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First designs done for city parks coming to old Ford site

Comments still sought as the plans progress

By JANE McCLURE

The design work is finished for two of the city-owned parks and more than half-way done on the other two that are coming to Highland Bridge on the site of Ford Motor Company's former assembly plant in Highland Park. The Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission on December 17 approved the park designs as they now stand.

Commissioners said they will continue monitoring the work and expect to see updates as planning moves forward. They would also like more public comments on the park plans as they progress, with a virtual open house likely to be held.

More than 150 people weighed in on ideas for the

HIGHLAND BRIDGE PARKS ▶5



Winter weather lovers unite. First-timer Victor Ferris was all smiles as he joined the host of cross-country skiers who took to the Highland 9-Hole Course on December 27. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

St. Paul clears out homeless encampments

As officials scramble to find more shelter space

By JANE McCLURE

Saint Paul and Ramsey County officials are continuing their efforts to close homeless camps and relocate their residents out of the cold and into shelters. Eight of the city's 81 camps started being closed down in mid-December, including those in Kellogg Mall, Iris and Hamline parks, and on state-owned land at I-94 and Snelling Avenue.

The search for shelter space is ongoing as homelessness reaches crisis proportions. An emergency family shelter is being proposed at the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondelet's Provincial House at 1880 Randolph Ave. in Highland Park. (See story on page 5.)

Ramsey County has been leasing hotel rooms throughout Saint Paul to house the homeless, and started using the former Bethesda Hospital and a vacant Luther Seminary dormitory in December. The county's Safe Space

HOMELESS CAMPS ▶2

City's public schools plan February return to classroom

Middle and high school students would continue with all distance learning

By CASEY EK

Despite the ongoing concerns of the Saint Paul Federation of Educators, the Saint Paul Public Schools will be returning to in-person learning for students in grades PreK-2 on February 1 and in grades 3-5 on February 16. Saint Paul Superintendent Joe Gothard made the announcement in the wake of Governor Tim Walz's recent update to the Minnesota Department of Education's Safe Learning Plan.

Walz's order allows elementary schools to return to in-person learning as early as January 18. Saint Paul's two-week delay, Gothard said, will give more

time for the recent downward trend in COVID-19 cases to progress.

The Saint Paul Federation of Educators (SPFE) criticized the governor and the superintendent for announcing the move to in-person learning when Ramsey County was reporting 98 COVID-19 cases per 10,000 residents—or three times the number previously considered by the school district to be safe for the youngest students to return to in-person instruction. "And what's safe in Saint Paul isn't the same as for other school districts," the SPFE leadership stated, referring to the greater danger that COVID is believed to pose for people of color.

SPFE president Nick Faber said the federation is encouraging the school district to wait and see what effect the new COVID-19 vaccines have before scheduling a return to in-person learning.

Saint Paul educators want to be able to wear personal protective equipment (PPE), Faber said. Will the district allow them to wear medical scrubs, rub-

ber gloves and face shields when teaching in person? he asked. "It's not going to be just like this virus never happened," he said. "Our folks will want to be in PPE. There's going to be tension around the buildings. Our kids are going to feel that."

In an effort to quell educators' concerns and ensure safety in school buildings, Gothard has reached out to Walz's office to move teachers and staff into the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention's Jumpstart Phase for the COVID-19 vaccine, giving them the same priority as essential workers and people age 75 and older. Gothard's office has also contacted Ramsey County public health officials to make school buildings available as vaccination sites.

"I know the vaccine is on the horizon, but that's not our current reality," Gothard said. With or without it, he is confident that the return to in-person

IN-PERSON LEARNING ▶2

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1◀ HOMELESS CAMPS

has opened to provide overnight shelter at 160 Kellogg Blvd., and the Listening House is operating a day shelter in the former Fire Station 51 at 296 W. Seventh St.

However, with year-round shelters full, the need to find even more space for the homeless continues. The Saint Paul Department of Parks and Recreation recently opened the Harriet Island Pavilion and the Duluth & Case Recreation Center as places where people can stay before moving to other shelters. Parks and Recreation director Mike Hahm described the situation as a public safety and public health crisis.

By mid-December, the city had about 319 people living in the 81 camps. City and county staff and employees of social service agencies were working to find resources for them all. "Each person needs their own solution," said Deputy Mayor Jaime Tincher.

"We're working in unprecedented ways with our stakeholders," said City Council president Amy Brendmoen.

Moving people to shelters has been met with pushback from some advocacy groups for the homeless. Several groups have sprung up to provide food and other supplies to the camps. Advocates contend that some homeless people are afraid of or distrust government and social service agencies, and that they see

camps as a viable housing option.

The closing of the camp at Kellogg Mall Park in downtown Saint Paul met with protests that included City Council members Mitra Jalali and Nelsie Yang. Tincher and some elected officials countered that everyone needs a safe, dignified place to live. Mayor Melvin Carter met with the residents at the park as they were being moved out.

The eight camps were chosen for closure because of potential fire hazards, Tincher said. The camp at Kellogg Mall Park was cleared on December 21, but not before the site's third fire in several weeks. A fire there on December 18 destroyed seven tents, according to the Saint Paul Fire Department. Multiple propane tanks and cylinders of varying sizes were involved in the fire, which was presumed to be accidental. No one was injured.

The fire department has responded to Kellogg Mall Park 17 times for fire emergencies and 75 times for emergency medical calls for service in 2020, according to Deputy Fire Chief Roy Mokosso.

Citywide in 2020, the Fire Department has responded to more than 30 fires at homeless camps. One person died of exposure while living beneath a bridge.

One challenge city and county officials have is that members of the public drop off firewood and propane tanks to keep homeless people warm, often in response to pleas on



Scenes from a homeless camp on I-94 and Snelling Avenue just three days before Christmas. PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

social media.

"We're asking the community not to provide propane tanks or other heating materials," Tincher said.

Last year, Governor Tim Walz issued an executive order keeping the camps in place at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The one exception was a camp on Kellogg Boulevard near I-35E. That camp was closed because people were walking into traffic and putting themselves at risk.

At other camps, the city has provided portable toilets and a county-city team has regularly checked on the residents.



1◀ IN-PERSON LEARNING

son learning is safe considering the extremely low COVID-19 transmission rates for young children. "There have been few incidents of children (passing COVID-19 to adults), so we feel relatively safe," he said.

District students have been learning from home via computer laptops and tablets since the beginning of the school year as well as the last two months of the preceding school year. Though elementary school students are performing about as well this year with distance learning as they did last year with in-person learning, more middle school and high school students are receiving failing grades, according to a presentation at the December 18 meeting of the Saint Paul School Board. Data from the first quarter of the 2020-21 school year show that about half of the district's high

school students are failing at least one of their classes.

As a percentage of the grades earned by students in all classes in the first quarter of the 2020-21 school year, 34 percent were failing grades in the high schools—double the percentage of failing grades in the preceding year. In district middle schools, the percentage of failing grades in the first quarter was 29 percent—triple what it was in the preceding school year.

Twenty-two percent of the district's white students failed at least one class during the first quarter. For students of color, the data are even more troubling. About 70 percent of American Indian students, almost 50 percent of Asian students and about 60 percent of Hispanic, Black, English language learner and special education students failed at least one class.

District administrators are not sure just when students in grades 6-12 will be able to return to in-person learning. However, their overall performance during the fall semester is causing district administrators to rethink the grading system.

Kate Wilcox-Harris, chief academic officer of the Saint Paul Public Schools, said it may be time for the district to consider replacing letter grades with a standards-based grading system. The standards-based model divides each classroom subject into several specific learning targets. Students are rated from 1 to 4 in how well they meet each target. Such a model would help prevent students whose skills are not easily measured from falling through the cracks, Wilcox-Harris said.

School Board member Steve Marchese praised district administrators for their efforts in exploring standards-based grading. How-

ever, he said, he was concerned that adopting a new grading model in the midst of a pandemic would be "shifting the goal posts" and would not guarantee that students would be graduating with adequate skills.

Providing a way for failing students to recover the credits they need to graduate is critical, according to Gothard. The district is working to identify those students as early as possible, he said. One idea is to enable them to earn an additional quarter or semester of credit for classes taken during the summer.

The school district is also working to provide additional academic support sites during the spring semester where students who are struggling may receive in-person instruction. Additional social and emotional supports are also in the works.



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Maurice F. Mischke, 1920-1991

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U.S. Army Corps seeks new owner for Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock

BY CASEY EK

A new owner is in the offing for the Upper Saint Anthony Falls Lock on the Mississippi River. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans to relinquish the site following the release late last year of a disposition study of the Upper Saint Anthony Falls Lock and Dam. The transfer of ownership would likely come with a financial incentive for the new owner, but such a disposition must first be approved by Congress.

Congress closed the Upper Saint Anthony Falls Lock to commercial navigation in 2015. No reason was given in the legislation for the closure, but the presence of invasive carp downriver and a steady decline in commercial traffic on the river were among the factors listed by the Corps. However, the lock and dam continue to serve vital roles in flood control and supplying water to the city of Minneapolis.

Upper Saint Anthony Falls is one of three lock and dam sites along the Mississippi currently under review by the Corps. The other two are the Lower Saint Anthony Falls Lock and Dam and Lock and Dam No. 1 just downstream from the Ford Bridge. The federal Water Resources Development Act of 2018 authorized two studies for the lock and dam sites—one for Upper Saint Anthony Falls and another for Lower Saint Anthony Falls and Lock and Dam No. 1.

Congress fast-tracked the Upper Saint Anthony Falls study when the city of Minneapolis began exploring redeveloping the acreage around the lock as a recreational destination. The study for the Lower Saint Anthony Falls Lock and Dam and Lock and Dam No. 1 is

scheduled to begin in the fall of 2021.

The Corps wishes to divest itself of the Upper Saint Anthony Falls lock largely due to financial considerations, according to project manager Nanette Bischoff. “Our job is to approach this from the standpoint of what’s in the best interest of the federal government and the federal taxpayer,” she said.

Bischoff acknowledged that finding a new owner for a lock with limited commercial use has been a challenge. That is why the Corps may be willing to offer a sizable financial incentive. “Part of the incentive we’re thinking of is an amount that the future owner could set aside in a trust fund,” she said.

No prospective new owners have come forward to date. Xcel Energy, which owns the spillway and most of the dam at the Upper Saint Anthony Falls site, is among the private entities to whom the Corps would be open to selling the lock. The utility has not made any specific proposals regarding ownership of the lock, according to Xcel spokesperson Randy Fordice. “We’re currently reviewing the Corps’ study and expect to respond as part of the process early this year,” he said.

For Colleen O’Connor Toberman of the Friends of the Mississippi River, transferring the responsibility of the lock to a private entity poses a greater risk for public harm than if the Corps were to maintain ownership and management. She would like to see more information on the benefits of private ownership and the liabilities of taxpayers if a private entity were to manage the lock.

“There’s a reason we let the Army Corps operate these things,” Toberman said. The Corps has the fiscal and technological resources that are not always available to municipal or pri-



The Upper Saint Anthony Falls Lock and Dam on the Mississippi River, looking downstream toward the Stone Arch Bridge.

private entities, she explained.

Unlike the Upper Saint Anthony Falls site, the Corps owns virtually all of the Lower Saint Anthony Falls Lock and Dam and Lock and Dam No. 1. While the Corps’ recommendations on the latter two sites are two years away, Bischoff said, it is likely the Corps will also want to dispose of them. She believes the prospect of including the dams in any sale will increase interest in the sites.

The prospect of removing the Lower Saint Anthony Falls Dam and Lock and Dam No. 1 has drawn both excitement and criticism. Olivia Dorothy of America’s Rivers, a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C., praised the concept as an efficient way to restore the Mississippi’s natural habitats. Friends of the Mississippi River is encouraging thorough research into the undamming given the vast ecological implications. Meanwhile, the Twin Cities rowing clubs have objected to the undamming for how it would ruin that recreational activity on the river.

Brookfield Renewable, which owns hydroelectric power structures at the Lower Saint Anthony Falls and Lock and Dam No. 1 sites, is keeping a close eye on the disposition studies, according to Andy Davis, Brookfield’s senior director of communications. “We’re watching that piece quite closely,” he said. “There are so many interests at the table. The Corps has quite the task ahead of it.”

The draft report and environmental assessment on the Upper Saint Anthony Falls Lock and Dam may be viewed and downloaded by visiting mvp.usace.army.mil/Home/Public-Notices/. Questions and comments may be submitted through February 16 by calling Bischoff at 651-290-5426 or emailing MplsLocksDisposition@usace.army.mil.

Formal written correspondence on the disposition study should be addressed to the Saint Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, ATTN: Regional Planning and Environment Division North, 180 E. Fifth St., Suite 700, Saint Paul, MN 55101.

County OKs spending on senior housing, arena projects in Highland

BY JANE MCCLURE

An affordable senior housing complex at the Highland Bridge development and improvements at the Charles M. Schulz-Highland Arena are local highlights of Ramsey County’s 2021 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The County Board approved its capital spending plan in December.

CommonBond Communities will receive \$4.5 million toward its plan to construct a five-story, 60-unit apartment building for low-income seniors at 830 S. Cretin Ave. The approximately \$18 million project also received zoning variances from Saint Paul last fall.

The Highland Bridge building is one of two affordable housing projects county officials are working on with CommonBond. In December, the County Board issued up to \$17 million for the Wilder Square Apartments on North Milton Street, which will preserve more than 130 units of affordable housing there.

The Highland Arena project is the largest upcoming local public facility project and ties into the pending demolition of the decommissioned southern water reservoir just south of the arena’s parking lot. The County Board opted to shift \$1.89 million earmarked for parking lot improvements there and use it as part of \$3.46 million in larger improvements. The project is a cooperative effort of the coun-

ty and city parks and recreation departments, and Saint Paul Regional Water Services.

The existing parking lot, curbs and drainage infrastructure are currently in a deteriorated condition, allowing water to run into the arena and cause interior damage. The expansion of the arena in the past has added to the drainage and parking issues. Traffic flow and poor lighting are other concerns.

Changes to the lot have been discussed ever since a parking lot project won approval in the 2016-2017 CIP. When the water utility announced plans to demolish the empty 18-million-gallon reservoir and find a new use for the land, the county put its project on hold.

In early 2018, the water utility asked the city

and county parks departments to work on a plan for the 4.3-acre reservoir site and parking area, as well as park amenities, but that project stalled. The current project is to demolish the reservoir, reconfigure arena parking, make other site improvements, and create a future space for city recreational fields. That work will take place this year in a design-build process led by Shaw Lundquist Associates.

Having the county combine the parking lot project with the reservoir’s demolition allows the entire site to be graded and have drainage improvements made at once. It also means the parking lot improvements can be in place by the time the city has funding to complete the fields on the old reservoir site.

Developers propose 48 new apartments at Marshall and Cleveland

BY JANE MCCLURE

A rental house and duplex would be replaced by a five-story building with first-floor commercial space and up to 48 apartments if a zoning change is approved at the northwest corner of Marshall and Cleveland avenues. Developers Robert Page and David Kvasnik appeared before the Union Park District Council (UPDC) land use committee on December 21 to seek support for the zoning change. The committee laid the matter over until January 25 to give it more time to discuss the project with local residents and business people.

The parcel at 2063 Marshall Ave. is already zoned for Traditional Neighborhoods 3 (TN3), allowing a building up to 55 feet high. The developers’ request to rezone 2069 Marshall Ave. from TN2 to TN3 will be reviewed by the Saint Paul Planning Commission’s Zoning Committee at 3:30 p.m. Thursday, January 14. The zoning change needs the approval of the

City Council. If the property at 2069 Marshall is not rezoned, the developers may opt for a three-story building with 32 apartments.

The developers hope to break ground in June and complete the project by July of 2022. One-bedroom apartments are being proposed, although the developers are considering including some studio apartments.

Kvasnik’s family owns the buildings at the southeast corner of Marshall and Cleveland and the southwest corner of Marshall and Cretin avenues. David Kvasnik was involved in the West Marshall Avenue study that in 2018 resulted in rezoning much of that thoroughfare between Hamline Avenue and the Mississippi River for higher-density housing.

Several UPDC committee members cited the months of work on the study as a reason to proceed slowly with any additional zoning changes. “We put in a lot of time on the West Marshall study,” said Mark Morrow. “This is a big ask with not much information.”

Local residents said they would like to see

architectural drawings as well as shadow studies of the proposed building and more information on traffic. “We’re being rushed into this with very little information,” said Iglehart Avenue resident George Bounds. “I think this is a poorly thought-out project.”

The developers said that while the neighborhood has plenty of off-campus student housing with three- and four-bedroom apartments, their project would cater to working-class people who are interested in smaller apartments. The 48-unit building would have 35 off-street parking spaces, including 31 below-grade and four in a surface lot.

The December 21 meeting was the first time many neighbors had heard about the project, and they had many questions. Several who live across the alley on Iglehart were concerned about the loss of privacy for their yards and homes. They asked the UPDC committee to postpone its recommendation so they could continue discussions with the developers. Another issue is vehicular access to the

parking. The developers want a curb cut on Cleveland, but several committee members pushed for alley access only.

The UPDC committee also heard from the students who live in the Marshall Avenue rental house and duplex. After signing leases through June 2022, they are now being asked to move. “We’re going to be thrown out onto the street,” said tenant Peyton Shuler.

Kvasnik said he and Page are willing to work with neighbors, but they are on a tight timeline. They would like to be able to rent the new apartments before December of 2022 because of the difficulty of renting housing during the winter.

Committee member Charlotte Berres, who lives on Iglehart, said the neighborhood’s concerns need to be addressed. “I’m just visualizing a whole street of apartments,” she said. Berres joined other neighbors in asking for a shadow study to determine to what degree the proposed five-story building would block sunlight for residents to the north.

Interfaith Action unveils plan for Randolph Ave. homeless shelter

By JANE MCCLURE

A former nunnery in Highland Park could become an emergency shelter for between 22 and 30 families who would otherwise be homeless. The Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondelet (CSJ) are considering leasing their old Provincial House at 1880 Randolph Ave. to Interfaith Action of Greater Saint Paul for use as a Project Home family shelter.

The Provincial House space was freed up several years ago when the sisters moved into the adjacent Carondelet Village senior housing facility, according to Sister Cathy Steffens, a member of the CSJ leadership team.

The Saint Paul Planning Commission's Zoning Committee was scheduled to hold a public hearing on the proposed shelter on December 31. However, at the request of the Sisters, the public hearing was postponed and so was the Planning Commission's decision on whether or not to approve a conditional use permit for the shelter. The city of Saint Paul requires a conditional use permit for homeless shelters. City staff had recommended approval of the permit.

A virtual meeting on the proposed shelter drew 223 participants on December 21. Many were Project Home volunteers or supporters.

While no one expressed outright opposition to the shelter, a few neighbors had questions about operations and what they perceived as a lack of notice. Many others said they would welcome the facility and hope to be able to volunteer there.

Affordable housing for families has been in short supply in Saint Paul for more than a decade, according to Tenecia Trice, supervisor of homeless programs for Ramsey County. Trice said her department sees many families who are working but cannot afford rent and are on long waiting lists for subsidized housing. The COVID-19 pandemic and the unemployment engendered by government shutdowns have only made a bad situation worse.

"The pandemic has changed needs in ways we cannot imagine," said Sara Liegl, director of Project Home.

Interfaith Action has worked with local faith-based institutions to provide overnight shelters for families for over 20 years. Initially envisioned as a temporary solution, Project Home has expanded its nightly capacity from 40 to 80 adults and children.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 24 facilities staffed by volunteers took turns providing shelter for the Project Home families for a month. Among the facilities in the Villager area were Cretin-Derham Hall, Mount Zion

Temple, and House of Hope Presbyterian, Fairmount Avenue United Methodist, Saint Mark's Catholic, Redeemer Lutheran, Messiah Episcopal and Gloria Dei Lutheran churches.

Families stayed at the Project Home locations overnight, then went to work or school or spent the day at the nonprofit Family Place downtown. When Family Place shut down more than a year ago, Interfaith Action took over the day program.

Project Home has temporarily relocated to a hotel downtown, but is seeking a long-term location for the program. Randi Roth, executive director of Interfaith Action, said the program hopes to use Provincial House as well as the monthly host sites in the future.

Seventy-one different families were served by Project Home in 2020, including 130 children and 88 adults. About 87 percent of the children were age 12 or younger. One of the clients was a 4-day-old.

Families are referred to Project Home through Ramsey County's Continuum of Care program and county shelter team. Clients undergo a background check and are ineligible for the accommodations if they have had any sex offenses or recent violent offenses on their record. The program typically has a waiting list. Spaces free up as families find financial stability and move into housing.

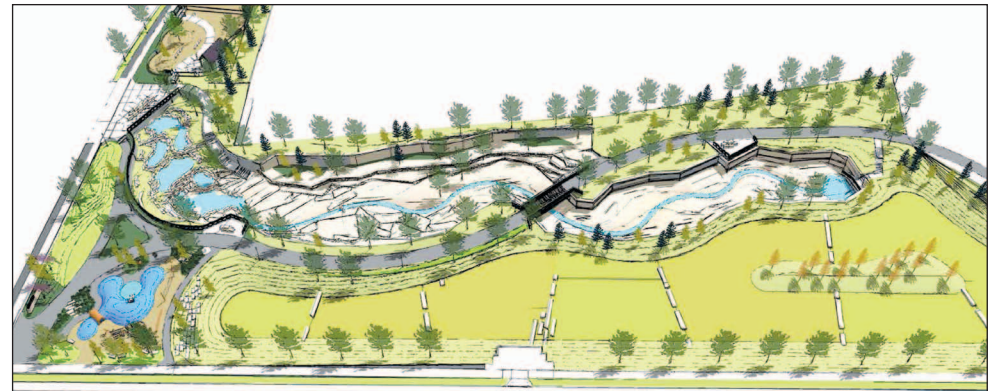
Ramsey County in 2019 had 660 families requesting emergency shelter, but only 185 beds were available. The number of beds increased to 247 in 2020, but so did the demand.

Provincial House is a four-story building on a six-acre campus adjacent to Saint Catherine University. Project Home would occupy the second and third floors primarily, with use of the first and fourth floors available at designated periods. Bathrooms are on the fourth floor and a laundry on the first floor. Three meals a day would be served in the first-floor dining room.

The average stay at Provincial House is anticipated to be about 43 days. A designated outdoor play space would be provided for children, and off-street parking would be available for clients who have a vehicle.

Drugs, alcohol and smoking would not be allowed. Quiet hours would be maintained from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. The facility would be staffed 24 hours a day with volunteers helping out once the pandemic subsides.

A second virtual meeting on the Provincial House shelter was scheduled for 5-6:30 p.m. Tuesday, January 5, after this issue of the Villager went to press. Participants may register for the link by visiting zoom.us/j/96222033055.



The two city-owned parks at Highland Bridge with completed designs are Park A (left) with skateboarding, bocce ball, water fountain and other amenities near Ford Parkway and Mississippi River Boulevard; and Park C (above) with pools, waterfalls and more at the southwest corner of the site.

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parks during a recent public comment period that was extended in November to allow more time for feedback. The city has been working with master developer Ryan Companies to set aside parkland and make plans for each park at Highland Bridge. Infrastructure work began last year, and work on the parks will continue this year. One of the next steps to be taken is naming the parks.

Highland Bridge will have more than 9 acres of city parks, 10 miles of shared bicycle and pedestrian paths, and two ballfields owned and operated by Highland Ball. There will also be three other open spaces that will be privately owned and maintained.

A Parks Advisory Committee that was formed last year has called for a balance of activities for groups and individuals, including active and passive recreation. Each park should complement the development adjacent to it, committee members said.

The two city parks with completed designs are Park A, the so-called "gateway" park near Ford Parkway and Mississippi River Boulevard, and Park C at the southwest corner of the 122-acre site near Mississippi River Boulevard. The other two city parks are Park B bounded by Mount Curve Boulevard, Village Way, Woodlawn and Beechwood avenues, and Park D located south of the intersection of Finn Street and Montreal Avenue.

Park A will include a multiuse lawn, skateboard area, bocce ball courts, seating, walkways, water fountain and boardwalk.

Park B is expected to include a large playground, multiuse lawn, basketball and pickleball courts, game tables, seating, walkways, water feature, water fountains and pet area.

Park C will have a play area, adult fitness area, volleyball courts, shelter, a multiuse lawn, activity and games area, dog park, picnic area, hammock area, seating, walkways, bedrock ravine, pools and waterfalls, natural landscapes, interpretive features, a pedestrian

bridge and water fountains.

Park D is expected to have an open lawn, seating, trails, wetland and public gardens.

The four city parks will be maintained and programmed by the Department of Parks and Recreation. The city no longer demands parking spaces in parks because it takes up valuable real estate. However, on-street parking will be available and it is expected that many people will walk or bike to the parks.

Three other open spaces at Highland Bridge will be owned and maintained by an eventual property owners' association. A civic plaza at the southwest corner of Ford and Cretin is expected to have a water feature, sculpture, seating and outdoor dining. It will connect to a larger civic square to the southwest that is expected to have a lawn and plaza for public events, seating, an outdoor market, an area for yard games and interpretive features.

The space around the central water feature is expected to include open lawns, canoe and kayak access, ice skating, a performance ter-

race, seating, hammock space, swings, plazas, a water trail, interpretive features, gardens, a pedestrian bridge, trails, pet area and a structure for checking out books.

Friends of Highland Arts has asked for more details on the various performance and event spaces, as well as those for creative and educational activities. The group is asking that features such as electricity and running water be added.

"The expense of adding this infrastructure later would far exceed the cost during initial development," Friends founder and board member Colleen Zuro-White said in a letter.

Parks commissioners praised the planning and public engagement process thus far, and want to see it continue. They and others want to see drinking fountains and public restrooms added to the parks. As of now, all of the parks will have the former, but the latter is not in the budget.

For detailed park plans, visit tinyurl.com/y7y8uzhj.

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Taste of Ward 3

Promotion comes to aid of struggling restaurants

By CAROLYN WALKUP

It has been a rough year for restaurants, both here and across the country. Close to a dozen have closed in the neighborhoods served by the *Villager* since the outbreak of COVID-19 began. Almost 100 have closed across the Twin Cities. Those that have managed to survive the statewide lockdown of last spring and summer and the partial shutdown since November are anxiously awaiting Governor Tim Walz's announcement on January 11 on whether he will end or extend the prohibition on indoor dining and drinking at restaurants.

In the meantime, several local organizations are attempting to come to their aid with a two-week promotion, Taste of Ward 3: Save Our Restaurants. Those who order takeout meals from participating restaurants between January 9 and 23 and submit their receipts will be entered in a drawing for restaurant gift cards. Every two receipts are good for one entry in the drawing.

The promotion is sponsored by the Highland District Council, Macalester-Groveland Community Council, Highland Business Association, Grand Avenue Business Association and the High Winds Fund of Macalester College. More information and a list of participating restaurants is available at tasteofward3.com.

"Restaurants contribute so much to our community," said Michelle Doyle of the Highland District Council. "They make our neighborhood more interesting and vibrant. They're there for us at community

events and fundraisers. We want to ensure that they're here post-pandemic."

"Restaurants are a key component of our neighborhoods," said Brian Wagner, the Macalester-Groveland Community Council's business liaison. "Knowing our names when we walk in is integral, and the walkability factor is amazing."

The promotion comes too late for several restaurants in Ward 3, including Bar Brigade, Cleveland Wok, Rah'Mn, Grandview Grill, and Sweet Pea's Public House, all of which have closed over the past nine months.

"Things have been tough with the continual shutdowns," said Stephanie Shimp of Blue Plate Restaurant Company, which operates the Highland Grill at 771 S. Cleveland Ave., the Groveland Tap at 1834 Saint Clair Ave. and the Longfellow Grill at 2990 W. River Pkwy. in Minneapolis. "Doing takeout alone is not sustainable."

Shimp is hopeful that the January promotion will bring in additional business. "We want everyone to know we need their support," she said. "It's vital that communities continue to support small businesses."

Cecil's Delicatessen at 651 S. Cleveland Ave. took its takeout business for granted in the past, but that is what has sustained the 71-year-old restaurant over the past year. Still, business overall is just half of what it was when the 80-seat dining room was open, according to Cecil's general manager Brad Hall. Delivery service has also become a big part of the deli's retail business.



Atzin Rayas (above), manager of La Cocina de Ana, 2559 W. Seventh St., boxed up take-and-bake orders for New Year's Eve last week, while Kate Mayer and Brian Tiemann (left) placed their takeout order with server Scott Flynn at Grand Avenue's Shish.

PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER.

Saint Clair Ave., sold out its prime rib Christmas dinners for four.

Colossal Cafe, 1340 Grand Ave., is packaging "take and bake" breakfasts of omelets, ham, cheesy potatoes and cinnamon rolls. Agra Culture, 721 S. Cleveland Ave., has added whole pies from Buttered Tin Bakery to its menu. Grand Catch, 1612 Grand Ave., is offering Louisiana seafood "boil kits" that customers can cook at home.

Almost all full-service restaurants have had to lay off employees. Some are encouraged by the aid packages recently approved by the federal and state governments, including a new round of subsidies for hard-hit businesses and an extension of unemployment benefits.

The government funding "is a bit of a Band-Aid," said Tony Chesak, executive director of the Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association. "It will help, but not to the extent of what these folks have lost."

Another business model that has been working pretty well during the pandemic is the "take and bake" format at La Cocina de Ana, 2559 W. Seventh St. The year-old eatery has been packaging fully cooked dishes and displaying them in glass-enclosed refrigerators. Heating instructions are printed on the packages.

"We got lucky in terms of the pandemic," said La Cocina co-owner Atzin Rayas. "We haven't had to close." Rayas is hopeful that the January promotion will increase the restaurant's visibility.

Restaurants designed primarily for takeout have been doing OK through the current shutdown. The new Tono Pizzeria + Cheesesteak at 1580 Saint Clair Ave., for instance, has found its early support from the surrounding neighborhoods encouraging, according to manager Sean Grimes. "We hope to see more students when the colleges (return from winter break)," he said.

Several restaurants introduced new takeout specials during the holidays. Highland Grill offered special family meals for Christmas and New Year's takeout. Estelle, 1806

Saint Paul considers reducing required distance between wine shops

By JANE MCCLURE

A proposal to reduce the distance requirement between wine-only shops and other off-sale liquor stores has been shelved until at least January 27. The Saint Paul City Council laid the matter over twice in December following a veto threat from Mayor Melvin Carter.

Saint Paul currently requires a half-mile distance between off-sale liquor stores in all but downtown where the distance requirement is 300 feet. The proposal brought forward by council members Jane Prince and Dai Thao would reduce the minimum distance from a half-mile to a quarter-mile.

The ordinance change has drawn opposition from liquor store owners and the Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association (MLBA). It has the support of other business groups, including the city's Business Review Council, as well as several district councils.

Supporters say the change would help struggling small businesses add wine sales in a separate shop as some grocery stores already do. Opponents contend the change would cut into the sales of existing liquor stores and encourage big-box wine shops to open in Saint Paul.

The number of off-sale liquor licenses is capped by population in Saint Paul. The city has 50 off-sale liquor license holders. The maximum is 57. The city also issues wine-only licenses, but there are no off-sale liquor stores

in Saint Paul that sell wine only.

Prince first proposed the ordinance change last year at the behest of Yoerg Brewing Company. The Dayton's Bluff restaurant and brewery wants to add a wine shop, but it would be located less than half a mile from two other liquor stores. Prince has since heard from two other businesses owners who are interested in opening wine-only shops.

Saint Paul's distance requirement was established to prevent the problems that have been cited when liquor stores are clustered together. Most Saint Paul suburbs that had distance requirements between liquor stores have since dropped them, according to Prince.

At this point, it is not clear whether the proposed change has enough votes to pass. Prince, Thao and council member Rebecca Noecker have spoken in support. Noecker said the change would help small businesses compete. In any case, the cap on the number of licenses means there only could be seven new licenses issued by the city, she said.

Carter sent a letter to the City Council asking that the vote be delayed until the proposed ordinance change can be studied by the city's Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI). More public testimony is needed, the mayor stated, because of the effect the change could have on the business climate, public safety and sales tax revenue.

"I cannot in good faith sign such a significant policy change into law without a thor-

ough review by city staff, who will ultimately be charged with administering the policy," Carter stated. If the measure was adopted by the council and then vetoed by the mayor, it would take at least five council votes to override the veto.

Prince said she was disappointed in Carter's letter. She said she had been told by DSI staff to study the distance change, and that is what she and her staff did with the help of local district councils and business associations. DSI staff has indicated that it is not likely to have the time to study the issue until March, according to Prince.

The owners of 1st Grand Liquors, Haskell's, Liquor Village, Lowertown Wine & Spirits, Morelli's, Park Liquors, Perrier Wines and Liquors, Sharretts, and the Wine Thief and Ale Jail have all spoken out against the proposed change.

According to Nick Nadeau of 1st Grand Liquors, 918 Grand Ave., a similar ordinance change forced a Woodbury store he owned to go out of business. "Believe me when I say all this will do is make the pieces of the pie smaller in Saint Paul," Nadeau said.

Luke Gulbranson, co-owner of Liquor Village, 2289 Ford Pkwy., said, "the main reason I purchased my business in Saint Paul is because of requirements that the city provided to protect small businesses."

"This change will only be another nail in the coffin of many small businesses, includ-

ing mine," said Michael McCafferty, owner of McCafferty's Fine Wine and Spirits, 1325 Randolph Ave. "I know the city is looking for ways to raise revenue, but this is absolutely not the way to do it."

MLBA executive director Tony Chesak described the proposal as a "drastic response" to the temporary downturn in business caused by the pandemic. The MLBA has been in touch with its Saint Paul members, he said, and has not detected a demand for more wine stores. Another concern for liquor store owners is the possibility of more grocery stores adding separate wine shops, he added.

The Summit Hill Association (SHA), Payne-Phalen Community Council, Dayton's Bluff Community Council and Saint Anthony Park Community Council all support the ordinance change, as do the Payne-Arcade and East Side Area business associations.

The SHA stated that it supports the change "in the spirit of supporting a retail mix that attracts more customers and benefits every business along Grand Avenue and in the city as a whole." The SHA acknowledged the concerns raised by existing liquor stores, including the fear of large supermarkets forcing out local independent stores. However, the SHA stated, the market for wine shops is different than the market for full-service liquor stores, and the cap on the number of off-sale liquor licenses citywide will prevent all but a few new wine shops from opening.

Levine prepares her A-game for role as mayor of Mendota Heights

By CASEY EK

New Mendota Heights Mayor Stephanie Levine has taken countless walks through the city in her 30 years as a resident. Many of those walks have been with her sisters, both of whom live in the city. But in the weeks before she filed to be a candidate for mayor, Levine asked Sandra Krebsbach to join her. Krebsbach had served three terms as mayor of Mendota Heights, and Levine was looking for guidance.

As the two of them wound along the trails and walkways that connect the various parts of the city, they discussed how each neighborhood interacts with the others. “I think it’s important for people to realize that the city doesn’t just happen,” Krebsbach said.

While she did not endorse any of the candidates in this fall’s race for mayor, Krebsbach grew convinced that Levine had the qualities to be a successful one. The candidate was eager to listen and learn during their conversations, according to Krebsbach. That is an attitude Levine said she will maintain as she acquaints herself with her new role in City Hall. “There are three seasoned members on the City Council,” Levine said. “I’m going to be listening. I’m going to be learning.”

Levine is not one to shrink from difficult decisions. That was evident in December when the District 197 School Board voted unanimously to remove Henry Sibley’s name from the school district’s high school. The high school was named for the



Mayor Stephanie Levine and daughter Maya walk their dog Leo along a wooded trail in Mendota Heights' Valley Park. PHOTO BY CASEY EK

first governor of Minnesota when it opened in 1954, but the name came under scrutiny this fall because of Sibley’s alleged treatment of Dakota Indians in the mid-1800s.

Levine was among the most outspoken of the seven School Board members, though she knew there would be fallout. “We knew (that dropping the name) would be unpopular with a big segment of our population,” she said. “But if you want to be in a public position, you have to make the right decision, not necessarily what’s going to be popular.”

Levine stepped down from the

District 197 School Board as her term as mayor of Mendota Heights began on January 1. What stood out during her tenure on the board was her consistency in fastidiously preparing for tough decisions, according to District 197 superintendent Peter Olson-Skog.

“That’s not something you usually see,” Olson-Skog said, “somebody who can bring their A-game to every meeting. Stephanie’s a wonderful blend of professionalism and deep caring for our community.”

Levine does not shy away from difficult conversations, he said, but will hear everyone out completely.

That is a quality Levine will need as mayor, according to Krebsbach—an ability to maintain cohesion, not just in the council chambers, but in the city at large. “As mayor you have to lead the whole city,” Krebsbach said. “You have to be comfortable holding the center seat.”

Levine topped two other candidates in the race to succeed outgoing Mayor Neil Garlock. She received 44.6 percent of the vote to City Council member Liz Petschel’s 40.6 percent and Patrick Watson’s 14.4 percent. She will preside over her first City Council meeting on January 12.

The City Council has a new look this year with the resignation of Petschel in November. John Mazzitello was appointed by now fellow council members Ultan Duggan, Jay Miller and Joel Paper to serve the remaining two years in Petschel’s term. A civil engineer by profession, Mazzitello works as the deputy director of public works for Ramsey County. He served as Mendota Heights’s city engineer and director of public works from 2008-16 and as a member of the city’s Planning Commission from 2017-20.

In her first months in office, Levine said she will make Mendota Heights’ 2040 Comprehensive Plan one of her top priorities. The document, which is coming up for approval soon, will form the basis of future zoning and land use decisions in Mendota Heights.

Levine noted the “balancing act” that will be required in making decisions that best serve Mendota

Heights when it comes to development and preserving the city’s character as an oasis close to the metropolitan area’s urban center. Mendota Heights’ natural resources are irreplaceable, Levine said. “I would never have gotten elected if I wanted to change that,” she said.

Levine considers herself a collaborator at heart. In the wake of the financial hardships brought on by COVID-19, she believes collaboration is paramount in rebuilding the economy. That, she said, will require cooperation from all of the city’s public and private entities.

Getting that cooperation is a task Levine said she has successfully navigated in years past. From 2013-18 she served concurrently on the District 197 School Board and the Mendota Heights Parks and Recreation Commission. After being approached to run for mayor, she agreed only after receiving the blessings of her fellow School Board members.

Levine was born in the Highland Park neighborhood of Saint Paul. An actuary by profession, she has dived headfirst into the technical aspects of being mayor. Last month a binder containing Mendota Heights’ entire city code was propped on a shelf in her home office. She intends to familiarize herself with the document as she strives to get to know her new constituents.

Levine invites citizens to contact her. “Leave me a message, and I’ll call you back,” she said. She may even be open to a walk.

Plan for six-story building on Lexington Parkway gets public hearing

By JANE MCCLURE

A much-debated development near Lexington Parkway and University Avenue will go before the Saint Paul Planning Commission’s Zoning Committee for a site plan review at 3:30 p.m. Thursday, January 14. A recommendation on the site plan would then go to the full commission.

Typically, site plan reviews are conducted

by city staff. However, years of controversy over the proposed development prompted the public hearing. Commission approval would be final unless the plan is appealed to the City Council.

The property at 411-417 N. Lexington Pkwy. has been owned for several years by the Wilder Foundation. Wilder has tried to sell the site for development in the past, but all previous projects have fallen through.

Minneapolis-based Alatus is proposing to construct a six-story, mixed-use building with 288 apartments, structured parking at grade level and beneath the building, and about 3,300 square feet for ground-floor retail, lobby and space for resident amenities. The developer is proposing a “blended affordability” at 60 percent of the area median income (AMI). Last year’s AMI in the Twin Cities ranged from \$72,350 for one person to

\$103,400 for a family of four.

As of the *Villager’s* deadline, complete plans had not been posted by city staff. The plans released last year had an estimated cost of \$59 million.

A flash point over past plans has been rental rates and their potential contribution to gentrification in the neighborhoods surrounding the site.

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VIEWPOINT

INBOX

For a fairer, more stable Midway

I live four blocks from Major League Soccer's Allianz Field. It's a beautiful structure—futuristic, sleek, much more pleasant than some of the stadiums across the river.

I can't help but think about the relatively humble beginnings of this area of the Midway, at least since I've been living in Saint Paul. Rainbow Foods, Midway Pro Bowl, Big Top Liquors and Perkins were my favorites. I remember it being a little rough around the edges, but full of great people. It was a great, diverse and cheap place to eat, shop and hang out.

Midway is now moving in a different direction. Luxurious high-rise apartments are being built next to Allianz Field. Property values are shooting up. Two large department and grocery stores have vacated the area, and whatever replaces them will likely have a more upscale feel.

I love this area, and I'm excited to see what the future holds. One can't help but notice, however, the contrast of other recent nearby developments. Four blocks away in Hamline Park, tents line the basketball court. South of I-94, more tents occupy a vacant lot. A burned-out strip mall is a reminder that several local businesses were recently evicted from the area with little help from the landlord.

Minnesota United soccer team owner Bill McGuire's estimated net worth is \$999 million. Poverty in the area is at 16.9 percent and likely rising. Unemployment is at 5.1 percent and likely rising. Almost half of the renters are cost-burdened.

While I love the soccer team, it's fair to ask McGuire to help out residents going through hard times as a gesture of goodwill. I suggest McGuire pay it forward, further the equitable development of this city, and donate \$2 million to the Saint Paul Housing Trust Fund to build and retain affordable housing and provide housing assistance for those in need.

If he does, I'm sure the investment would more than pay for itself. A fairer Saint Paul is a safer Saint Paul, a more stable Saint Paul. And a more stable Saint Paul is a better business climate for a man like McGuire. It's like having your cake and eating it, too.

*Stuart Orłowski
Hamline-Midway*

Christmas fatigue

When are we going to make an attempt for sanity in this country? The holiday season advertisements and music start Thanksgiving Day so that what used to be the least commercial holiday of the year is now fruitcakeville. I'm grateful that I can no longer allot money to no-longer-free television, as it spares me the onslaught of commercials for junk that neither I nor anyone else truly needs.

Then the packages begin to arrive at the door, so that one cannot have a peaceful moment to finish any endeavor. I received so many things this year that went directly from the front door to the charity box after its packaging was broken down and hauled to the recycling bin.

I have sympathy for the Jewish, Muslim and other-oriented people in this country. They must feel beat over the head by Christmas, including nonstop Christian music, even on Minnesota Public Radio, even when it's Advent. Then on Christmas night at midnight—done.

As I write this, still in the season of Christmas, which runs through Twelfth Night on January 6, there's nothing... Nothing except the glitter-covered Christmas cards and their foil-lined envelopes and gift wrap and ribbon—all non-recyclable. So much for remembering the planet in the celebration.

*Kathleen Deming
Macalester-Groveland*

A school, not a statement

I am absolutely incensed that the District 197 School Board dropped the name of my high school, Henry Sibley.

An article in the *StarTribune* cited 200 emails and an article in the *Pioneer Press* cited 1,300 emails with concerns over the school name. That seems like a very small sample to make a radical change. There are thousands of students who have passed through Henry Sibley over the years. Did the School Board ask them?

I feel as if I have lost my high school forever. The name Henry Sibley was not a political statement in my time there, but a place and time in this community's history. If the name change is truly what is decided, in future elections I will

'Abundant nature' meets chainsaw at Ford site

By JIM GINTHER

Saint Catherine University cleared a large section of trees on its campus several years ago and put in a parking lot. While there was some opposition, nothing came of it. As the Joni Mitchell song says, "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot."

South of there, at Cleveland and Montreal avenues, a large number of mature trees once surrounded the former Little League ballfields. They were removed last summer to make way for the Highland Bridge development on the former Ford site. Along Ford Parkway near Mississippi River Boulevard, green banners proclaim the "abundant nature, sustainable future" that will be the cornerstone of Highland Bridge.

A huge cottonwood tree grows at the southeast corner of the Ford site, across Mississippi River Boulevard from Hidden Falls Park. It is close to 18 feet in circumference and provides most of the canopy for the picturesque curve that frames the falls just north of Magoffin Street. The mature grove of eight to 10 pine trees immediately to the west has already been cut down.

The front-page story in the September 30, 2020, edition of the *Villager* was headlined, "Tunnel OK'd for under River Road." The 90-foot tunnel will lead to a terrace overlooking Hidden Falls. Saint Paul City Council member Chris Tolbert is quoted as saying, "(Hidden Falls) is misnamed now because people have found it."

We received a letter from Ellen Stewart of the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department on November 11. It informed us that the city required access to the western edge of our property to do survey work in conjunction with the proposed tunnel. We called Ellen and asked for a meeting at the construction site. She declined, but did

agree to a Zoom meeting on December 8 with her and team member Ann Gardener. Also present would be John Libby of the architectural firm Toltz, King, Duvall and Anderson who would be working on the tunnel project. We wanted to discuss the effects the project would have on the surrounding area. However, by November 30 another 78 conifer and hardwood trees had already been cut down along River Boulevard.

At this point, we decided to research the site plan. On pages 42 and 45 of the Hidden Falls-Crosby Farm Regional Park Master Plan, we found plans for public transit access at both the north and south entrances to the park. Plazas with seating, wayfinding and art were sketched in above the falls. Additionally, a boardwalk is planned along the west side of that beautiful gorge.

When the time came for our meeting with park staff and architect, they were quite accommodating and addressed some of our concerns. When we brought up the issues of density, traffic flow, tree loss and noise, we were told, "we are trying to drive more people to the park and make it a destination."

I replied that there are going to be over 6,000 people living on the site. They happily responded, "probably more like 10,000 people." Finally, I asked about the prospects of the big cottonwood tree and the hardwood trees near it surviving the construction. Ellen said she knew of the big tree and sadly it would have to go.

Obviously, with a project this large, we are going to lose some trees. But the great number we've already seen cut down is a high price to pay. Are the concrete plazas, tunnel and boardwalk going to secure the "abundant nature" promised on the Highland Bridge banner on Ford Parkway?

To quote Joni Mitchell again, "Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone?"

never vote for the School Board members who approved this. In addition, I will never attend or support the high school with whatever new name they dream up. I have supported numerous school district special bonding issues and tax increases, but never again. This is not my school anymore.

I felt bad when the Saint Paul School Board forced the name change of Linwood-Monroe School and the old Monroe High School. There are still a lot of people who live in that area who cling to their old high school as part of their community regardless of politics.

Monroe, Sibley, even FDR were our elected officials, but certainly not saints. Each of them had many flaws.

*Dennis G. Hoyer
Mendota Heights*

Sobering review of city streets

Former Governor Jesse Ventura once said that the streets of Saint Paul must have been designed by drunken Irishmen. He was right. Near Assumption Church in downtown Saint Paul there's a street sign on a single pole that reads 9th Street, Saint Joseph's Lane and Exchange Street. All three streets end at that intersection. A reconfiguration would help. The short stretch of 9th Street could become a natural extension of Exchange Street. Saint Joseph's Lane could be renamed Xcel Energy Street. The only street sign you would need is Exchange Street. That's if you need any sign at all.

I think I just sobered up.

*Steven Hubbell
Downtown Saint Paul*

Runaway train at Ford site

A runaway train of variance requests is barreling toward the Highland Bridge development on the former site of the Ford Plant. It seems that master developer Ryan Companies and the city of Saint Paul are driving the train of ever-increasing height variances to maximize density and profit at the expense of neighborhood livability.

Remember when Ryan and the city committed to the Ford Site Zoning and Public Realm Master Plan in 2017, proclaiming it the best? If it was so good then, why have they been requesting and receiving building height and open space variances since construction started?

The latest is the height variance for a 95-foot decorative tower in an area with a 65-foot height limit. Ryan and the city are not following their own agreed-upon zoning plan. Friends

of the Mississippi opposes this variance, and Neighbors for a Livable Saint Paul has filed legal action to force the city to follow its own zoning rules.

Taxpayers could be doling out up to \$275 million in tax increment financing for this development on the Ford site. If you are outraged about where this train is heading, please contact Ryan Companies, the city administration and your City Council member to voice your opposition.

*Kate Hunt
Highland Park*

Taxpayers left holding the bag

Usually, news that a lender stood to lose \$435 billion on \$1.37 trillion of loans would be pretty shocking, but not when the lender is the U.S. taxpayer. And you can bet this first estimate of the student loan losses will prove to be rosy.

*T.J. Sexton
Highland Park*

Delve into Highland's history

Intrigue, mystery, warm memories, cold facts and conjecture—we are discovering all of these as part of the Highland Heritage Project's research into Highland Park's history. We have interviewed residents who have provided critical information for us. They have recommended other folks to interview. It turns out, Highland residents have done amazing things and have participated deeply in the formation of this unique neighborhood.

Highland Heritage Project team members are committed to carrying out this research funded by a Minnesota Historical Society legacy grant. But there is lots more to discover, lots more people to interview, and we want to share the fun. If you have recommendations for people to interview (even yourself) or would like to participate in the project as a volunteer, contact us by email at hhp@highlandheritageproject.org.

For more information, visit the Highland Heritage Project website at highlandheritageproject.org, the project's Facebook page, or its Zoom program at youtu.be/RmVwU3SecMI.

A Zoom program on the houses of worship in Highland Park is also available at youtu.be/hgQk6eVzC2M.

*Jackie Mosio
Highland Park*

Campaign launches to get area neighbors to go solar together

By FRANK JOSSI

Solar United Neighbors recently announced that it has begun recruiting Saint Paul residents to take part in a co-operative buying plan that provides clean energy expertise and saves money on solar panel installations.

With chapters in states across the country, the nonprofit organization is seeking homeowners and business owners to form cooperatives that contract with local solar firms. While Solar United Neighbors has previously created co-ops in Minneapolis, much of its work has been in outstate Minnesota and a handful of Twin Cities suburbs.

Minnesota program director Bobby King said he looks forward to working with Saint Paul homeowners and business owners for the first time as part of a new Twin Cities area co-op. He said Saint Paul has plenty of rooftops ready for solar and citizens interested in supporting clean energy and reducing utility bills.

“We find there are a lot of people who’ve been thinking about solar for a long time, and they just need some help on their side,” he said. “It’s like so many large home purchases that you only do once or twice, and you can’t get good at it without some help.”

King wants to attract 150 homeowners and business owners to form the new co-op by the end of winter. If more sign up, he will add another group. Members can sign up for the co-op for free, though Solar United Neighbors also offers paid memberships that offer more individualized advice.

The organization will hold a free online informational session for Twin Cities residents at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, January 7. Registration is available by visiting solarunitedneighbors.org.



Bobby King, Minnesota program director of Solar United Neighbors, is working to enlist Saint Paul homeowners to the organization’s fold. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

[org/minnesota/events/](http://solarunitedneighbors.org/minnesota/events/).

Saint Paul has welcomed the group’s efforts, especially since the city’s climate action plan calls for cleaner energy sources.

“This is a great idea, and anything we can do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move toward cleaner energy sources will help Saint Paul do our part to meet our climate goals,” said Russ Stark, the city’s chief resilience officer.

The nonprofit organization holds online webinars to get potential co-op members acquainted with solar energy, the installation process, and the connection their systems have to make with Xcel Energy.

King said tax benefits and incentives continue to make solar systems more affordable. In 2021, new solar panel owners will receive

a 26 percent tax credit. He said another cost savings is that panel prices have declined over the years as technology has improved.

According to EnergySage, the average cost of solar panel installation in Minnesota ranges from \$13,000-\$18,000, not including tax credits and other incentives.

When homeowners and businesses with solar panels produce more power than they consume, Xcel Energy buys the excess energy, King said. The utility’s Solar Rewards program offers additional incentives for low-income residents, he said.

Once co-ops reach 30 members, Solar United Neighbors solicits bids from solar installers. A co-op committee forms to choose from among the finalists. The committee will “look at the price, at the quality of equipment, at the

years of experience, at whether or not (the installers) are local,” King said. “They’ll look at commitment to racial justice and diversity—all of that in picking an installer who’s the best fit for the co-op.”

The group will check the homes of co-op members to ensure solar panels will work on their roofs. The chosen solar company will then conduct site visits to size the systems and determine the costs before scheduling installations. At any point, co-op members can decide they no longer want to add solar to their homes or businesses, King said.

Group purchasing saves as much as 15 percent on cost for homeowners and businesses. After the installations, the organization continues to work with members to answer their questions or solve any issues, King said.

Minneapolis resident John Farrell purchased his solar installation through Solar United Neighbors. The nationally known clean energy expert and co-director of the Minneapolis-based Institute for Local Self-Reliance worked with the nonprofit because he said he wanted the advantages of co-op buying and guidance.

“What’s great about the Solar United model is if you have questions, there’s a built-in way to get answers from someone without a financial interest in how they answer,” said Farrell, who also serves on the group’s national board. “This organization is really motivated to help you have a good experience and get a good deal.”

King said there is another compelling reason to participate in cooperative buying. “We can’t tell you we’re getting absolutely a rock-bottom price, but you’re getting a good deal,” he said. “You can be sure that the installer is going to be vetted, and doing this with other folks is fun.”

Allina Health to open new United Family Physicians Clinic on the West End

By JANE MCCLURE

Allina Health will open a new neighborhood-based primary care clinic in Saint Paul’s West End neighborhood this month. Its United Family Physicians Clinic at 233 Grand Ave. will also serve as a new clinical practice and training site for United Family Medicine’s residency program.

The new clinic is located near United Hospital, the residency program’s core teaching

site. The program trains 21 family medicine residents a year, and many graduates go on to serve in clinical settings throughout Minnesota. Family medicine physicians are increasingly in short supply in the state.

The teaching program replaces a long-time residency program within United Family Medicine (UFM), which operates its main clinic on West Seventh Street and Randolph Avenue. Some people expressed their displeasure that the residency program was dropped there and the clinic lost many doc-

tors. Clinic leaders claimed the changes were needed to retain federal funding, but some elected officials have called for an investigation of the clinic’s practices. Without the residency program, UFM is moving to directly employ physicians and other health care providers.

Allina, meanwhile, is looking forward to the opening of its new clinic. “Allina Health has deep roots in the West Seventh neighborhood,” said Sara Criger, senior vice president of Allina Health Operations and president of

United Hospital. “With the opening of this new clinic, we’re deepening our commitment to serve the health care needs of the community, while providing a new training site for Allina Health’s well-respected residency program.”

The clinic will provide primary health care for patients of all ages, as well as mental health and addiction services and obstetrics. It also plans to continue providing access to comprehensive health care for low-income and medically underserved people.

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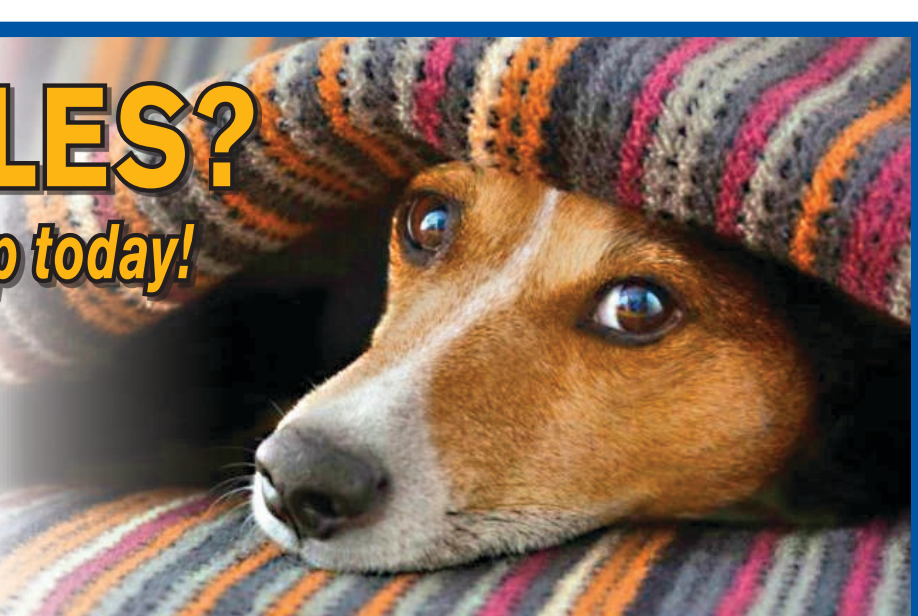
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EDUCATION

Learning in person

Area high schools have found a way to secure classrooms from COVID-19

BY CAROLYN WALKUP

While their counterparts in the Saint Paul Public Schools continue to learn from home on desktop or laptop computers or tablets, students in local private high schools have been attending classes in person for most if not all of the current school year. With mandatory facemasks, smaller class sizes and large enough rooms to accommodate social distancing, the private schools have avoided all but a few cases of COVID-19 among students and staff, and those cases have been traced to off-campus sources.

All five high schools contacted for this story—Saint Thomas Academy, Visitation School, Cretin-Derham Hall, Saint Paul Academy and Saint Agnes School—allow students who prefer distance learning to take classes remotely from home.

Saint Thomas, an all-boys school in Mendota Heights with 480 students in grades 9-12, tore down walls to enlarge classrooms and upgraded its air filtration system last summer in preparation for the school year, according to headmaster Kelby Woodard. Classes range from 12 to 20 students with desks spaced six feet apart, he said.

In classrooms where a six-foot distance cannot be achieved for all, the extra students learn remotely from the school library via computer. "It's better than being home all day," Woodard said. "We look at every in-person school day as being worth two days of distance learning. A key piece is that our families and cadets buy in with 100 percent compliance with mask wearing and the sense that students want to be here in person. They're willing to make those sacrifices."

Saint Thomas asked families not to travel over the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, and those students who did travel agreed to limit themselves to distance learning for two weeks before returning to the classroom.

The academy was listed in a recent report from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) as having five or more cases of COVID-19 during the two weeks prior to December 24. Woodard said that report may be misleading because once a school is on the list it is not removed for 28 days or until the count is zero. Those COVID cases were not contracted in the school, he added, and did not result in closing any classrooms.

Saint Thomas' sister school in Mendota Heights, all-girls Visitation, did a lot of planning to be able to conduct in-person classes this fall with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, the MDH and the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. Headmaster Rene Gavic credits a partnership among teachers, parents and the schools' 310 students for enabling it to continue with in-person classes.

"We have the gift of space," Gavic said.

Visitation recently added 4,700 square feet of classroom space in the former Visitation Sisters monastery next door. Average class sizes have been reduced to 15. Student-to-student contact was minimized by eliminating lockers and having teachers rather than students move from classroom to classroom. The heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems were upgraded, and students' temperatures are checked every morning.

Visitation had 20-some cases of COVID-19 this fall among students, Gavic said, but all were traced to contacts outside of the school. It, too, was on MDH's December 24 list as having five or more cases during the previous two weeks. As a precaution, Visitation added a week of distance learning after Christmas break before students return to in-person learning later in January.

Saint Agnes has been conducting in-person classes for its 312 high school students since late August. "Our faculty knows the best way for kids to learn is in the classroom," said headmaster Kevin Ferdinandt.

The school has been able to maintain social



Masked and socially distanced, students in Amanda Rosas' AP Spanish class at Visitation School work on an assignment.

distancing in the classroom by keeping class sizes to an average of 19 students. Students move from classroom to classroom between periods. However, those who experience any symptoms, even symptoms associated with the common cold, are instructed to remain home.

The few COVID-19 cases this fall among Saint Agnes students and staff were traced to sources outside of the school, Ferdinandt said. Students who have been exposed to people who test positive for COVID are required to quarantine, and with the many large families at K-12 Saint Agnes, the number of students quarantining at any one time can number in the dozens.

Saint Paul Academy has followed mostly a hybrid model of learning for its 427 high school students this fall. With half of its students learning from home on any one day, the school has been able to keep its in-person class size to an average of 14.

"The upper school campus is spacious, so we were able to put a lot of safety protocols in place," said SPA spokesperson Ami Berger. "We also significantly upgraded the HVAC system, so all classrooms are well-ventilated."

Nevertheless, due to the rising number of

COVID cases in Ramsey and Hennepin counties, SPA switched to all-distance learning in mid-November, according to Berger. It hopes to return to a hybrid schedule on January 19, she said.

Hybrid learning has been the primary model this fall for the 940 students at Cretin-Derham Hall. One-half to one-quarter of the students are in-person each day, with the rest learning from home. Upgraded computer technology offers students at home a collaborative learning environment similar to what they would get in person, according to CDH spokesperson Annie Broos.

There have been a few COVID cases among CDH students, Broos said. The high school was listed by MDH as having five or more cases in the two weeks prior to December 24. However, "many of those who tested positive this fall may not have been on campus during the exposure period," Broos said. The school does aggressive contact tracing, she said, and requires students and staff to quarantine as needed.

"We're hopeful we can continue our in-person classes," Broos said. We're doing everything we can to keep the environment safe, and our community is very compliant."



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K-12 Public Charter School

WSNAC tapers off student rental conversions, ponders future of UST lot at Grand-Cleveland

By JANE McCLURE

A project that has helped convert student rental housing in the neighborhoods around the University of Saint Thomas into owner-occupied homes is now winding down. However, some neighbors want to see continued efforts to promote those conversions.

The West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee (WSNAC) agreed on December 8 to spend the balance of its Neighborhood Stabilization Fund to help purchase and convert a student rental house in Macalester-Groveland. About \$27,000 is left in the fund, which comes from Davanni's lease of parking spaces in UST's lot on Grand and Cleveland avenues.

Once that money is spent, WSNAC is expected to consider redirecting the fund to other efforts to encourage converting student rentals to owner-occupied homes.

Some UST officials question whether it is appropriate for the university to continue to be involved in housing conversions. Amy McDonough, chief of staff for Saint Thomas president Julie Sullivan, said the university's move to campus residency requirements for first- and second-year students beginning in the fall of 2021 and fall of 2022, respectively, will have a big impact on off-campus student rentals.

The Neighborhood Stabilization Fund was the successor of a mandatory UST housing buyback program that resulted in the conversion of 30 student rentals to owner-occupied homes between 2005-2014. The buyback program was part of a legal settlement between neighbors

and the university over the expansion of Saint Thomas' campus onto the two blocks bounded by Summit, Cleveland, Grand and Cretin avenues.

The current fund has its roots in UST's effort to retain its 32-space parking lot at the northwest corner of Grand and Cleveland. The university's conditional use permit in 2004 called for the site to be developed as a mixed-use building with commercial space on the first floor and student housing above, or be converted into green space by 2015.

"The parking lot has been a huge benefit to us," Stupka said. "It doesn't seem like the right thing to plow it under."

As part of the first of two three-year extensions, the Neighborhood Stabilization Fund was created as a condition for allowing the parking lot to remain. At the time, UST provided \$60,000 to convert four student rentals into owner-occupied homes and another \$40,000 to improve lighting near campus. The \$100,000 is what it would have cost the university to turn the parking lot into green space.

The fund most recently has been supported by Davanni's lease of half of the lot's spaces. Davanni's began leasing 16 spaces in April 2018. At that time, the annual lease payment was \$15,000.

Over the three-year extension that ends in March 2021, the \$45,000 was to be used to convert three student rent-

als to owner-occupied homes. However, WSNAC voted to reduce and then forgive the rent payments as Davanni's fell on hard times during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The three conversions never happened and are now deemed unrealistic due to higher costs and fewer dollars.

"The (annual) \$15,000 that looked good in 2018 doesn't look as good now," said Tanya Hietpas, a real estate agent who has worked on the housing programs for several years. "When we did the housing buyback program, we had more money to spend per house."

WSNAC and the Macalester-Groveland Community Council will soon make a recommendation to the Saint Paul Planning Commission on the future of the Grand and Cleveland parking lot. Davanni's president and CFO Bob Stupka would like to continue leasing the spaces. He said the Grand-Cleveland restaurant continues to struggle without indoor dining and its adjacent Coffee Bené coffee shop is temporarily closed.

"The parking lot has been a huge benefit to us," Stupka said. "It doesn't seem like the right thing to plow it under."

Former WSNAC chair Rachel Westermeyer said she would still like to see the parking lot converted to green space. "This shouldn't come back to us every three years," she said.

Macalester-Groveland Community Council representative Tom Dietsche questioned what turning the corner into "basically useless green space" would accomplish.

Others at the meeting said they understand the local parking pressures and campus development issues and want to see what ideas UST brings forward.

Keystone outlines plans for new food shelf

By JANE McCLURE

Soaring demand has strained Keystone Community Services' food shelves, including the one at 1916 University Ave. A new facility that would house an expanded food shelf is now being proposed for 1790-1800 University. Mary McKeown, CEO of Keystone, presented initial plans for the site to the Union Park District Council's Committee on Land Use and Economic Development on December 21.

"2020 has been a challenging year for us," McKeown said of Keystone, which closed on the two University Avenue properties on December 28.

Keystone is one of the region's largest providers of food. The nonprofit organization, which operates a second food shelf on Rice Street, hosted 21 drive-through food giveaways last year, including one at Allianz Field. The drive-through events provided food for about 32,000 people since June.

Keystone served more than 28,000 people in 2019 with food, basic needs and crisis support, and expects that number to significantly increase when 2020 totals are completed.

"Hunger relief is a very critical issue," said McKeown. Final numbers for 2020 were not available, but she estimates that food service requests were up 93 percent from 2019.

The need for a new space actually preceded the pandemic. Keystone has been looking for a new site for its food and crisis services since 2019, at one point eyeing a spot near University and

Lexington Parkway. The newly proposed site on University and Beacon Avenue would have 20,000 square feet of space, compared to the 7,000 feet it has now. Its current food shelves lack storage and refrigeration, requiring Keystone to rent other facilities.

Plans call for remodeling the two buildings currently on the property, which include the former Hafner Furniture and Bonded Auto Repair. McKeown said the buildings will need "pretty significant renovation" before Keystone can press them into service.

The facility will be within a short walk of the light-rail station on Fairview and is near two bus routes. It will also have parking in the rear and space for the organization's two food mobiles.

Public outreach is now underway and McKeown said predesign work is expected to be completed by February. Keystone will then launch a fundraising campaign to pay for renovating and equipping the facility. That will include seeking \$3 million from the 2021 Minnesota Legislature.

It is not known yet what the total project costs will be. Last year, Keystone received a predevelopment planning grant for the project from the Metropolitan Council.

Keystone is asking the Union Park District Council and other groups for help with public engagement as the facility takes shape. One idea is to incorporate space for volunteers, since the current food shelves are very crowded. Another idea is to move more of the agency's offerings, such as tax assistance and emer-

gency services, to University Avenue from their current space in the Merriam Park Community Center at 2000 Saint Anthony Ave.

Keystone's proposed move to 1790-1800 University comes after plans for a mixed-use development there were shelved. Last March, developer LIG Investments unveiled plans for a five-story building on the site with 146 market-rate apartments above first-floor retail space.

The district council committee recommended denial of a conditional use permit and variances for that project after much debate. Some committee members said they could not support the project because it lacked affordable housing. Others said they needed more time to discuss the plans. Supporters said the project would redevelop the site for a higher and better use.

The mixed-use project was never submitted to the Saint Paul Planning Commission for its consideration.

While excited about the Keystone facility, some land use committee members said they were disappointed that the other project was abandoned. "I and others are excited about the possibilities for Keystone," said committee member Rob Vanasek, "but we need to let it sink in what we've lost."

Committee members asked if Keystone would consider being part of a larger building, with housing on the upper floors. McKeown said Keystone did reach out to the previous developer, but did not get a response. "But housing is not our area of expertise," she said.



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Crime Report

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

Highland Park

Robbery—A strong-arm robbery was reported on the 2200 block of Benson Avenue at 5:09 p.m. Sunday, December 20.

Theft—Several items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from vehicles on the 1900 block of Ford Parkway on December 10, the 1300 block of East Maynard Drive on December 18, the 600 block of South Snelling Avenue on December 22, and the 2000 block of Shepard Road on December 22.

—Vehicles were reported stolen on the 1300 block of Eleanor Avenue on December 12, on Davern Street and Ford Parkway on December 13, on the 500 block of South Snelling Avenue on December 15, and two vehicles on the 2100 block of Ford on December 18.

Lexington-Hamline

Burglary—A commercial burglary was reported on the 400 block of North Syndicate Street at 9:40 a.m. Thursday, December 10.

Theft—Three vehicles were reported stolen on December 14, including on the 1200 blocks of both Laurel and Hague avenues, and on Carroll Avenue and Syndicate Street.

Macalester-Groveland

Burglaries—Garage burglaries were reported on the 1200 block of Jefferson Avenue and the 100 block of South Pascal Street on December 10, the 1200 block of Fairmount Avenue on December 11, the 1300 block of Osceola Avenue on December 13, and the 1900 block of Lincoln Avenue on December 19.

—Commercial break-ins were reported on the 1500 block of Saint Clair Avenue at 3:30

a.m. Sunday, December 13, and at 6:07 a.m. Saturday, December 19.

—A commercial burglary was reported on the 1100 block of Randolph Avenue at 11:44 p.m. Tuesday, December 22.

Theft—Several items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from vehicles on the 1900 block of Jefferson Avenue on December 11, the 300 block of Warwick Street on December 14, the 1800 block of Palace Avenue on December 15, the 2100 block of Princeton Avenue on December 22, and on Fairmount and Prior avenues on December 22.

—Vehicles were reported stolen on Fairview and Randolph avenues on December 17, the 1800 block of Jefferson Avenue on December 20, and the 1200 block of Saint Clair Avenue on December 22.

Merriam Park

Burglary—A commercial break-in was reported on the 2000 block of Marshall Avenue at 7 a.m. Tuesday, December 15.

Theft—A vehicle was reported stolen on the 1700 block of Carroll Avenue on Monday, December 14.

—Several items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from a vehicle on Laurel and Prior avenues on Friday, December 18.

Assault—An aggravated assault with a gun was reported on the 1600 block of Dayton Avenue at 2:39 a.m. Wednesday, December 16.

Miscellaneous—An incident involving the possession of methamphetamine was reported on the 1900 block of University Avenue at 1:21 a.m. Tuesday, December 15.

Snelling-Hamline

Burglary—Burglaries were reported on the 1500 block of Selby Avenue at 6:54 a.m. Sunday, December 13, and at 3:27 p.m. Tuesday,

December 15.

Miscellaneous—Felony graffiti was reported on Ayd Mill Road and Summit Avenue at midnight Saturday, December 19.

Summit Hill

Burglary—A garage burglary was reported on the 200 block of Oakgrove Place on Friday, December 18.

—An attempted home break-in was reported on Crocus Place near Fairmount Avenue at 9 p.m. Sunday, December 20.

Theft—Several items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from a vehicle on the 900 block of Fairmount Avenue on Saturday, December 12.

—A vehicle was reported stolen on the 100 block of South Chatsworth Street on Thursday, December 17.

Weapons—Gunfire was reported on the 700 block of Summit Avenue on December 10, on Osceola Avenue and Avon Street on December 10, and on the 100 block of South Lexington Parkway on December 16.

Summit-University

Robbery—A strong-arm robbery was reported on the 700 block of Selby Avenue at 3:44 a.m. Saturday, December 19.

Burglary—A garage burglary was reported on Milton Street north of Summit Avenue on Thursday, December 10.

Theft—Vehicles were reported stolen on the 800 block of Selby Avenue on December 12, the 300 block of North Western Avenue on December 13, the 900 block of Selby on December 14, and the 900 block of Marshall Avenue on December 15.

—Several items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from vehicles on the 300 block of Dayton Avenue on December 10, and

the 400 block of Marshall Avenue on December 14.

Arson—A fire was reported in a multifamily building on the 300 block of North Dale Street at 8:31 a.m. Monday, December 14.

Assault—An aggravated assault with a dangerous weapon was reported on Carroll Avenue and Chatsworth Street at 3:49 p.m. Monday, December 21.

Weapons—Gunfire was reported on the 800 block of Carroll Avenue on Sunday, December 13.

Miscellaneous—An incident involving narcotics was reported on the 800 block of Selby Avenue at 2:41 p.m. Sunday, December 20.

West End

Burglaries—Garage burglaries were reported on the 900 block of Tuscarora Avenue on December 18, and the 700 block of Bayard Avenue on December 20.

Theft—Several items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from vehicles on the 800 block of Bayard Avenue on December 11, the 200 block of North Smith Avenue on December 19, the 1000 block of Watson Avenue on December 20, and the 1000 block of Randolph Avenue on December 22.

—Three vehicles were reported stolen on the 400 block of North Smith Avenue between December 11-13.

—Two vehicles were reported stolen on the 700 block of Otto Avenue on December 19.

—Other vehicles were reported stolen on the 300 block of North Smith on December 22, and on the 1000 block of West Seventh Street on December 23.

Arson—A vehicle fire was reported on the 300 block of Fulton Street at 5:35 a.m. Sunday, December 13.

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District Councils

Highland Park

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Taste of Ward 3—Order takeout food from restaurants in Ward 3, which includes the Highland Park and Macalester-Groveland neighborhoods, between January 9-23 and submit your receipts to be entered into drawings for gift cards. Every two receipts submitted by January 27 will be eligible for the drawing. Learn more by visiting tasteofward3.com.

Senior, caregiver support—The Highland Block Nurse Program serves seniors age 65 and older and their caregivers who live south of Saint Clair Avenue and west of Lexington Parkway. For information, contact program director Paula Fischer at 651-696-8425 or paulaf@ourladyofpeace.org.

Randolph-Snelling meeting—A neighborhood meeting has been tentatively scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, January 13, regarding a proposal to construct a six-story apartment building on the southwest corner of Randolph and Snelling avenues. Visit highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar for updates.

Upcoming meetings—board of directors, 7 p.m. Thursday, January 7; Transportation Committee, 7 p.m. Tuesday, January 12; and Community Development Committee, 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, January 19. All HDC meetings are currently being conducted online via Zoom. Links to access the meetings are being posted on the HDC's website. For future meetings, visit highlanddistrictcouncil.org/events.

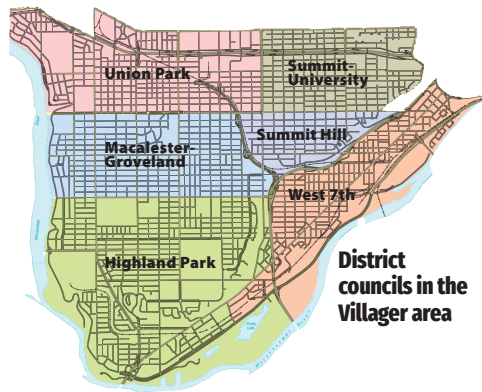
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Taste of Ward 3—The Macalester-Groveland Community Council, together with the Highland District Council and others, are putting together a program to support local restaurants. Those who order from Ward 3 restaurants between January 9-23 may submit photos of their receipts to be entered in a drawing for restaurant gift cards. Learn more by visiting tasteofward3.com.

Free virtual webinar—A virtual webinar on climate will be presented by Russ Stark, chief resilience officer for the city of Saint Paul, at 7 p.m. Tuesday, January 19. More details and registration information are available at macgrove.org/2020webinars.

Show your neighborhood pride—Locally designed Macalester-Groveland T-shirts can be ordered online for home delivery. The shirts come in kiwi, heather indigo and dark heather. Visit macgrove.org/tshirt.



District councils in the Villager area

Upcoming meetings—Inclusivity Task Force on Thursday, January 7; Community Building Committee on Monday, January 11; and board of directors on Thursday, January 14. The meetings are held virtually at 6:30 p.m. Sign up by visiting macgrove.org/participate.

Summit Hill

summithillassociation.org • 651-222-1222

Pedestrian safety survey—The Summit Hill Association's Pedestrian Safety and Traffic Calming Committee encourages Saint Paul residents to take part in a short pedestrian safety survey sponsored by the University of Minnesota. Access it at https://umn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eVzUc3nOTvvEjvL.

Union Park

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Helping the homeless—The Union Park District Council is working to help ensure that homeless people have the resources they need. The Saint Paul Camps Hub (linktr.ee/StpCampsHub) will connect people with those who are coordinating the efforts. An Amazon wish list (tinyurl.com/y6hj8wnf) has been assembled for a local camp. The UPDC is also encouraging people to join Hamline-Midway Neighbors Helping Homeless Neighbors (tinyurl.com/yys3ur6p) on Facebook.

Upcoming online meetings—board of directors, 7 p.m. Wednesday, January 6; Transportation Committee, 6:30 p.m. Monday, January 11; Committee on Land Use and Development, 6:30 p.m. Monday, January 18; and Environment and Parks Committee, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, January 20. To access the meetings, see unionparkdc.org/calendar.

Contact us—The public is invited to "like" the Union Park District Council on Facebook, follow it on Twitter at @UnionParkDC, and subscribe to its e-newsletter, "Neighborhood Matters," by emailing info@unionparkdc.org.

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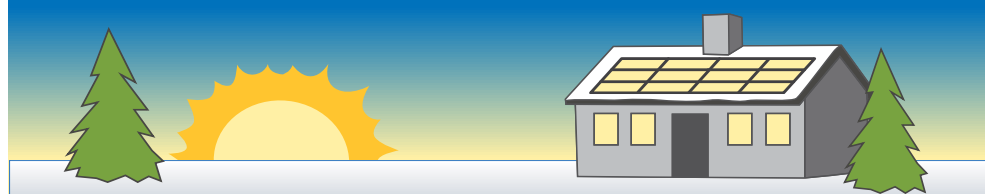
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Artists take their inspiration from opposing elements of city’s carnival

BY ANNE MURPHY

You can take the chill out of winter by taking in the “Fire & Ice” art show on display from January 9 through February 28 at AZ Gallery, 308 Prince St. The fifth annual exhibit is being held in conjunction with the Saint Paul Winter Carnival. This year it includes 78 works by regional artists, all inspired by the properties of the two disparate elements.

“The Winter Carnival allows us at the AZ Gallery to celebrate the beauty of fire and ice,” said Amy Clark, a Macalester-Groveland painter who has been with the gallery since 2004 and pioneered the “Fire & Ice” show.

AZ Gallery is a visual arts cooperative founded in 1997 by a group of artists and friends living in the Lowertown neighborhood of downtown. “The artists wanted a gallery that was owned and run by the artists themselves,” Clark said, “one where they could be hands-on with all the decisions, contribute to the daily work of running a gallery and focus on supporting and educating other artists in Lowertown.”

“When we started hosting Winter Carnival shows, there had been a significant period when nothing was being organized at AZ,” Clark said. “So I called the Winter Carnival and they readily agreed to help promote and market the ‘Fire & Ice’ show. The Winter Carnival wants to include everyone in their celebration, and ‘Fire & Ice’ is a perfect way to include Lowertown and the artists of Minnesota.”

Clark organized the first few “Fire and Ice” exhibits, but now partners with Tom Reynen, a photographer who serves as treasurer of AZ Gallery. According to him, the association of “Fire & Ice” with the Winter Carnival has been extremely beneficial for AZ. This year that association is especially important, as the gallery has struggled with the COVID-19 pandemic. “It’s been a challenge, financially and otherwise,” Clark said.

AZ has thrived for more than 20 years with an average of 10 member artists, and they have high hopes for 2021. However, revenue was down 66 percent in 2020, Reynen said. Even so, with small-business loans, temporary rent forgiveness and creative virtual marketing, the gallery has managed to keep afloat.

“Most of us have full-time jobs that have

changed, and that’s had an influence on individual artist’s energy to create new work,” Clark said. “Everyone feels the pressure that 2020 has exerted. Artists can either flourish or feel weighed down by all the change.” AZ artists have chosen the former, according to Clark, and that is evident in the new exhibit.

“We get to open again—safely with precautions in place,” she said. “We’re excited to meet new participants and see old friends who have new work to show. The Winter Carnival brings joy to our gallery and to the city as a whole. It brings a sense of pride to the people of Saint Paul and gives us a reason to get outside and see the beauty around us during this magical season.”

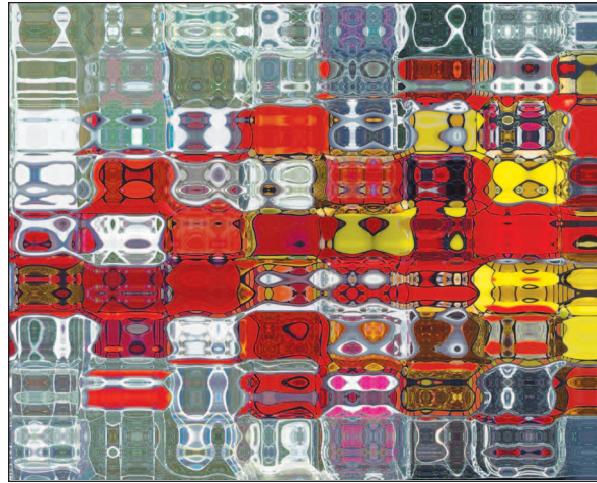
The association of ‘Fire & Ice’ with the Saint Paul Winter Carnival has been extremely beneficial for AZ Gallery. This year that association is especially important.

Macalester-Groveland painter Mark Cosimini, another AZ member, has taken part in all of the previous “Fire & Ice” shows. In the 2021 show he has two paintings—“Fire & Ice Falls” and “Pines in the Abstract.”

“‘Fire & Ice’ is a perfect opportunity to use a complementary palette of blue and orange,” Cosimini said. “In ‘Fire and Ice Falls,’ I try to show the two colors melting into each other, showing a smooth transition from the ice of winter to the warmth of spring. ‘Pines in the Abstract’ shows the harsh contrast between the two. The green pines and sharp lines of the abstract birch trees create an active setting for the orange and blue to compete.”

Reynen has three photographs in the show. “‘Temperance River Falls’ was taken during a trip to the North Shore in mid-November when we just had to get out of the house for a few days,” he said. “I thought it fit well with the theme because evidently the falls had been frozen in October, but warming temps in early November caused some of the ice to melt. So it was a balance between winter and spring or cold and warmer weather.”

“My second entry, titled ‘Winter Time,’ was taken in my garden,” Reynen said. “I was struck by the way the first snowfall of the season covered my sundial and the way the shadows fell. My third entry, titled ‘Fire in Ice,’ is from my Garden Quilt series. It was digitally enhanced with a mosaic filter that divided the photo into tiny squares and created abstract patterns within each block, almost like you were looking through a wall



Among the 78 artworks displayed in the 2021 edition of “Fire and Ice” are the following: (counter-clockwise from above right) “Pines in the Abstract” by Mark Cosimini of Macalester-Groveland, “Winter Time” and “Fire in Ice” by Tom Reynen of Shoreview, “Fire and Ice Falls” by Cosimini, and “Spring Flurries” by Brian Poulton of Snelling-Hamline.



of glass blocks. For me, the reds and yellows were the flames of fire trapped below a sheet of ice.”

Clark contributed paintings that reflect her love of Saint Paul and the places she holds dear. “The three winter pieces—‘Nina’s on Selby,’ ‘Saint Paul Cathedral’ and ‘Rice Park’—are all places that I frequent,” she said. “They’re historic landmarks that have survived time and changed to embrace the city today. It’s like how the Winter Carnival

reinvents itself to offer new events to new generations but keeps timeless traditions like the medallion hunt.

“I’m a big carnival girl and try to do as many events as possible,” Clark said. “It always falls on my birthday, so it has always been a big deal.”

“Fire & Ice” will be on view from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays at the AZ Gallery. For more information or to view the exhibit virtually, visit theazgallery.org.



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ON THE TOWN *Briefly*

Books

Join Milkweed Editions for the virtual launch of poet torrin a. greathouse's debut collection, *Wound from the Mouth of a Wound*, at 7 p.m. Thursday, January 7. Winner of the 2020 Ballard Spahr Prize for Poetry, greathouse will be joined in the free hour-long program by author and Ballard Spahr judge Aimee Nezhukumatathil. To register, visit tinyurl.com/y4xz6waz. The first 500 RSVPs will receive access to the Zoom link via email. The event will also be live-streamed to Milkweed Edition's YouTube page.

Subtext Books, 6 W. Fifth St., will host free online readings and discussions with authors Peg Guilfoyle and her essay collection, *Singing All the Verses*, at 7 p.m. Wednesday, January 13; Charles Baxter and his novel, *The Sun Collective*, and Matthew Duffus and his book, *Dunbar's Folly and Other Stories*, at 7 p.m. Wednesday, January 20. To register for the link, visit subtextbooks.com.

Five poets will recite their verse in a virtual reading at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, January 21. The program is part of the monthly Bridges series hosted by Stan Kusonoki. The word-smiths, who hail from both coasts as well as the Twin Cities, include Alan Walowitz, Betsy Mars, Brett Elizabeth Jenkins, Mikaela Pavlicek and Morgan Kerber-Folstrom. To register to receive a link for the Zoom program, visit nextchapterbooksellers.com.

Music

The music of Libby Larsen will be featured in a free Courtroom Concert presented by the Schubert Club from noon-1 p.m. Thursday,



Harpsichordist Jacques Ogg will perform the music of four 17th-century composers in a recital live-streamed on January 23 from the Netherlands. For more information, see the music listing below.

January 7, on Landmark Center's website. Visit landmarkcenter.org.

The Minnesota Orchestra will open a series of four free concerts this winter at 8 p.m. Friday, January 15, with a performance of Saint-Georges' Symphony No. 1 and Mozart's Bassoon Concerto on television (TPT MN), radio (99.5 FM) and internet (classicalmpr.org and minnesotaorchestra.org). Music director Osmo Vänskä will conduct the concert, and principal bassoon Fei Xie is the featured soloist. The series continues with principal oboe John Snow and principal

second violin Peter McGuire as soloists in a concert at 8 p.m. Friday, January 29, over those same stations and web sites. Vanska will conduct the program, which includes Bach's Concerto in C minor and Herbert's Elegy: In Memoriam.

From the Cellebrederskapel in Maastricht in the Netherlands, Lyra Baroque Orchestra artistic director and harpsichordist Jacques Ogg will perform the music of 17th-century composers Philips, Frescobaldi, Froberger and Muffat in a recital live-streamed at 11 a.m. Saturday, January 23. Tickets are \$15,

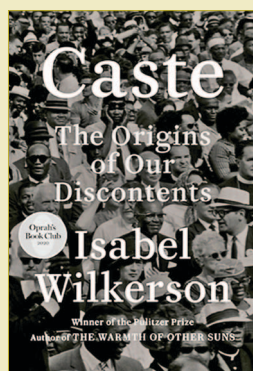
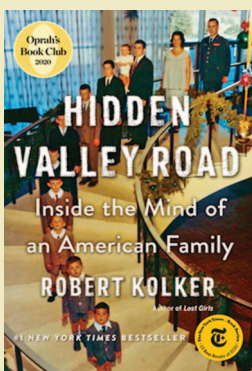
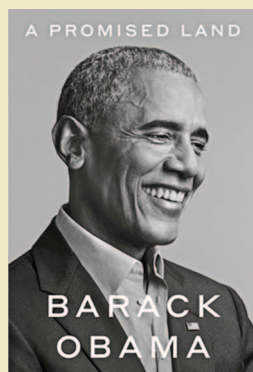
\$5 for students. To register for the link, visit lyrabaroque.org.

Exhibits

Northern Clay Center, 2424 E. Franklin Ave., is displaying the works of master ceramicists Bianka Groves, Jeff Ostreich and Doug Peltzman through January 31 in the Sales Gallery. The ceramic projects of 2020 Jerome grant recipients Casey Beck, Ritan Panton and Ginny Sims-Burchard will be featured from January 15 through February 21 in the Main and Emily Galusha galleries. Admission to the galleries is free and open to two patrons at a time between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. daily. Facemasks are required. The Jerome grant recipients will discuss their art from 4-6 p.m. Friday, January 15. For reservations, visit northernclaycenter.org or call 612-339-8007 ext. 301.

"Sending Hope for 2021," a project of the Friends of Highland Arts, is seeking original art to be hung in the windows of participating Highland Park businesses. The artworks should measure 4 by 6 inches or slightly larger and be mailed by January 8 to the Highland Business Association, 790 S. Cleveland Ave., Suite 219, Saint Paul, MN 55116. The works will be displayed from January 17 through February 19. A virtual opening reception is tentatively scheduled for 7 p.m. Friday, January 22. For more information, visit friendsofhighlandarts.org.

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SPORTS

Fitness centers are back running again as state restrictions ease

By FRANK JOSSI

After being shut down for a month, the operators of gyms and fitness clubs received a bit of relief in mid-December when Governor Tim Walz reduced restrictions prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The governor's executive order allowed fitness centers to operate at 25 percent capacity from December 19-January 10, with a cap of 100 people for drop-in workouts. Group exercise classes were allowed to resume on January 4 with a maximum of 10 people. Pools also were allowed to reopen then for lap swimming and lessons.

Local fitness centers have been partly open since the restrictions were lifted. The Jewish Community Center, for example, has been open for scheduled appointments, with no more than 25 slots available at any one time, according to fitness and group exercise manager Anna Golv.

The Minnesota Health Department's guidance requiring a 12-foot distance between group fitness training participants has left the JCC wondering whether to begin in-person classes again, Golv said. Before the shutdown, the JCC held group classes in its auditorium with at least six feet between people. The new guidelines would allow just four or five people to take a class based on the room's size.

Golv said JCC members have begun returning to exercise, while others have stayed home to take virtual fitness and yoga classes that draw as many as 20 people. As state guidelines change, the JCC will adjust.

"We're happy to be back open and serving as many people as we can as safely as possible," Golv said.

The distance requirements on small group training sessions continue to hurt boutique gyms in the area because they operate in tighter spaces. Sweatshop Health Club owner



A masked and socially distanced Ann Rajkowski took advantage of the treadmills at the Saint Paul Jewish Community Center last week. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Gayle Winegar said the state still fails to distinguish between boutique gyms and larger fitness centers. Many fitness providers in small facilities are highly dependent on personalized classes, not drop-in club members who come for exercise.

A large gym could accept up to 100 people, but a smaller fitness club can only provide individualized training or group classes for no more than a handful of people, she said.

"Health clubs are very, very nuanced, and that's just been very hard to communicate," Winegar said. "We're making slow progress, but the small boutique gyms have not been heard."

Around half of the Sweatshop's business comes from classes of 20 people or less. The governor's order clips that number to six or seven. The Sweatshop also is struggling to figure out how to offer Pilates classes, despite

having a large room with machines spaced out.

The Sweatshop plans to continue a robust offering of online classes, which draw as many as 20 people, in addition to individualized and small group training. Winegar said she supports the governor, but hopes that the fitness industry will not be painted "with one brush" in any future orders.

Max Lipset, founder of The Power House, said the state's guidelines calling for 12 feet between small group class participants "is challenging for us in a lot of ways." Because so few people could take in-person group training, he said it may not be worthwhile to provide it. Room sizes vary at The Power House, which has three locations, including 617 S. Snelling Ave. in Highland Park.

Not every location has a large single room that would allow for larger group training classes, Lipset said. Even where he can hold

classes, the size cannot reach above six or seven participants due to the restrictions.

"There's equipment taking up some of that square footage, and that reduces the number of bodies that we can have in there to between four and six," he said. "Our pricing for group fitness is not based on having four to six people. It's based on having 12 people."

Lipset said at least the governor's order allows for personal training, a strength of his company. He said the approach to fitness industry prohibitions, while understandable, fail to take into account the close relationships trainers in small facilities have with their clients.

Ann Blackburn, co-founder and owner of Tula Yoga & Wellness at 99 N. Snelling Ave., said the governor's recent order does not change her current approach of providing all courses online. Neither Tula's clientele nor its trainers have any interest in holding in-person classes with the danger of the virus still present.

"People are really enjoying the online classes right now, so we don't think it's worth it to open the studio to in-person classes," Blackburn said.

Tula holds three to four online classes a day, sometimes drawing snowbirds and friends and acquaintances living in other states. Blackburn said the classes draw from six to 12 participants. Individual training and coaching continue digitally, with no changes planned until at least spring when more clients have been vaccinated, she added.

The fitness owners said they believe they play an essential role in maintaining people's health in the face of the global medical crisis.

"We have a really valuable role in the health and fitness of our community," Lipset said. "During a pandemic that's driven by a respiratory virus that's preying on people with chronic diseases, to just ignore the value we provide is very disappointing."



The Wright Call By Dave Wright

Hoping for better sports year in '21

For lots of people, perhaps especially those of the sporting type, 2020 was a year they'd like to forget.

Many local high school sports teams eventually got a chance to play, and some of them, such as Saint Thomas Academy's football team, made the most of their abbreviated season in the spotlight. But with one notable exception, the year was an unpleasant one on the local sports scenes. Both the regular season and postseason for the Twins were way too short, and the Wild's run for the Stanley Cup was so brief that it's hard to even remember who they played against.

The fall brought hope that college and pro football would lift our spirits. Those hopes quickly faded when the Vikings staggered to a 1-5 start. There was a midseason recovery that revived some of the earlier optimism, but that was quickly squashed with losses to Dallas and Chicago. The less said about the un merry Christmas that Minnesota spent in New Orleans, the better.

The Gopher gridders were brimming with enthusiasm when their delayed season began. A 49-24 loss to Michigan at home in the opener doused those dreams. There were three wins to enjoy, but the finale—a 20-17 overtime loss to rival Wisconsin—was a frustratingly fitting farewell. Perennially upbeat head coach P.J. Fleck had seen enough. Though they could have secured a bowl bid, the Gophers declined, allowing everyone to head home for the holidays.

Next year's prospects, though, brightened with the news that star running back Mo Ibrahim plans to return.

It was left to the local pro soccer club to give us some late-season joy. As admirable as the efforts of Minnesota United FC were, the Loons still didn't succeed in capturing the attention of a lot of fans. Many people didn't even take note of the team's two impressive shutout wins before bowing out in the Major League Soccer semifinals.

But there is sunlight behind even the darkest clouds. As we begin 2021, there are plenty of reasons to be optimistic that good times may soon be here again.

For openers, it seems likely that the high school winter sports season will finally get going. Practices were scheduled to begin on January 4 and competitions on January 14. Masks will be required during all practices and competitions, with exceptions for sports in which doing so may present safety concerns. The exceptions include gymnastics, cheerleading, wrestling and swimming/diving.

The high school winter sports seasons won't be as long as in the past and the tournaments will run a little later than usual. That may cramp the spring sports season a bit. Still, half a season is better than none. Just ask any prep athlete.

As 2021 starts, folks will also be paying attention to what's going on with the Gopher men's hockey team, which has somehow been playing under the radar despite an 8-0 start. Not being able to attend games has dulled the enthusiasm for some, but just about every game is televised. The Gopher women's hockey team also is off to another outstanding start.

Basketball also has suddenly become interesting again to a lot of people. The Timberwolves have an exciting, creative top draft pick in Anthony Edwards to go along with the talented Karl-Anthony Towns and other new names. It's a young team and the players will need to stay healthy to keep our interest level up, but there are reasons to be hopeful.

The same is true with the Gopher men's basketball team. As have several other top college programs around the country, the Gophers have added four good players who started college elsewhere and transferred here. In a three-day span, Minnesota recorded impressive wins over nationally ranked Iowa and Michigan State. In the absence of fans in the stands

at Williams Arena, Twitter and Facebook exploded with joy.

The dawn of a new year means one other thing: Spring training for Major League Baseball isn't that far away. The Twins' first exhibition game is scheduled for February 27. The season opener is set for April 1 and the return to Target Field will be a week later. Television will carry us through until we can go back to the ballpark in person.

Granted, we don't yet know about the makeup of the roster. As this is being written, there are notable unsigned players who've been stalwarts in recent seasons, such as Nelson Cruz. There are also a slew of interesting free agent types who, for the right price, would love to spend the summer here.

As has been the case since 1993, there will be pro baseball in Saint Paul again as well. However, 2021 will be a radical change from the past. As was noted in the last issue of the *Villager*, the Saints have abandoned their renegade days and joined the system as the Twins' top minor league affiliate.

It may take a while to grasp how much this changes things downtown. For one thing, Triple-A teams start in April and play until Labor Day. Thus, there'll be some chilly game days at CHS Field.

Then too, the parent club pulls all the strings when it comes to personnel. The good news is that fans may be able to see future Twins stars play for 10 bucks or less. The bad news is that the big league club can move anybody it wants at anytime it wants. Hence, some players can be here one day and be exchanged for somebody from the Double-A club the next. Winning is nice, but developing players is the name of the new game.

Some tricky negotiations will be required regarding how much access prep, college and amateur teams will now have to CHS Field. The fact is, this is a new world for a lot of folks.

The businesses near CHS will also find themselves adjusting to a new world—one that might help make up for some of the financial losses they endured by the pandemic.

But sports is all about hope. For fans, the wish is always that next year will be better than last one. After what we went through in 2020, that hope will be more fervent than ever.

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

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exclusive rights to that name. The filing is required for consumer protection in order to enable consumers to be able to identify the true owner of a business. 1. List the exact assumed name under which the business is or will be conducted: Times Of Our Lives 2. List the Principal Place of Business: 1531 West Idaho Avenue Falcon Heights MN 55108 USA3. List the name and complete street address of all persons conducting business under the above Assumed Name, OR if an entity, provide the legal corporate, LLC, or Limited Partnership name and registered office address: Times Of Our Lives, LLC; 1531 West Idaho Avenue Falcon Heights MN 55108 USA4. I, the undersigned, certify that I am signing this document as the person whose signature is required, or as agent of the person(s) whose signature would be required who has authorized me to sign this document on his/her behalf, or in both capacities. I further certify that I have completed all required fields, and that the information in this document is true and correct and in compliance with the applicable chapter of Minnesota Statutes. I understand that by signing this document I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Section 609.48 as if I had signed this document under oath. Date filed: December 16, 2020. Signed by: Matthew J. McClenahan Mailing Address: None Provided Email for Official Notices: jangibsonalbot@gmail.com

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STATE OF MINNESOTA CERTIFICATE OF ASSUMED NAME, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 333. The filing of an assumed name does not provide a user with exclusive rights to that name. The filing is required for consumer protection in order to enable consumers to be able to identify the true owner of a business. 1. List the exact assumed name under which the business is or will be conducted: Human Resources Executive Council 2. List the Principal Place of Business: 1890 Portland Ave St. Paul MN 55104 USA 3. List the name and complete street address of all persons conducting business under the above Assumed Name, OR if an entity, provide the legal corporate, LLC, or Limited Partnership name and registered office address: Anne Obst; 1890 Portland Ave St Paul MN 55104 USA 4. I, the undersigned, certify that I am signing this document as the person whose signature is required, or as agent of the person(s) whose signature would be required who has authorized me to sign this document on his/her behalf, or in both capacities. I further certify that I have completed all required fields, and that the information in this document is true and correct and in compliance with the applicable chapter of Minnesota Statutes. I understand that by signing this document I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Section 609.48 as if I had signed this document under oath. Date filed: December 1, 2020 Mailing Address: 1890 Portland Ave St Paul MN 55104 Email for Official Notices: obstx011@umn.edu

STATE OF MINNESOTA CERTIFICATE OF ASSUMED NAME, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 333. The filing of an assumed name does not provide a user with exclusive rights to that name. The filing is required for consumer protection in order to enable consumers to be able to identify the true owner of a business. 1. List the exact assumed name under which the business is or will be conducted: La Garderie French Immersion Childcare 2. List the Principal Place of Business: 1319 Minnehaha Ave W Saint Paul MN 55104 USA 3. List the name and complete street address of all persons conducting business under

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the above Assumed Name, OR if an entity, provide the legal corporate, LLC, or Limited Partnership name and registered office address: Rachelle N Gasho; 1319 Minnehaha Ave W Saint Paul MN 55104 USA 4. I, the undersigned, certify that I am signing this document as the person whose signature is required, or as agent of the person(s) whose signature would be required who has authorized me to sign this document on his/her behalf, or in both capacities. I further certify that I have completed all required fields, and that the information in this document is true and correct and in compliance with the applicable chapter of Minnesota Statutes. I understand that by signing this document I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Section 609.48 as if I had signed this document under oath. Date filed: December 28, 2020. Signed by: Rachelle Gasho MAILING ADDRESS: 1319 Minnehaha Ave W Saint Paul MN 55104 EMAIL FOR OFFICIAL NOTICES: rachellepoubelle@yahoo.fr

STATE OF MINNESOTA
 COUNTY OF RAMSEY
 SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT
 DISTRICT COURT
 PROBATE DIVISION
 Court File No. 62-PR-20-855
 Estate of Terence James Hislop, aka Terry Hislop, Decedent
 NOTICE OF INFORMAL APPOINTMENT OF PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE AND NOTICE TO CREDITORS (INTESTATE)
 Notice is given that an application for informal appointment of personal representative has been filed with the Registrar. No will has been presented for probate. The application has been granted.
 Notice is also given that the Registrar has informally appointed Lynda Joy Hislop, whose address is 4609 East Via Estrella, Phoenix, Arizona,

LEGAL NOTICES

85028, as personal representative of the Estate of the Decedent. Any heir or other interested person may be entitled to appointment as personal representative or may object to the appointment of the personal representative. Unless objections are filed with the Court (pursuant to Minnesota Statutes section 524.3-607) and the Court otherwise orders, the personal representative has full power to administer the Estate including, after 30 days from the date of issuance of letters, the power to sell, encumber, lease or distribute real estate.

Any objections to the appointment of the Personal Representative must be filed with this Court and will be heard by the Court after the filing of an appropriate petition and proper notice of hearing.

Notice is also given that (subject to Minnesota Statutes section 524.3-801) all creditors having claims against the Estate are required to present the claims to the personal representative or to the Court Administrator within four months after the date of this Notice or the claims will be barred.

Dated: December 14, 2020
 Registrar: Laura J. Stevens
 Dated: December 14, 2020
 Court Administrator: Michael F. Upton
 Filed in District Court
 State of MN 12/14/2020 2:21 PM
 Attorney for Personal Representative Don Paul Cochran
 Don Paul Cochran, Attorney at Law
 14375 Ebony Lane
 Apple Valley, MN, 55124
 Attorney License No: 0171773
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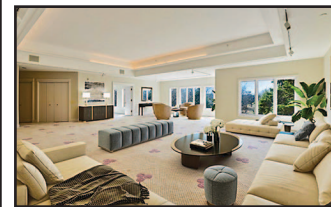
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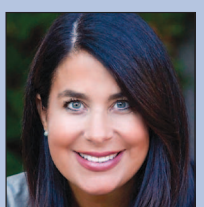


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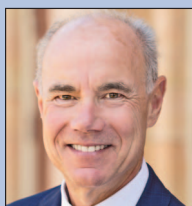
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