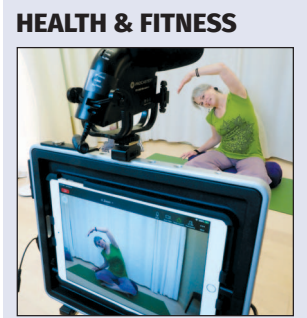


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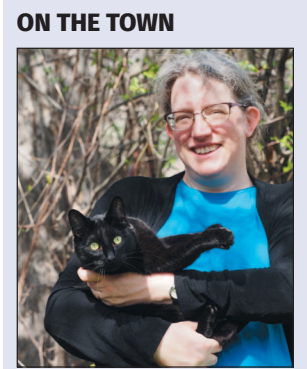
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The Highland Village Panera Bread shop accepted a takeout order from one pair of patrons while Eyob Kelu and Giyorgis Tsehaye (right) awaited service at one of the restaurant's sidewalk tables. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Business restrictions eased some in Village

Highland stores are still hurting from drastic downturn in revenue

BY ROGER BARR

Highland Park area businesses are struggling to survive even as they work to implement new ways of doing business amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Their strategies offer a preview of what promises to be a vastly different experience for customers once the government-ordered restrictions are fully lifted.

Governor Tim Walz ordered all non-essential businesses closed on March 27, instructing Minnesotans to stay at home in hopes of giving the state's health care industry time to prepare for an expected peak in infections in early summer. Walz later extended that order until May 18, though he did allow some non-essential businesses to re-open, offering delivery and curbside

service only.

That did not help Brad Schlaeger. Like barber shops, massage centers and other personal services, Schlaeger's Accolades Salon & Spa at 2065 Randolph Ave. remains closed. All of his 33 employees have been furloughed. He has applied for a forgivable loan through the federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), but has yet to be approved for one.

Restaurants, pubs and nonessential retail stores have been among the hardest hit by the governor's order. Patina, 2098 Ford Pkwy., closed its doors on March 17. More than 100 of its full- and part-time staff have been furloughed, leaving only three full-time employees. On May 4, the company launched an e-commerce Internet platform where customers can order merchandise for pickup or delivery. Nearly a third of Patina's inventory is now available online, and the goal is to have most of it online soon.

HIGHLAND BUSINESS CLIMATE ▶4

Families find distance learning to be an education in itself

BY ANNE MURPHY

For students across the area served by the *Villager*, it appears distance learning is here to stay until at least the end of the current school year. Parents and children may not agree about its pluses and minuses, but all seem to have found the practice to be an education in itself.

Nick Cook and Catherine Kanera of Lexington-Hamline have two children studying at home because of the COVID-19 restrictions. Their son Xavier, 15, is enrolled at Central High School, and daughter Felicia, 11, is at

the German Immersion School. With both parents also working at home, "it took a week to get a routine," Cook said. "But now we're all independently online by 8:30 a.m., spread throughout the house. Normally we don't see each other until lunch."

"Without question, the biggest challenge has been to balance our jobs with being a parent-teacher, and honestly we're still struggling with it," Cook said. "The teachers want and need us to be involved with our kids' curriculum and progress, but most of the time the kids are forced to manage alone because we don't have

time when they need help."

Xavier and Felicia suspect that the adjustment to distance learning may have been easier for them than for some of their classmates. Their family lived for a time in Italy and Germany, and they knew what experiencing a new school format was like.

"School serves many purposes, but an important one is to learn the intricacies of peer-to-peer relationships in a dynamic social environment," Cook said. "That's one thing that parents, books and online contact can't substitute for."

Nevertheless, Cook has been im-

pressed with the implementation of distance learning locally. "We have teacher friends overseas who had one weekend to prepare for the first lesson of online learning," he said. "Minnesota put the time aside to plan, and it paid off. It's far from perfect, but given the circumstances, they've done a great job. The (school district) has done an excellent job in designing the system to allow work with intermittent Internet access and more generally to prevent less privileged kids from being further disadvantaged."

DISTANCE LEARNING ▶2

Council to consider controversial new tenants' rights law

Landlords believe measure could drive up costs and lead to less affordable housing

BY JANE MCCLURE

Supporters and opponents of a proposed package of "tenant protection" measures are gearing up for a potentially contentious public hearing before the St. Paul City Council.

The hearing on the Safe, Accessible, Fair and Equitable (SAFE) Housing ordinance was originally scheduled for May 20, but the council is now expected to reschedule the hearing for a later date and to consider new ways to conduct the hearing. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the city has conducted public hearings by email and phone until noon on the day before a hearing. The council is now exploring ways to allow other forms of spoken testimony.

The SAFE Housing ordinance was introduced earlier this year with the support of Mayor Melvin Carter and a majority of City Council members. Numerous housing, civil rights, faith-based and low-income advocacy groups have thrown their support behind the ordinance in hopes it will help address the city's shortage of affordable housing. However, St. Paul landlords, who are already dealing with increased vacancies due to the COVID-19 pandemic, worry that the regulations will not only drive up their management costs, but make it hard-

TENANTS' RIGHTS ▶4

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A class act

High schools strive to maintain tradition as pandemic prevents usual pomp and circumstance

By CASEY EK

Graduation is fast approaching, and with the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to keep students out of classrooms, high school administrators are scrambling to find ways to give the Class of 2020 an appropriate send-off.

Two weeks ago, the St. Paul Public Schools announced that its high schools will be holding virtual graduation ceremonies between June 1 and 5. The ceremonies will take place at their regularly scheduled dates and times, according to Heather Kilgore, director of family engagement and community partnerships for the school district. But instead of a large auditorium, graduating seniors, school staff and administrators will all gather around computer screens linked to Zoom. Families may also view the event live by tuning into YouTube, the educational video platform Eduvision or cable television channel 15.

Several elements of the district's traditional graduation ceremony will carry over into the virtual affair, Kilgore said. For example, a School Board member and the high school's principal will be present, and every school will put together a video featuring the graduates.

"The virtual ceremony will look very similar to the typical program that the high schools would have had in person," Kilgore said.

Individual high schools will have a degree of freedom in making their

ceremonies reflect their student bodies. As of May 6, administrators across the district were working with students and parents to shape those ceremonies. "What (the school administrators) are really trying to do is preserve the traditions," Kilgore said, "because we all have a great sense of loss that we can't do it the old way."

One tradition Highland Park High School hopes to preserve in its June 1 celebration is the performance of a live bagpiper, according to principal Winston Tucker. He and his staff are also looking for ways to incorporate students' voices.

"I think (the virtual graduation) does lend itself to a little creativity," Tucker said. "Schools have been encouraged to have the latitude to maintain their traditions while also being able to really tap into each school's flavor."

One avenue graduates may have to express their creativity is the symbolic presentation of the tassel turn, Kilgore said. Those moments may be assembled as a video montage during the streaming of the graduations. District administrators have not imposed any limitations on how students present themselves in the montages, leaving that largely to the principals. However, the district will review any student-submitted content prior to the ceremonies.

Ruwayda Egal, president of the Class of 2020 at Highland Park High School, views the upcoming ceremony as an opportunity for her and her classmates to demonstrate their



Highland Park High School seniors Mya Bishop (left), Cailin Johnson, Delaney Lumpkin, Will Altman, Aedon Oberdorfer, Catie Carlson and Alivia Arredondo stand in front of the school's Snelling Avenue courtyard where they and their fellow students have drawn a chalk mural dedicated to the Class of 2020. PHOTO BY CASEY EK

"What we're really trying to do is preserve traditions, because we all have a great sense of loss that we can't do it the old way."

resilience in the midst of a pandemic that is preventing them from giving each other what she described as a proper farewell.

"With graduation, I hope everyone feels like we came together as a community," Egal said. "I want to tell everyone that we're so much more than a pandemic. Although our senior year has ended early, that doesn't mean anything to the people we've grown to be." Egal is also hoping that she and her classmates can still take part in the traditional postgraduation lock-in at the school at a later date, perhaps in August.

Henry Sibley High School in Mendota Heights is hoping to hold a one-car-per-graduate drive-by cel-

ebration on May 31, their original graduation date, along with an in-person commencement on August 5 or later if necessary, according to Principal Ron Monson.

As this *Villager* was going to press, several high schools in the area were still waiting to see whether the coronavirus restrictions would be relaxed in time for graduation ceremonies. But that was before May 8, when Governor Tim Walz issued guidelines that recommended against any large gatherings for graduation indoors or out.

Cretin-Derham Hall has decided to postpone its graduation, according to school spokeswoman Annie Broos. "We're aware of the strong need to feel connected, to feel celebrated, to be honored," she said. "What's important to know is this isn't just a sad turn of events for the seniors. It's really emotional for everyone as we realized we wouldn't be with one another. We want to be able to pivot so that we can do as much as we can for our students."

CDH administrators will prioritize safety as they revise their grad-

uation plans, Broos said. Students will be able to engage in a virtual awards ceremony in the near future as well as the cap and gown distribution on May 27, which was the school's original graduation date.

Minnehaha Academy has also opted to postpone its graduation beyond its originally scheduled date of May 31. As of last week, the school was awaiting news of any change in the restrictions on large gatherings before notifying students and their families of a specific date, according to principal Jason Wenschlag.

Meanwhile, Visitation School was working with parents and students on multiple scenarios that may involve pushing graduation back to June 28 or July 19. "We're doing everything we can to honor our students in whatever way we are allowed to do it," Visitation School spokeswoman Cecilia Petschel stated in an email.

Central High School, St. Thomas Academy and St. Paul Academy were also contacted for this story, but did not return calls before press time.

14 DISTANCE LEARNING

Bernard and Gina Armada of Highland Park believe that adaptability is the common denominator for successful distance learning. Their twin daughters, Maria and Sabrina, 13, are seventh-graders at Highland Catholic School, and son Alex, 15, is a freshman at Cretin-Derham Hall.

"Initial setup was like two people dancing for the first time, trying to find a rhythm through trial and error," said Bernard, a professor of communication and journalism at the University of St. Thomas. "We were all fumbling through this situation. We were staying up too late at night, taking naps at unusual hours and wearing the same clothes from one day to the next. OK, maybe that was just me. But after about two weeks we found a rhythm, and our spirits have remained relatively high."

Maria and Sabrina say they have noticed a big increase in homework with distance learning. Alex has discovered that mathematics and science can be more difficult to learn online. And all three are unhappy with how the landscape has changed for school sports.

"It's really difficult," Alex said. "I play hockey and baseball, and not being able to skate or practice on a field with a team has been tough. I've had to work hard at scheduling time every day to stay in shape so that I can be ready to play whenever things open up."

The governor's stay-at-home order came right in the middle of Maria and Sabrina's volleyball season, and their softball season was cancelled. "But we've been exercising every day, so that's been good," Maria said.

"This experience has affirmed and strengthened our bond as a family," Bernard said. "On



Nick Cook checks in with children Xavier, 15, and Felicia, 11, as they engage in virtual classroom activities from the dining room of their Lexington-Hamline home. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

the other hand, we're mindful of the fact that both Gina and I are extremely fortunate to be employed at this time. We realize there are many people who are struggling not only to stay healthy, but to pay their bills or care for their young children or deal with any number of challenging circumstances."

Joey Cienian and Annie Lien are experiencing distance learning from both sides of the computer screen. The parents of a 10-month-old and a preschool student at J.J. Hill Elementary School, Joey is the director of education at the High School for Recording Arts (HSRA) and Annie is a fifth- and sixth-grade teacher at Laura Jeffrey Academy.

"We spent the first few days at home trying to get a system set up," Lien said. "Every day

brings a new experience, but we've figured out a schedule." Their daily routine includes having baby June nap in their arms and helping preschooler Willa access her assignments online and stay in touch with her peers.

"I miss my school and my friends," Willa said, "but I like seeing their faces on an iPad."

Cienian said his greatest stress professionally has been making sure his students at HSRA stay connected and safe. "Many of our students are homeless," he said. Others don't have supportive environments at home. "A big part of this for everyone is personal connections," he said.

Lien, in the days leading up to distance learning, took part in virtual staff meetings to ensure a smooth transition for students. She

also talked at length with the families of her students. "They needed the connection," she said. Distance learning makes the inequities in society intensify, Lien added, with students who do not have the same access to technology or those whose parents work outside the home.

Routine was the early challenge for Kimberly and Eric Moteberg, who have four sons enrolled at Nova Classical Academy—Josiah, 17, Andrew, 11, Braxton, 8, and Tobias, 6. "Literally overnight we went from days full of rhythm and rhyme to now where one day might bring a feeling of success, but other days just blur into the next," Kimberly said.

The Moteberg boys are enjoying the flexible schedules of distance learning, but they miss the interaction with friends and teachers.

"It's been a sweet time of reconnecting with my boys in some ways," Kimberly said. "Taking my boys' usual seven-hour school day and cutting it down to basic reading, writing and arithmetic, and to be able to enjoy each other's company for the rest of the day, has been neat. Some days the puzzles never end. Other days we bike or hike 'til our legs burn, and still other days we fuss at one another and need to sink into a favorite book with a blanket."

Distance learning "has brought us together as a family," Cook said, "and in a strange way as a household and a community. We live in a neighborhood of big, 100-year-old houses, and they're now being used in the way they were designed with people occupying all of the spaces within them. We have more in common with our neighbors than in normal times. We say hello to strangers on the street, and there's the smell of baking coming from kitchens."

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14 HIGHLAND BUSINESS CLIMATE

"All staff wear face masks when leaving the store to go curbside or to a parked car," said Patina co-owner and CEO Christine Ward. "No customers are allowed in the store."

Schuler Shoes, 2081 Ford Pkwy., is also implementing curbside pickup. The company has suffered an 80 to 85 percent loss in revenue at its nine stores over the past six weeks and has furloughed 95 percent of its employees, according to Kari Palmer, Schuler's marketing and creative director.

Pearle Vision Center, 2024 Ford Pkwy., straddles the line between essential and non-essential business because it offers eye exams and sells eyeglasses. The store was closed for two weeks before reopening with new safety protocols, according to owner Becky Kerkow. "In March business was down 40 percent, and April was even worse," she said. Most employees have been furloughed. One doctor has been furloughed, and the other doctor works two or three days a week.

At Pearle, patients are interviewed by phone before their visit. Their temperatures are taken upon arrival. If they arrive without a face mask, they are given one. Everyone uses hand sanitizer. Customers are not allowed to independently select frames.

"The impact on our office has been devastating," said Dr. Kay Egan, owner of Dentists of Highland Park, 2096 Ford Pkwy. In dentistry, "you can't GrubHub your dentist for delivery, do a contact-free curbside pickup or buy a gift card for later use," she said. "I can't do cleanings, fillings or cosmetic procedures right now, but I'm here if you're having a dental emergency." Egan applied for a PPP loan, but did not receive one in the first round.

At Langford & Karls Chiropractic, 730 S. Cleveland Ave., the pandemic has "touched all areas of our practice," said Dr. Heather Karls. "We've needed to adapt very quickly to solve numerous challenges, from how to rethink all aspects of patient interaction to the financial implications." Many patients are waiting in their cars until their appointments and wear masks and gloves when they enter the clinic. "Some of the changes happening now will be commonplace in health care," Karls predicted.



Patina employee Kendra Minser delivered an order last week to a customer at the curb outside the store at the corner of Cleveland Avenue and Ford Parkway in Highland Village. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Kari Palmer of Schuler Shoes said she understands the reasoning behind the business closures, but she questions why some stores are allowed to have customers inside while others are not. Curbside pickup is "not a sustainable business model," she said.

An essential business, New Horizon Academy has remained open, but business has been drastically reduced. "In two weeks, we lost about 120 kids," director Danielle Richards said. Hours at the child care center have been reduced to 7 a.m.-6 p.m., and 18 staff have been furloughed. All those who enter the building have their temperature taken, and anyone with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher is excluded from the building for seven days.

Children are walked to the classroom by their parents, but parents cannot enter the classroom. Hospital-grade cleaning processes are followed, and playground equipment is sanitized twice a day. "Teachers have been doing a magnificent job of keeping things as normal and positive as possible for the children," Richards said.

While some restaurants have closed at least temporarily, others have remained open by switching from dining room to takeout or delivery service. Joan's in the Park, 631 S. Snelling Ave., is offering evening takeout on Wednesdays through Saturdays. Meanwhile, it has lost about 70 percent of its revenue, according to co-owner Joan Schmitt.

A PPP loan has allowed Joan's to retain all staff, though everyone is working reduced hours on staggered shifts. Employees maintain social distancing within the restaurant and follow strict hygiene practices. "Our plan is to reopen with a different menu as soon as we're able to," Schmitt said. "We miss being together with our customers and staff."

Business is down 80 percent at Highland Cafe and Bakery, 2012 Ford Pkwy., according to co-owner Deb Narusiewicz. Half the staff has been furloughed, and four employees

are probably gone for good. The restaurant secured a PPP loan, which is helping, Narusiewicz said, but such loans are difficult for restaurants to administer because of the tips employees receive. "It will probably end up being a loan" that the cafe will have to pay back, she said.

Highland Cafe and Bakery customers can come inside to pick up their takeout orders or be met at the curb. About half of the customers are wearing face masks. "Most want to come in," Narusiewicz said. "People are incredibly supportive. I've never seen so much respectfulness for each other"—a trend she hopes will continue.

Despite the stress it has placed on their businesses, most owners are supportive of the strict measures imposed to slow the spread of COVID-19. "I trust Governor Walz," Schmitt said. "I trust the decisions being made by our city and state."

Palmer of Schuler Shoes said she understands the reasoning behind the business closures, but she questions why some stores are allowed to have customers inside while others are not. Curbside pickup is "not a sustainable business model," she said, insisting that Schuler employees can practice the same safety protocols that essential businesses are following to admit customers. "We want to stay positive about this," Palmer said, "but it's a challenge to understand the logic when we're able to mirror the businesses that have put best practices in place."

At Accolades, Schlaeger has completely redesigned his stations to make it safe for both customers and staff. Plexiglass barriers separate the stations from each other, and additional barriers prevent staff and customers from breathing on each other. "We spent thousands of dollars to install these stations," Schaefer said. He has even forwarded a description of them to Governor Walz and the Minnesota Board of Cosmetology.

None of the owners who were interviewed for this story foresee a return to business as usual once the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. "It's a new normal," Ward said. "The public will support those business that are operating in a safe manner and will not support those that aren't."

14 TENANTS' RIGHTS

er for them to maintain their properties and provide the affordable housing they agree is needed in the city.

The ordinance would, among other things, require landlords to provide detailed information about tenants' rights and responsibilities before leases are signed, charge no more than one month's rent as a security deposit, alert tenants and city staff whenever one of their rental buildings goes on the market, and limit the criteria they use in credit, rental and criminal background checks when reviewing a prospective tenant's rental application.

The ordinance would take effect on January 1, 2021. Tenants and tenant advocacy organizations say the changes are long overdue. "Renters are disproportionately younger, lower-income, and people of color," said Summit-University tenant Olivia Grajeda, "and because of decades of disinvestment, racially discriminatory housing policies and exclusionary practices, they're facing a housing crisis that demands comprehensive action."

Among the biggest challenges tenants face, according to Grajeda and others, are discrimination during the rental screening process, informal evictions through the nonrenewal of leases, and abrupt notices to vacate. "Tenant protections are aimed at giving more people access to the housing they need and preventing families from being displaced from housing they already have," Grajeda said. "They are not meant to solve our affordable housing crisis on their own."

Some landlords and the Minnesota Multifamily Housing Association believe the ordinance would cause more problems than it solves. Jeff Arnold, a Highland Park resident

whose family has owned rental properties in St. Paul for 35 years, said the ordinance "has good intentions, but as a landlord I see a lot of problems in unintended consequences."

The requirement that there be standard just causes and notice requirements for non-renewal of a lease or termination of a tenancy troubles some landlords. Just causes for eviction include nonpayment of rent, chronically late payment of rent, noncompliance with other lease terms, and the intention of the landlord to rent the unit to an immediate family member or to occupy the unit themselves. The required notice varies for each just cause.

"Not all disagreements between a landlord and tenant go to court," Arnold said. In many cases, landlords and tenants reach a "cash for keys" agreement. The tenant agrees to move in exchange for cash. That avoids potential property damage by a disgruntled tenant and an eviction process in the courts, and keeps an eviction off of the tenant's record, according to Arnold. Giving the city more say over what is just cause could make reaching a cash for keys agreement more difficult, he said.

Chad Skally, who owns and operates Live Green Apartments, the owner of rental properties in the Macalester-Groveland, Summit Hill, Ramsey Hill and Como Park neighborhoods, is frustrated that city staff and City Council members did not consult landlords before bringing the ordinance forward.

"We would have liked to be able to discuss these ideas before they were announced," Skally said. Many landlords were willing to work with the council and city staff on the ordinance, but did not get the chance to do so, according to him. He said he would like to see more done to educate tenants on financial management and credit repair rather than

putting the onus on landlords.

Skally and other landlords believe the result of the SAFE Housing ordinance will be higher rents, higher property taxes across the city and, in some cases, a decline in the quality of rental housing.

"It's just too much," said rental property owner and real estate agent Diane Schray. "You have increasing taxes, higher garbage costs, hyper-vigilant building inspectors and other costs. It's becoming increasingly difficult to find people who want to invest in rental properties in St. Paul."

Landlord Mia Kia Miller is down to two rental properties after recently selling one. She dislikes an ordinance provision that would require her to pay relocation costs for tenants when a rental property is sold. "I see that as potentially affecting the value of the building when I sell," she said.

Without the protections provided by SAFE Housing, some tenants fear unfair practices will continue. James Wilkinson, a former project director for Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid Society's Housing Discrimination Law Project, supports the ordinance, especially the section that limits the use of criminal background checks when reviewing a rental application. "Limiting this tenant screening will open housing to families of color and people with disabilities who are often adversely affected by such practices," he said. "If there is just cause (in the future), these people, like renters without criminal records, can be evicted or their leases not renewed."

Many people have suggested amendments to the ordinance before it is passed. One is an exemption for owner-occupied rental property. Brian Martinson, a duplex owner in Macalester-Groveland, asked that the City Council

consider giving tenants "the first right of refusal" to buy a rental property when it is put up for sale. "For the tenants of single-family, duplex and triplex buildings, this could provide a meaningful path to homeownership," Martinson said.

Michelle Messer of Summit Hill, who works for St. Catherine University, believes the proposed tenant protections will help student renters. "I have students every year express concerns about the impact that housing insecurity has on their success as students," she said. Students who have not had the opportunity to build a credit history have been excluded from living in neighborhoods around the St. Catherine campus, according to her.

Students have complained about security deposits being two to three times a month's rent, making it impossible for many of them to sign leases, she said. Others have been forced out of rentals with little notice when a property is sold.

"Finding new housing on the fly, especially housing that doesn't carry exorbitant deposits or ultra-stringent screening, is a near impossible feat in this city," she said.

Arnold wondered if the proposed ordinance has become moot, given the growing rental vacancy rate driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. He and other landlords have seen a drop in requested showings. "We have people moving out and not moving in," Arnold said. "We could hit the 25 percent vacancy rate we saw in 2004."

Public comments on the SAFE Housing ordinance are being accepted between now and noon on the day before the hearing. To submit a comment, call 651-266-6805 or email Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us or CouncilHearing@ci.stpaul.mn.us.

Capital City Bikeway

Council OKs 9th/10th Street corridor despite concerns about parking loss

By JANE MCCLURE

Construction of Capital City Bikeway routes on 9th and 10th streets in downtown St. Paul will move ahead this fall, with the unanimous approval of the St. Paul City Council on May 6. Debate over the plans pitted several small businesses that were concerned about the loss of on-street parking against bicyclists who were eager to see the city’s bike network expanded.

The interim bike lanes will be added on 9th Street between Jackson and Broadway streets and on 10th Street between Jackson and Dorothy Day Place as part of a street mill and overlay project. The total project cost is \$630,000.

A third segment of the bikeway along either St. Peter, St. Peter/Market or Wabasha/St. Peter streets between Kellogg and John Ireland boulevards will be considered later this year, said city engineer Randy Newton.

The Capital City Bikeway is a planned network of bicycle routes throughout downtown that will eventually connect to existing trails and on-street bikeways. The network was a top priority of the St. Paul Bicycle Plan that was adopted by the City Council in 2015. Only part of the project has been built since then.

Several businesses, including Keys Cafe, Tin Whiskers Brewing Company, Black Sheep Coal-Fired Pizza, Camp Bar and Sawatdee Thai Cuisine, opposed the 10th Street plan and asked for at least a delay, especially with

the hardships small businesses are facing amid the coronavirus pandemic. According to them many of their customers, when surveyed, said they would not come back if parking were reduced.

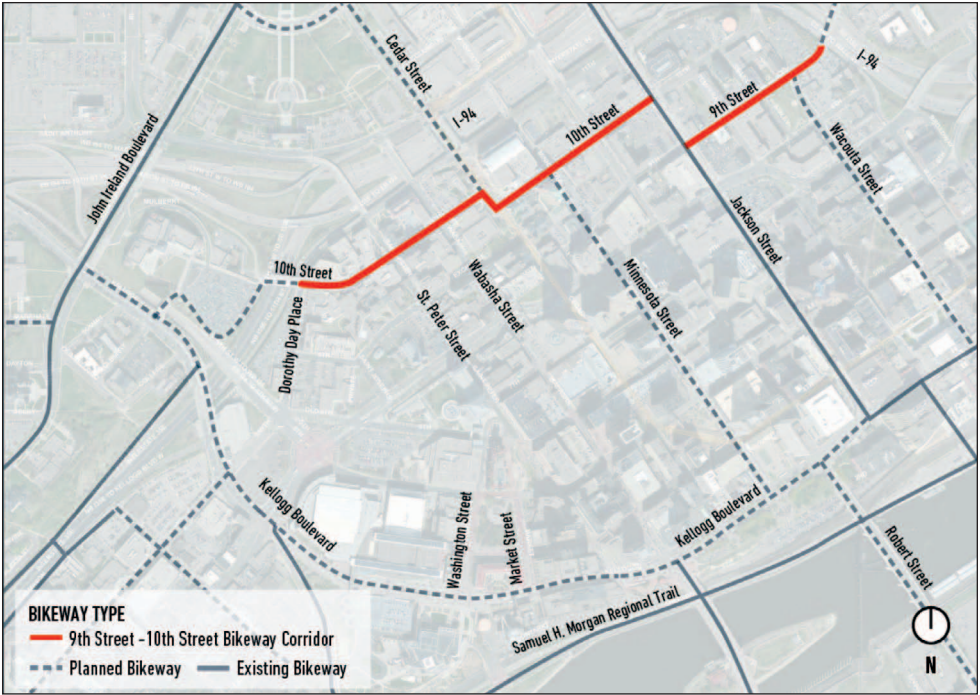
The businesses will also lose parking when the Rush Line bus rapid transit project is built in the next few years.

“Seriously, with what we’re having to deal with now and then construction and you taking away parking, why would we even want to stay in downtown St. Paul?” asked Keys owner Carol Hunn-Gregory in a letter.

Ward 2 council member Rebecca Noecker, whose ward includes downtown, said the bikeway project needs to move forward. She acknowledged the difficulties small businesses are facing because of the virus. However, she also noted that St. Paul is “becoming a big city downtown,” with on-street parking becoming harder to find.

Noecker committed to improving nearby parking ramps and seeking validated parking for businesses that lose spaces to the bike lanes.

The Metropolitan Center for Independent Living, which serves people with disabilities, was worried about access for people whose limited mobility would be adversely affected as a result of the bikeway plan. Securian, which has its headquarters downtown, pointed out what it saw as design flaws in the existing bikeway.



Interim bike lanes will be installed on 10th Street from Dorothy Day Place to Jackson Street and 9th Street from Jackson to Broadway streets.

Bicycling advocates spoke in favor of the plan. “Downtown St. Paul has forever been a giant doughnut hole in our bicycle network,” said Andy Singer, a Macalester-Groveland resident and co-chair of the St. Paul Bicycle Coalition. “Despite passing a bike plan in 2015, the council, mayor’s office and downtown business leaders have been unable to even come to a consensus on which streets this bikeway should be on. It’s time we make a decision and implement this critical piece of the bike network.”

Singer said the routes for 9th and 10th streets seem reasonable. “Making part of 10th Street one-way preserves parking and offers a nice connection for cyclists across downtown,” he said. “Hopefully, the council can also decide

between Wabasha and St. Peter later this summer and implement that as well.”

Downtown resident Scott Walters was among those calling for the plan to pass. “As a downtown resident and downtown business owner, this plan will enhance downtown as a place to live and work,” he said.

The bikeway designs are considered interim because they will be at street-level and incorporated into the existing streets’ width. Newton said the long-term plan is to develop protected bikeways at sidewalk level with physical separation between bicyclists and motorists. No date has been set for a permanent change.

For more information on the project, see stpaul.gov/ccbinterimstudy.

Summit Ave. will be restriped with wider, possibly safer bike lanes

By JANE MCCLURE

Summit Avenue is being restriped this month by the city of St. Paul with wider bike lanes and narrower traffic lanes in hopes of improving the safety of bicyclists. The bike lanes will be widened from 5 to 6 feet and the traffic lanes will be narrowed from 15 to 10 feet with a 3-foot cushion between the traffic lanes and bike lanes and a 1-foot cushion between the traffic lanes and medians. The parking lanes will remain 8 feet wide. New signs will also be added along the street.

At almost 30 years of age, Summit’s bike lanes are among the oldest in St. Paul. “The design dates from the 1990s, and that’s pretty evident,” said Reuben Collins, a planner and engineer in the St. Paul Department of Public Works. The bike lanes are relatively narrow, and some motorists fail to give bicyclists the required 3 feet of clearance, according to him.

Summit carries between 7,000 and 10,000 motor vehicles per day. An estimated 800-1,000 bicyclists join them during the warmer months, but even in the winter 30 to 50 bicyclists travel along Summit each day.

Summit Avenue is scheduled to be resur-

faced in 2024 between Mississippi River Boulevard and Lexington Parkway, and members of the Macalester-Groveland Community Council’s Transportation Committee have questioned whether it made sense to restripe the street this year.

The Summit street restriping project was initially scheduled for 2019, but the city and its contractors ran out of time, and it and three other restriping projects with a combined cost of \$365,000 are being completed this year, according to Collins. “When we began work on the projects a year ago, Summit Avenue wasn’t on the list to do a mill and overlay in 2024,” he said. The city’s five-year street plan is subject to change, he added, “and we think it still makes sense to move forward (with the street restriping).”

Before Summit is restriped, its potholes will be patched. Larger potholes will be given a more extensive skin patching. At Summit’s intersections with Snelling Avenue and Lexington Parkway, green “conflict pavement markings” will be added to clearly delineate the bike lanes. “We think this is an important safety improvement,” Collins said. After a fatal collision involving a bicyclist and school

bus at Summit and Snelling in 2018, Public Works staff began looking at ways to make that intersection safer. The traffic signals were retimed there last year.

Another safety improvement is planned at Summit and Wheeler Street. There, the single grassy median becomes two smaller islands between Summit and its frontage roads. Paint will be used to extend the large single median and to mark where bicycles should travel. Similar plans are in place for just east of Snelling where the smaller islands become a single median again.

The Summit bike lane project has the support of the Summit Avenue Residential Preservation Association (SARPA), according to member Kathy Cairns. “Summit Avenue residents and SARPA are really excited about this,” she said.

SARPA would be opposed to the installation of bollards or vertical delineators between the bike and traffic lanes, like those on Pelham Boulevard, she said. However, the thin white poles are not part of the design on Summit, Collins said.

SARPA does oppose the imposition of a proposed parking ban on Summit for one

night each week to allow for additional snowplowing during the winter. One longstanding complaint from Summit bicyclists is how the parking lanes become encrusted with snow and ice and thus encroach on the bike lanes, making riding more treacherous. A city study of such a parking ban was recently completed, and will be forwarded to the City Council for future consideration.

Other street projects scheduled this year in the Villager area include new bike lanes on Marshall Avenue between Western Avenue and John Ireland Boulevard, new bike lanes on Fairview Avenue between Marshall and University avenues, enhanced shared bike-traffic lanes on Western Avenue between Selby and Summit avenues, and a restriped southbound bike lane on Mississippi River Boulevard between Marshall and Randolph avenues.

Correction

A story on the Capital Improvement Budget in the April 29 issue of the Villager incorrectly identified Luke Hanson as a former city transportation planner. He is a Macalester-Groveland resident and member of Sustain St. Paul.

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News Briefs

Neighbors appeal approvals for seven-story building on West 7th

Irvine Park neighbors are appealing the St. Paul Planning Commission's decision on May 1 to approve a conditional use permit and variances for an 85-foot-tall mixed-use building at 337 W. Seventh St. The appeal will be taken up by the St. Paul City Council.

This is the second time in less than a year that the Planning Commission has voted on the project. Underlying bedrock forced the developers to revise their plans and adopt a modular form of building construction. The latest proposal is for a seven-story building with 194 apartments above parking and a small commercial space.

The building height is a point of contention for neighbors and the Historic Irvine Park Association. They submitted more than 30 letters in opposition to the Zoning Committee regarding the building's height in relation to the surrounding neighborhood. Spillover parking in the area is also a concern, compounded by events at the nearby Xcel Energy Center.

Planning commissioner and West End resident Wendy Underwood cast the sole vote against the project on May 1. While saying she believes in adding housing density, she called the project too big for the site.

"I've been uncomfortable with this project from the start," she said.

Other commissioners disagreed, saying the site's location near transit lines and downtown make it ideal for people who want to rent there and not own a motor vehicle.

City staff recommended approval of the permit and variances, as did the West Seventh/Fort Road Federation. The conditional use permit allows heights up to 85 feet, while the underlying zoning only allows up to 55 feet. The project also needs parking and floor-area ratio variances.

St. Paul seeks grants for YWCA project, Uni-Fairview apartments

The St. Paul City Council voted on May 6 to apply for grants from the Metropolitan Council and Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) for four development projects. They include two new apartment buildings at the northwest corner of Fairview and University avenues and a replacement for the YWCA of St. Paul's



An artist's rendering of the seven-story, 194-unit apartment building planned for 337 W. Seventh St., on the site of Bonfe's Auto Service Mechanical Center, looking northwest from West Seventh.

building at Selby and Western avenues.

Minneapolis-based Reuter Walton Development is seeking \$111,814 from the Metropolitan Council's Tax Base Revitalization Account and \$654,080 from DEED to assist with site cleanup before it builds two seven-story apartment buildings at 1845 University Ave. The property, which is now occupied by commercial buildings and a parking lot, is owned by Goodwill/Easter Seals of Minnesota. Part of the property was once a gas station.

The 279-unit project would feature a mix of apartment sizes and would be one of the first new affordable housing complexes on University west of Snelling Avenue.

A proposal to redevelop the YWCA of St. Paul's buildings at 375 Selby Ave. is a candidate for the Metropolitan Council's Livable Communities Transit-Oriented pre-development grant of \$100,000. YWCA officials have been looking at redeveloping its buildings there for the last few years. A new building would include a health and fitness center, offices and spaces for its various social programs. Last year Master Properties was selected as the developer and partner for the YWCA project. Ideas that have been discussed for the property include combining the Y's current programs with housing, parking and retail.

Another request for funding is from Keystone Community Services, which has locations in Merriam Park, the West End and the North End. Keystone is seeking a pre-development grant of \$100,000 from the Metropolitan Council for a site still to be determined.

Plat approved for Merriam Park property used by Catholic order

The redevelopment of the property at 104 N. Mississippi River Blvd. can move ahead with the St. Paul City Council's approval on May 6 of the plat for Mississippi River Vista. The 2.1-acre property, which for many years housed a Catholic religious order of priests and brothers, is being divided into six lots of single-family housing.

The site was occupied for years by a brick mansion, which over time was renovated and expanded to 18 bedrooms and 19 bathrooms. The 15,500-square-foot house was torn down in 2019. The property had been owned by a trust and occupied by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. It was the Oblates' Midwest provincial house until 1999. Declining numbers of priests and brothers forced the order to move out.

The mansion was purchased for \$2.4 mil-

lion in 2018 by an affiliate of Wayzata-based Streeter & Associates and its Elevation Homes division. The new houses will be fronted by Mississippi River Boulevard, Otis Lane and Otis Way. Sidewalks will be added and some land along Mississippi River Boulevard will be ceded to meet the city's parkland dedication requirement.

City officials heard from neighbors with concerns about the project, including the number of curb cuts planned along Otis Lane, which has long served as an alley for some homes on Mississippi River Boulevard and Otis Avenue. Neighbors wanted a more centrally located access point for the new homes in the interest of safety.

Neighbors also objected to the loss of mature trees and the addition of sidewalks for the new homes, saying that other properties in the neighborhood do not have sidewalks.

The developers met with neighbors several times and with the Union Park District Council's Land Use Committee. The district council took no action on the project.

Collaborative creates relief fund for area surrounding Allianz Field

Minnesota United and Allianz Life Insurance Company of North America are partnering to donate \$75,000 to the Neighbors United Funding Collaborative (NUFC) to support residents, businesses and organizations in the Midway and Union Park areas during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Union Park District Council (UPDC) and Hamline Midway Coalition are working together on the funding collaborative. More than three dozen small businesses near Allianz Field on Snelling Avenue and I-94 are currently seeking \$2,500 grants from the fund. Applications were being accepted through May 11. Visit midwayunited.org/grant-process.

The NUFC was created in 2016 to provide a resource that neighborhoods surrounding Allianz Field can draw from to improve the area. The joint donation by Minnesota United and Allianz Life has quadrupled the fund's resources.

Allianz Life also is matching up to \$50,000 in financial contributions to Keystone Community Services to help provide access to food for those who are living in the area.

NEWS BRIEFS ►7

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St. Paul officials brace for an estimated \$19 million to \$34 million deficit in 2021

By JANE MCCLURE

The COVID-19 pandemic will be a budget buster for the city of St. Paul, Mayor Melvin Carter told the City Council on May 6. The city has already spent \$7 million this year on pandemic-related costs that were not anticipated in its 2020 budget. That, combined with the anticipated drop in local sales taxes, hotel and motel taxes and other sources of city revenue, means the picture could be bleak in 2021 with an estimated \$19 million to \$34 million hit to the city budget.

"This will present real fiscal challenges, which will impact all city departments," Carter said.

The city is adjusting its 2020 budget as it amends plans for its 2021 operations. Staff vacancies are not being filled, and all expenses are being scrutinized to see what can be deferred. Carter said that though he is confident the city can find a way forward, he cautioned that changes lie ahead. He said the total economic impact of the pandemic has yet to be realized as state officials balance the need for public safety with the demand to reopen businesses that have been fully or partially closed by order of Governor Tim Walz for almost two months.

One major concern for the city is the trickle down effect of the state's own budget woes. A projected \$1.5 billion state surplus became an estimated \$2.4 billion deficit over the past couple weeks, and that could affect the amount of Local Government Aid St. Paul and other cities can expect to receive from the state. St. Paul officials have been working with the state's congressional delegation to see what funding is available from the federal government, Carter said.

The City Council on May 6 adopted a temporary reduction in business license fees to offer some relief for local businesses that have suffered a pronounced reduction in revenue due to the pandemic. Council members reduced license fees by 25 percent for many types of businesses, extended for 90 days the

deadline for business license renewals that were due before August 1, and waived the late fees on a one-time basis.

While city facilities, including recreation centers and libraries, remain largely closed, city parks, trails, dog parks and other public spaces have been opened with social distancing guidelines, though group activities involving people outside of one's immediate family are still prohibited.

Some basketball and tennis courts have also been reopened as part of the Parks and Recreation Department's Rec Engagement Crew (REC) pilot program. The goal is to safely reintroduce recreational activities in each of the city's seven wards.

REC workers have been assigned to each of the pilot program locations to educate and encourage park visitors to abide by social distancing and other public health directives. Signs will be posted to explain the public health guidelines and how following them will help to keep the facilities available for all to use.

The newly reopened basketball and tennis courts in the *Villager's* coverage area are located at Dunning, Groveland, Homecroft, Mattocks, Martin Luther King and St. Clair recreation centers. City crews are replacing the basketball hoops and other recreational equipment that were removed in April.

St. Paul's municipal golf courses were reopened to the public in April. However, the city's playgrounds, skate parks, Highland disc golf course and other sports courts remain closed. Restrooms and drinking fountains in the parks also remain closed. Como Zoo and Conservatory and the Great River Water Park remain closed. No decisions have been made on when the city's swimming pools will reopen.

Parks events, rentals, programs and activities have been canceled through May 18, though refunds for cancelled activities are being offered. The cancellation period could be extended depending on decisions made at the state level.

6 NEWS BRIEFS

PPL purchases part of Ford site to construct affordable housing

The St. Paul City Council is poised to adopt zoning and other changes to the master plan and site plan for Ford Motor Company's former assembly plant in Highland Park following a public hearing on May 6. The hearing occurred just a day after the Ford site's master developer, Ryan Companies, announced the sale of part of the 122-acre site to Project for Pride in Living (PPL) for the construction of affordable housing.

PPL's purchase is the first sale of land for affordable housing there. PPL completed the purchase on .78 acres for two phases of affordable housing. Its first building on the site will be 60 units of supportive housing for households earning 30 percent or less of the Twin Cities' median income. Phase two will consist of 76 units of "workforce" housing. Construction of the first building is anticipated to begin in 2021.

PPL is partnering with St. Paul-based Emma Norton Services (ENS) to develop the supportive housing and a new headquarters for ENS, a nonprofit organization that provides housing for women and families on their way out of homelessness.

"This is the most significant redevelopment initiative St. Paul has seen in decades. We look forward to continuing to pursue the goal of creating housing that is affordable and accessible to everyone," said Paul Williams, CEO of PPL.

The next step in the process for the affordable housing component of the redevelopment

ment is for PPL and CommonBond to submit an application for public funding to the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency.

St. Paul tries to reduce market for stolen catalytic converters

The St. Paul City Council approved an ordinance on May 6 that makes it a misdemeanor to sell or purchase a catalytic converter that is not attached to a motor vehicle. Thieves steal and sell the devices for their metal content. A used catalytic converter can bring about \$100 at a scrapyard.

Replacing a stolen converter can cost hundreds of dollars and often exceeds the value of an older vehicle. Council president Amy Brendmoen said the spike in those thefts has created a hardship for many families unable to replace vehicles that are the targets of those thieves. Many of the thefts occur in poorer neighborhoods near scrapyards.

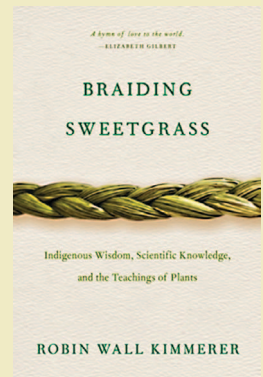
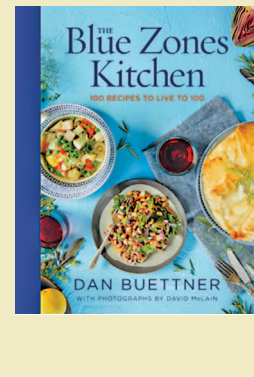
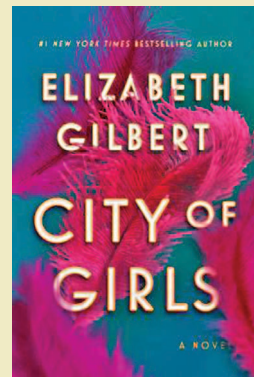
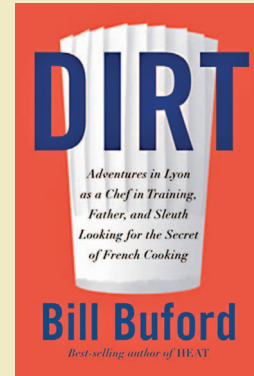
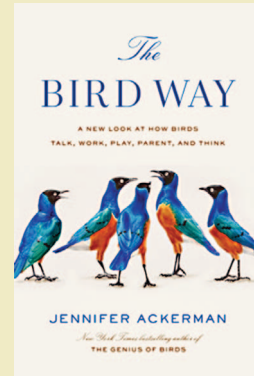
The City Council received about half a dozen comments on the ordinance. Most people expressed support, saying they or their neighbors had been victims of catalytic converter theft. However, others said that until there is a statewide crackdown on such sales, thieves can simply sell the devices in another city.

Brendmoen agreed that the long-term solution is statewide regulation, but that the St. Paul ordinance should be seen as an interim step. "We're killing the market here," she said.

City officials plan to contact businesses that may be buying the stolen catalytic converters. In recent months the rate of theft of the devices has skyrocketed.

News Briefs were compiled by Jane McClure.

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VIEWPOINT

Rental housing regulations would do more harm than good

BY CHAD SKALLY

I am highly disheartened by the work of St. Paul city staff to develop a proposed Tenant Protections Ordinance. Not only did they ignore all of the input from property managers last summer and fall, they developed an ordinance that will ultimately increase property taxes for homeowners and rental rates for tenants and reduce the amount of affordable housing in St. Paul.

There are people who damage apartments and do not pay rent. That is why property management companies have screening criteria. If the city makes it so property management companies can no longer effectively screen prospective tenants, then rents will have to be increased to not only deter people who cannot pay the rent, but to cover the extra costs associated with the effects of the city's requirements. Changing screening criteria will also cause rental property values to go down and property taxes for homeowners to go up.

The proposed ordinance would limit which criminal offenses may be used to deny a rental application. There are many misdemeanor-level offenses related to sexual attacks and stalking that the proposed ordinance would force property managers to ignore. This would only make it more difficult

for low-income renters to find apartments.

Limiting the use of security deposits and prepaid rent will also cause an increase in monthly rents. The extra security deposits and prepaid rent help offset future non-payments from residents who are at higher risk of not paying rent. If these fees are limited, property managers will have to increase the monthly rent to offset future non-payments. In Seattle over 20 percent of landlords that increased rent said that one of the reasons was their city's similar tenant protection ordinances.

Is it right for a landlord who wants to renovate a unit to have to give a resident three months' notice and pay the resident a relocation amount equal to three times the Metropolitan Council's affordability limit? (For a one-bedroom apartment, that is three times \$1,124, which comes to \$3,372.) This will only promote the deterioration of apartments in St. Paul.

I do not believe tenants should be allowed to pay their rent late five months in a year. Nor should a management company be prohibited from giving them notice. If someone consistently pays rent late, that typically means they are in an apartment that is too expensive. This will cause late fees to increase because property owners still must pay their bills. The increased late fees will

then lead to more evictions.

Many respectful renters will ultimately choose to move out of St. Paul because tenants who cause trouble at a property will be more difficult to give notice to move. The extra work for owners of affordable rental housing to report a sale and purchase will be a burden that may cause fewer properties to stay or become affordable.

Overall, the proposed ordinance would burden small landlords and cause them to sell to large national companies. That will affect St. Paul's economy, because small landlords spend more in their community than large companies. My family has managed apartments in St. Paul for over 70 years. I can see this ordinance as a reason for my family and many others to retire from this business. In Seattle about 40 percent of landlords have sold, or plan to sell, their properties in response to their city's similar ordinances.

Here are my recommendations:

- If there is not enough affordable housing in St. Paul, the city should focus its efforts on allocating funds to build more.
- If tenants are having trouble renting because of poor credit scores and criminal histories, provide them with outreach on personal finance and respectful citizenship.
- If renters have many late payments, work

with them to find apartments that they can afford and resources to help them budget their money.

What frustrates me about this ordinance is that the city staff and City Council members who put this together most likely did zero research on the impact that these types of ordinances have had in other cities. I am willing to bet that no one read the University of Washington's 2018 Seattle Housing Rental Study.

This ordinance was brought to the City Council with zero public input. The city held several public meetings last summer to discuss safe housing, but none of the language in this proposal was discussed at those meetings. If you look at the public comments regarding the proposed ordinance, it is more than apparent that the people involved in developing it did not seek any input from the residents affected by it. I had hoped that since we are a democratic government, our City Council would be more transparent. I now fully expect the City Council to completely ignore all the comments against this ordinance and pass it.

A resident of Highland Park, Chad Skally manages rental properties in downtown St. Paul, Macalester-Groveland, Summit Hill, Summit-University and St. Anthony Park.

INBOX

Adopt tenants' rights ordinance

Housing is a basic need we all share, and our community is healthier, safer and more resilient when everyone has access to stable, affordable housing. However, the reality is that many St. Paul residents struggle to find and keep a place to call home. Together, we can expand housing opportunities.

I urge *Villager* readers to contact their City Council members to express support of a new tenants' rights ordinance under consideration. This ordinance, which will create Chapter 193 in the city's Legislative Code, provides much-needed protections for tenants. For example, it would prohibit housing providers from charging a security deposit of more than one month's rent and would require that housing providers have just cause before terminating someone's tenancy. It would also require that landlords provide their rental screening criteria to all applicants in writing.

Perhaps most important, the proposed ordinance will increase equal opportunity in St. Paul by changing the ways in which housing providers may screen out applicants using criminal history background checks. Our criminal justice system is rife with inequalities based on race and ethnicity. Barring rental applicants with conviction records has a disproportionate and unfair impact on people of color. Currently, too many home seekers are summarily disqualified from housing due to behavior long in the past, or not pertinent to the ability to be a good tenant.

These simple changes will expand housing opportunities for St. Paul renters, and that's a benefit for our entire city.

*Erika L. Sanders
Macalester-Groveland*

No pride in Ayd Mill Road vote

Mrs. Gonzalez was my fourth-grade teacher, a naturalized U.S. citizen and my first daily interaction with someone who did not look like me in 1960s Minnesota. Mrs. Gonzalez was a wonderful teacher, and many of her lessons are still in my memory as I am sure they are in my fellow students. "Always do your best," "Tell the truth," "Respect your elders and your fellow students," "Be kind to the less fortunate," "Be generous to those in need," "Think before you act," and the notice she always gave us when turning in our tests—"Be proud of your efforts and sign your work so I know whom to give credit to."

I still remember how to count to 10 and to thank people in Spanish, but I have failed Mrs. Gonzalez's lessons in critical thinking and compassion on many occasions. This bothers

my conscience, and the bad feelings I get from that encourages me to try harder when challenged the next time.

We are in the midst of a coronavirus catastrophe that has cost millions of jobs. Public tax revenues are going to go down just as quickly. Those most vulnerable will suffer the most. Elected officials have known this for months, yet how do they respond?

I encourage every citizen of St. Paul to watch the City Council meeting of April 22 on the city's web site (<https://stpaul.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>), agenda item #29. Ayd Mill Road improvements passed by one vote at the end of the meeting. This is the first of many tests for our elected officials in choosing between what is essential and what is not in the face of collapsed revenues. If we apply Mrs. Gonzalez's standards of critical thinking and compassion, how would your council member fare?

Regardless of how you feel about the worthiness of this project, don't you think that part of the \$7.5 million should be dedicated for signage on Ayd Mill Road, for the ones who worked so hard to make this happen, so that they can be proud of their efforts and take credit for their work? "This multi-modal bikeway was made possible by Melvin Carter-Mayor, Russ Stark-Chief Resilience Officer, Amy Brendmoen-City Council President, and Mitra Jalali, Nelsie Yang and Jane Prince-City Council members.

Or should we all hang our heads in collective shame?

*Robert Stady
Macalester-Groveland*

Resurface Ayd Mill—period!

The St. Paul City Council ought to be ashamed of itself for wasting an extra \$5 million that belongs to the taxpayers of this city on an unnecessary—or, shall I say, "nonessential"—bike project. Ayd Mill Road needs to be repaved—period! We do not need another expensive bike-lane right now.

The City Council approved the \$7.5 million rebuild of Ayd Mill Road in the midst of people losing employment and businesses shutting down, and people facing economic ruin. As a St. Paul business owner, I am shut down, losing



thousands of dollars that I will not be able to recoup. Let's put that \$5 million toward the real needs of our citizens and—like we have to do in our own households—spend on luxuries only when we have the money.

*Amy Stariha
Lexington-Hamline*

City Council must do better

The St. Paul City Council just OK'd the \$7.5 million rebuild of Ayd Mill Road. With the current shutdown going on, a lot of people are not working. This also means the city will not have the revenue coming in. I don't want to hear that St. Paul can't afford police or firefighters. The City Council needs to make better decisions for its residents.

*Mark Lehner
West End*

A time for belt-tightening

Yee-haw! My Social Security benefit increased by 1.6 percent this year and my property tax by 14.6 percent. So my stimulus check arrived just in time to turn it around at the bank and pay less than half of my May property tax

84 INBOX

payment. So much for using the \$1,200 for financial stimulus in the community, in which I've been trying to support local businesses as best I can.

This city of St. Paul has got to stop spending on multi-million-dollar projects, such as the really stupid plan for Ayd Mill Road, at a time when people and businesses are hanging on to a very slippery slope with short fingernails. This is a time for governmental belt-tightening.

*Kathleen Deming
Macalester-Groveland*

Just close Ayd Mill Road

Ayd Mill Road primarily serves suburban commuters driving to their Minneapolis jobs. Let them take Crosstown Highway 62 to Hiawatha Avenue, or heaven forbid, public transit. Close Ayd Mill Road. Let nature finish off the remnants, and lease the land for a solar-panel farm.

*Peter K. Butler
Highland Park*

A final solution

Given that Ayd Mill Road sucks up one-third of St. Paul's street maintenance resources, that it is in a bad location for street maintenance with springs seeping out of the hills on the west side of the valley, that many other city streets are in desperate need of maintenance, that higher speeds damage roads at an increased rate, and that a significant number of drivers on Ayd Mill Road are not city residents and taxpayers, I suggest the city stop maintaining Ayd Mill Road, reduce the speed limit to 30 or 25 mph, post signs warning people to travel on it at their own risk, and drop all plans to reconstruct the road in any fashion. If someday it appears feasible to construct a bike and pedestrian trail in that location, then try that, but keep motor vehicles elsewhere.

*David Heitzman
Macalester-Groveland*

Immigrants' needs unmet

As states across the country make the decision about reopening parts of their economies, immigrants will take on a disproportionate amount of risk while receiving less than their share of support. Lifting business restrictions in Minnesota means asking local businesses to weigh their own financial solvency against public health precautions. For many small businesses, this is an impossible choice, and many will be forced to choose to open or go bankrupt.

Small businesses employ nearly half of Minnesota's workforce. And immigrant-owned businesses in Minnesota account for \$8.7 billion in annual sales, employing over 50,000 Minnesotans. Nearly 500,000 immigrants – both documented and undocumented – serve in essential roles throughout our workforce and make up 16 percent of all health care workers fighting on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis.

Immigrants are key parts of our communities and

economies. However, they have been unduly neglected in federal relief efforts. The recent federal CARES Act does not apply to undocumented immigrants, who make up a quarter of Minnesota's immigrant population; only those who can demonstrate that they are authorized to work in the U.S. are eligible for unemployment benefits, a stipulation that impacts H1-B skilled workers and DACA recipients. President Trump signed an executive order to keep meat processing plants open despite the rising death toll. Guess what population makes up nearly half of Minnesota's animal slaughtering and processing employees?

Our federal government's response to COVID-19 has failed to meet the needs of our immigrant communities. And so it is even more urgent that state governments do not fail them, too, in this next phase of their response to the pandemic. Before we consider reopening Minnesota businesses, please, Governor Walz, let's give immigrants the support they deserve.

*Libby Arnosti
Macalester-Groveland*

Help for those with Alzheimer's

The COVID-19 pandemic threatens the health of millions in this country and around the world, but also presents additional challenges for more than 5 million Americans living with Alzheimer's, their caregivers, the research community and the nonprofits serving these vulnerable populations. In Minnesota, it's projected that the number of individuals 65 and older living with Alzheimer's will increase by over 20 percent, to 120,000, in the next five years. In addition, data show that roughly 257,000 Minnesotans provided direct care for people living with Alzheimer's in 2019. These numbers will only grow.

The Promoting Alzheimer's Awareness to Prevent Elder Abuse Act would require the U.S. Department of Justice to develop training materials to assist professionals who support victims of abuse living with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia in order to improve their interactions with this vulnerable population and protect them from elder abuse.

The bipartisan Improving HOPE for Alzheimer's Act would help families by educating clinicians on the Alzheimer's and dementia care planning services available through Medicare. Given that the need for geriatric clinicians will increase dramatically, this is especially important.

During this crisis, nonprofits are providing tremendous support to the communities they serve despite facing economic hardships. Congress must establish an exclusive fund to support nonprofits that have between 500 and 10,000 employees, including loan forgiveness to ensure charities like the Alzheimer's Association can continue to serve the communities that depend on them.

Please join me and the Alzheimer's Association in encouraging U.S. Representative McCollum as well as U.S. Senators Smith and Klobuchar to include these bipartisan policies that will have an impact on the millions of families affected by Alzheimer's and other dementia in the fourth COVID-19 pandemic relief package.

*Margot Schwamb
Lowertown*

Flyers that fall short

I'd like to think that we could come up with a solution to the environmental obscenity we all experience at least weekly. I'm talking about those plastic-wrapped flyers that litter walkways, lawns, boulevards and, most important, gutters. At a time when we all should be wary of our consumptive habits, this just seems to be obscene.

*Dick Kleinbaum
Summit-University*

Immigration then and now

My maternal grandfather left Sweden in 1880 as Per Carlsson and settled in Minnesota where he became Peter Sandberg. Peter eventually made his way to the Lake Itasca area where he probably worked in a lumber camp. He spent most of his working years as a blacksmith on the Iron Range. That is where my mother was born.

I recently discovered that when Peter came to America, he initially lived around Wyoming, Minnesota, not far from where Olaus and Johanna Soderberg lived with their children in a log cabin that Olaus built. Olaus and Johanna were Peter's aunt and uncle. It seems likely that they shared their home with Peter for a time after his arrival. He probably received their help on his journey from Sweden.

Olaus left Sweden in 1869, probably driven by the famine of 1867-68. Johanna left Europe in 1871, in either a sailing ship or a steamship. She traveled with her six children, ages 3-14. They likely spent several weeks in steerage, crossing the Atlantic on the lower deck of the ship where the cargo was stored. Steerage was normally crowded, dark and damp. Limited sanitation often made it dirty and foul-smelling. In New York, Johanna and her children would have boarded a westbound train. The final leg of their journey would likely have been by steamboat, traveling up the Mississippi and St. Croix rivers to the landings at either Stillwater or Taylors Falls.

When I hear people complain about the would-be immigrants on our southern border today, I think of my Swedish ancestors. They were poor, unskilled and didn't know English, but they weren't placed in cages and their children weren't separated from their parents. Yes, we need a coherent immigration policy. We cannot have open borders. But the whole process involving immigrants should be done in a humane manner. We can do better as a nation. As Jesus said, "What you do to the least among us, you also do to me."

*M.L. Kluznik
Mendota Heights*

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The *Villager* welcomes letters to the editor. To be considered for publication, however, letters must be signed, indicate the neighborhood in which the letter writer lives, and include a phone number for verification purposes. Please, send your letter to the *Villager* at 757 S. Snelling Ave., St. Paul, MN 55116 or email it to letters@myvillager.com.



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Thirty new apartments planned for corner of Marshall and Finn

By JANE MCCLURE

Three single-family homes and a duplex on the northeast corner of Marshall Avenue and Finn Street would be replaced by two new apartment buildings under a plan that was reviewed on April 20 by the Land Use Committee of the Union Park District Council (UPDC).

The project proposed by developer Jon Schwartzman was met with a decidedly mixed reaction from the committee members and neighbors who attended the meeting. They asked for more time to consider the matter, and Schwartzman agreed to come back to the committee on May 18. (Visit unionparkdc.org for how to access that meeting.)

City staff have been reviewing Schwartzman's site plan since March. The project needs no zoning changes or variances, so the recommendation of the UPDC is not needed.

The dwellings slated for demolition are at 2115, 2111, 2103 and 2097 Marshall. The four properties, which cumulatively encompass more than 46,500 square feet, are zoned for lower-density multifamily residential.

Last summer Schwartzman completed the construction of a five-story, 16-unit apartment building at Marshall Avenue and Moore Street. That building, which has been marketed to college students, can house up to 64 residents. Schwartzman said he is now hearing from young adults who want a different rental option. He described his latest project as appealing to young professionals.

The developer said he hopes to work with neighbors on the project at Marshall and Finn, given his experience with the building at Marshall and Moore. "I got pummeled the last



Developer John Schwartzman said he is willing to work with neighbors on his plans for replacing three single-family homes and a duplex with two new apartment buildings on Marshall Avenue at Finn Street.

time I was here," Schwartzman said. Some neighbors unsuccessfully sued the city over that project.

The Marshall-Moore development coincided with an effort to get historic designation for a six-block stretch of Marshall Avenue along with a major rezoning study for Marshall in both the Merriam Park and Snelling-Hamline neighborhoods. Much of the two-mile stretch of Marshall from the Mississippi River to Hamline Avenue has been rezoned for higher-density redevelopment, while the historic study is still pending before the city's Heritage Preservation Commission.

The first building Schwartzman plans to construct at Marshall and Finn would have 10

three-bedroom loft-style apartments. With a height of 40 feet, it would include three levels of housing above one level of parking. The second building at the rear of the property would have 20 apartments in a mix of one-, two-, three- and four bedroom units. It too would have a height of 40 feet. The buildings would share 45 enclosed parking stalls and six surface stalls for their residents.

Schwartzman described the first building, dubbed the Marshall Lofts, as "cool looking. We want to create something more contemporary." Exterior materials for both buildings would be a combination of metal, composite board and brick.

Some UPDC committee members and

neighbors disagreed with Schwartzman's description of the architecture, saying they would like to see a style that better complements the surrounding neighborhood. According to them, Schwartzman's firm, Fairway Property Management, displays more attractive buildings on its website.

The Marshall building was described by some at the meeting as "boxy," "cheap," "institutional" and lacking in the architectural details that would break up the building's long facade.

"I like the density," said UPDC board member Scott Berger, "but my college dorm built in the 1960s was dense. This reminds me of my dorm, built during an architectural age that isn't highly regarded and hasn't aged very well."

The amount of parking was also criticized. Schwartzman said he would like to offer more than one space per apartment. However, some committee members and neighbors said it should not need that much parking, given that Marshall has been designated for a new bus rapid transit line in the future.

One suggestion was to provide more housing and fewer parking stalls and seek a parking variance. Schwartzman, whose company needed a variance for a recent development on Grand Avenue, was reluctant to apply for another one. "It was a nightmare," he said.

Others at the meeting pressed for more affordable housing. Schwartzman said he had hoped to offer an affordable unit and that he looked closely at the city's 4D program, which provides property tax breaks for landlords who maintain a minimum percentage of units at affordable rent levels. "But we couldn't make the numbers work," he said.

Changes to St. Paul's multifamily zoning regulations gain support

By JANE MCCLURE

Proposed changes to allow more density in many of St. Paul's existing multifamily residential districts have much more support than opposition, if comments received during a public hearing before the St. Paul Planning Commission on May 1 are any indication.

The changes are being proposed to address the city's affordable housing shortage and are being promoted as a way to add more dwellings on properties already zoned for residential multifamily (RM) use. The commission heard from almost a dozen district councils,

developers and private citizens via written comments, according to senior city planner Bill Dermody. In-person comments were not allowed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The commission forwarded the comments to its Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee for further study before it makes a recommendation to the City Council. A second public hearing will be held by the council, most likely in June or July.

"The proposed changes are significant," said Dermody, who met with seven district councils over the past several months to explain them. The Summit Hill Association and North End Neighborhood Association were

the only district councils that submitted written comments on the changes, which could potentially affect hundreds of properties.

For more than a decade, St. Paul has used traditional neighborhoods mixed-use zoning to promote development and add more density, especially along major transit routes. Changing what is allowed under RM zoning would permit greater housing density in those areas without requiring commercial uses.

Under the proposed changes, taller structures would be allowed at up to 70 feet in RM zones with a conditional use permit. Currently, the highest buildings allowed in those zones is 50 feet.

The changes would also allow a property to have less off-street parking and would establish design standards so new buildings would complement the surrounding neighborhood. Other changes would affect building setbacks, lot coverage and floor-area ratios that are used to regulate density.

Developers, private citizens and landlords who submitted comments praised the changes, but also wanted more added. Dustin Schroeder, a Summit-University resident and owner of three rental properties, said he has looked at adding units to his properties in re-

MULTIFAMILY ZONING ►11



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St. Paul's Heritage Preservation Commission approved plans for a two-story, single-family home with attached three-car garage on the vacant lot at 962 Summit Ave.

One of two proposed new homes on Summit Ave. approved by HPC

By JANE MCCLURE

Plans for two new Summit Avenue homes met very different fates on April 20 at the hands of the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC). Work on a home at 962 Summit Ave. can move forward, but the prospective developer of a home at 1498 Summit will have to go back to the drawing board.

The housing projects involve two of the few vacant lots on Summit. The former is in the Historic Hill District and the latter is in the Summit Avenue West Historic District. Construction plans require HPC review before building permits can be issued in historic districts. HPC staff had earlier recommended approval of both building plans.

David Hovda, the prospective developer of 1498 Summit, attended his preapplication review, but not the April 20 public hearing on his plans. Commissioners asked if they could lay over Hovda's application so that they could seek more information from the applicant. But with the project facing a deadline for action, the HPC felt it had no choice but to reject the application. State law requires local units of government to act within 60 days of receiving a zoning application. Otherwise the application is approved automatically. Applicants can consent to a 60-day extension, but Hovda was not there to consent.

The lot in question, on the south side of Summit between Saratoga and Pascal streets, was split off several years ago. Hovda's plans call for a two-story, single-family home and a detached three-car garage. The house would fill most of the 40-foot-wide lot, which raised red flags for HPC members and two neighbors of the proposed home.

"This would be very close to neighboring properties," said Jacob Stern, an attorney representing the Koppang and Teigen families, who live on either side of the lot. "The building is something you'd expect to see on a much larger lot. It would tower over the adja-

cent properties."

While Stern's clients understand that the lot between their homes will not remain vacant forever, Stern said, they believe the proposed dwelling with its steeply pitched roof is too massive for the lot.

"It looks like a very nice house," said Richard Teigen. "It just doesn't seem to be the right fit for the lot."

Several commissioners agreed with neighbors that the design of the house is inconsistent with historic district guidelines. They wanted more details on the building's height and setbacks along with drawings that showed how the proposed home looked next to neighboring homes.

"We just don't have enough information," said commissioner Paul Nelson. "I think it's a good thing to send this back to the drawing board."

Hovda had 10 days to appeal the HPC's ruling to the City Council, but no appeal was filed.

The HPC approved the plans for a two-story single-family home with attached three-car garage at 962 Summit. The 60-by-250-foot lot is on the south side of Summit between Chatsworth and Milton streets. It was split from the lot at 966 Summit in 2019.

Builder John Sharkey made design changes in response to comments received at an HPC preapplication review in February. The proposed house is designed in the Colonial Revival style with an open front porch, a deck above and a heavy cornice lining the roof and dividing the first and second floors. It would have double-hung windows and shake siding.

Karen Miller, who lives in Hudson but owns the house at 952 Summit, opposed the plans. According to her, the new house will be "an obstacle" to her plans to sell her property. Neighbor Lee Sexton expressed general approval, with the caveat that quality materials be used in construction in keeping with other nearby homes.

10◀ MULTIFAMILY ZONING

sponse to tenants' requests for smaller units, but current RM zoning makes that difficult.

The Summit Hill Association met four times in recent weeks to discuss the zoning changes and made several suggestions, including retaining current RM parking standards. Because the Planning Commission has had a parking study underway for the past few years, the SHA is suggesting that any parking changes wait until that study is complete.

"We recognize that parking availability plays a major role in increasing residential housing density, providing affordable housing and promoting the use of public transit," the SHA wrote. "In a current densely populated neighborhood with limited transit options, livability includes access to parking. Ideally

and essentially, parking, transit and RM zoning should be considered together."

The SHA also asked that a height limit of 35 feet, or 45 feet with a conditional use permit, be imposed for all RM properties.

Many technical changes are also being proposed to the city's three types of RM zoning. RM-1 provides for predominantly one- and two-family homes, townhouses and low-density multi-unit structures as a transition between single-family areas and ones with higher density. RM-2, which is the most prevalent of the three types, allows more densely populated multifamily residences and a variety of congregate living arrangements, especially near major thoroughfares and transit lines. RM-3 zoning has long been used for high-rise buildings.

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HEALTH & FITNESS

Survival of the fittest

Workout places try to stay strong with healthy dose of online classes

By FRANK JOSSI

The SweatShop Health Club in Merriam Park has been holding periodic “pandemic parades” in which trainers drive to their clients’ homes, drop off free fitness props and sing the Randy Newman song “You’ve Got a Friend in Me” from a safe social distance.

Trainers from the St. Paul Jewish Community Center have been teaching online workout classes from makeshift basement or living room fitness areas, with sessions occasionally interrupted by visits from family pets.

Some of the clients of The Power House in Highland Park are using sand-filled water jugs or whatever else they can find around their homes to serve as weights during their virtual workout sessions.

Welcome to the new world of fitness training during the coronavirus pandemic. Online workouts have become popular as fitness centers struggle to stay in business, keep staff busy and help clients stay healthy with personalized exercises they can do at home. The fitness instructors have not only picked up viewers from down the street, but around the globe while presenting classes using laptop computers, tablets and cellphones.

Tula Yoga & Wellness, 99 N. Snelling Ave., offers at least 30 virtual fitness classes from morning to evening with an expanded base of participants ranging from regular members

“Half of our work is fitness and half is about engagement and connection,” said Gayle Winegar of the SweatShop.

to people across the country. “We no longer have geographic constraints, but we do have to remember to tell people about the time zone difference,” said studio owner and yoga therapist Ann Blackburn.

Delivering a virtual class without being able to see the participants presents many challenges for the instructors, according to Blackburn. She generally uses Zoom’s webinar option where those who are working out see the instructor, but not vice versa. It is a level of privacy welcomed by many students who may feel more comfortable doing yoga alone.

“We feel like we’re offering a really good service that people need,” said Blackburn, who teaches out of her studio.

For private and small group sessions, instructors can see and lead students through the exercises. Blackburn said she opens classes by asking if participants have any tension issues or injuries and asks that they grab a few props—a bath towel, chair, blanket or pillow—to support themselves as they work out.



Tula Yoga & Wellness owner Ann Blackburn streams a virtual workout class. PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

Gayle Winegar, president and founder of the SweatShop at 167 N. Snelling Ave., said she and her staff first started offering free virtual workouts on Facebook Live before moving to private paid Zoom classes. She said the club’s instructors have grown comfortable leading the classes and have learned the art of advising Pilates and fitness clients not only in St. Paul, but in other states and countries.

The trainers also have gotten creative. One employs a chair as a Pilates prop, while another discovered her hallway was the best place to teach online. The club’s 22 digital trainers reach out to clients through the pandemic parades and spend 30 minutes a day checking in on them with phone calls.

“Half of our work is fitness and half is about engagement and connection,” Winegar said.

Max and Jill Lipset own The Power House, a fitness studio at 617 S. Snelling Ave. with 15 instructors teaching as many as 40 online classes every week in addition to providing private health coaching.

“It’s going pretty well,” Max Lipset said about the virtual workouts. “The challenge is people are on their screens at work a lot, so doing another 45 minutes to an hour adds to that screen time. But people say they’re getting a lot of value out of it.”

The Power House has lent resistance bands, barbells and other small fitness equipment to members and has rented large pieces to them for a fee. By clearing the equipment out, Lipset said he can more easily move forward on his plans to renovate the space. “My gyms are pretty empty,” he said. “That’s not something we expected.”

The remote workouts also are not expected to end anytime soon. “For the next year or so, we have to be ready to provide people with exercise instruction they can do from their homes until there’s a vaccine,” Lipset said. “We’re planning to continue the digital workouts for the foreseeable future.”

The Jewish Community Center, 1375 St. Paul Ave., also is using Facebook Live for its virtual workout classes and then provides them on its Facebook page and YouTube channel, according to Anna Golv, fitness and group exercise manager. The JCC offers about 15 classes weekly, allowing nonmembers to participate in classes or watch videos, hoping they sign up as members after the pandemic subsides.

“We’ve had a lot of positive feedback from people thanking us for providing a place where people can gather and take care of one another and still have a community feel in this new world,” Golv said.



Blackburn adjusts a sign advertising Tula Yoga’s online classes.

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BZA denies variances for Grand apartments

New building would have 12 three- and four-bedroom units

BY JANE MCCLURE

A proposed five-story, 12-unit apartment building is too large and dense for its Grand Avenue site, according to the St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). The board voted 6-1 on April 27 to deny variances for the project at 1769 Grand Ave.

The developer, Owatonna-based Good Timing LLC, had applied for three variances for the building. The first was for lot size—1,500 square feet per apartment unit is required, and 866 square feet per unit was proposed. The second was for the sideyard setback—nine feet is required, and six feet was proposed. The third variance was for off-street parking—19 parking spaces are required, and 12 spaces were proposed.

The apartment building would replace a duplex built in 1916. The site is zoned for multifamily, medium-density housing (RM2). That block of Grand Avenue also includes Grand-Wheeler Sinclair service station, three apartment buildings and CVS Pharmacy.

Developer Luke Wiborg said he and business partner Max Smith purchased the duplex last October. They originally intended to rehabilitate the structure, but found it to be too deteriorated. He said they consulted city and neighborhood plans before proposing the five-story apartment building. He cited as reasons for the added density the underlying RM2 zoning as well as the lot's 50-by-200-foot size. "That told us this was platted for more intensive use," he said.

The building as proposed would have 12 three- and four-bedroom units, most of them multi-level in design. Several floor plans would be offered. The units could appeal to families, Wiborg said, providing flexibility for tenants wanting a home office, den or playroom. Monthly rents would range from \$2,500 to \$3,400.

BZA staff recommend approval of the variances. So did the Macalester-Groveland Community Council's Housing and Land Use Committee on an 11-4 vote in April. Some district council members questioned whether the apartments would appeal more to students from nearby colleges with bedrooms that could accommodate as many as four people in each unit. However, others applauded the project, saying it would provide greater density along a bus route



Good Timing LLC has proposed a five-story, 12-unit apartment building for the 50-by-200-foot lot at 1769 Grand Ave.

"You've got the skinniest lot on the block," said Summit Avenue resident Dan Scott. "(The building design) seems really out of proportion."

and near the A Line bus rapid transit line.

The Summit Avenue Residential Preservation Association (SARPA) opposed the project.

BZA members Robert Clarksen, Joyce Maddox, Daniel Miller, Luis Rangel Morales, Danielle Swift and Diane Trout-Oertel voted to deny the variances. Thomas Saylor cast the sole vote against denial.

Several BZA members said that while they appreciate the project's design and the developers' commitment to such features as rooftop solar panels, it is too dense for the lot and out of character for the neighborhood. Inconsistency with the city's comprehensive plan was also cited.

"You're cramming a lot of people into a very narrow space," said Rangel Morales. He and others said a smaller building could be built there.

"I think the parking will be a real problem," Maddox said. "It's always been a problem on Grand Avenue."

Clarksen and Maddox were dubious that the apartments would be attractive to families. According to Clarksen, the

proposed rents are higher than the average mortgage payment in the area. "To even suggest that this is an option for anything other than student housing is disingenuous," he said.

One person, Macalester-Groveland resident Cathy Plessner, spoke in favor of the project at the BZA hearing, saying it would bring greater vitality to the area. However, that was questioned by several other local residents. They said that while they welcome new development, the building is simply too large for the lot. They recommended that a smaller building be proposed, as did the owner of the apartment building at 1775 Grand Ave.

The project's opponents disputed Wiborg's contention that the area lacks three- and four-bedroom apartments, saying those are what are being built in the area.

"You've got the skinniest lot on the block," said Summit Avenue resident Dan Scott. "(The building design) seems really out of proportion."

"We welcome and commend new development," said Suzi Scott, Dan's wife. "But this is too big. And we already have a problem with spillover parking."

Summit Avenue resident Anne Geisser said a lower-density development should be considered. "This is just the wrong building in the wrong place," she said.

"How does it add to livability, adding that many people on the block?" asked Summit Avenue resident Paul Padratzki.

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Suntide Commercial Realty has purchased Johnny Baby's on the northwest corner of University Avenue and Chatsworth St. and plans to renovate the longtime bar as a retail establishment. Suntide closed on the sale in March and immediately began work to improve the 5,376-square-foot property, including new windows and landscaping. "We think this is a great opportunity for Suntide to improve the neighborhood and add retail," said Barb Schuba, CEO of Suntide, a commercial real estate company headquartered at 2550 University Ave. W. in St. Paul.

Business Briefs

Bethany Wood of HealthSource Chiropractic of St. Paul, 1053 Grand Ave., was chosen as the Young Entrepreneur of the Year as part of Minnesota's celebration of National Small Business Week on May 3-9. The state's winners were chosen for their success in starting or helping small business and their efforts to give back to the community. Each business also received assistance from the U.S. Small Business Association in the form of guaranteed loans, business training, consultation and more. The SBA Minnesota District Office will join partners across the state to celebrate the winners at events to be announced soon. To learn more, visit sba.gov.

The **Grand Avenue Business Association** is partnering with Lunds & Byerlys to sponsor a blood drive for Memorial Blood Center that has been rescheduled from noon-6 p.m. Thursday and Friday, July 9-10, at 799 Grand Ave. The ongoing corona-

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Crime Report

The following crime incidents were compiled from St. Paul and Mendota Heights police department reports and other sources.

Highland Park

Robbery—A strong-arm robbery was reported on the 1800 block of Saunders Avenue at 7:58 p.m. Monday, April 27.

Burglary—Residential burglaries were committed on the 2300 block of Benson Avenue on April 19, the 1600 block of Pinehurst Avenue on April 20 and the 1300 block of East Maynard Drive on April 23.

Theft—Vehicles were stolen on the 2100 block of Ford Parkway on April 16, the 1900 block of Graham Avenue on April 17, the 1200 block of Juno Avenue on April 17, the 500 block of Warwick Street on April 20 and the 1200 block of Davern Street on April 22.

—Several items were reported stolen from vehicles on the 600 block of South Cleveland Avenue on April 18 and the 1700 block of Rome Avenue on April 23.

—Several items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from a business on the 2000 block of Ford Parkway at 7:55 a.m. Monday, April 20.

Arson—An arson fire was reported at a multifamily residence on the 2500 block of Edgumbe Road at 11:38 p.m. Sunday, April 19. Another arson fire was reported on the 1300 block of East Maynard Drive at 11:16 p.m. Saturday, April 25.

Miscellaneous—Felony damage to property was reported on the 2300 block of Benson Avenue at 2:25 a.m. Sunday, April 19.

Lexington-Hamline

Theft—A theft from vehicle of items valued at more than \$1,000 was reported on Ashland Avenue and Dunlap Street at 12:45 p.m. Saturday, April 18.

Macalester-Groveland

Burglary—A home burglary was reported on the 200 block of South Syndicate Street at

1:58 a.m. Saturday, April 18.

Theft—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were stolen from vehicles on the 1800 block of Randolph Avenue on April 16, on Edgumbe Road and Jefferson Avenue on April 20, and on the 1600 block of Berkeley Avenue on April 22.

—Vehicles were stolen on Osceola and Snelling avenues on April 19, the 1800 block of Wellesley Avenue on April 26, on Palace and Snelling avenues on April 28, and the 2000 block of Grand Avenue on April 29.

Mendota Heights

Burglary—Tools were reported stolen from an underground parking garage on the 2300 block of Lexington Avenue at 10:05 a.m. Friday, April 24.

Theft—A wheelchair valued at \$5,000 was stolen from the end of a driveway on the 500 block of Mendota Road while its owner was walking down the street at 9:50 a.m. Monday, April 20.

—Spools of copper wire were reported stolen from a work truck on the 1400 block of Northland Drive at 6:08 a.m. Monday, April 20.

—Several items were reported stolen from vehicles on the 2300 block of Lexington Avenue on April 23, the 600 block of Hidden Creek Trail on April 25, the 1000 block of Mayfield Heights Lane on April 25, the 700 block of Round Hill Road on April 25, the 600 block of Linden Street on April 27, the 900 block of Mendakota Court on April 27, the 2100 block of Dodd Road on May 6, and the 600 block of Sunset Lane on May 6.

—Vehicles were reported stolen on the 1700 block of Trail Road on April 25, the 800 block of Crown Circle on April 29 and the 1800 block of Delaware Avenue on May 1.

—Two vehicles were reported broken into and had items stolen on the 1600 block of Lilydale Road around 8:30 p.m. Sunday, May 3. A black Yukon-style vehicle with loud exhaust was seen leaving the area and was believed to be connected to the thefts.

Miscellaneous—A large number of street racers were stopped and issued citations at

11:55 p.m. Saturday, April 18, on the 900 block of Mendota Heights Road. One driver was arrested by the State Patrol on a felony count for fleeing police.

—Police received a call of a male suspect trying to enter a home on the 1300 block of Cherry Hill Road at 9:40 p.m. Saturday, May 2. Officers searched the area and observed individuals gathering at the house next door. Upon attempting to contact the group, the individuals fled on foot. One underage male who was under the influence was cited and released to a sober adult.

—A dog bite was reported at the city's off-leash dog park on Acacia Boulevard around 12:48 p.m. Tuesday, May 5.

Merriam Park

Burglary—A commercial break-in was reported on the 2000 block of Marshall Avenue at 10 a.m. Thursday, April 16.

—Burglaries were reported on the 1700 block of University Avenue at 3:50 p.m. Wednesday, April 23; and on the 2000 block of Carroll Avenue at 6:57 a.m. Friday, April 24.

Theft—Vehicles were stolen on the 1500 block of St. Anthony Avenue on April 16, the 2100 block of University Avenue on April 17, the 400 block of North Prior Avenue on April 17, the 300 block of North Cleveland Avenue on April 19, the 400 block of North Wilder Street on April 22 and the 1900 block of University Avenue on April 27.

Arson—An arson fire was reported at a commercial building on the 400 block of North Prior Avenue at 5:28 p.m. Friday, April 17.

Snelling-Hamline

Burglary—A commercial break-in occurred on the 1400 block of Concordia Avenue at 4:06 p.m. Thursday, April 16.

—Residential burglaries were reported on the 400 block of North Snelling Avenue at 12:54 p.m. Sunday, April 19; and on the 1500 block of Portland Avenue at midnight Monday, April 20.

Assault—Aggravated assaults with a gun

occurred on the 1400 block of University Avenue at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, April 21, and again at 11:10 p.m. Thursday, April 23.

Arson—An arson fire was reported on the 1300 block of University Avenue at 8:30 p.m. Saturday, April 25.

Summit Hill

Theft—Vehicles were stolen on the 1000 block of Grand Avenue at 1:38 p.m. Friday, April 17; and on Grand Avenue and Grotto Street at 7:12 p.m. Tuesday, April 21.

—Thefts from vehicles of items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported on Chatsworth Street and St. Clair Avenues on April 24; and on St. Clair and Victoria Street on April 25.

Summit-University

Burglary—A home break-in was reported on the 600 block of Dayton Avenue at 3 p.m. Monday, April 27.

Theft—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from a vehicle on the 200 block of North Chatsworth Street at 1:10 p.m. Friday, April 24.

—Vehicles were stolen on the 200 block of North Milton Street on April 28 and the 700 block of Dayton Avenue on April 29.

Sex crime—A rape was reported at 8 p.m. Saturday, April 18, on the 600 block of Dayton Avenue.

West End

Robbery—A strong-arm robbery occurred at a convenience store on the 700 block of Randolph Avenue at 2:54 p.m. Saturday, April 25.

—A robbery at gunpoint was reported on Superior and Western avenues at 7:45 p.m. Wednesday, April 29.

Burglary—A residential break-in was reported on the 200 block of Richmond Street at 4:07 p.m. Thursday, April 23.

Theft—Vehicles were reported stolen on the 700 block of Otto Avenue on April 24 and on the 200 block of Grand Avenue on April 29.

School Notes

Paula Alihonou, a neuroscience major at Macalester College, and **Marry Tha Dar Soe**, a nursing major at Metropolitan State University, are two St. Paul recipients of the Dream Award from Minnesota-based Scholarship America. The renewable scholarship are for students who have overcome challenges to pursue their college ambitions. For more information, visit scholarshipamerica.org/news-events/dreams-to-success.

Casa de Corazón, a Spanish immersion early learning program, plans to open a franchise location on Ford Parkway and South Howell Street this fall. Founder Natalie Standridge created Casa de Corazón in 2002 after searching for a dual-language childcare program for her daughter. The centers feature indoor gyms, outdoor playgrounds, updated security, commercial kitchens and native Spanish-speaking teachers with degrees in child development fields. Other local franchise locations are in Minneapolis, Edina, Maple Grove and Wisconsin. Visit casaearlylearning.com.

The St. Paul School Board recently accepted an \$800,000 grant from 3M to support distance learning initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic. The money will enhance student online learning experiences by providing additional program licenses, creating video content with partners like Belwin and Como Planetarium, delivering art supplies to students' houses, and providing additional Wi-Fi hotspots to students and families in need. In addition, 3M donated \$25,000 to support the district's meal service program, which has served more than 1 million meals since March 18.

Sam Hochberger, a neuroscience major at Macalester College, was a finalist for the 2019 Global Citizen of the Year Award from the not-for-profit IES Abroad organization. He was chosen for his study in Spain last fall, where he assisted the autism community and their families in Granada. He was one of four U.S. college students to be recognized. Visit IESabroad.org.

Mina Mandic, a junior at St. Paul Academy, took first place in the physical science category for an oral presentation on "Exploring the Wonders of the Early Universe: Green Pea Galaxies and Light Flux" as part of the 58th National Junior Science and Humanities Symposium (JSHS), a STEM research paper competition for high school students sponsored by the U.S. Army, Navy and Air Force. The award was announced in April during a virtual ceremony and includes a \$12,000 scholarship.

The Hiway Credit Union Foundation recently donated \$5,250 to the St. Paul Public Schools to purchase 21 Wi-Fi hotspots to assist families with distance learning. The hotspots will be used by students and families in the district who currently do not have reliable Internet access. On April 23, the governor ordered K-12 schools to stay closed for the remainder of the academic year to slow the spread of the coronavirus. The hotspots were delivered to the St. Paul Public Schools the next day and were distributed to those in need the following week.



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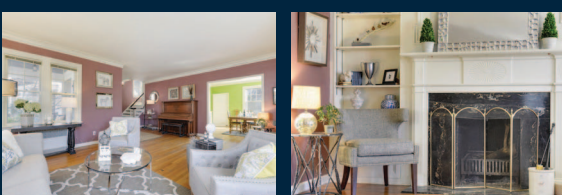
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District Councils

Highland Park

highlanddistrictcouncil.org • 651-695-4005

HDC board elections—The Highland District Council will hold an election this month to fill seats on its board of directors for even-numbered grid positions and two at-large positions. Voting will take place from now through 5 p.m. Monday, May 18. Candidate information and links to an online or paper ballot are available at tinyurl.com/hdc-vote. The site also includes a link to view the HDC’s annual meeting presentation. For information on the election or to vote with a paper ballot, call 651-695-4005 or email kathy@highlanddistrictcouncil.org.

Upcoming meetings—Transportation Committee, 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 12; Community Development Committee, 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 19; and Community Engagement Committee, 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 27. All meetings of the council will be held online through the month of May. Links to access the meetings and updates are posted on the website.

Macalester-Groveland

macgrove.org • 651-695-4000

Office closed—The Macalester-Groveland Community Council office remains closed due to the coronavirus pandemic. For more information, email mgcc@macgrove.org.

Join meetings online—The public can participate in the community council’s board and committee meetings by using Zoom videoconferencing. Macalester-Groveland council staff will send out meeting links to all who are interested a few days in advance. Email mgcc@macgrove.org to get on the list. Upcoming meetings include the board of directors at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, May 14; and the Housing and Land Use Committee at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 27.

Building community while apart—Follow @macgrovecc on Facebook and Instagram to participate in weekly neighborhood-building contests. Participants will be entered into a drawing to win gift cards from local businesses.

COVID-19 resources—Visit macgrove.org/2020resources

for an updated list of current offers, activities and ways to support one another during this uncertain time. Those who have something to add may email mgcc@macgrove.org.

Get involved—The community council has three standing committees that meet once a month on making Macalester-Groveland a great place to live, work, learn and play. See more at macgrove.org/committees.

Union Park

unionparkdc.org • 651-645-6887

Micro-grants—Those who have an idea for a neighborhood event or improvement project have until May 15 to apply for the Union Park District Council’s micro-grants program to help fund those efforts. For an application form, email wako@unionparkdc.org.

COVID-19 resources—Those who need assistance or information pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic are invited to call the UPDC office or visit its website.

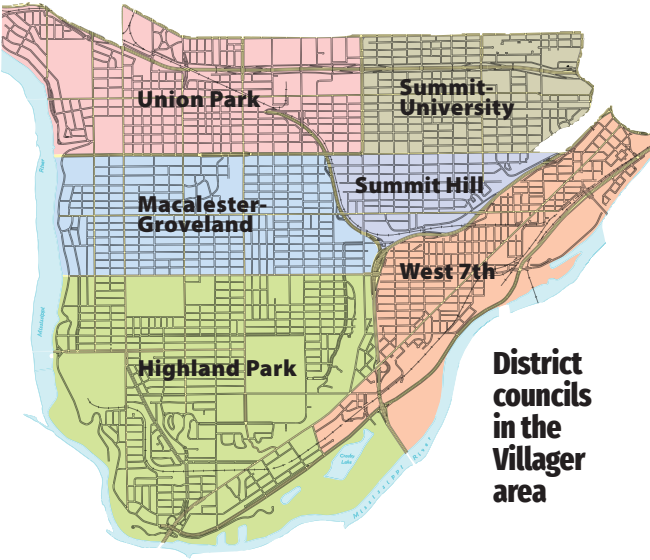
Stay in contact—The public is invited to “like” the Union Park District Council on Facebook, follow it on Twitter at @UnionParkDC, and subscribe to its monthly e-newsletter, “Neighborhood Matters,” by emailing info@unionparkdc.org.

Upcoming online meetings—Neighborhood Involvement Committee, 6:30 p.m. Monday, May 18, and Environment and Parks Committee, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 20 (email wako@unionparkdc.org to join these Zoom videoconferences); Committee on Land Use and Economic Development, 6:30 p.m. Monday, May 18, and board of directors, 7 p.m. Wednesday, June 3 (email brandon@unionparkdc.org to join these Zoom videoconferences).

West Seventh

fortroadfederation.org • 651-298-5599

Board elections—The West Seventh/Fort Road Federation’s board elections are being moved online and by mail this year due to COVID-19. Vote online on the website between June 1-13 or print out and mail in a ballot that can be found



there. Responses from board candidates can also be found on the site. The first board meeting for elected members will be held at 7 p.m. Monday, June 15, via Zoom. There will not be a board meeting in May.

Rescheduled events—The 13th annual West End Neighbors’ Garden and History Tour that was to take place in June has been rescheduled for Saturday, September 12, due to the pandemic. The West Seventh Community Service Award recipients will be honored on Wednesday, September 16, at Mancini’s Char House.

COVID-19 resources—Information continues to be regularly updated on ways that people who live or work in the West Seventh neighborhood can support one another during the COVID-19 pandemic. To learn how, visit fortroadfederation.org/community-resources.html.

Upcoming virtual meetings—Community Engagement and Outreach Committee, 8 a.m. Thursday, May 21; Transportation and Land Use Committee, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 3; and board of directors, 7 p.m. Monday, June 15. Information on connecting to the Zoom meetings can be found by visiting fortroadfederation.org/calendar.html.

Volunteers

Partners in Policymaking is welcoming applications for its eight-month leadership training program that will start this fall at the Crowne Plaza Aire in Bloomington, near the Mall of America. Individuals with disabilities and parents of young children with developmental disabilities will be trained at no cost. Eight, two-day sessions will be held on Fridays and Saturdays from September-May (no session in December), with the March class held on Sunday and Monday so participants can visit legislators at the Capitol. Child care and respite allowances are given, and mileage and meals are covered. Applications are due by July 10. For more information, visit

tinyurl.com/y6vglwf7 or contact Brenton Rice at brenton@togeevents.com or 651-242-6589.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, is offering free pickup of sand that has been dredged from the Mississippi River on a first-come, first-served basis. The St. Paul District maintains the 9-foot navigation channel on the Mississippi River from Minneapolis to Guttenberg, Iowa. On average, it removes approximately 1 million cubic yards of dredged material from the river. For a full list of sites, requirements and limitations, visit tinyurl.com/y7ly39wk. Please contact the corps at 651-290-5154 prior to removing material.

Religious Notes

Or Emet will host an online program titled “Surviving Trauma: Freud, Anti-Semitism and the Spanish Flu Pandemic” from 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Sunday, May 17. The program will be presented by Or Emet congregation member Ellen Chazdon, a longtime practicing psychologist in the Twin Cities. She will focus on how Freud was impacted by the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-20 and how he endured multiple traumatic events throughout his life. For information or to register, email Scott Chazdon at president@oremnet.org.

Jehovah Lutheran Church in St. Paul is continuing online Bible study through May 31. The Reverend Mark Schuler, vacancy pastor at the church and professor at Concordia University-St. Paul, covers the four Gospels in half-hour videos at jehovahlutheran.online (online worship can be found at the same address). The videos are free and available for viewing anytime. For information, visit jehovah-lutheran.org or contact the church at jelcoffice@gmail.com or 651-644-1421.

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The Villager serves the Highland Park, Lexington-Hamline, Macalester-Groveland, Merriam Park, Snelling-Hamline, Summit Hill, Summit-University and West 7th neighborhoods of St. Paul, the Longfellow and Nokomis neighborhoods of Minneapolis, Lilydale, Mendota and Mendota Heights.

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Visit MyVillager.com for deadline

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THE KIOSK

Thursday/May 14

OUR LADY OF PEACE (OLP) hospice will hold its annual spring luncheon online at noon today. The 80-year-old institution provides free housing and care to patients beyond what is covered by their insurance at a daily cost of about \$1,000 per patient. The public is invited to grab lunch and log on to the OLP website for a video presentation that includes words of comfort from Archbishop Bernard Hebda, the story of four generations of Rudolfs who have built and sold bluebird houses to raise money for Our Lady of Peace, a message from OLP director of development Lisa Sweeney, and a performance of “Shelter Me—A Prayer” by its composer, the Reverend Michael Jonas. Donations to OLP will be requested, but are not required. Visit ourladyofpeacemn.org.

WANT TO IMPROVE your public speaking skills? The Midway Toastmasters club is meeting from 6-8 p.m. on most Thursdays via video chat. For information, visit midway.toastmastersclubs.org or email vpm-383@toastmastersclubs.org.

Sunday/May 17

“SURVIVING TRAUMA: Freud, Anti-Semitism and the Spanish Flu Pandemic” will be discussed from 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. by Ellen Chazdon, a longtime practicing psychologist in the Twin Cities. Sponsored by the congregation Or Emet, the online program explores how Sigmund Freud was impacted by the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-20 and how he endured multiple



traumatic events throughout his life. To register, email Scott Chazdon at president@oremnet.org.

Monday/May 18

END OF LIFE CARE and advanced care directives will be addressed by Jewish Family Service from 4-5 p.m. via Zoom. Hear from doctors about their experiences with end of life care and decision-making during the COVID-19 pandemic. To register for the free program, email Tara Burns at tburns@jfssp.org.

Friday/May 22

“OPENING THE DOORS of Sephardic Music and Culture,” an online program led by David Jordan Harris, artistic director of the ensemble Voices of Sepharad and executive director of Rimón: The Minnesota Jewish Arts Council, will be offered from 7:30-9 p.m. by the Jewish congregation Or Emet. Harris will discuss the history of the Sephardic Jews through their music. A short Sabbath service will precede the program. To register, email Scott Chazdon at president@oremnet.org.

Saturday/May 23

A POLLINATOR PLANT SALE is being held today. Drive-through pickup is available for orders placed by May 20 at stanthonyparkgardenclub.com. For more information, email sapgcsale@gmail.com. All plants have been grown without using any neo-nicotinoid insecticides, which are responsible for a large decline in the population of pollinating insects and birds. Net proceeds from the sale will go to the city of St. Paul to purchase personal protective equipment for first responders.

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ON THE TOWN

A fine catch

Kritzer's 'Catfishing' honored for both mystery and science fiction

BY ANNE MURPHY

The awards Naomi Kritzer has won this year for her new young adult novel *Catfishing on CatNet* are almost beyond her imagining. Within the span of a week in April, the Highland Park author received the Minnesota Book Award for Young Adult Literature and the Mystery Writer's of America's Edgar Award in the Best Young Adult category.

Catfishing, which is set in the near future, tells the story of a 16-year-old girl named Steph who moves with her mother every few months or so and yearns for some stability in her life through an online community called CatNet. Users of the social medium upload pictures of cats to a website. It seems welcoming, but the website is run by an artificial intelligence called CheshireCat. From Steph's first interaction, a mystery unfolds raising questions about online privacy, social networking and the importance of personal friendships in one's life.

Catfishing on CatNet is based on Kritzer's short story, "Cat Pictures Please," which won the 2016 Hugo Award from the World Science Fiction Society and the 2016 Locus Award from the science fiction and fantasy magazine *Locus*. "An editor who liked my writing asked if I'd consider expanding the short story," Kritzer said. "I started thinking about where the story might go, what sorts of human characters might live a great deal of their lives online, and Steph quickly took on a life of her own."

The daughter of two professors at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Kritzer was enthralled as a child with C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Hans Christian Andersen's *The Wild Swans*, the essays of George Orwell and *The Curse of Chalion* by Minneapolis author Lois McMaster Bujold. While attend-

ing Carleton College in Northfield, where she earned a degree in religion in 1995, she took a course in creative writing.

Her first short story was published in 1999. Several fantasy novels followed, and she gave up her job as a technical writer at the University of St. Thomas to devote herself full-time to writing fiction. Her early titles included *Fires of the Faithful*, *Turning the Storm*, *Freedom's Gate*, *Freedom's Apprentice* and *Freedom's Sisters*.

A story with feline characters seemed inevitable. Kritzer's household includes four cats, in addition to husband Ed Burke and daughters Molly, 19, and Kiera, 16. *Catfishing* is also connected to some of Kritzer's early reading.

"Among the stories from my childhood that I revisited in some ways with this book is 'The Westing Game' by Ellen Raskin, which features a nerdy, isolated teenager whose life improves with new friendships, one of which is with a deeply eccentric mastermind," Kritzer said.

"My friends were such a central part of my life as a kid," she said. "Like a lot of nerdy kids, I struggled to make friends and it was always devastating when one moved away or left school. I think it's easy to forget as an adult how important friendships are to kids, yet how dependent they are on the whims of others to maintain those incredibly important relationships."

Online friendships can be real friendships, Kritzer added. "Sometimes online is the first place where LGBT teens can connect with other LGBT teens, or the first place where people with a niche interest can find others who are as excited about the topic as they are," she said.

"People in general, not just teens, should probably be more aware of the degree to which large corporations—Google and Ap-



Naomi Kritzer, winner of the 2020 Edgar Award for her young adult novel, *Catfishing on CatNet*, poses in the backyard of her Highland Park home with her feline friend, Balto.

PHOTO BY
BRAD STAUFFER

ple in particular, but also Amazon and Facebook—can track not only our virtual but our physical movements," she said. "The AI in my story is benign and uses this information for good purposes mostly, but the algorithms used by the large corporations are really not focused on our well-being."

Kritzer is currently at work on a sequel to *Catfishing on CatNet*. Titled *Chaos on CatNet*, the novel is due out in April 2021. "I've had two short stories published this year—'Monster' on Clarkesworld and 'Little Free Library' on Tor.com," she said. "I expect another short story to come out soon, 'The New Decameron.'"

When she is not writing, Kritzer is reading. "I bought *The Missing Piece of Charlie O'Reilly* and *The Stars and the Blackness Between* from Red Balloon Bookshop last week," she said. "I have *A Paradise Built in Hell* checked out in e-book form from the St. Paul Public Library,

and Nevil Shute's *Requiem for a Wren* is on my coffee table at the moment. The book I finished most recently is the Sarah Dessen novel *Someone Like You*, which I also checked out from the St. Paul Public Library in e-book form. I highly recommend its e-book collection for anyone casting around for something to read."

To be part of the Twin Cities's vibrant literary community was once also beyond her imagining, Kritzer said. "There are so many fantastic writers here," she said. "In 1997, when I was just a couple of years out of college, I joined a writers' group, which I'm still in. The Wyrdsmiths have given me an amazing amount of encouragement, support and feedback, as well as camaraderie and friendship. I know we're just one writers' group of many in the area, and that collaborative aspect of the literary community is something I value so much."

ON THE TOWN Briefly

Books

Next Chapter Booksellers, 38 S. Snelling Ave., will present the following virtual events in the coming fortnight via Zoom: historian Curt Brown discussing his book, *Minnesota 1918: When Flu, Fire and War Ravaged the State*, at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 14; Maria Reva telling about her short-story collection, *Good Citizens Need Not Fear*, at 6 p.m. Friday, May 15; Christopher G. Bremicker conversing about his collection, *Song for My Baby and Other Stories*, with St. Paul novelist William Kent Krueger at 7 p.m. Saturday, May 16; Elizabeth Wetmore discussing her debut novel, *Valentine*, at 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 20; and Jennifer Ackerman exploring her book, *The Bird Way: A New Look at How Birds Talk, Work, Play, Parent and Think*, at 7 p.m. Friday, May 22. To register for the events, visit nextchapterbooksellers.com or call 651-225-8989 for more information.

Exhibits

Landmark Center is offering two exhibits through its website at landmarkcenter.org. "Polish Art: Brooklyn to Minnesota," a virtual tour of the private collection of Brian and Teresa McMahon, is available through June 7. "Evidence of Humanity," a photography exhibit curated by Wing Young Huie to illustrate the efforts of people to communicate with others or express their connection to those around them, is being shown through June 26.

The Minnesota Museum of American Art is offering online tours through The M at Home page on its website at mmaa.org. Among the current offerings are "A Choice of Weapons: Honor and Dignity," featuring the photographs of Jamel Shabazz and the late Gordon Parks; and "Gordon Parks: A Homecoming," featuring the work of the former staff photographer for the African

American-owned Twin Cities newspapers the *St. Paul Recorder* and the *Minneapolis Spokesman*.

Film

The Science Museum of Minnesota and its Omnitheater are temporarily closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, but several Omni and IMAX films have been made available for free streaming. Visit smm.org, sit back and enjoy a big screen adventure at home. The choices include *Dinosaurs Alive!*, *The Living Sea*, *Mummies: Secrets of the Pharaohs*, *National Parks Adventure* and *Wild Ocean*.

The Minneapolis-St. Paul International Film Festival will roll from May 15-23 but in a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A robust selection of narrative and documentary films are promised following a pre-festival Virtual Dance Party on Thursday, May 14, with Transmission's DJ Jake Rudh.

Some of the films will be presented at specific times, while others will be available for the duration. Tickets for individual screenings are \$10 for the general public, \$5 for MSP Film Society members. Festival passes will also be available. For more information, visit mspfilm.org or call 612-331-7563.

Theater

The curtain may have come down on the current season due to the coronavirus pandemic; however, History Theatre is streaming popular productions from the past. *Coco's Diary*, a musical drama for the entire family based on Summit Avenue teenager Clotilde "Coco" Irvine's diary from the 1920s, is playing now through May 21. In it, Coco tells of the ups and downs of a bright, adventurous and wickedly funny girl who is constantly in a fix "through no fault of my own." Visit historytheatre.com.

SPORTS



The Wright Call

By Dave Wright

Recreation is still in holding pattern

We never appreciated how far a virus' reach could extend until now. By the time many people read this, it's possible that some places that have been shuttered due to the pandemic will be allowed to reopen, albeit with strict conditions. However, one thing is clear: Local sports teams that are hoping to play their games this spring and summer have to do what many businesses are doing—wait for guidance from the governor's office and public health officials about when they can start up again.

"Everything is up in the air right now," said Liz McDonald, interim marketing and public relations manager for the St. Paul Department of Parks and Recreation. "There'll be no decisions until at least May 18. We need more guidance from the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)."

For now, the city's playgrounds and recreation centers remain closed, as the CDC recommends. Softball and volleyball games are out for now, though some basketball and tennis courts are being reopened.

Andy Rodriguez, recreation services manager for the city, has been staying in contact with youth sports organizations about potential summer plans. Once the state offers more guidance, he said, Parks and Recreation will swing into action quickly.

"Everyone is in a holding pattern," Rodriguez said. Softball usually runs until late July, with playoffs done by the middle of August. As for whether that will happen this year, he sighed and said, "Who knows?"

McDonald said all events up to May 18, the last day of the governor's most recent extended stay-at-home order, have been canceled and refunds will be issued. She added that there are some discussions taking place regarding future activities—athletic and otherwise—but nothing can be done without the go-ahead from the governor and the CDC.

The American Legion national baseball tournament was scrapped a couple of weeks ago. On May 9, the news that local teams feared came true. The state officially canceled the entire season. "Safety has always been important in American Legion Baseball," said Randy Schaub, director of Minnesota American Legion Baseball. "As much as we wanted to play this year, we cannot take chances with the players, coaches and fans we oversee."

National picture is murky as well

At this point, there appears to be little incentive for the NBA or the NHL to crank up what's left of the regular season before heading into the playoffs. There were only about a dozen regular-season games remaining when play stopped due to the pandemic. As a rule, both leagues' playoffs take a couple of months to conclude. Both leagues will have to work with their TV partners before any decisions about scheduling are made. They also need to check on arena availability and decide whether they want to invite a sparse gathering of fans or play their games without them.

The Timberwolves are well out of contention for a playoff spot and would probably welcome an official closing of the season. There would likely be an outcry from hockey fans if that happened to the Wild, who were in contention for a playoff spot when the virus stopped play. But pro sports leagues have to look at the big picture. The fate of one team is just a small piece of the puzzle.

Thanks to Major League Baseball, both leagues have precedents for how to proceed. The worst-case scenario occurred in 1994 when MLB's players went on strike in August and didn't return until spring training in February.

On two other occasions, strike-shortened MLB seasons caused problems. In 1972, teams missed the first week of the season. When baseball resumed, no missed games were made up. As a result, Boston went 85-70, but finished second in the American League East to Detroit (86-70). In 1981, the strike was in midseason. When play resumed, the MLB expanded the playoffs to include first- and second-half winners. St.

WRIGHT CALL ►20



Highland Ball field manager Steve DuMond and coach Darcy Tinnes stand in the organization's batting cages at the ballfields on Cleveland and Montreal avenues. They are looking forward to once again hearing the familiar refrain, "Play ball," this summer. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Waiting for the signal

Youth leagues still hoping to safely salvage season

BY BILL WAGNER

With the state of Minnesota still under the governor's stay-at-home order, local youth sports organizations have been forced to face the very real probability of their programs being idled for the summer.

Directors for Highland Ball, the Highland Groveland Recreation Association (HGRA) and the St. Paul Blackhawks were all hoping that their summer programs could somehow be salvaged. However, they all stressed that it depended on when state and health officials deemed it would be safe.

"We're ready to play," said Drew Hodson, president of Highland Ball, which operates baseball and softball leagues for boys and girls ages 4-16. "People have asked me a lot about what's going to happen, but like everybody else I honestly don't know. Everything is on hold."

Hodson said Highland Ball had to cancel its annual spring parade and opening day festivities that were scheduled for May 3. However, the organization still has hopes of salvaging at least part of the 2020 sports season.

The main organizing bodies for youth baseball and softball in the Twin Cities—Metro Baseball League, MYAS (Gopher State) and Minnesota Softball—are asking the governor to consider allowing play to commence as long as it can be conducted safely.

Their "Safe Play: Back to the Diamond Proposal" would allow single-team practices for baseball and softball to begin on May 18, which is when the governor's extended stay-at-home order is set to expire. No more than 16 individuals would be allowed on the field, including players and coaches.

Games would start between May 29 and June 1, with social distancing and

"Like with anything else, you try to keep a positive attitude," Hodson said. "I'm optimistic that we'll play baseball and softball, but we want to be safe."

other safety protocols put in place to protect players and fans.

According to a joint statement issued on May 6, the group expected to hear from the governor's office by the end of last week. Multiple attempts to reach Walz's communications director Kayla Castaneda were unsuccessful.

Hodson said the plan appeared well-researched and that his organization was ready to take the field if it's told that it was safe to do so.

"It makes sense to put together a proposal that works for all of Minnesota," Hodson said. "We want to do whatever needs to be done to make sure that we're safe."

Meanwhile, he said youngsters were still being encouraged to play catch in their yards and that emails were being sent to keep families informed of the latest updates.

"Like with anything else, you try to keep a positive attitude," Hodson said. "I'm optimistic that we'll play baseball and softball, but we want to be safe."

Field manager Steve DuMond said the infields of the two Highland ballfields on Cleveland and Montreal avenues have been dragged as needed and the grass has been mowed once a week. Though maintenance work could be expedited if needed, he doubted that the fields could be ready for play before next month.

"We could get the fields ready if we

needed to, but I think it'd be June at the earliest," he said.

Viktor Adamcsek, club director of the St. Paul Blackhawks, which offers soccer programs for players ages 5-19, voiced similar sentiments about the uncertainty of whether its boys' and girls' programs will be sidelined this summer.

"This is hard on the kids," Adamcsek said. "Soccer is a social game. There's only so much that you can do on your own."

Adamcsek said that it is still hoped that practices could start by June 1. Matches would then be able to commence around mid-June. Meanwhile, Adamcsek said the league is asking coaches to check in once a week and keep connected with players through videoconferencing or social media.

HGRA president Dennis Merley declined to predict what the chances are for having a summer season, saying he is leaving that up to health experts.

"I'm still hopeful, but there's also some great discouragement right now," he said. "The idea of us having to cancel (the season) is really hard for me. But we're like everybody else. We're not going to run any program until it's safe to allow youth sports to proceed."

Merley said a decision will have to be made by June 15 on whether the HGRA, which offers leagues for youngsters ages 5-18, will have a 2020 season. If it is safe to proceed by then, the association's track, softball and baseball programs would begin around June 29.

Then there is the other scenario. "If there are no assurances that the kids will be safe (by June 15), we'll have to cancel," he said.

That prospect hit home with Merley, who has been part of the organization since 1990. "I love the HGRA," he said. "It's just an incredible resource for our community."

Sports Shorts

Concordia University-St. Paul has named Matt Fletcher as its head men's basketball coach. Fletcher was previously head coach at Bethany Lutheran College, where he spent four seasons compiling a 73-33 overall record



and a 52-12 mark in the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference. In his second season there in 2017-18, he led Bethany to the regular-season and tournament championships, earning UMAC Coach of the Year honors and guiding the program to its first NCAA Division III tournament. This year, he led the Vikings back to the national tournament for the second time in three seasons. Fletcher also was the head women's golf coach and head of strength and conditioning at Bethany. He has experience coaching at Upper Iowa, Kentucky Wesleyan and Concordia-Moorhead colleges, and at Anoka and South St. Paul high schools.

The 44th annual Winfield Award honorees were recently announced. The award recognizes the top male and female high school student-athletes of color for their accomplishments in academics, athletics and community activities. The local awardees are Anatalia Radoc and Mickies Kiros of Central High School, Sydney Jackson and Curtis Jones of Cretin-Derham Hall, Mya Bishop and Kojo

Frimpong of Highland Park, and Arie Walker and Noah Rice of St. Paul Academy. Each winner will receive a financial grant to assist them in furthering their education. The annual awards banquet was canceled this year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Oliver Paleen of Highland Park High School is one of four students to be named 2020 Triple "A" Award state scholarship winners. The award recognizes high school seniors for their achievements in academics, arts/activities and athletics. Each winner receives a \$4,000 scholarship. Paleen was nominated from Region 4AA. The list of finalists for the award also included Andrew Karpenko of Minnehaha Academy in Region 4A.

Joe Nelson has been retained as head women's lacrosse coach at Concordia University-St. Paul after leading the Golden Bears to a 5-2 season as interim coach before the season was cancelled due to the COVID-19 outbreak. He is the program's third head coach since the program was founded in 2017.

Timothy Samec, a West End resident and senior hockey defenseman, received the Community Service Award by the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Samec is a multiple ECAC Hockey all-academic honoree and has been nominated for the Derek Hines Unsung Hero Award, which is given to the NCAA Division I player judged to best exemplify the qualities of sportsmanship and work ethic. Through-

Friends of Highland Ball get 5 acres of Ford site

Ryan Companies announced on May 8 that it has completed the transfer of 5 acres of land from the 122-acre site of Ford Motor Company's former assembly plant to the Friends of Highland Ball. The transaction was part of the development agreement that Ryan struck in 2019 with Ford and the city of St. Paul. Ryan acquired the entire 122-acre site from Ford in December 2019.

The Friends of Highland Ball is taking over ownership of two ballfields on Cleveland and Montreal avenues, which will continue to be used by youth baseball and softball leagues for boys and girls ages 4-16. Highland Ball (formerly Highland Little League) has been using the ballfields there with Ford's permission since 1954.

The Friends of Highland Ball is planning future enhancements for the property, including a public playground, concession stand, restrooms, training facilities, and upgrades to make the fields adaptable for both baseball and softball. A fundraising



effort will be launched to pay for the enhancements and for scholarships to provide greater access and expanded youth programs in the leagues.

"The Ford Fields have been a legacy asset in Highland Park," said Highland Ball president Drew Hodson. "We're grateful and really excited to work with the city and Ryan Companies to keep this amazing tradition alive for boys and girls throughout St. Paul."

Mike Ryan, the North Region president of Ryan Companies, said that having multiple professional ballplayers and former Ryan team members as Highland Ball alumni made the land transfer an easy call for Ryan Companies.

out his career, he has been a member of RPI's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, worked with Adopt-A-Highway, the American Red

Cross, Street Soldiers II Troy, STRIDE Adaptive Sports, Troy Soup Kitchen and a number of other local service projects.

19◀ WRIGHT CALL

Louis had the best overall record in the National League, but missed the postseason because it didn't finish in first place in either half.

No system is perfect

Meanwhile, the Twins, Saints and Loons are waiting on how—and when—to start up their 2020 seasons. The best guess for now for all three teams is that their regular seasons could start around July 1. If so, the Twins and Saints could get in at least half their normal slate of games. Both teams run their own stadiums, so rescheduling should be an issue.

Of course, it would take the teams a few weeks for the players to get in condition to play. For the Twins, that would mean an abbreviated return to spring training and, if the rumor mill is correct, a regional setup with games against teams from both leagues that are in close proximity. They would also have to decide how many, if any, fans they're

going to allow to attend games at Target Field.

It gets more complicated if the MLB decides to extend the schedule into October. It's one thing to have a playoff game on a brisk evening and another thing altogether to play Kansas City on a Wednesday when it's 40 degrees and the game means nothing.

It gets trickier for the Saints, who get many of their players after spring training is over. Unlike the Twins, who get a lot of money for television and radio rights, the Saints need bodies to fill CHS Field, drink beer, eat hot dogs and buy merchandise to make a profit. A condensed schedule will reduce costs for player salaries, but it will also reduce the team's revenue. The team recently released a plan that would allow for about a quarter of CHS Field to be filled for home games.

For their part, the Loons could stretch things out a bit and condense their schedule to play two or three games a week if they want to catch up for missed time. Like the baseball teams, they also run their stadium. Thus, they can dictate the terms of how and when they'll play and how many fans they'll welcome to watch games. Their league is tied up

heavily with ESPN, and a lot will depend on whether there's a college football season this fall. If there isn't, the network will be begging for live programming and will gladly take a soccer game at any time—even if it's in a blizzard.

The problem is, some of the Loons play elsewhere when their season here is over. Some of those commitments are for much more money than the players can earn here. Major League Soccer has officially been suspended until June 8. The teams had 16 games scheduled up to that point. There's talk that the MLS Cup could be pushed into December. It goes beyond dicey around these parts to play games at that time of year in shorts.

Icy might be a better description.

In the end, local pro and amateur athletes are all in the same boat. They simply don't know what uncharted waters lie ahead.

Patience is more than a virtue this year for starved sports participants and fans. It's a necessity.

Dave Wright can be reached at dwright53@msn.com.

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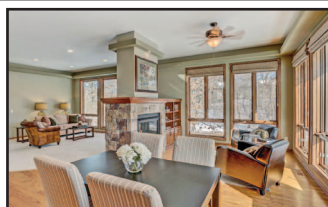
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On a wonderful block near the river with easy access to trails, shopping, and restaurants. Newly refinished hardwood floors, sunroom off the main floor dining room, eat-in kitchen, and a spacious backyard. **www.StoryBookCharmer.com**

KRISTA WOLTER
612-247-5106 • \$375,000



MICHAELA TOOHEY
651-253-6830



BANCROFT BEAUTY!

4049 16th Ave. S. features 4 bedroom, 3 bath, newer roof, mechanicals and windows. The kitchen and baths have been updated. This property has great bones. The home has great space with over 2,100 square feet.

TOM & MIKE DISTAD
612-275-1343 • \$339,900



OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING!

1910 Pinehurst is situated on a wonderful block in the heart of Highland Park. This home has loads of charm and numerous outdoor entertainment spaces. This is the perfect home for entertaining. The home features 4BR's and 3BA's.

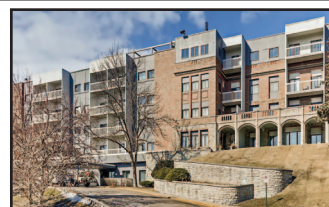
TOM & MIKE DISTAD
612-275-1343 • \$534,900



438 PORTLAND AVE #6

Fabulous Ramsey Hill condo has been completely renovated top to bottom. Cooks kitchen with Viking Stove and dishwasher, custom cabinets and counter tops. 2 new bathrooms. All new electrical and plumbing, refinished hardwood floors, air conditioning, garage parking.

SARAH KINNEY
651-282-9621 • \$548,500



311 PLEASANT #215

Spectacular large 2 bedroom, 2 bath corner unit. Front: rear walkout patios. 2 units combined. 1 garage. In unit laundry.

SARAH KINNEY
651-282-9621 • \$299,000



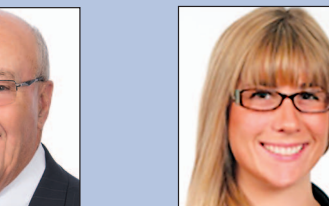
BRIAN WAGNER, M.D.
651-497-4387



KRISTA WOLTER
612-247-5106



BRYAN BEDESSEM
612-382-8415



JIM BURTON
651-690-8556



MORAGHAN DeROSIA
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651-307-7260



PHILIP M. WAHLBERG
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MICHELE DUMOND
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