the Lakewood Observer’s mission to connect us all with what is happening locally continues to play a pivotal role in our community today, and, like our republic, relies on citizen participation. Congratulations to Jim O’Bryan and the Observer team for 20

by Sarah Kepple
President of City Council/Council Person-At-Large



Freedom of the Press: Twenty years ago this week, the very first issue of the Lakewood Observer was published! Visit the Observer online to read it.

years of independent and community based journalism!



Freedom to Assemble: City Council held the Ward 4 community conversation at Cove, and will continue with Ward 2 at the Main Library on July 22nd at 6pm.

Freedom to Peaceably Assemble

Lakewoodites love to assemble! Recently, the Lakewood Black Caucus saw a record turnout at their excellent Juneteenth event, and no doubt I will see thousands of you at the 4th of July Parade at 10am. City Council also recently kicked off our community conversation series with Ward 1 and Ward 4. If you missed the one for your ward, please join us for one of the other ones. These casual chats help us answer resident questions, hear ideas and concerns from the community, and provide

an opportunity for the type of citizen engagement necessary to keep our republic truly representative.



Freedom to Petition: City Council will discuss the Charter Review Commission’s recommendations at their July 7th 6pm meeting. Scan the QR code or visit <https://www.lakewoodoh.gov/accordions/charter-review-commission/> to read the CRC’s report.

Freedom to Petition the Government

Every ten years, the City of Lakewood’s Charter requires the formation of a commission, made up of nine registered voters appointed by the Mayor and City Council to review the charter. At the upcoming July 7th Committee of the Whole meeting, City Council will discuss their recommendations, including the possibility of using Rank Choice Voting in municipal elections. Representatives from the Rank the Vote Ohio will provide a presentation. Please join us, read the commission’s recommendations, and let us know what you think! <https://www.lakewoodoh.gov/accordions/charter-review-commission/>

Upcoming Council Community Conversations:

Ward 2 - July 22, 6:00pm @ Lakewood Public Library Main Branch

Ward 3 – August 12, 6:00pm @ Lakewood Park Women’s Club Pavilion

Upcoming Council Meetings

July 7th 6:00pm Committee of the Whole - Charter Review Recommendations & Rank Choice Voting Presentation

7:30pm Regular Meeting of City Council

Learn more about Council on our webpage: <https://www.lakewoodoh.gov/lakewood-city-council/>



FROM THE STATEHOUSE

Why I Voted “NO!” On Ohio’s State Budget

by Tristan Rader
State Representative

\$1.7 Billion for Billionaires.
Cuts for Everyone Else.

The state budget passed by the Ohio General Assembly gave away \$1.7 billion in taxpayer dollars for stadiums and luxury projects benefiting billionaire sports owners. Meanwhile, critical support systems for working families, seniors, and public services were squeezed or left stagnant.

I voted NO on this budget because Ohio deserves better. Here’s what Ohioans need to know:

Education: Underfunded and Politicized

Public schools face ongoing uncertainty, with complex new funding models obscuring real cuts. A punitive formula penalizes districts for fiscal responsibility, risking local tax increases.

This budget:

- Expands private school subsidies, including new “education savings accounts” with minimal oversight.
- Abolishes elected State Board of Education members, consolidating power under political appointees.
- Broadens voucher eligibility, diverting public funds to wealthy families.

Libraries: Neglected Again

Despite rising demand, library funding remains virtually flat: \$490 million in FY26, \$500 million in FY27. Structural spending constraints risk further harm.



“If this bill was a scented candle, it would smell like this!” State Representative Tristan Rader

Meanwhile, libraries face mounting threats from censorship and political interference with no additional support to confront them.

LGBTQ+ Ohioans: Singled Out

Provisions codify a narrow definition of sex into law, sidelining trans, nonbinary, and intersex people in state policy. Access to shelters and affirming care for LGBTQ+ youth remains threatened.

While some discriminatory Medicaid restrictions were vetoed, harmful provisions remain that stigmatize and deny critical care.

Child Care and Family Supports: Stalled

Promised expansions in publicly funded child care were abandoned. The budget:

- Cuts funding for infant vitality

programs and eliminates support for Black maternal health initiatives.

- Flat-funds “Help Me Grow,” halting plans to reach thousands of additional families.
- Ends presumptive eligibility for child care, delaying support for working parents.

Mental Health: Critical Services Cut

The 988 Crisis Lifeline remains underfunded by \$15 million. Several mental health initiatives, including student services and behavioral health telehealth programs, were eliminated or reduced.

These decisions jeopardize support at a time when demand is surging.

Medicaid: Dangerous Uncertainty

A trigger mechanism tied to federal policy could still threaten Medicaid expansion. And funding for hospitals and providers remains reduced. While some extreme anti-DEI provisions were vetoed, the overall direction of Medicaid policy in this budget is concerning.

Public Health: Left Vulnerable

Key health programs were slashed:

- State lab testing for newborns and outbreaks was cut.
- Overdose prevention efforts were slashed by \$6 million.
- Campus sexual violence preven-

tion programs were cut 70%, to just \$400,000.

Lead abatement was partially protected by a veto, but overall investment remains inadequate.

Higher Education: Politicized and Guttled

Although some harmful changes to college funding were vetoed, the budget still advances an agenda of ideological control over public universities. DEI efforts are defunded, and curriculum oversight is politicized.

Student support services were slashed, including mental health programs.

Housing: Misplaced Priorities

Funding for brownfield cleanup was maintained, but lead abatement workforce training was drastically cut. “Welcome Home Ohio” excludes urban counties, and the Ohio Housing Trust Fund remains stagnant, ignoring the housing crisis facing many cities.

Corporate Welfare: Business as Usual

Despite cuts elsewhere:

- \$1.7 billion remains allocated for stadiums and similar projects.
- A regressive flat tax benefits top earners: someone making \$1.8 million gets a \$9,800 break, while most Ohioans get nothing.

What’s Missing? Property Tax Relief

Local governments are being forced to pick up the slack, driving up local taxes. The refusal to fully fund public schools and essential services guarantees rising costs for ordinary Ohioans over time.

Final Word

This budget prioritizes luxury boxes over lunchboxes. It’s not just unfair—it’s immoral. I voted NO because Ohio’s priorities should be care, not corporate handouts. Let’s hold lawmakers accountable and fight for a budget that puts people first.

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LAKEWOOD SPORTS

The Lakewood Rangers-Built From The Ground Up

by Dr. Charles Greanoff

Want a good baseball team? You can either build one, or buy one. The Los Angeles Dodgers are mostly bought, as are most Division 1 college teams, increasingly assembled through NIL money and the transfer portal. It's almost laughable to call these assemblage of players "programs," implying a high level of development. See a good player—buy them—simple and soulless.

Conversely, the Lakewood Rangers program is built-- on the practice fields and in the LHS weight room, through a vibrant youth recreation program coordinated with the Lakewood



Community Baseball and Softball Association, and via other summer/travel baseball programs. We are hyper

local—just doing our best with and for the 44107 kids. It's a thing of beauty.

The wildly successful 2025 Lakewood Rangers (22 wins, District Championship, Regional Finalist, 4-0 vs the SWC) is the most tangible indicator of a successful program, but there are others, including full JV and Freshman teams, strong attendance, heightened participation in baseball across all age groups in the city, and the number of former players who attend games to root on their Lakewood Rangers. From top to bottom, it's an authentic, organic community effort.

Coach Grant Graves, LHS '11, reflecting on the historic 2025 campaign, attributed the success to the commitment players made to strength and conditioning—greatly aided by Coach Jim Gajewski--and by players who are dedicated to getting better every season and every day. Coach Graves emphasized that he and his staff, while relishing the past two seasons (42-12), will continue to look for ways to improve in all phases. There is satisfaction, but no complacency.

The highlights on the field included winning three tight OHSAA tournament games against tough opponents— capped off by a 3-1 nail biter over North Canton Hoover in the Regional semi-final, thrilling Friday Night wins over Chagrin Falls, Elyria, North Ridgeville and St Edward, and a late inning comeback at Westlake. Every tough loss: River, Buckeye, Westlake--was followed by a bounce back win. Win or lose, there is no better high school baseball experience in

NE Ohio than Friday Night Under the Lights at Lakewood Stadium, with LHS alum DJ Ray Carr on the PA system, music between innings, and a spirited student section.

Off the field, the spring break trip to Myrtle Beach—new this year-- (3-1) was great for team bonding. The honoring of the late Hall of Fame Coach Ken Ciolek, Senior Night and the Teacher Appreciation game further solidifies the connection between the team and our community. These traditions and rituals not only honor the parents, teachers and alumni and are vital to our success, but also indicate a level of connectivity and gratitude that simply doesn't exist when players are commodities.

To be fair, there is a level of "buying" here—not of players—but of resources. We are a town that gives youth a chance to play ball (field, umpires, scorekeepers, etc.), the Lakewood Athletic Boosters donated a new weight room, the school district provides a state-of-the-art field at the high school, citizens/alumni stepped up to fund the spring trip. LCBSA (founded as LCBA in 2013) has been critical to the vitality of baseball in Lakewood, and former Coach Mike Ribar—another LHS Hall of Famer—along with several community members, are chiefly responsible building LCBA. Essentially, the citizens of Lakewood are unsurpassed in their commitment to providing an opportunity rich environment for our students, baseball being no exception. It takes a village—and we sure have one.

The Lakewood Rangers are already working to win a State Championship in 2026. That's a tall order, a long shot, even with so many returning letter winners from this year's Elite Eight team. With fierce competition, there are no guarantees, save one: no matter what, the Lakewood Rangers are, and will be, one team, from one town, that will give it their best. Long Live Lakewood.

The Cottage Of Flowers: Showing Up



Dr. Greanoff checks out the 2025 Cottage of Flowers display which includes owners' grandson Cooper Russell and his teammates.

by Dr. Charles Greanoff

Pillars. Every vibrant community has them, and Lakewood is no exception. Schools, places of worship, locally-owned businesses, and of course families sustain us with their donations/sponsorships and other tangible contributions, but also by simply maintaining a beautiful storefront/landscaping or having a welcoming attitude. I wish I could thank every homeowner with a beautiful yard, every business that serves as a sponsor, and every family that volunteers and helps for our students. Lakewood is magic.

Having just experienced perhaps the greatest baseball season in Lakewood Ranger history (District Championship/Elite Eight), I will long fondly think back on homeruns, masterful pitching performances, and defensive gems. But these spectacular accomplishments are rooted not just on the diamonds, but in parents and coaches who provide the rides, resources and encouragement to make it all happen. But it's also community thing, that extends beyond the families and schools.

As the historic season wound down, I was driving down Madison and was reminded of a stalwart Lakewood business, the Cottage of Flowers (1967), that each season adorns their storefront with of purple and gold cutouts of LHS players. This gesture, which is now a

Madison Avenue tradition, connects the team to the community and has become an institution in Lakewood. Every fall, I eagerly wait for the cut-out to appear in the window.

This year, owners John and Kristina Russell's grandson, Cooper Russell—a junior, was a 1st team all CWC/All-Ohio Honorable Mention shortstop, and is "on the window" with his teammates. The thing is, Cooper and company would be on the window if they hadn't won a single game, but simply by virtue that they are our students, who go to our high school, and live in 44107. Pillars stand in fair or foul weather, they show up no matter what.

By chance, I ran in to the John and Kristina in Little Italy after Lakewood's big win over North Canton Hoover in the Regional Semi-final game. We talked about the aesthetics of Little Italy, and of course the game and the season. After showing up year after year for our teams, it's wonderful that they could experience such a magical run, especially with a grandson on the squad.

Quaint floral arrangements and a beautifully maintained red brick building are one thing—the Cottage of Flowers is lovely—but the purple and gold cut outs, with a Ranger on each one, is part of the fabric of our community.

Long Live Lakewood.

Lakewood Pools Are Open!



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FORUM



Lakewood’s Secret Gardens Are Yours To Discover!

by Melissa Kress

Mark your calendars - Lakewood is about to bloom in the most spectacular way! On Saturday, July 19, from 10 AM to 4 PM, the city will be filled with fun and floral fellowship during the 4th Annual GardenWalk Lakewood—a free, self-guided tour of the most beautiful and creative gardens our community has to offer.

Whether you’re a seasoned horticulturist or just someone who likes to stop and smell the roses, this event is your chance to explore Lakewood’s lushest landscapes—and if you’re lucky—to swap gardening tips with the green thumbs behind the blooms! GardenWalk Lakewood will feature dozens

of gardens, each with its own personality and charm.

Want to help? We’re still looking for a few volunteers to:

Deliver yard signs, staff info stations, sell GardenWalk Lakewood t-shirts. Email us at GardenWalkLakewood@gmail.com and let us know how you’d like to lend a hand.

Whether you’re someone who loves gardening, supporting your community or just a good walk, this event is for you. Check out GardenWalkLakewood.org for more information.

Melissa Kress is a longtime Lakewood resident, a part-time plant whisperer, and a member of the GardenWalk Lakewood board.

Lakewood-Based Lawyer To Challenge Browns Financing Through State

from a news release

Marc Dann, Jeff Crossman announce plans to challenge unconstitutional, illegal funding scheme for privately-owned Browns stadium

Former Ohio Attorney General Marc Dann and former state representative Jeff Crossman discussed their plan to file a class action lawsuit challenging the legality of using \$600 million from Ohio’s Unclaimed Funds Trust (UFT) to finance a privately-owned stadium for the Cleveland Browns. The pair discussed the impending lawsuit and distributed copies of the complaint during a Statehouse press conference at 10:00 A.M. on Wednesday, June 25, 2025.

According to Dann and Crossman the suit will be filed in Franklin County Common Pleas Court immediately if the blatantly unconstitutional and illegal scheme is included in Ohio’s 2026/2027 operating budget and becomes law. Director of Commerce Sheryl Maxfield, Ohio State Treasurer Robert Sprague, and Akil Hardy, Superintendent of the Ohio Division of Unclaimed Funds are listed as defendants in the complaint.

To protect all persons who have funds in the UFT, the suit will ask the Court to issue temporary, pre-



Waaaaay before “Chomps” a Lakewood based group “The Cleveland Kennel Club” came up with their mascot Hanford pictured above.

liminary, and permanent injunctions prohibiting the defendants from reallocating or approving the use of unclaimed funds for private stadium construction and a declaratory judgment that the proposed scheme violates the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U. S. Constitution, Article I, Section 19 of the Ohio Constitution, and ORC Section 169.01.

For more information, please contact Marc Dann at 330-651-3131.

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Available Items: Pepperoni, Sausage, Mushrooms, Onion, Green & Red Bell Peppers, Anchovies, Ham, Bacon, Fresh Garlic, Black Olives, Hot Peppers, Ground Beef, Pineapple, Jalapeño Peppers Special Toppings: Artichoke Hearts, Fresh Tomato, Broccoli, and *Chicken

LAKEWOOD OBSERVER

Mandel Foundation Programs Are At No Cost To Applicants Leadership Programs Seeking 2025 Applicants

by Sandra Kluk

If you are passionate, committed and dedicated to taking an active role in improving your community, you may be excited by, and ready for, one of two valuable leadership development programs. NLDP and CDCLP are programs of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation. Both programs are at no cost to participants.

The Neighborhood Leadership Development Program (NLDP), for 18 years, has offered community engagement leadership training for residents of Cleveland, and its inner ring suburbs, who are working on projects in the City of Cleveland and who are determined to make a positive impact on their communities.

The Community Development Corporation Leadership Program (CDCLP) just graduated its fourth cohort. CDCLP is the Cleveland area's only leadership program specifically designed for Community Development Corporation Executive level leadership.

Ian Andrews, Executive Director of LakewoodAlive just graduated from the CDCLP program.

Both programs are currently seeking applicants for their 2025 cohorts.

NLDP and CDCLP are designed to help emerging neighborhood lead-



CDCLP Graduates Cohort IV

ers reach their potential by expanding their knowledge base and personal development through education, one on one coaching and ongoing interaction with their peers and other leaders. Participants, as well as, graduates of both programs have ongoing access to the services of a Program Coach who will give advice and support tailored to the needs of the participant.

The programs cover topics such as organizational and program planning, marketing and communications, pro-

gram fundraising, board governance, conflict resolution and more. NLDP and CDCLP participants and graduates are a diverse group with many interests who are working on a wide variety of issues that positively impact Cleveland's neighborhoods.

Ian Andrews, Executive Director of LakewoodAlive and CDCLP Cohort IV Graduate had this to say, "While it was an honor to be asked to apply for, and admitted to, CDCLP, the true honor was being the recipient of such a thoughtful

approach to leadership development in a sector many don't understand despite many benefitting from our collective work. I found myself drawing upon CDCLP courses almost immediately to better lead our organization, and the impact is palpable. We all strive to fill gaps every day in our communities and CDCLP provided the resources to fill leadership and knowledge gaps to better lead our organizations and support our neighbors."

Both programs hold their in-person sessions at Trinity Commons at 2230 Euclid Avenue.

NLDP sessions take place from 8:30am to 4:30pm on Saturdays, CDCLP sessions take place from 8:30am to 5pm on Thursdays.

The application period is now open!

The CDCLP deadline is July 31st. For additional information on CDCLP and to view the curriculum and online application, visit www.cdclp.org or call 216-776-6172.

The deadline for NLDP applications is August 14th. For additional information on NLDP and to view the curriculum and online application, visit www.nldpcleveland.com or call 216-776-6167.

Think you have what it takes? Apply to make a difference!

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FORUM

Property Taxes:
Why It Is Time For Change

by Micah Zakem

What started out as a minor tax has morphed into an out-of-control monster, pushing homeowners out of their homes, increasing rents and pushing prices up as businesses pass on property taxes to their customers. While a few politicians have tried to apply a comb over, property taxes have become complex and undemocratic beyond repair.

Citizens for Property Tax Reform, a non-partisan, grassroots organization, is collecting signatures for an Ohio constitutional amendment to repeal property taxes. This will open a path to fund schools and other institutions with a more equitable system. You can sign the petition Wednesdays, 6–8 PM, at 15635 Madison Avenue in Lakewood.

Before becoming involved with Citizens for Property Tax Reform, I did my own research. The more I learned, the more I realized significant change is needed. Here are a few reasons outlining why I decided to volunteer as a signature collector:

All of us complain about federal income taxes – yet at least federal taxes are based on money we have earned and have access to spend. We do not pay income taxes on our home’s value, because the cash invested is tied up in the home. Why should we allow this

for property taxes?

Also, wages taxed are based on a definitive, easily determinable value. As a certified public accountant with many years of experience in property valuation, I can assure you that there is no such thing as a definitive value for a tax appraisal. There is a range of justifiable values that can be produced using accepted techniques. In this time of tightening budgets, counties are under pressure to come in on the high side.

Now that the first couple layers of the onion have been peeled back, the real crying can begin. All tax districts in Ohio charge 10 mills which voters do not get to approve. These levies are known as inside levies. Like many cities, Lakewood also collects property taxes through its charter, which are referred to as charter levies. The chances of getting to vote on a charter levy are extremely small. Lakewood’s charter committee only meets every 10 years to recommend changes for voter approval and is appointed by city leadership who have shown no interest in reducing charter mill rates.

One could legitimately argue that it would be impossible for voters to vote on everything, but shouldn’t we get to vote on levies that have an over-size impact on our wallets? You may have heard that when market values go

up, mill rates are reduced to lessen the tax increase. This reduction does not apply to inside or charter levies. Let’s put some numbers to this so we can see how bad this is. I have a property in Lakewood with a market value of \$200,300 in 2024 resulting in \$5,380 in property taxes and a \$334,400 market value resulting in \$7,687 for property taxes in 2025. There are 9 charter and inside levies out of 39 levies. Of the \$2,307 increase in taxes, \$1,011 is from those 9 inside and charter levies.

Charter levies also obfuscate how much we are really paying for government services. Lakewood income taxes pay for day-to-day operations but there is a charter levy that also covers general expenses. We pay for police and fire salaries from city income taxes, but their pensions are funded through charter levies. We pay monthly water and sewer bills, but there is also a charter levy to pay for sewer upgrades. Most of us are tired of the endless fees that get tacked onto our phone bill, but at least they all appear on the billing statement. Figuring out what we pay for city services in total should not require any detective work.

Are you tired of charter and inside levies? Let’s move on to levies that voters get to approve. While some of these levies expire, many others do not. 61% of the mills homeowners are paying in 2025 come from permanent levies. Lakewood schools have operat-

ing levies on the books for 1976, 1980, 1983, 1987, 1990, 1995 and 1999 for example. Yes, voters approved these levies but should we have the ability to reexamine what we are paying as time and needs change?

Before we end, let’s touch on Taxpayer Incremental Financing (TIFs). For those who are greatly concerned with the state legislature underfunding our schools, for nearly 50 years, Ohio law has given cities, townships and counties the power to divert real estate revenues from schools to private and public development. TIFs can divert funds away from schools for up to 30 years and for other recipients of real estate tax revenues for up to 60 years, without any voter approval. If voters pass the amendment to repeal property taxes, all active and future TIFs would be stopped dead in their tracks. Citizens could then establish a more equitable tax system, forcing developers to fund their full share like the rest of us.

If I have convinced you to sign—or you would like to learn more—stop by 15635 Madison Avenue any Wednesday from 6–8 PM.

Micah Zakem is a small landlord and certified public accountant with 15 years of experience in commercial real estate who enjoys working on homes and woodworking.

Bunts Road Boondoggle

by Edward Graham

After having been told by so many Lakewood residents that the City’s proposed “multi-use path” for Bunts Road makes no sense, I have taken the time to review various articles on the topic in the Observer in search for facts.

One Observer writer, Daniel Zielinski, said that “next to Lakewood Stadium, parking will switch to the west side of Bunts causing a chicane effect to calm motor traffic in this busy corridor.” I had to google “chicane” to learn that ‘Chicanes’ are also known as ‘single lane working chicanes’ or priority ‘narrowing.’ Single lane chicanes require one direction of traffic to give way to oncoming vehicles.” That leaves the question, who has the right of way?

Jim O’Bryan, from the Observer, wrote that he spoke with Mayor Meghan George, and Ward 1 Councilman and Council VP Kyle Baker who told him to go read what is on the website to better understand it. The City website says, among other things, that “the City of Lakewood is working to make travel easier and safer on Bunts Road for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists.”

Bunts Road is not a very wide street. How could any city official possibly think that putting a chicane on Bunts requiring “one direction of traffic to give way to oncoming vehicles” would make travel easier or safer for anyone?

What would happen when ambulances or firetrucks or police cars or moving vans or electric company repair vehicles need to stop in front of a home where their services are needed? Would drivers who get trapped behind such vehicles have to back out of the street on which they started behind such vehicle?

Shannon Mortland, another Observer writer, received a City letter that “mentioned a ‘bike lane’ which is 4-6 feet wide, according to the Ohio Department of Transportation.” She states that, “We were shocked to find out at the May 7 meeting that the city had already created two plans for the Bunts project, both of which included a 10-foot-wide multi-use path, the same size as a standard lane for vehicle traffic.” A 10-foot-wide multi-use path shared by pedestrians with bikes speeding in both directions is not safer for pedestrians, especially very young children. Bikes are going to go slower on uneven sidewalks, where they can now legally go, than they

would when they are on 10-foot wide multi-use smoothly paved paths.

Mr. Zielinski also noted that the City’s plans include “removal of many mature trees.” Such planning does not seem to agree with a letter I just received from the City stating that, “The City of Lakewood recognizes the many benefits that come with a robust tree canopy, including the reduction of home cooling costs, improved air quality, and an increase in residents’ mental and physical health outcomes. For this reason, the City is working to increase our urban tree presence with our tree planting program.” Is cutting down healthy trees recognizing the many benefits that come with a robust tree canopy?

Besides trees, there are many other costly barriers to be dealt with such as light poles and fire hydrants.

I don’t happen to live on Bunts Road, but I do drive on Bunts five or more times a week. I don’t remember ever seeing a bike on Bunts, but I do see a great many cars on Bunts,

especially during rush hours, going to and returning from work. People in a hurry trying to get to work on time would not be benefitted by having to take turns using any street, let alone Bunts.

Water and sewer requirements may be necessary on Bunts, but the proposed 10 foot-wide multi-use path is not required. How many tax dollars could be saved by doing the necessary works on Bunts? I have not seen any information given to the public as to the tax dollars required for the proposed project, nor any information given as to how much of those tax dollars are for the proposed unnecessary multi-use path and how much for the required water and sewer work.

Shouldn’t the public be provided with cost information about expensive projects, especially those including a huge expenditure for an unnecessary multi-use bike path?

Bike riders can legally ride their bikes on Bunts, in the street or on the sidewalk, right now. Furthermore, there are neighboring north & south streets nearby if riders prefer less busy streets. There is no need for the proposed “multi-use path.” As Bert Lance said, “That’s the trouble with government: Fixing things that aren’t broken and not fixing things that are broken.”

Edward Graham is a former member Lakewood City Council.



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LAKEWOOD IS ART

On The Dime:
Reviews Of Recent Releases By Local Bands, Pt. 142

by Buzz Kompier

Paul Nickels - With Friends Like These - Banana Records - 20 songs - CD, digital

Paul Nickels - One Hand Clapping - Banana Records - 14 songs - CD, digital

These were sent to me together and so I'm reviewing them together— hey, why not. It'll make it harder for the editors here to cut anything and I'm all about making things difficult for people. Anyway, Paul Nickels has appeared in this column quite a lot in the past few years for his work recording and drumming on all the recent Butterfield 8 material, but these are his first "solo" outings (solo being a very relative word, as you'll see in a minute) and his career goes all the way back to the '70s and the Backdoor Men (you'll be hearing a lot about them in a minute too). "With Friends Like These" has a whopping 20 tracks and almost as many players— Paul, of course, plus fellow Backdoor Men Dan Cook and Terry Hartman, other members of Paul's previous groups (like Bill Rouse from The Clifton Beat, to name just one), Jim Butterfield making a few appearances, and many more. It's an interesting concept for an album— a solo release in theory, but since almost everyone involved contributed songs and vocals, it is a sort of various artists compilation but with almost the same backing band on each song (maybe— of the fifteen people credited here, I don't really know who plays what). Some highlights: "Liter-

ary Tradition" is a good laid back power pop track by Terry Hartman; Jim Butterfield's "I Wanna Be A Cowboy" is an almost-country song that absolutely does not swing but does have a fiddle and some slide guitar and is somehow relatable, at least to this critic; "Inner Peace" is by Dan Cook and has some good harmonica and while it may be a little gimmicky as a concept, I enjoyed it anyway (Jim O'Bryan, founder of this paper, would enjoy this one— he goes way back with these guys, so it actually may very well be about him); I remember "Shit Outta Luck" from the Backdoor Men's "Mohawk Combover" CD which I got in a dollar bin when I was 13, so that was fun to revisit; "Falling And Rolling" is a John Castrigano tune and I don't know if it's him singing but if so he's got a pretty interesting voice and it's a catchy song. What's cool about this is that, as far as a quick scan on Discogs shows, many of the people on here have few or no other credits on other things, or at least none that have been catalogued in that way, but have presumably been around doing stuff this whole time. The Cleveland underground is fuller than any of us know. The issue with this is mainly its runtime: 20 tracks is quite a lot and there are songs that I noted as being good that I could barely remember by the time the record was over and that certainly would've stood out more on a shorter release ("Our Dog Days," "Schoolgirl Tomboy" (which I noted uses the word

'squelches' in its lyrics), and "Change On Me And You" among them).

The second CD here has fewer tracks and a sort of loose concept in that it functions as a pretty nice tribute to the late Terry Hartman. The majority of the songs are reworked Backdoor Men tracks, plus a handful by Terry's friend Leroy Fail (great name) and several either written or co-written by Terry himself (plus one by Jim Butterfield and another by Paul Nickels and Mark Bluhm). Though the Backdoor Men get sort of loosely grouped in as "punk," they're sort of more of a '60s garage-inspired group of goofballs— nothing here can really be called punk, even the songs that seem like they maybe should be, like "Neutralizer." "Handsome," a sort of rallying cry for this motley crew, is great and sort of is their version of the Penetrators' "#1 Band In Town." The Penetrators are a pretty good comparison for the Back Door Men, actually. "Day Now" is another favorite— probably you could call it power pop, but again the strongest influence is clearly '60s garage. Leroy's songs mesh very well with the mostly Dan Cook-written material; I was surprised when I checked the credits on

"Death Valley Rock" and realized it was one of his. Jim's song, "Your Renaissance Man," while maybe not as clearly fitting into the overall concept, is a really good song with some nice backing vocals. The album ends with three penned solely by Terry Hartman. I don't know if I just particularly like the songs or if they put a little more effort in on these as a tribute, but they're three of the best here. "Life" and "Just Another Lonely Boy" are both sung by Les Vincent, another Banana friend and the final song, "My Old Truck," is Terry himself on vocals and guitar. I never knew the guy and I'm not even super familiar with his musical output, but I was moved. This album is a nice tribute but also stands on its own as a decent collection of songs even if you don't know who any of these people are. Of the two CDs, it's the one I'd listen to first, but if it's your bag there are certainly some goodies on the first one too.

(bananarecords.net)

Are you a local-ish band? Do you have a record out? Email vaguelythreatening@gmail.com or send it directly to the Observer: PO Box 770203, Lakewood, OH 44107.

Have You Heard Of Laska Lakewood?

continued from page 1

trucks, and a multitude of easygoing and free fun to be had at Laska Lakewood.

The word "Laska" means love in Czech Slovakian and was chosen precisely for its founder, Colin Cox, of Funkworkstudio, and his love for Lakewood, Ohio. Colin is a Lakewood resident who has been living in Columbus for many years. He shares that he had a rough past year and recently moved back to Lakewood only to immediately feel the love and community welcoming him home. Laska Lakewood Community Market was born and the very first Laska was held on Sunday, May 18th, 2025. Local artists, residents, and vendors quickly joined the Laska family and the market continues to grow and evolve with every event.

Laska Market is held in the parking lot of Mike's Barbershop, located at 17100 Madison in Lakewood, and runs from 11 am to 7 pm every other Sunday. Upcoming Laska Market dates are Sunday, July 27th, 11 am to 7 pm, Sunday, August 10th, 11 am to 7 pm, Sunday, August 24th, 11 am to 7 pm, Sunday, September 7th, 11 am to 7 pm, and biweekly ongoing through September and October, with an unsure date of when the Laska Family will call it for the season. Colin shares that he'd like to keep it going through the fall season most definitely.

Laska is free to attend and only \$10 to vend, offering a plethora of engaging



activities for local families during their visit. Bubbles, sidewalk chalk, treasures and findings, henna, music, and food as mentioned earlier. This event is brought to Lakewood by Funkworkstudio and potential vendors should visit www.funkworkstudio.com to inquire about vending opportunities.

Laska Lakewood Community Market is unique and stands out from other markets with its laid back, everyone-is-welcome approach with vendors of all ages, and from all walks of life sharing space together, and sharing their love of Lakewood, Ohio. Be sure to check out Laska Lakewood Community Market, it's quite a good energy vibe and you don't want to miss it!

Heather is the kindness lady here in Lakewood. In the past she had a family Enrichment center here in town. She works in the nonprofit sector in Cleveland and is also an artist with her own companies, Kind Mind Art and Heather Feather Henna. She's involved with Laska Community Market here in Lakewood too.

Shared-Use Path: Your Street Could Be Next

by Shannon Mortland

The next time you are out and about in Lakewood, look at the streets that have recently been repaved and/or involved in the sewer repair system. Tree lawns have been diminished in favor of more pavement.

I had not noticed until my street, Bunts, was chosen for a redesign to include a 10-foot-wide, shared-use path on the west side of the street. That means significantly reducing tree lawns on both sides of the street the entire length of Bunts for a path that dead ends into the freeway and Clifton. Green space is being sacrificed for more pavement, which leads to environmental concerns.

Your street could be next.

Look at the city's Active Transportation Plan. Nobody can argue that safe streets are imperative. However, the way in which the city is implementing this plan is anything but safe, and it lacks common sense. There was very little input from Lakewood residents who do not have a special interest.

The city claims it is looking for ways for residential input going forward, but how much damage will be done in the meantime?

The streets in the city's plan marked for a shared-use path include



Lake, West Clifton, Rocky River Drive and Clifton, to name a few. Overall, 29 streets are earmarked for reconfiguration to accommodate bicycle lanes of some kind. That's as the Active Transportation Plan notes that less than 1% of city residents commute via bicycle.

Bike lanes, bicycles and accommodating all people are great, but it must be done responsibly and not at the expense of our home values. Even the Ohio Department of Transportation advises against shared-use paths in densely populated areas where there are many driveways to cross.

Let the city know you are paying attention before it is too late. Sign our petition, write to council and the mayor, speak at city council meetings. Don't let them force poor planning upon you.

BUSINESS



Testing Wall 1 with Alan hanging a quartz clock.
Photo: Yoshitaka Anchi

Ticking Right Along

by Alan Rue

Lakewood Clock Repair would like to say “Thank You” to the community for its support of our growing business. Since opening February 2024, word has been spreading that there is now a very capable clock repair shop right here in Lakewood, Ohio.

Originally Lakewood Clock Repair was conceived as as a one or two-person operation. Today, Lakewood Clock Repair has three full-time employees and one part-time employee. The increased headcount permits Lakewood Clock Repair to keep what is considered a relatively short industry turn-around time of approximately 6-8 weeks. With the additional expertise we can also offer services like in-home



John with a kitchen clock once owned by Mark Twain. photo: Alan Rue

service-calls for Grandfather Clocks.

Under the Lakewood Clock Repair roof there is almost 90 years of clock repair experience, allowing Howard-Miller and Ridgeway clock brands to quickly recognize Lakewood Clock Repair as one of their Authorized Service Centers.

When we opened the storefront, a soft goal to repair 500 clocks in our first year was set. At our 1-year anniversary (Feb 2025), 750 jobs tickets had already been written up. And before we knew it, we were writing up job ticket one thousand.

We attribute much of our success to our customer interactions. Our customers describe the shop as “professional, not stuffy,” “serious, yet fun,” “friendly & helpful.” Stop by the shop, and you will agree.



15725 Madison Ave,

Lakewood Clock Repair is primarily a repair shop. Our “sales floor” is the workshop. We do not hide our technicians in some back room. The technician workbenches are right there on full display in our shop. You will find our technicians are happy to answer questions, explain the repair process, and show you how your clock works.

Speaking of our “sales floor,” a common question we get is, “Do you sell new clocks?” While we do not sell “new clocks,” please check out our Adoptable Clock collection. Our Adoptable Clocks have been reconditioned and function like a new clock. They even come with a 1-year warranty just like purchasing a new clock. For current availability, click the “Adoptable Clock” link @ www.LakewoodClockRepair.com.

Another question is “What types of clocks do you repair?” We repair most types of clocks and provide free estimates. We have repaired clocks that date back to the mid 1700’s right up to the modern-day quartz battery operated clocks.

Need a clock repaired? Know someone that needs a clock repaired? No appointment required to bring a clock to the shop for evaluation. Estimates are FREE and can often be provided while you wait. Own a Grandfather Clock, give the shop a call to schedule a service call.

Lakewood Clock Repair, 15725 Madison Ave, Lakewood, OH 44107. Open: Tue-Sat (see website for current hours). Phone: 216-421-4201. Website: LakewoodClockRepair.com

Again, Thank You!!! from the team that makes Lakewood Clock Repair “tic”: Alan, Andrew, John, & Mike.

Cherishing Small Bites For Now

by Jeremy Garcia Vinluan

Usually, I would sleep in and wake up whenever I feel like it. It was not the case on Saturday, June 28, 2025. That early sunny morning, I woke up in my small apartment on the west side of Cleveland. I just decided to go on a quick adventure to downtown Lakewood. I got ready for a few minutes and headed out the door. I drove my car over with windows down in warm weather on a sunny morning. It was 70 degrees out, compared to 80 to 90 degrees we have been having lately.

I parked my car in a public parking lot near the southeast corner of Warren Road and Detroit Avenue. Then I walked over to a decent restaurant called “The Place To Be.”

When I entered this place, I was reminded of my time in Marion, Iowa. In this small Midwestern town, there was a restaurant called “MJ Restaurant,” which is a local family restaurant similar to “The Place To Be.” I was a regular over there and I fondly remember the owner talking to me and the waiters knowing my order.

Now, I am a regular at “The Place To Be.” Sometimes, I would come here during my lunch break since I work at a nearby office downtown. Sometimes, I would come here before I start my work day.

So that morning, two of their wonderful waiters recognized me and greeted me. One of them gave me a table and took my order of juice, a Belgian waffle and a breakfast burrito.

So when my plates came shortly after, the waitress made sure I had everything. I had more than enough. I thanked her. Before I started eating, I made a simple prayer to Heavenly Father for the great food I was about to eat. I had asked Him to bless the people in Lakewood that have no home and have no food to eat. I also asked Him to bless the waiters and the amazing cooks



at the restaurant for always taking good care of their customers, especially me, a frequent and hungry diner.

I cherished every small bite I had with the big breakfast. Taking a tiny cut of the fluffy waffle with my fork and knife, dipping with sugary syrup, and tasting the soft cut SLOWLY were a small ritual I enjoyed many times. I had a similar routine for the breakfast burrito, which had bacon, potato and scrambled eggs. I used the salsa sauce and sour cream, which usually come with the dish.

I tried not to get emotional about my brief young adult years in Iowa or my teenage years in Virginia. I was craving a breakfast burrito that morning because it was my top order back when I used to live in Marion. I too was craving Belgian waffles because my parents used to have an old waffle maker they allowed me to use when I was growing up in Virginia. Iowa and Virginia will always have a place in my heart. So will Ohio.

I would recommend anybody who has not been to this place to check out this superb restaurant. Just make sure you bring cash. If you forget, there’s an ATM machine on site. I always enjoy good food here and appreciate the people who work here.

I do not know what tomorrow will bring. Or next week. Or next month. Or next year. When I am going to another state for another grand adventure of my life sooner or later, I know I will miss taking a small bite of a big breakfast at The Place to Be.

Jeremy Garcia Vinluan currently lives in Cleveland and works as an office assistant in downtown Lakewood. If you know of any place for him to check out in Lakewood or in the greater Cleveland area before his next chapter elsewhere, please let him know.

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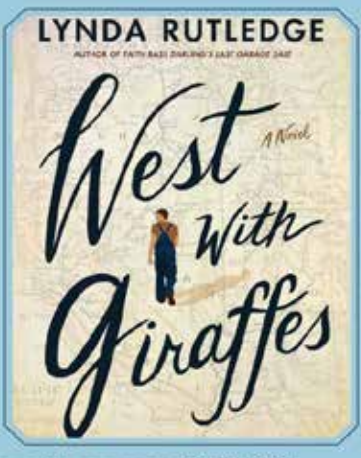
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Join us at one of two community discussion days:

August 11th at 2pm
or August 14th at 6:30pm.

Childcare will be available for both sessions. Copies of West With Giraffe are available through Lakewood Public Library or your preferred book retailer

Questions? Contact us at humanservices@lakewoodoh.gov or at 216-529-5061





Introducing Common Ground At Cove!

by Nancy Feighan

We’re transforming part of the outdoor space at Cove Community Center into a welcoming place for all ages. It will feature gardens, nature play areas,

shaded seating, a walking path with plant identification, an improved bocce court and play areas. We look forward to offering more intergenerational activities soon. Stay tuned for updates.

Save the Date: Summer Resource Fair At Cove!

by Nancy Feighan

Lakewood Area Collaborative’s FREE Back-to-School Event
Sponsored by: Healthy Lakewood Foundation & Cuyahoga County Health and Human Services
Date: Saturday, July 26, 2025
Time: 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM
Location: Cove Community Center, 12525 Lake Avenue, Lakewood, OH 44107
Join us for a day of community connection and support!

- Explore local resources and services
 - Connect with neighbors and organizations
 - Get FREE school supplies
- This event is free and open to all. Whether you’re looking for educational tools, health information, or family fun, this fair is for you. Spread the word and bring your friends and family. We can’t wait to see you there!

Common Ground At Cove: Summer Book Club

by Nancy Feighan

This summer, we’re building connections—one page at a time. As part of our Common Ground at Cove initiative, we invite you to join the Summer Book Club—an opportunity to come together, share perspectives, and enjoy meaningful conversation with your neighbors. Choose the session that works best for you:

Monday, August 11 | 2:00–3:00 PM
Thursday, August 14 | 6:30–7:30 PM
Both gatherings will take place at Cove Community Center, and childcare will be provided to make it easier for everyone to attend. Whether you’re a lifelong reader or just getting started, there’s a place for you in the conversation. Let’s read, reflect, and connect—together.



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Legal Aid thanks the Healthy Lakewood Foundation for its outreach support!