

Council OKs concept for housing complex along Lilydale bluffs

Apartments, townhouses eyed for long-shuttered Hwy. 13 site

BY FRANK JOSSI

Once home to the Moose Country restaurant and several small shops along Highway 13, the long-vacant River Bluffs Center in Lilydale may find a second life as a new apartment and townhouse complex called the Lilia.

In January, the Lilydale City Council approved a concept developed by Golden Valley-based Bigos Management to construct a five-story, 126-unit apartment building and four-story, 11-unit townhouse building on the 5.7-acre site. The planned unit development (PUD) will have the apartments on the southern end and the townhouses on the narrower northern end.

Designed by ESG, the buildings would be separated by a vehicular entrance and outdoor courtyard. Covered and surface parking would be located behind the buildings. Because of the lot's narrow configuration, both buildings would face Highway 13.

Bigos Management described the development as "an upscale apartment community." Since 1997, the company has owned and operated the Riverwood apartments on Highway 13 in Lilydale, just south of I-35E. Founded in 1981, the company manages around 9,500 apartments in more than 45 properties throughout the metropolitan area, including Galtier Towers, Lowertown Lofts

RIVER BLUFFS CENTER ▶2



Precarious pachyderm. Austin Greenleaf works on "The Circus," which placed second in the multi-block category in the 2022 Saint Paul Winter Carnival ice carving competition in Rice Park. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

City considers ways to allow more homes on single-family lots

Changes aim to increase stock of duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes

BY JANE MCCLURE

A new strategy to address Saint Paul's housing shortage by making it easier for property owners to add one- to four-unit dwellings in single-family neighborhoods attracted more than 50 people to a virtual meeting on February 1. Hosted by the city's Department of Planning and Economic Development, the Macalester-Groveland Community Council and the Highland District Council, it was the first in a series of public meetings to gather comments on proposed changes to the city's zoning code.

The zoning changes will be drafted this spring and summer before being released for public comment. The city's goal is to see the new provisions adopted by the City Council before the end of the year following a review and recommendation by the Saint Paul Planning Commission.

The city's intent is to promote new housing that is similar in scale to single-family housing, according to Emma Siegworth, the lead city planner for the zoning study. That includes duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, detached single-family homes, attached single-family homes such as townhomes and twin homes, accessory dwellings and cluster or cottage developments.

This is the second phase of an effort to ease the restrictions in single-family zones. Last month, the City Council approved a package of zoning changes that make it easier to add accessory dwellings on a single-family lot, to construct smaller and narrower houses, and to build houses closer to the property line. Registered stu-

NEIGHBORHOOD-SCALE HOUSING ▶4

Downtown venues hanging on in hopes of return to normal

Restaurants make do for now, but are banking on end to fears of COVID

BY CAROLYN WALKUP

Downtown Saint Paul restaurants and entertainment venues have been devastated by the pandemic. Patrons have shied away from indoor dining and large crowds during successive

surges of COVID-19, and thousands of downtown employees have vacated their offices to work from home. Almost two years into the pandemic, an estimated 55 to 60 percent of downtown office workers have yet to return, according to Joe Spencer, president of the Saint Paul Downtown Alliance.

There are glimmers of hope, however. The recent Winter Carnival brought crowds of people downtown. Valentine's Day promotions are right around the corner. And based on conversations with several major employers, Spencer is predicting

a widespread return of downtown office workers within the next few months.

"Downtown business districts face a real challenge if they rely on foot traffic," said Ben Wogsland of Hospitality Minnesota. A recent survey by the trade association showed that 52 percent of food service operators statewide are projecting much lower revenue this winter compared to prepandemic times.

Several downtown restaurateurs reported revenue declines of 30 to 80 percent at various times during the pandemic. Tim

Mahoney, owner of the Loon Cafe in downtown Saint Paul and downtown Minneapolis, said his restaurant does well when events are happening at nearby Xcel Energy Center, Palace and Ordway theaters, the Amsterdam Bar and kj's hideaway. During Winter Carnival, "many people noted how nice it was to see people out and about downtown," Mahoney said. The hard part, according to him, was having to hire additional staff to check for proof of COVID vac-

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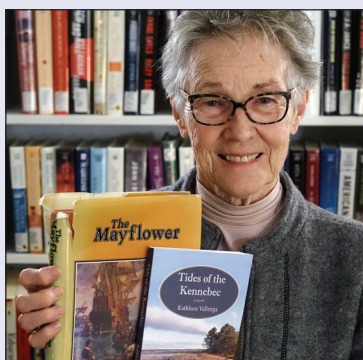
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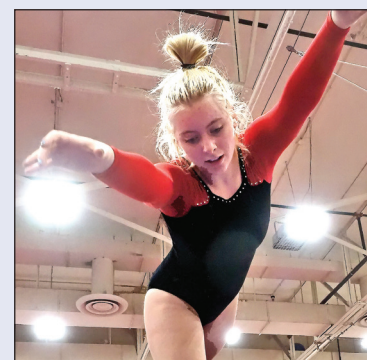
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Mendota Council OKs scaled-back plan for new Plaza apartments

BY CASEY EK

At Home Apartments' plan for a new 79-unit apartment building on the south side of Mendota Plaza was approved on February 2 by the Mendota Heights City Council.

Following an hours-long discussion and the testimony of a dozen residents opposed to the plan, Mayor Stephanie Levine and council members Joel Paper and John Mazzitello voted in favor of the development, Jay Miller voted against it, and Ultan Duggan was absent.

The new building is the third and final phase of a housing development by At Home in Mendota Plaza, which is located just southeast of the intersection of Highway 62 and Dodd Road. The development includes the 139-unit Reserve that opened in 2018 and a 58-unit building approved by the City Council in November.

The latest project is slightly smaller than the 89-unit building At Home had presented to the City Council last November. The developer agreed to modify the four-story building following conversations with a City Council work group chaired by Mazzitello and Duggan.

In addition to reducing the number of



At Home Apartments' plan for a new 79-unit apartment building on the south side of Mendota Plaza.

units, At Home agreed to reduce the height of the building, incorporate more open space around the building and shift the building to the east to allow for a larger, 25-foot setback from a private driveway.

At a December meeting, Mendota Heights residents had asked for a height of three stories and no more than 60 apartments. At Home indicated that would not be feasible. Instead, the developer will step back portions of the fourth floor to reduce the building's mass.

With fewer units, the average size of the apartments will increase. The smallest units will average 737 square feet, and the

largest will average 1,179 square feet.

Among those who opposed the plan was Planning Commission vice chair Sally Lorberbaum, who asked the council to return the revised plan to the commission or deny it altogether, stating that it was "not quite right."

Others opposed to the plan were concerned about increased traffic on Dodd Road, where backups are frequent during rush hour and left turns onto Highway 62 can mean long waits for motorists. "It's going to clog up Mendota Heights," one speaker said of the apartment project.

Traffic congestion was a frequent com-

plaint in the discussions leading up to the February 2 vote as was the approval of the 58-unit building in November. However, since the state of Minnesota owns and manages Highway 62, Mendota Heights officials do not have the authority to make any changes at the intersection with Dodd Road that would mitigate traffic. The city recently formed a committee to collaborate with state and Dakota County officials on a possible solution to the traffic problems. In any case, Levine said, traffic congestion at the intersection has been a long-standing problem and it is not one that the developers should have to solve.

Leanna Stefaniak, At Home's president of real estate and a Mendota Heights resident, described the new housing as "smart planning." The apartments will be marketed to young professionals, she said, a population that is not prevalent in Mendota Heights, which has a median age of 51.2 years.

Howard Paster of Paster Properties, which owns and manages Mendota Plaza, said that with the construction of the 58- and 79-unit buildings, the city has a chance to "realize a vision" for downtown Mendota Heights. "We have the ability to showcase what Mendota Heights is and what we can become in the future," he said.

1 RIVER BLUFFS CENTER

and Kellogg Square in Saint Paul.

River Bluffs Center has seen development proposals come and go since closing in 2018. Property owners Joe and Linda Schaefer shuttered Moose Country and vacated the tenants in the adjoining shopping center after announcing they would sell the property to a senior housing company. When that fell through, Opus Group stepped in with plans for a five-story senior housing complex. Opus pulled out in May 2021, citing complexities in building on the site.

Lilydale Mayor Warren Peterson hopes the third time is the charm. The site has been difficult for developers because of its narrow depth and setback requirements from the river bluff and Highway 13.

"We're glad they're coming in," Peterson said about Bigos. "It's a difficult piece of property to develop and I think this is a plan that works. It's great."

The council will approve a final plan for the site at a later meeting. Bigos also is seeking tax increment financing (TIF) to



A five-story, 126-unit apartment building (shown) and four-story, 11-unit townhouse building are being proposed on the 5.7-acre site of the vacant River Bluffs Center along Highway 13 in Lilydale.

help pay for improvements to the property. Opus also had asked for TIF because of the property's challenges.

Peterson said the new apartments would have tuck-under parking that roughly adds another story to the project. That is necessary since bedrock on the site makes an underground garage prohibitively expensive.

A PUD allows for a slightly taller building than Lilydale's zoning code allows in return for more density. The apartment

building, including the parking, will be 57 feet tall, or 7 feet above the city's height limit. The townhouses will be 43 feet tall.

Despite the added height, planning commissioner and council liaison John Diehl said the apartment building would only rise slightly above the tree line. "You'll see the top of the roof. It's not like a 20-story building," he said.

The shopping center has sat vacant for nearly four years and city staff said it has

become a blighted fire hazard that should be demolished. "This property needs to be redeveloped. There's no doubt about that," Diehl said.

Water runoff from the site heads down the bluff and into the Mississippi River, he added, an issue Bigos will solve with holding ponds and storm sewers. "They've got this design so that there's going to be no runoff toward the bluff," Diehl said. "That's huge."

Dan Petrik, a land use specialist with the state Department of Natural Resources, agreed with Diehl that the building's height will have a minimal impact on the property, which sits within the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area. Compared to other proposed developments for the site, this one moves buildings back from the bluff and has fewer impervious surfaces.

The developer made modifications to the project based on comments from the DNR, Friends of the Mississippi River and National Park Service, according to Petrik. "Certainly, this current project is a definite improvement over prior proposals for the site," he said.





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1- DOWNTOWN VENUES

cinations or negative tests, now required by the city for entry into all restaurants with liquor licenses.

The Loon Cafe has been holding a cross-promotion this winter with kj's hideaway and the Pillbox Tavern to draw attention to the area. CynCity Tours is participating by offering tours of the historic Hamm Building, which houses kj's and the Loon. Pillbox, which opened just as COVID broke out in March 2020, is offering a free appetizer with an entrée purchase and a ticket stub from a show at kj's hideaway.

Business has been best when there are events downtown, according to Pillbox general manager Matt Bakke, but the sports bar is also seeing some improvement in its weekday lunch business.

Kristen Siers and her husband opened kj's hideaway last September in the space vacated in June 2019 by the jazz club Vieux Carré. Business has been a challenge, she admitted, with frequent cancellations by bands when members contract COVID. "We're now working on having local bands in reserve in case of last-minute cancellations," she said.

The Saint Paul Hotel and its Saint Paul Grill have adapted to the new environment downtown by becoming more of a leisure destination, according to Richard Dobransky, president of Morrissey Hospitality, which manages the hotel and restaurant. Weekend occupancy at the hotel has been averaging between 75 and 80 percent, he said. Weekday occupancy is averaging 30 percent, down from 70 percent before the pandemic, he added.

Downtown restaurants that have relied on lunch and breakfast traffic have been especially hard hit. Sales have fallen 40 percent since 2019 at the Skyway Grill, according to owner Scott Johnson. The Skyway Grill is one of five food outlets still operating in the Alliance Bank Center's 11-space food court. "October through December were way off," Johnson said. "I'm hoping February will be better."

The Buttered Tin has seen its revenue decline about 35 percent from 2019, according to owner Alicia Hinze. The vaccine mandate imposed by Mayor Melvin Carter on January 19 has further curtailed her weekend breakfast business. "Some people don't want to have to show a medical card



Patrons enjoy a quiet lunch on January 29 at Saint Dinette.

to dine, even if they are vaccinated," Hinze said. "If their kids haven't taken the (COVID-19) test within 72 hours, they go to the suburbs." Hinze is hoping her Valentine's Day specials will bring in more business. Meanwhile, she continues to promote the takeout of her bakery items and full breakfasts.

Keys Cafe owner Carol Gregory said she is particularly dismayed by the vaccine mandate. Her sales are off by 50 percent. "The cities have destroyed both downtowns in Saint Paul and Minneapolis," Gregory said. "This is the worst I've seen in 33 years in business."

The vaccine mandate has not been a deterrent for patrons at Meritage. "We've had no pushback on masks or proof of vaccination," said Marguerite Mingus, assistant director of operations. To cope with the pandemic, Meritage shortened its operations from six days per week to Thursdays through Sundays. "We've reinvented ourselves and pared down our staff and seating to 80 percent of normal," Mingus said. Reservations at Meritage for Valentine's Day and the weekend before were sold out almost two weeks in advance, she added.

Saint Dinette, which is normally closed on Mondays, will be open on Valentine's Day with a special menu. "We're looking forward to people seeing that they can go downtown and not get sick," said owner Tim Nivens. "What business will we get back? It's hard to forecast. I'm still in austerity mode and have battened down the hatches."

Across the street from Saint Dinette, the brewpub MetroNOME is scheduled to open soon in the space formerly occupied by Birch's Lowertown Taproom. "We weren't targeting downtown, but we found this ideal space right next to the Farmers' Market and CHS Field," said co-owner Matt Engstrom.

Engstrom and partner Bill Eddins, a former conductor of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, are planning to offer live jazz music and hope to hire some of the artists who performed at the now defunct Black Dog Cafe.

Other signs of new life are cropping up downtown. Madison Restaurant Group recently reopened the Gray Duck Tavern with a more casual atmosphere and more moderately priced menu. Morrissey Hospitality is preparing to open a new restaurant in a portion of the former Pazzaluna space in early March, according to Dobransky. And the new Courtyard by Marriott hotel is scheduled to open this spring with an upscale supper club across from Xcel Energy Center.



Matt Engstrom poses for posterity while preparing for the opening of MetroNOME, his new brewpub in downtown Saint Paul's Lowertown.

PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

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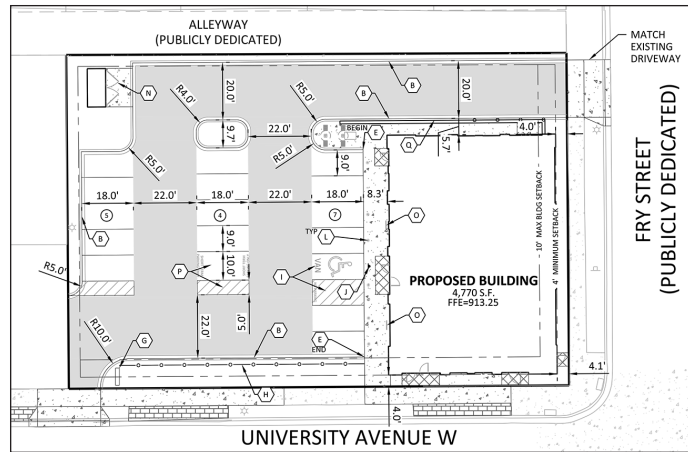
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The site plan for the proposed Tumble Fresh laundromat on the north-west corner of University Avenue and Fry Street.

Laundromat denied University site BZA decides laundry isn't transit-friendly enough

By JANE MCCLURE

Variations for a proposed "luxury" laundromat at 1647 University Ave. were rejected on January 24 by the Saint Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) because of the property's zoning, which calls for developments that are more compatible with mass transit and walking.

Woodbury-based Linn Diversified Properties wants to tear down a longtime restaurant building and replace it with Tumble Fresh, one of a chain of laundromats in the Twin Cities. The current tenant at 1647 University is J.J. Fish & Chicken, but the building was a Burger King for many years.

BZA member Diane Trout-Oertel said she appreciates that the laundromat could be a local amenity, but she and other members said the business would not promote transit use nor a walkable neighborhood, which is what city land use plans and the Traditional Neighborhoods 3 zoning call for. Most of University Avenue was rezoned for that purpose about a decade ago to encourage higher-density development along the light-rail Green Line.

The site plan for the laundromat at 1647 University project had been approved by city staff before it was determined that two zoning variances were needed. Staff recommended denying the variances.

The variances are for floor area ratio and

parking. Floor area ratio is the building's total floor area divided by the size of the lot on which it is built. A floor area ratio of 0.213 is proposed; a minimum of 0.5 is required. The developer also sought 103.5 feet of parking lot frontage along University; the maximum allowable parking lot frontage is 60 feet.

The laundromat was designed to give the appearance of a taller, two-story building, according to Brady Busselman, a civil engineer with Sambatek, the engineering and planning firm working on the project. The building would be placed at the corner of University and Fry Street. The parking lot to its west would be fenced and landscaped. Grade changes make it difficult to put the parking lot on the alley side of the building, Busselman said.

At 4,770 square feet, the proposed building would be more than double the size of the one-story, 2,286-square-foot building it would replace, according to Busselman. To meet the minimum floor area ratio would require a building with 11,000 square feet of floor area, which in a single story would not allow room for parking, sidewalks, landscaping and stormwater management, he said.

"We do feel that this is a fit under the city's comprehensive plan," Busselman said. A laundromat is allowed under the property's zoning, he added.

14 NEIGHBORHOOD-SCALE HOUSING

dent dwellings near the University of Saint Thomas campus in Merriam Park and Macalester-Groveland may now house up to six residents rather than just four.

The additional housing is needed to accommodate the city's growing population, according to city officials. In 2019, rental vacancy rates averaged 4.4 percent, which is below the 5 percent minimum vacancy rate considered to be a healthy rental market, according to Siegworth. A low vacancy rate tends to drive rental costs up, and about 47 percent of the people renting homes in Saint Paul spend 30 percent or more of their household income on rent. Thirty percent is the threshold for what economists consider "cost-burdened."

Another factor in the desire for new housing options is the 64 percent of Saint Paul households that include just one or two individuals. A large single-family home may not be the best option for these households, Siegworth said. City officials would also like to promote new ways for several generations in the same family to share housing.

Single-family homes make up about 54 percent of the city's housing stock. Multifamily buildings with five or more units make up another 35 percent. Duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes make up the remaining 11 percent.

One concern for city planners is the declining number of duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes in Saint Paul. From 2000-2017, the number of duplexes in the city decreased by 17 percent and the number

of triplexes and fourplexes decreased by 11 percent. City staff are not sure why. In some instances, especially in Merriam Park, Snelling-Hamline and Macalester-Groveland, these smaller rental buildings have been torn down to make way for large apartment buildings.

Building new duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes can be difficult under current zoning regulations, which is why the changes are being sought. The zoning of 48 percent of the real estate in Saint Paul does not allow new duplexes, triplexes or fourplexes.

The people taking part in the February 1 meeting were generally in support of the addition of new housing in single-family zones and changing longstanding city regulations to do so. Much interest was shown in converting large single-family homes to more than one dwelling. Another popular sentiment was to ensure that neighborhoods did not lose their feeling of openness by sacrificing green space or filling yards with new building from lot line to lot line.

Two more public meetings on the issue are scheduled, both of them virtual. The first session from 6:30-8 p.m. Thursday, February 10, will be hosted by the Hamline-Midway Coalition, Como Community Council and North End Neighborhood Organization. The second meeting from 6:30-8 p.m. Wednesday, March 2, will be hosted by the Dayton's Bluff Community Council.

To register for the meeting links, visit engagstpaul.org/1to4housingstudy. Additional information and a survey on the proposed changes may also be found at that website.

Affordable senior housing project in Highland gets tax credits

By JANE McCLURE

Plans for a 36-unit apartment building for low-income seniors took a big step forward on January 26 with the approval of \$831,754 in Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. The Saint Paul City Council, acting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) Board, granted the credits to developer Trellis for its Treehouse project near West Seventh Street and Saint Paul Avenue.

"It'll be a great addition to the community," said Ward 3 City Council member Chris Tolbert, who chairs the HRA Board. He cited the apartments' proximity to the Highland Chateau senior housing and transitional care facility, the Jewish Community Center, mass transit and Sibley Plaza.

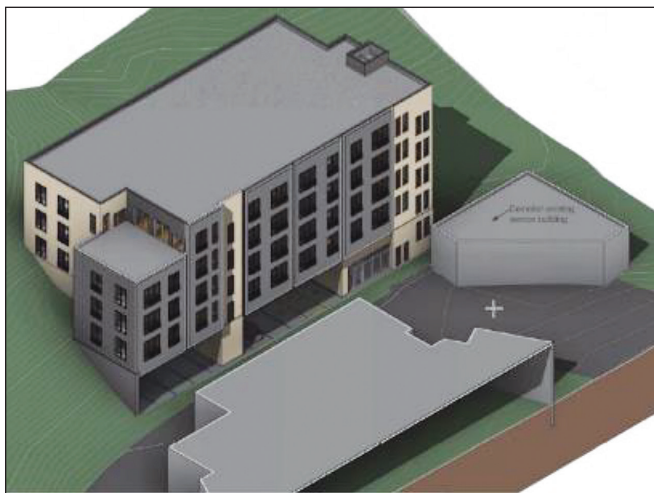
Trellis' plans call for 15 efficiency apartments affordable to residents at 30 percent of the Twin Cities' area median income (AMI), 12 one-bedroom units affordable to residents at 30 percent of the AMI, and nine one-bedroom units affordable to residents at 50 percent of the AMI. Seven of the apartments would be reserved for seniors

who have been homeless.

The AMI is currently \$104,900 for a family of four. Thirty percent of the AMI ranges from \$22,050 for an individual to \$31,450 for a family of four. Fifty percent of the AMI is \$36,750 for an individual and \$52,450 for a family of four.

Treehouse would be built into the slope behind Highland Chateau, 2319 West Seventh St. It would have four stories of housing above one level of parking. Highland Chateau owner Health Dimensions Group is a partner in the project, as is Catholic Charities. Treehouse residents would be able to take advantage of meals and other services at Highland Chateau.

Trellis was formed recently through the merger of the Community Housing Development Corporation and BDC Manage-



The five-story Treehouse with 36 units of affordable housing for seniors would be built into the hill above the Highland Chateau senior housing facility on West Seventh Street and Saint Paul Avenue.

ment. The corporation has two arms, Trellis Company and Trellis Management. It oversees about 50 housing developments across Minnesota with a total of about 4,500 units.

Trellis had requested \$1.25 million in tax credits for the Treehouse project. Last year

the \$12.79 million project was awarded \$550,000 in city HOME program funds. If all goes as planned, construction would begin this year, according to Dan Walsh of Trellis.

Treehouse was one of two projects vying for the Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. The other was the renovation of Mary Hall at 438 Dorothy Day Place in downtown Saint Paul. City staff ranked the Treehouse project slightly higher. One factor in Treehouse's favor was the support of the Highland District Council. Another was its focus on senior housing.

Minneapolis-based Aeon is proposing to rehabilitate the 88-unit Mary Hall at a cost of \$21.02 million. Its request for \$1.34 million in tax credits is still under consideration by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, according to Tolbert.

Built in 1925 as a dormitory for nurses at nearby Saint Joseph's Hospital, Mary Hall was operated by Catholic Charities in recent years as single-room housing. It has also been used as respite housing for people who are homeless and ill with COVID-19.

Remodeling of historic Casket Co. building in Lex-Ham moves ahead

By JANE McCLURE

The former Saint Paul Casket Company building, 1222 University Ave., could house 55 apartments if plans unveiled by developer JB Vang come to fruition. The Union Park District Council (UPDC) approved a letter of support for the project on February 2, following a January 24 recommendation of approval from its land use committee.

If financing falls into place, work on the building could start later this year and be completed in the spring of 2023.

District council support could help with funding applications, including Low Income Housing Tax Credits for historic buildings. Early last year, the building was named to the National Register of Historic Places. It also won support from the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission and state Historic Preservation Office.

Jackson Cruikshank and Justin Fincher of Hamline-Midway-based JB Vang have spent several months looking at ways to reuse the four-story structure, which features a 104-foot-tall central tower. Plans call for a mix of 55 one- and two-bedroom apartments, plus common spaces.

The developers are looking to set rents for some units at 30 percent of the Twin Cities Area Median Income (AMI) and some at 60 percent. Cruikshank said neither the final housing mix nor the rents have been finalized.

The most recent AMI was \$104,900 for a family of four, which drops to \$31,450 at 30 percent and \$62,940 at 60 percent.

"I think everyone is excited to see something neat happen with that building," said UPDC land use committee co-chair Dean Cummings.

"It's been sitting with a fence around it, looking like an aban-



The central tower of the former Saint Paul Casket Company building at 1222 University Ave.

doned building," said committee member Roger Meyer.

The developers plan to retain the building's distinctive lattice window details and restore the steel-sash windows. The stucco will have to be repaired in plac-

es and the tower's iconic clock will also have to be restored. The tower was built to house a water tank.

Garage doors on the Griggs Street side of the former warehouse and showroom will be turned into windows that preserve the appearance of the original openings.

Though the building has some large windows, the developers said interior bedrooms will have to be designed to provide more natural lighting.

The developers plan to keep a surface lot behind the building that will provide 55-60 residential parking spaces. Plans call for the lot and grounds to be landscaped and improved. No zoning changes or variances are anticipated. The property is zoned for Traditional Neighborhoods 2.

The building's original occupant was the North Saint Paul Casket Company. The company

moved to Saint Paul and changed its name in 1923.

The concrete and stucco building was erected in 1922-23 and designed with "modern gothic" details by the Saint Paul architectural firm of Allen H. Stem. It cost \$150,000 to build (about \$2.5 million in today's dollars), according to the National Register application. It is considered an example of a vertical manufacturing building, with different floors used for various phases of casket manufacturing.

The building housed a variety of commercial functions after the casket company moved out in 1951. For the next decade or so, it was the office and warehouse for the Snyder Drug Stores chain. The building sat vacant from 1962 until the 1970s. Cheapo Records later used the building as a warehouse and operated the Landfill Books & Music store there for several years.

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Saint Paul removes 3.2 beer limit in designated city parks

By JANE MCCLURE

The Saint Paul City Council voted unanimously on January 26 to remove longstanding regulations that allowed only 3.2 beer to be consumed in designated city parks.

The change, which was discussed during a public hearing on January 19 and drew no discernible opposition, will allow the consumption of beverages with up to 5.5 percent alcohol in the parks. That includes seltzers, prepackaged drinks and wine coolers as well as beer. It also is expected to make enforcement easier for park security and police.

Anyone wanting to imbibe stronger alcoholic beverages, such as liquor and wine, would still have to obtain a temporary liquor license from the city's Department



Hard seltzers, prepackaged drinks, wine coolers and beer with up to 5.5 percent alcohol will be allowed in designated Saint Paul parks.

ment of Safety and Inspections.

The previous ordinance stated that no consumption of alcoholic beverages stronger than 3.2 percent alcohol by weight is permitted in any city park without an approved temporary liquor license. Mike Hahm, director of the city's Department

Parks and Recreation, called that regulation "obsolete."

"The change will make it easier on our customers and easier on those who enforce the rules," Hahm said. He noted that it is increasingly difficult to even find 3.2 beer.

Other rules involving alcohol in the city's parks will not change. Alcohol can only be consumed between 8 a.m.-8 p.m. at designated parks and picnic areas. Those include Cherokee Park, Como Park, Harriet Island Park, Raspberry Island, Upper Landing Park, City House, Highland Park, Phalen Park, the Rice-Arlington and McMurray athletic complexes, and Dunning Field. Consumption of alcohol in other parks is not allowed.

City parks spokesperson Clare Cloyd said that the city typically gets fewer than 20 temporary liquor license requests per

year to serve or sell alcohol above the current 3.2 limit for small-scale events. The city also sees fewer than 20 liquor license requests for large-scale events, such as the Irish Fair of Minnesota and Saint Paul Winter Carnival.

The sale of 3.2 beer is a relic of the Prohibition Era (1929-33) when alcohol was banned in the United States. For nine months in 1933 as Prohibition was being repealed, it was the highest alcohol content beer allowed to be produced legally.

By 2019, only Minnesota and Utah still banned grocery and convenience stores to sell anything stronger than 3.2 beer. Utah dropped its 3.2 restrictions in 2020, leaving Minnesota as the last state in the country where 3.2 beer is sold. Many breweries have discontinued production of 3.2 beer because of low consumer demand.

UST can serve liquor at more spots on campus, with conditions

By JANE MCCLURE

The University of Saint Thomas will be able to serve alcohol at several additional locations on its Saint Paul campus with the City Council's approval of an amended liquor license on January 26. The new locations include the north athletic fields at Cretin and Selby avenues, Palmer Field at O'Shaughnessy Stadium, the new Tommie East and North residence halls, and the new Iverson Center for Faith.

The five new locations were more than some neighbors would have liked. And the 11 conditions placed on the expanded license by a city legislative hearing officer are two more than city staff originally proposed almost a year ago.

City staff had recommended approval of the liquor license conditions that included limiting the sale of alcoholic beverages at outdoor events with more than 150 attendees to six locations on campus. Other conditions require UST to ensure that the consumption of alcohol stays in those service areas, bans the creation of a permanent bar on campus, and requires training for anyone providing alcohol beverages.

The university also must have procedures in place to make sure alcohol is not served to anyone under age 21, and limit liquor sales to between 10 a.m. and midnight.

City and university officials review the liquor license each year. No problems at events where liquor has been served in the

past have been reported.

The conditions added by city legislative hearing officer Nhia Vang call for UST to position trash receptacles at each exit of events drawing more than 150 people. The university also must control access to and from each service area so no one comes in or leaves with open containers of alcohol.

Five neighbors filed objections to the license expansion, which sent the matter to Vang last November.

The university's first city liquor license was approved in January 2012. At that time, 15 indoor and three outdoor locations were granted. UST associate vice president of auxiliary services Mitchell Karstens said the expanded locations were sought this year because of the addition of new facili-

ties on campus over the past decade.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, UST had about 250 events each year where alcohol was served. Most of those events involved 50 or fewer people. Around 50 draw 150 people or more. Karstens said that most of those are donor and alumni events.

Neighbors said it is larger events that raise red flags due to the potential for alcohol abuse, trash and nuisance behavior. A few neighbors brought up the university's recent jump to Division I athletics and questioned whether that would attract larger crowds.

Karstens said Saint Thomas has no plans to expand liquor use at any of the games. Some alcohol is served in VIP areas, but not in the stands.



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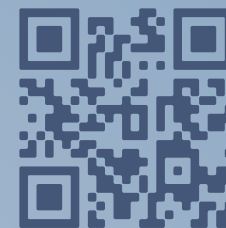
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News Briefs

Construction slated for \$1.4M multiuse field at Victoria Park

A \$1.4 million multiuse athletic field is expected to be built this construction season near the corner of Victoria Way and Adrian Street in Victoria Park. The West Seventh/Fort Road Federation Transportation and Land Use Committee got a chance to weigh in on the field's design features on February 2.

The synthetic turf field will be used for youth soccer, lacrosse and baseball. The project also includes restrooms and a picnic shelter on the field's northwest corner. Funding is being provided by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Twins and other sources.

Committee members liked what they saw for the most part, and favored having the picnic shelter and restroom facilities adjacent, but not attached. They also requested that a proposed brick oven be located near the new facilities. Additional design features discussed included a large periscope that would offer views of the Mississippi River Valley, a water feature and a play area.

City staff is working with Snow Kreilich Architects and Larson Engineering on the project. Comments from the committee will be incorporated into the final design.

The field, restrooms, shelter and other park features are included in a Victoria Park master plan that was adopted in 2013.

Bids for this year's work will be taken in the spring. The field project could also include features such as dugouts and lighting if the bids for the work are favorable.

More information about the project is available at tinyurl.com/2ppjeb23.

Evie Carshare makes Twin Cities debut with five charging stations

A long-awaited car-sharing program powered by renewable energy has been unveiled with the opening of five charging stations in Saint Paul and Minneapolis on February 2. The Twin Cities have spent many months working with HourCar and Xcel Energy on the Evie Carshare program, which is believed to be the first of its kind in the United States.

The \$12 million program will utilize 101 Chevy Bolt vehicles and will eventually have 70 charging stations, each with two dedicated parking spaces for personal vehicles and two for Evie Carshare. Eventually, the vehicle fleet will increase to 171.

The first two Saint Paul charging stations are at Sherburne and Dale streets, and Margaret and East Seventh streets. The other three are in Minneapolis.

The one-way car-sharing program allows users to end their trips by parking the vehicle on a street anywhere within a 35-mile home area. The vehicles will not have to be docked at charging stations, though credits will be offered to users who do.

The Evie Spot Network should be fully operational by the fall of 2022. By the time all 70 charging locations are activated, it will increase the number of public charging ports in the Twin Cities by 50 percent.

Users will have to sign up through HourCar using its hotline, website or an app to find available cars. Billing will be by the minute, but can be adjusted for longer trips. For more information, check out eviecarshare.com.

News Briefs were compiled by Jane McClure.

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VIEWPOINT

Possible removal of Twin Cities dams deserves more study

BY COLLEEN O'CONNOR TOBERMAN

In the 20th century, we made major public investments in the Twin Cities to transform the Mississippi River for commercial and industrial purposes. However, some of that old infrastructure is no longer useful, presenting an opportunity to re-imagine our relationship to the river.

Should we remove the dams? It's a big question with big implications. What we do here will affect the Twin Cities, all of the communities downstream, and may have an even larger ripple effect. Large-scale dam removal has never been done in a setting as urban as the Twin Cities. The Mississippi River's global prominence only adds to the significance of this potential opportunity and might inspire other communities to reconsider the future of their rivers, too.

There are three locks and dams in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. The first two are on either side of the Stone Arch Bridge in downtown Minneapolis. The Upper Saint Anthony Falls lock and dam is the uppermost navigation dam on the Mississippi. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers owns the lock, which has been closed to boat traffic since 2015 to reduce the spread of invasive carp. Just downstream is the Lower Saint Anthony Falls lock and dam. Eight miles further downstream is Lock and Dam No. 1, also known as the Ford dam. The Corps owns these lower two locks and dams and leases the hydropower generation rights for the dams.

These three structures were originally built to facilitate commercial shipping, but these days barges no longer travel through these locks. The Corps is studying the future of these locks and dams because they no longer fulfill their original purpose. They do support several important uses, including flood control, water supply management and hydropower generation, but they also fragment wildlife habitat and alter the river's natural flow.



Remove Lock and Dam No. 1 just downriver from the Ford Bridge, and instead of a stretch of flat water through the Mississippi River gorge (above), there could be whitewater rapids. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) believes the Corps should continue to own, maintain and manage the Upper Saint Anthony Falls lock. This lock and dam serve many essential functions. They manage the river's upstream water levels to provide reliable drinking water to 1 million Twin Cities residents, block the spread of invasive carp upstream and prevent the collapse of Saint Anthony Falls.

However, the Lower Saint Anthony Falls lock and dam and Lock and Dam No. 1 are prospective candidates for removal, which could reap major benefits. Removing these two dams would reconnect 39 miles of the Mississippi River and could restore the types of rapids and floodplain habitats upon which mussels, paddlefish and many other rare, threatened and endangered species rely. The river would also become shallower and have a faster flow, enhancing recreational activities from whitewater paddling to shoreline fishing.

Dam removal has potential drawbacks.

Costs to remove the structures and restore the river bottom would be significant. While new recreational opportunities could draw many users, some current flatwater activities such as rowing would need to move elsewhere. The Ford and Lower Saint Anthony Falls dams also generate hydropower, though at modest levels that would not be difficult to replace with other renewable energy sources.

Each of the three locks is undergoing a disposition study to help the Army Corps assess whether the structures should remain in place and, if so, who should own, maintain and operate them. The Corps is now finalizing the study for the Upper Saint Anthony Falls lock.

A draft study released in February 2021 proposed moving the Upper Saint Anthony Falls lock into private ownership, which would threaten the management of the Twin Cities water supply. This proposal received significant opposition from FMR, local government agencies, river and environmental groups, business leaders and residents. The final report on

the Upper Saint Anthony Falls study is anticipated in 2022. The Corps will then begin to study the Lower Saint Anthony Falls and Ford locks and dams. There will be multiple opportunities for the public to comment on the design and final conclusions of that study.

These studies are just the early steps in what will likely be a long process. Congressional authorization would be required for any significant changes to lock and dam ownership, modification or removal. Any of these outcomes could be costly. And a big step like dam removal may require further study and community engagement after the Corps' initial study process. Should the dams be slated for removal, it could be 10 or even 20 years before structural work begins.

The Mississippi River has been heavily altered to support human activity and industrial traffic. Removing dams will not return the river to its pre-industrial condition without extensive work to restore the shoreline and river bottoms, replace boulders removed from the channel and other work.

Dam removal is an intriguing possibility, but it needs more examination. We're eager to see a robust scientific review and community engagement process regarding the future of the two locks and dams with plenty of time for community members and other stakeholders to collaboratively raise questions, look at alternatives, examine evidence and seek solutions. It's time for us to think about the Mississippi River of the future, a river no longer bound by its industrial past. Together, we can chart a 21st-century course to protect and restore the Mississippi and all the communities and wildlife that depend on its health.

To learn more or to sign up for invites to upcoming tours and advocacy opportunities, visit fmr.org/metrodams.

Colleen O'Connor Toberman is the land use and planning director for Friends of the Mississippi River.

INBOX

Make public safety a priority

A woman on Osceola Avenue had to convince armed carjackers recently to allow her to get the toddler out of her car before they stole it. This event gave us pause to ask, "When is public safety going to get better?" There have been too many victims and stories. It is past due for our elected leaders to have a plan on how to address this woeful situation. While some say that the trends for homicides, thefts and carjackings are up across the country, we're not satisfied with that explanation for why we continue to experience inordinate amounts of crime in Saint Paul.

Our Ramsey Hill neighborhood felt the increased crime rate acutely in the spring of 2020. A spree of unrelated carjackings and robberies hit the blocks between Selby, Dale, Grand and Western avenues. Men and women were attacked for their cell phones, keys, wallets and cars while walking on our quiet blocks, getting in a car to run an errand or parking in their garage.

Recent news coverage has focused on platitudes and generalities from Mayor Melvin Carter, Ramsey County Attorney John Choi and the Ramsey County Board, pitting these officials against Sheriff Bob Fletcher, Police Chief Todd Axtell and the Saint Paul Police Department. We hear how COVID has shut down schools, leaving kids to their own devices, and how the closing of Totem Town has put juvenile offenders on the streets.

We have also been told that COVID has created a

backlog in the criminal justice system and dangerous environments in our jails and prisons, which has put repeat offenders of all ages back into our communities almost as quickly as they are caught. We've learned that violent crimes are prioritized over nonviolent crimes due to budget constraints, all while prosecutors are making it abundantly clear that many minor felonies will not be prosecuted at all.

There is no doubt that such initiatives as restorative justice, community ambassadors, data-driven crime prevention and crime prevention through environmental design are admirable, long-term tactics for strengthening the community. We don't forget that most of the crime we describe above has been endemic in less-privileged neighborhoods for decades. When will this sense of lawlessness go away for everyone? When are all the residents of Saint Paul, Ramsey County and the Twin Cities metro area going to feel safer? Little that elected officials and law enforcement officers are saying provides the public with hope of not being afraid to play at a playground, walk a dog, take out the trash or park a car.

We encourage our neighbors across the region to do the same two things that we have. First and most important, support Twin Cities organizations that work with young people. Second, contact local officials and ask them what their plan is to make public safety their priority.

*Cathy Maes, Jason Patalonis, Bryan Whitaker
Ramsey Hill*

Editor's note: The writers are the president, vice president and crime prevention chair, respectively, of the Ramsey Hill Association.

Cities' quality of life is slipping

The mayor of Saint Paul imposes mask and vaccine mandates on restaurants and public places and businesses licensed by the city. *MyVillager* publishes a sugary article on the vaccine mandate for restaurants and other entertainment venues, quoting only restaurants and patrons who think this is a peachy idea (*MyVillager*, January 26). But many establishments do not think this is a peachy idea, and these businesses are suffering.

During the COVID-19 shutdowns, so many people lost the life savings they invested in their shops and restaurants. Well, everyone I know is just going out to eat in a suburb or purchasing items on-line or in a suburb. I can go to an athletic event all around the country with no mask or vaccine, but not in Saint Paul. The mayor chooses once again to pick on the hospitality industry.

If the mayor and his henchmen actually did some research rather than reciting the mantra of the day, perhaps they could learn the truth. The vaccinated are spreading the disease. The vaccinated are filling up the hospitals. And a plethora of research has proven that masks do not work.

I have lived in the Twin Cities for 51 years and in Saint

City employees await judge's ruling on vaccine mandate

Carter administration declines to arbitrate 'managerial policy'

By JANE McCLURE

The city of Saint Paul's proposed COVID-19 vaccine mandate for its 4,000 employees has been put on hold at least until spring. That is when Ramsey County District Court Judge Robert Awsumb is scheduled to rule on a lawsuit filed last fall against the mandate by several unions representing city employees.

The vaccine mandate was to take effect at the end of 2021, with sanctions for employees who refuse to get vaccinated kicking in by mid-January. The Saint Paul police and firefighters unions and the Tri-Council of Public Works and Parks and Recreation department employees challenged

the policy because it did not include an option for weekly COVID testing. They also accused the city of engaging in unfair labor practices because it ended negotiations on a vaccine policy after they had been unable to reach agreement.

Awsumb asked the employee unions and city to resume negotiations over the mandate or agree to arbitration. The city declined in writing, saying it would not arbitrate nor negotiate what it considers "inherent managerial policy." Instead, city officials want the court to decide, to which the employee groups agreed.

Meanwhile, Ramsey County is preparing to impose sanctions on employees who are not in compliance with its COVID vaccine mandate beginning February 14. County employees who are not fully vaccinated or have not agreed to regular testing for COVID 19 could be suspended for five days.

Ramsey County has about 4,000 employees. As of late January, 84 percent were fully vaccinated and 11.5 percent had agreed to regular testing. Of the remainder, 182 are believed to be out of compliance, and 134 of those are in the Sheriff's Department.

"We're seeing a localized challenge of compliance at this point," said Ramsey County manager Ryan O'Connor on January 25, referring to the 33 percent of Sheriff's Department employees who are out of compliance.

The Ramsey County Sheriff's Office recently indicated that its employees are concerned about the confidentiality of their decision whether to get vaccinated or agree to weekly testing. That concern was also raised by the Ramsey County Deputies' Federation.

According to Ryan, county administrators continue to work with the Sheriff's Department on concerns they have about the mandate.

8< JUMP HEAD

Paul for 47 years. Many of us came to Saint Paul and invested in homes in the city while people were fleeing to the suburbs in the 1960s and '70s, and we have been rewarded with huge property tax increases. We are expected to ride our bikes or take a train or bus to get around. But our stores have been razed for the soccer stadium or left vacant due to crime, so we have to go to the burbs on our bicycles or a bus or a train.

We no longer have any department stores or even a Walmart. The city has removed 110-year-old houses and replaced them with ugly, cubist-style apartment buildings, losing the quaintness and charm of our city. Now we have to wear a face diaper and be vaccinated to shop or go out to eat.

I no longer have a reason to live or shop or eat in Saint Paul or Minneapolis. Keep this up and the cities will become ghost towns. So very sad. We should not have to spend our lives protecting ourselves from our elected officials' stupid ideas.

Nancy Hone
Merriam Park

summon a special session to get this done. Otherwise, our governor and any legislators seeking re-election are at risk of losing a lot of voter support in November.

Please, speak up regarding this taxing issue by contacting Governor Walz (651-201-3400), House Tax Committee chair Paul Marquart (651-296-6829), Senate Tax Committee chair Carla Nelson (651-296-4848) and your state representative and senator.

Sue Shetka
Macalester-Groveland

A jolly good idea for carnival

Why don't we invite some real royalty to the Saint Paul Winter Carnival? How about Prince Andrew of England? He's charming, good looking and funny, not like his dull and boring brother. We could crown him king. If Charlie "Super Mayor" McCarty were still living and mayor, he would say, "I think it's a jolly good idea, my boy!"

Steven Horak
West End

Stop taxing Social Security

Minnesota seniors and retirees must stop tolerating the bullying and abuse of our state government. Since the state has a budget surplus of \$7.7 billion, now is the time to abolish taxing our Social Security benefits income. This must be a priority. If repealing the taxation of our Social Security benefits income is not accomplished by the end of the 2022 legislative session, the governor must

MyVillager welcomes letters to the editor and guest editorials. All commentary must be signed, indicate the neighborhood in which the writer lives and include a phone number for verification purposes. Please, send your commentary to MyVillager, 241 S. Cleveland Ave., Suite V, Saint Paul, MN 55105, email it to letters@myvillager.com or submit it via our website at myvillager.com/editorial. The views expressed are not the views of MyVillager.

MyVillager

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

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Maurice F. Mischke, 1920-1991

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Editors

Dale Mischke, John Wadell
news@myvillager.com

Owner

Michael Mischke
mmischke@myvillager.com

Display Advertising

Gary Ball
gball@myvillager.com

Administration

Jennifer Gordon
jgordon@myvillager.com

Classified Advertising and Legal Notices

Jennifer Gordon
wantads@myvillager.com

Graphic Designers

Craig Schuster
Jennifer Gordon

Publisher

John Rauch

Circulation

Craig Schuster
memberecare@myvillager.com

CONTRIBUTORS: Roger Barr, Matthew Davis, Casey Ek, Janet Lunder Hanafin, Anne Hauth, Brian Johnson, Frank Jossi, Mary Maguire Lerman, Jane McClure, Lou Michaels, Steve Michaels, Anne Murphy, Melenie Soucheray, Brad Stauffer, Jennifer Stewart, Bill Wagner, Carolyn Walkup, Dave Wright.



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SUMMER CAMPS

Camp for everykid

Great River program gives children freedom to explore their interests

By ANNE MURPHY

There is something for almost every child in the camps that will be conducted this summer by Great River School. The four-day sessions will focus on hiking, sailing, mountain biking and other sports as well as science, the environment, and the creative and culinary arts, according to Brent Cummins, who is in his fourth year directing the program.

The camps are staffed by instructors from Great River School, a public charter school at 1326 Energy Park Drive. Cummins, the director of outdoor education at Great River, has seen the summer program grow from 346 students in 2019 to 898 in 2021.

“We pride ourselves on offering a wide variety of camps to hopefully capture the interest of every youth,” Cummins said.

The camps are offered in five age groups from prekindergarten through high school. Half-day and full-day sessions are offered Monday through Thursday from June 20 to August 12 (except for July 4-8). The cost is \$175 for half-day and \$350 for full-day camps with discounts for multiple weeks, multiple children and early registration. New this year is an additional Friday Fun Day option.

Scholarships are available for families who request assistance, Cummins said, “and since COVID began, we’ve offered 100 percent refunds (to families who decide not to attend) no matter the reason.”

Great River is a Montessori school, and the summer camps embrace the same philosophy. “Our mission is to prepare students for their unique roles as responsible and engaged citizens of the world,” Cum-

mins said. “We encourage students to seek new challenges and explore their interests by offering a variety of themes and using experiential learning and exploration as our primary teaching tools. We provide enough instruction to teach new skills and give campers the opportunity to take it to the next level, whatever that might be for each individual.”

“(Great River’s summer camps) strike a perfect balance of structured, stimulating activities and that kind of shaggy hanging-out feeling of freedom and discovery and fun.”

“We know that consistency is really helpful for children,” said Nadine Wetzel-Curtis, a teacher at Great River who has been leading its summer camps for the past three years. Wetzel-Curtis’ two daughters have enrolled in several of the camps over the past few summers. The younger, Thea, 9, participated in such week-long camps

as Silly Science; Nature Naturally; Games, Games, Games; and Totally Awesome Random Fun. “I think her favorite was Cardboard Creation Camp,” Wetzel-Curtis said. “Never underestimate the possibilities of a bunch of cardboard boxes.”

“(Great River’s summer camps) strike a perfect balance of structured, stimulating activities and that kind of shaggy hanging-out feeling of freedom and discovery and fun,” said Macalester-Groveland mother Emily Simon. “As a working parent, I’m happily paying for my son to spend his day in exactly the environment I’d be trying to create at home if I could. The leaders of the camps are strong authority figures, so the kids respect them and there is structure. But they give the kids enough freedom to make it feel like summer should feel—open, fun and mostly outside.”

“It’s really fun,” said Great River summer camper Milo Simon-Lucero, 12. “I’ll do the Robotics camp this summer if I can, but I have mostly done the Camp of All Camps,”



In summers past, children enrolled in Great River School’s Camp of All Camps tried out archery and visited Como Zoo (top left and right), while those in Who Kneads the Dough made pasta.

referring to a four-day session that offers a variety of activities. “The people are great and nice and kind and the activities—if you can’t do something or don’t want to, there’s always a second option,” Simon-Lucero said.

“My kids first went to a Great River camp when they were 5 and 7,” said Berit Thorkelson of Mendota Heights. “They’re now 10 and 12. We were drawn to it as a lo-fi experience that encourages kids to use their imagination and be outdoors. This year, my son will be going to Mountain Biking, and my daughter is going to Totally Awesome Random Fun. The camps they chose are representative of their person-

alities and interests now. I love that they always have more than enough options to excite them.”

Great River offered six weeks of in-person summer camps in 2020 “with zero known spread of COVID,” Cummins said. Last year, camp staff were strict about COVID protocols, he added. “We don’t know what the health data will look like this summer, but we ran a safe and fun camp in 2020 and 2021, so we already have our systems set up and ready to go.”

For more information on Great River’s summer camp offerings in 2022, visit greatriverschool.org, email bcummins@greatriverschool.org or call 320-300-0079.

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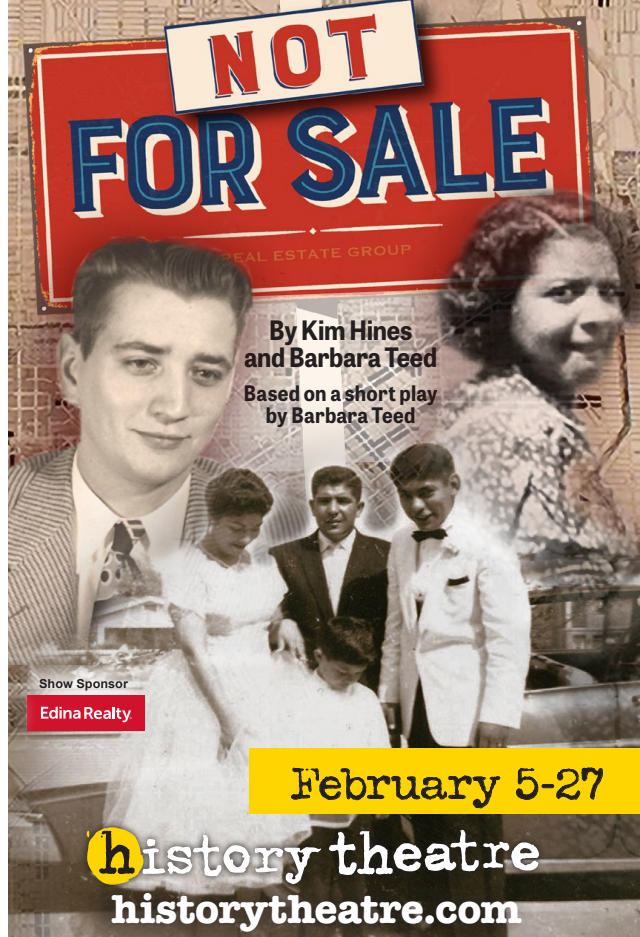
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District Councils

Highland Park

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HDC in 2021—A brief recap of the Highland District Council's impact on the neighborhood in 2021 can now be viewed at bit.ly/HDC2021video.

Highland winter fun—Join the HDC and the Saint Paul Department of Parks and Recreation for outdoor fun from 1-3 p.m. Saturday, February 26, at the Highland Park Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy. There will be a bonfire, hot cocoa, games and sledding. See the website for more information.

HDC e-newsletter—People can subscribe to the HDC's monthly electronic newsletter at bit.ly/HDCenews.

Upcoming meetings—Community Development Committee to discuss redevelopment of the property at 580 S. Snelling Ave. for Jardin Academy Spanish Immersion Preschool, 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, February 15; and Community Engagement Committee, 7 p.m. Monday, February 28. Almost all HDC meetings are being held online via Zoom until future notice. Select meetings (when noted) will be in-person at the Highland Park Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy. Agendas and meeting links are posted on the HDC website.

Summit Hill

summithillassociation.org • 651-222-1222

Neighborhood Plan—The deadline for participating in the "visioning survey" on the Summit Hill Association's new Neighborhood Plan has been extended to February 19. To have their thoughts included in drafting the plan, Summit Hill residents, visitors and business owners can complete the brief questionnaire at SummitHillAssociation.org/Survey.

Reach 'The Summit'—The spring issue of the association's newsletter, "The Summit," will be reaching mailboxes in the Summit Hill neighborhood in late February or early March.

Upcoming meetings—board of directors, 7 p.m. Thursday, February 10; Zoning and Land Use Committee, 7 p.m. Tuesday, February 15; Streetscapes Committee, 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, February 16; and Neighborhood Plan Committee, 7 p.m. Tuesday, February 22. For information and participation links to the Zoom meetings, visit SummitHillAssociation.org/calendar.

Macalester-Groveland

macgrove.org • 651-695-4000

Annual meeting and elections—The Macalester-Groveland Community Council will host its annual meeting and board elections from 6:30-8 p.m. Thursday, April 21, via Zoom. All those who live, work, learn or play in the neighborhood are invited to attend. Those who tune in will learn more about the neighborhood, meet board candidates and connect with current grid representatives. For

information about the meeting or running for the board, visit the website or email mgcc@macgrove.org.

Century building plaques—Those whose Macalester-Groveland homes or commercial buildings are nearing or over 100 years old may still purchase engraved plaques to celebrate the older structures. Any building that will be 100 years old by 2027 is eligible. Order and pay online by March 31 at macgrove.org/what-we-do/100years.

Mac-Grove T-shirts—A new order of locally designed Macalester-Groveland T-shirts has been received. Visit macgrove.org/tshirts.

Upcoming meetings—board of directors on Thursday, February 10; Inclusivity Task Force on Wednesday, February 16; Housing and Land Use Committee on Wednesday, February 23; and Transportation Committee on Monday, February 28. All meetings will be held at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. Sign up to receive monthly meeting notices and log-in information at macgrove.org/participate.

Union Park

unionparkdc.org • 651-645-6887

Union Park resource map—Union Park District Council staff are beginning preliminary work on a map of resources in the neighborhood. Those who know of an establishment that they consider vital to the quality of the neighborhood may email jonah@unionparkdc.org.

Upcoming online meetings—Transportation Committee, 6:30 p.m. Monday, February 14; Environment and Parks Committee, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, February 16; and board of directors, 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 2. Click on the Zoom meeting links at 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 jonah@unionparkdc.org.

West Seventh

fortroadfederation.org • 651-298-5599

Wanted: West Seventh recipes—The West Seventh/Fort Road Federation is collecting recipes from local residents to be included in a cookbook that will be sold as a fundraiser for the organization. Recipes may be sent for consideration to fortroadfederation.org/cookbook.

Board nominations—A new board president, treasurer and one coordinator for each of the planning district's three geographical areas will be elected at the board's annual meeting in April. Those who are interested in these volunteer positions should fill out the nomination form on the website. Candidates must be 18 or older and live, own property or own a business in the area served by the Fort Road Federation. For information, email the office at fortroadfed@fortroadfederation.org.

Upcoming meetings—board of directors, 7 p.m. Monday, February 14; and Community Engagement Committee, 6:30 p.m. Thursday, February 17. For meeting details, see fortroadfederation.org/calendar.



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Crime Report

The following criminal incidents were compiled from Saint Paul and Mendota Heights police reports. For catalytic converter thefts and more reports, go to MyVillager.com.

Highland Park

Burglary—Break-ins were reported on the 600 block of South Lexington Parkway on January 24, and the 900 block of Lexington on January 31.

Theft—Vehicles were reported stolen on the 1900 block of Ford Parkway on January 21-22, the 2000 block of Ford on January 23, the 2500 block of Edgcombe Road on January 30, on Inner Drive on January 30-31, and the 1300 block of West Maynard Drive on February 1.

Sex crime—A rape was reported on the 1000 block of South Snelling Avenue at 4:01 p.m. Thursday, January 13.

Assault—A girl was arrested for aggravated assault with a dangerous weapon at 2:08 p.m. Monday, January 24, at Cretin-Derham Hall, 550 S. Albert St.

—A man was nearly run over while trying to prevent the theft of a catalytic converter at 8:05 a.m. Friday, January 28, on the 1300 block of Bayard Avenue. He tried to remove the rear license plate from the suspect's vehicle when the driver attempted to back over him.

—A man was assaulted on West Maynard Drive and West Seventh Street at 2:14 a.m. Sunday, January 30.

Miscellaneous—Felony damage to property was reported on the 1300 block of Hidden Falls Drive on January 27, and the 500 block of South Fairview Avenue on January 28.

—Police responded to a report of a male slumped over in a vehicle on Albert Street

and Scheffer Avenue at 11:41 p.m. Monday, January 31. Police were able to wake the driver, who fled in his car despite blowing out a rear tire on stop sticks that were deployed as a presumptive measure. Police decided not to pursue.

Lexington-Hamline

Robbery—A robbery at knifepoint was reported in an apartment at Skyline Tower, 1247 Saint Anthony Ave., at 11 p.m. Monday, January 24.

Theft—A running vehicle was reported stolen at 11:55 a.m. Saturday, January 22, at Speedway, 399 N. Lexington Pkwy.

—A suspect reportedly stole two large flat-screen televisions from the Midway Target at 3:11 p.m. Monday, January 24.

Miscellaneous—Someone used a hammer to damage the "Ice Portal" display on Summit Avenue and Griggs Street between 10:50-11:15 a.m. Monday, January 31.

Macalester-Groveland

Assault—A 23-year-old man was arrested for assaulting his girlfriend and threatening her father with a gun at 11:42 p.m. Sunday, January 23, on the 1400 block of Saint Clair Avenue. The suspect reportedly punched the woman multiple times while she was driving to the address. Once there, she ran inside and locked the door. Her father came out and the suspect pointed a gun at him and threatened to shoot him. Felony charges against the suspect included domestic assault, threats of violence, possession of a firearm by a felon, possession of a gun with an altered serial number and drug possession.

—A 39-year-old man was arrested for

felony domestic assault at 4:56 p.m. Sunday, January 30, on the 1300 block of Saint Clair Avenue.

Weapons—A vehicle was struck by a bullet while parked on the 1700 block of Palace Avenue on January 30-31.

Miscellaneous—Felony damage to property was reported on the 1100 block of James Avenue at 11:30 a.m. Thursday, January 27.

Mendota Heights

Burglary—A burglary was reported at a condominium complex on the 1100 block of Highway 13 at 10:54 a.m. Thursday, January 20.

Theft—Thefts from vehicles were reported on the 1500 block of Dodd Road on January 12, and the 1600 block of Lilydale Road on January 14.

Miscellaneous—Two adults were found unconscious inside a vehicle near Highways 62 and 13 at 8:30 a.m. Friday, January 14. They reportedly had been using methamphetamine before passing out. The driver was cited for possession of drug paraphernalia.

—A highly intoxicated individual was arrested for disorderly conduct after disturbing guests at a hotel on the 1300 block of Northland Drive at 8:49 p.m. Friday, January 14.

Merriam Park

Theft—Vehicles were reported stolen on the 1600 block of Ashland Avenue and on Hague and Snelling avenues on January 24, and the 1600 block Selby Avenue and the 200 block of North Snelling Avenue on January 25.

Assault—A suspect reportedly punched a woman in the face and broke her car window during a domestic assault on Marshall and Cretin avenues at 6:44 p.m. Monday, January 31.

Snelling-Hamline

Shooting—A male employee was shot at least twice in the parking lot when trying to recover merchandise from a male shoplifter at Park Liquors, 140 N. Snelling Ave., at 3:45 p.m. Sunday, January 23. The employee was taken to Regions Hospital where he was listed in stable condition.

Burglary—A residential break-in was reported on the 1500 block of Hague Avenue between 8:44-11:27 a.m. Monday, January 24.

Theft—A male suspect reportedly took keys from two secured lockers and used them to steal vehicles at LA Fitness, 1370 University Ave., between 4:32-5 p.m. Tuesday, January 25.

Summit Hill

Robbery—An aggravated robbery was reported at Billy's on Grand, 857 Grand Ave., at 3:03 p.m. Sunday, January 30.

Burglary—Residential break-ins were reported on the 300 block of Grand Avenue on January 21, and the 600 block of Summit Avenue on January 31.

—The ATM was reported stolen from inside Billy's on Grand, 857 Grand Ave., at 2 a.m. Tuesday, February 1.

Theft—A 39-year-old man was arrested for possession of stolen property on the 1000 block of Grand Avenue at 10 a.m. Friday, January 28.

CRIME REPORT ▶ 13



MONTHLY NEWS

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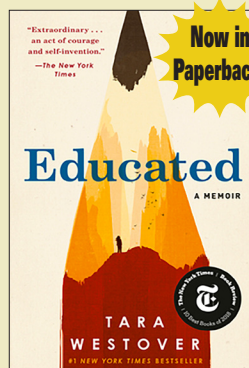
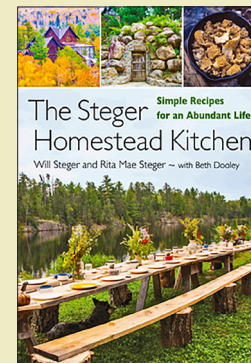


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12-1 CRIME REPORT

Summit-University

Burglary—An occupied residence was burglarized on the 200 block of Summit Avenue at 12:57 p.m. Tuesday, February 1.

Theft—A vehicle was reported stolen on the 700 block of Marshall Avenue on Thursday, January 27.

Assault—A 24-year-old man was arrested for trespassing, disorderly conduct and assault after security personnel asked him to leave the Cathedral of Saint Paul at 12:27 p.m. Monday, January 31. The suspect also had two felony warrants.

Weapons—A spent shell casing was discovered in the intersection after police received a report of a driver firing a weapon on Dale Street and Carroll Avenue at 1:48 a.m. Sunday, January 30.

Miscellaneous—A 24-year-old woman was cited for obstructing the legal process after locking herself in the bathroom with a knife at the Rondo Library, 461 N. Dale St., at 8:10 p.m. Monday, January 24.

—Felony damage to property was reported at the Cathedral of Saint Paul at 10:51 a.m. Monday, January 24.

—A known male window peeper was reportedly seen trespassing on the 400 block of Ashland Avenue at 9:18 p.m. Tuesday, January 25.

West End

Robbery—Officers investigated an armed robbery at Irvine Park Towers, 291 W. Seventh St., at 6:18 a.m. Monday, January 24.

Burglary—An apartment break-in was reported on the 300 block of West Seventh Street between January 20-22. The apartment was ransacked and electronics, furniture and food were stolen.

Theft—A vehicle and handgun were reported stolen on the 600 block of West

Seventh Street between 6:45-7:31 p.m. Friday, January 21.

—Vehicles were reported stolen on the 600 block of South Victoria Street and the 400 block of Clifton Street on January 22, the 800 block of Watson Street on January 22, the 100 block of South Western Avenue on January 22-23, the 700 block of Armstrong Avenue on January 25, and the 200 block of Grand Avenue on January 29.

—Police arrested two women for tampering with a vehicle after they were pulled over in a stolen car at 6:17 a.m. Sunday, January 30, on the 1000 block of Otto Avenue.

Sex crime—A rape was reported on the 200 block of West Seventh Street at 11:07 a.m. Sunday, January 9.

Assault—A male suspect was being sought for burglary and assaulting his stepfather with a blunt object at 3:26 p.m. Monday, January 24, on the 400 block of Goodhue Street. The victim was able to flee the residence and ask a neighbor to call 911. He was taken to the hospital.

—A man said he was punched in the face at Bennett's Chop & Railhouse, 1305 W. Seventh St., at 11:55 p.m. Saturday, January 29. The suspect fled before police arrived.

—A 28-year-old man was reportedly stabbed in his stomach at Irvine Park Towers, 291 W. Seventh St., at 7:39 p.m. Monday, January 31.

Weapons—Officers responded to a report of a juvenile who brought a weapon to Global Arts Plus, 810 Palace Ave., at 6 p.m. Monday, January 31.

Miscellaneous—Police were called to investigate an incident involving a knife, blood and tongue in the snow at 11:05 a.m. Saturday, January 29, on the 100 block of Grand Avenue. The tongue turned out to be fake.

—A 48-year-old man was arrested for drug possession after refusing to leave Freedom House, 296 W. Seventh St., at 11:13 a.m. Friday, January 28.



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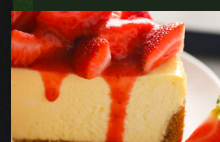


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ON THE TOWN

Vellenga's 'Tides' portrays ebb, flow of colonial New England

BY ANNE MURPHY

As Kathleen Vellenga embarked on her first book of historical fiction, she ran across a quote from Julius Lester, an author who chronicled Black America. His words became her literary compass as she told the story of two girls in the early 1600s living on the eastern shore of what is now Massachusetts. One of the girls had arrived on the Mayflower; the other was of Native American heritage.

"History isn't just events or dates,' Lester said, 'it's a pain in the heart. Until you feel that pain, you don't understand history and you repeat it,'" Vellenga related.

History has been a joy as well for the Merriam Park author and former state legislator whose third novel, *Tides of the Kennebec*, was published late last year. *Tides* continues the story of Elisabeth Tilley and Attitash. The girls were introduced as 13-year-olds in Vellenga's debut novel, *Strangers in our Midst* (2013). They became friends as the Pilgrim colonists from England and the native Wampanoags struggled to survive in 1620.

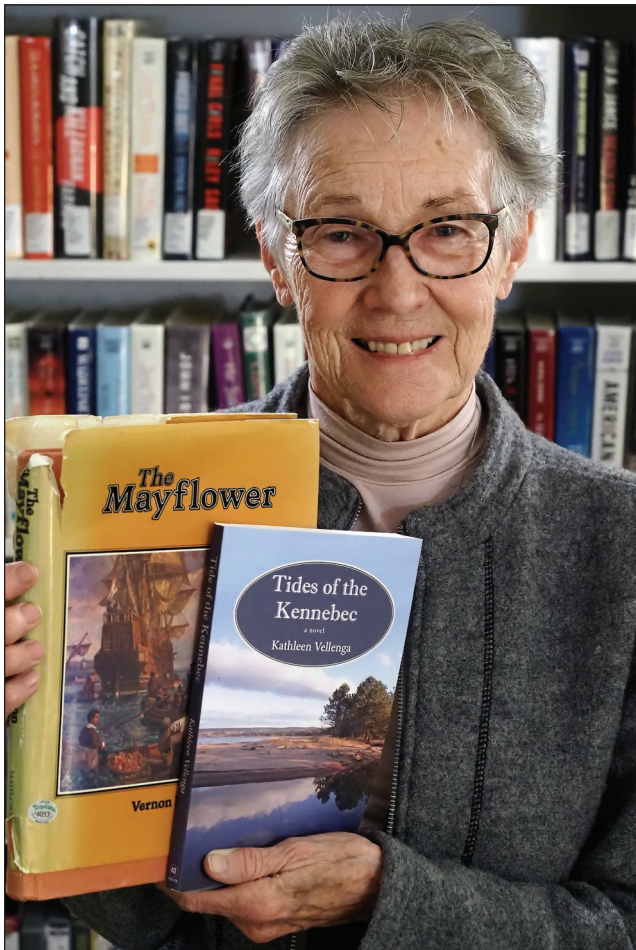
In Vellenga's second novel, *In the Midst of Bounty* (2016), the girls and their respective Pilgrim and Wampanoag peoples join forces to protect their land as more English colonists arrive and threaten to rend their relationship.

"From the beginning, my goal was to have Attitash and Elisabeth come alive and have readers feel the girls' pain and their joy," Vellenga said. "I figured out early on that if I was going to make their story come alive, I couldn't do it in one book."

The Kennebec is a river in Maine where Elisabeth and Attitash continue their friendship as women. The Pilgrims of Plymouth Colony have resettled in present-day Maine where they trap animals and trade their fur. "In the 1630s, beaver pelts were thicker in Maine, and the Kennebec River had a tidal flow up to where Augusta is," Vellenga said. Ships from the Atlantic Ocean would travel with the tidal flow to trade with the people upriver and then return to the Atlantic with their bounty when the tide reversed.

As she did for her previous two novels, Vellenga carefully researched the history behind her third book in the places where that history took place. She made several trips to Plymouth, Massachusetts, for the first two novels, and "my daughter and I went to Maine (for *Tides*)," she said.

There she learned that oxen had been used from southern New England to Maine to transport shallops, or small sailboats, for trading. This solved the problem of how to have Attitash relocate and end up with Elisabeth in Maine. Attitash would join the other Wampanoags who drove the oxen for the colonists. "I wanted to make



Author Kathleen Vellenga poses with her third novel and the history book that inspired her to begin the series. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

the story as plausible as possible," Vellenga said.

Writing historical fiction was not something Vellenga ever intended to do. That was until she spotted the book *The Mayflower* while sorting through her father's nearly 5,000-volume library following his death in 1998. "The book was written by a Brit, and the first third of it was all about what was going on in England at the time," she said. "But in the middle, I found a list of passengers." Among those passengers were several of her ancestors, including Elisabeth Tilley, Vellenga's grandmother's grandmother's grandmother.

There was another 13-year-old girl in the Mayflower registry, Mary. "Fifty of the 100 people who arrived on the ship died that first winter," Vellenga said. "Elisabeth and Mary were both orphaned. That caught my attention."

Vellenga's original plan was to write about Elisabeth and Mary. But when she realized there were such distorted views of the Wampanoags at that time, she

"People are going through so much loss right now.... It's good to remember that this isn't the first time that many people have suffered great change and great loss and learned how to pick up their feet and go out the door the next day."

eliminated Mary as a main character and created an indigenous friend for Elisabeth.

Before she began her first novel, Vellenga's writing experience was limited to her undergraduate years at Macalester College and as a regular columnist for the then *Villager* newspaper during her 14 years in the Minnesota House of Representatives. Much of her time was devoted to raising her three children, but she also served as a kindergarten teacher and as executive director of the Saint Paul Children's Initiative.

Vellenga hopes readers will find that the themes of her first two novels are not only present in *Tides of the Kennebec* but particularly poignant. Those themes include the value of cross-cultural relationships and the need for resiliency and hope in order to survive. With those benefits, Elisabeth and Attitash find that "even when things go badly awry, you can carry on," she said.

"I've gone through a lot of change since my second book," Vellenga said. "Shortly after it was published, my husband of 56 years died. I didn't really promote that book. And I wasn't able to write for a time. But finally I could, and it was so wonderful to be with my characters again. Before I sold the house that we lived in across from the University of Saint Thomas, our son who lived nearby would jog past. Once he said, 'I see you in the window sitting all by yourself at your computer.' I told him, 'I'm not by myself. I'm with my characters.'

"People are going through so much loss right now," Vellenga said, "not only from COVID but from a lack of trust and hope, just as our ancestors did. It's good to remember that this isn't the first time in history that many people have suffered great change and great loss and learned how to pick up their feet and go out the door the next day. And it's a falsehood that we can get along on our own as individuals or individual communities. We need each other."

Vellenga plans to begin work on a fourth novel soon. The sequel will feature Elisabeth and Attitash and be set during the war of 1674 between the Wampanoags and the British colonists. "That was the bloodiest war in American history in terms of per capita killed," Vellenga said. But even in the pain of that conflict, she added, "there is joy to be found in the hearts of her characters."

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ON THE TOWN *Briefly*

Books

SubText Books, 6 W. 5th St., will host virtual readings with authors James P. Lenfestey and his collection of essays, *Seasons of the Urban Coyote*, at 7 p.m. Wednesday, February 9; and Andrea Gilats and her candid book, *After Effects: A Memoir of Complicated Grief*, at 7 p.m. Thursday, February 10. To register for the free link, visit subtextbooks.com.

Highland Park author Fred Soukup will discuss his latest novel, *Blood Up North*, at 5:30 p.m. Friday, February 18, at Next Chapter Booksellers, 38 S. Snelling Ave. Set in a small town in northern Minnesota, the thriller tells of a fugitive brother and the sister he enlists in a dangerous scheme to hide a stash of stolen drug money. Registration is required. Call 651-225-8989 or visit nextchapterbooksellers.com.

Dance

The Triple T Square Dance Club is offering weekly classes for beginners from 6:30-8 p.m. on Mondays at Saint Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church, 550 W. Seventh St. No partner is necessary. The first night is free. After that it is \$5. For information, call 651-503-7040.

Love stories are told through dance and music in Collide Theatrical Dance Company's *Romance Candlelight Cabaret*. The hour-long show will be presented at 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday and 7 p.m. Monday, February 11-19, in Collide's newly renovated performance space at 755 N. Prior Ave., Suite 235H. Tickets are \$25-\$45. Visit collidetheatrical.org or call 651-395-7903.

Theater

The Anonymous Lover, the 1780 opera by groundbreaking Black composer Joseph Bologne, will be staged by the Minnesota Opera at 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Saturday and at 2 p.m. Sunday, February 10-13, at the Ordway Music Theater. Sung in French with English translations, the comic romance tells of a beautiful young widow who doubts she will ever find love again until she begins receiving letters from a secret admirer. Tickets are \$22-\$225. Visit mnopera.org.

'Til Death: A Marriage Musical will be performed by Bucket Brigade Theatre at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Monday, February 11-14, at Art House North, 793 Armstrong Ave. Husband and wife playwrights Jeremiah and Vanessa Gamble star as a middle-aged couple in marital crisis who get stuck in a remote cabin with newlywed couples who are "perfectly perfect" for each other. Joining them on stage will be real-life couples Nathan and Stephanie Cousins and Damian and Anna Leverett. Tickets are \$30, \$25 for students and seniors. Visit bucketbrigadetheater.com or call 612-547-9839.

La Boheme, the beloved opera by Puccini reimagined by director Peter Rothstein, is being performed by Theater Latte Da through February 27 at the Ritz Theater, 345 13th Ave. NE. in Minneapolis. The tale of love among young artists in Paris inspired the long-running Broadway hit *Rent*. Originally set in the 1830s, Rothstein has moved the story to the Nazi occupation of Paris during World War II. Tickets start at \$35. For reservations, call 612-339-3003 or visit latteda.org.

Not for Sale, a new play by Kim Hines and Barbara Teed about real estate agent



Omnifest returns. Science lights up the biggest screen in town during Omnifest, a series of five larger-than-life adventures that will be presented from February 4 through March 6 in the Science Museum of Minnesota's Omnitheater, 120 W. Kellogg Blvd. Travel to the ocean depths, the far corners of the earth, the far reaches of the galaxy or the prehistoric past. The schedule includes *Dinosaurs of Antarctica*, an examination of the polar continent's transformation with the climate change of long ago; *Island of Lemurs*, about the big-eyed and bushy-tailed creatures of Madagascar; *Deep Sea* (above), a colorful survey of the life that can be found beneath the waves; *Galapagos*, a dive deep into the waters surrounding the famous volcanic archipelago; and *Hubble*, a peek at the majesty of space through the lens of the famed NASA telescope. Tickets are required in advance. Visit smm.org or call 651-221-9444.

Arnold Weigel and his efforts in the 1950s and early '60s to overcome red-lining and help families of color buy homes in the all-white neighborhoods of the Twin Cities, is playing through February 27 at History Theatre, 30 E. 10th St. Andrew Erskine Wheeler and Charity Jones star. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays. A streaming option is also available. Tickets are \$15-\$53. Call 651-292-4323 or visit historytheatre.com.

Jordan Harrison's science fiction drama, Marjorie Prime will open on February 11 at Theatre in the Round, 245 Cedar Ave. S. in Minneapolis. It is the age of artificial intelligence and an elderly Marjorie has a handsome new companion who is programmed to feed the story of her life back to her. What would we remember, and what would we forget if given the chance? Show times are 7:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays through March 6. Tickets are \$25. Call 612-333-3010 or visit theatreintheround.org.

Exhibits

"Reverberating Bodies," the work of Vietnamese-American artists Christine Nguyen and Dao Strom, is being displayed through March 20 in the Catherine G. Murphy Gallery at Saint Catherine University. Nguyen pairs large paintings with porcelain mobiles to illustrate the interconnectedness of nature and the cosmos. Strom combines poetry, music, imagery and video to address displacement, myth and memory. A reception for the artists will be held from 5-7 p.m. Saturday, March 19. Visit gallery.stkate.edu.

"Art Speaks," an exhibit of more than 150 paintings, sculptures, photographs and other objects from the Minnesota Historical Society collection, will open on February 26 at the Minnesota History Center, 345 W. Kellogg Blvd. The display

includes portraits, landscapes, abstract and contemporary art by Charles Beck, Cameron Booth, Patrick Desjarlait, Mike Kareken, Clara Mairs, Teo Nguyen, Carolyn Olson, Patricia Olson, Bobby Rogers and others. Admission to the History Center is \$12, \$10 for seniors and college students, and \$6 for children ages 5-17. Visit minnesotahistorycenter.org or call 651-259-3000.

Family

The warm glow of streetlights and holiday decorations turn the Twin City Model Railroad Museum into a miniature winter wonderland from 3-7 p.m. on Saturdays, now through February 26. Admission to this special program in the museum at 668 Transfer Road is \$15, free for children age 4 and under. For reservations, visit tcmrm.org or call 651-647-9628.

Landmark Center's Urban Expedition program will immerse folks in the culture and traditions of distant lands from 1-3 p.m. on Sundays. Learn about the music, dance, traditional clothing and crafts of Ghana on February 13, China on February 20 and Greece on February 27. Admission is free. Call 651-292-3063 or visit landmarkcenter.org.

Lunar Lullaby, a 45-minute ballet based on the beloved picture book *Goodnight Moon*, will be performed by advanced students of the School of Ballet Co.Laboratory at 2 and 7 p.m. on Saturday, February 26, at Park Square Theatre, 20 W. Seventh Place. Margaret Wise Brown's classic tale is brought to life by such characters as three little bears, a cow jumping over the moon and two little kittens in the great green room of the little bunny. Choreographed by Genevieve Waterbury, the dance is set to popular music by Van Morrison, Creedence Clearwater Revival and Doris Day. Tickets start at \$20. Visit balletcolaboratory.org or call 651-313-5967.

Music

Women's Drum Center, 2242 University Ave., will offer a class in hand drumming for beginners from 3:30-4:30 p.m. Wednesday, February 16. Play djembes to explore pulse and rhythm. The cost is \$10, drums are provided. Masks are required. Visit womensdrumcenter.org.

"Serenade" will be presented by the Minnesota Sinfonia in concerts on February 18 and 19. The free program will feature Peter Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings, Debussy's Petite Suite, and William Gomes' Waltz. The music begins at 7 p.m. Friday in the Main Auditorium of Metropolitan State University, 700 E. Seventh St., and 2 p.m. Saturday at the Basilica of Saint Mary, 1600 Hennepin Ave. S. in Minneapolis. For COVID protocol, visit mnsinfonia.org or call 612-871-1701.

Pulitzer Prize-winning composer, violinist and singer Caroline Shaw will join the Chamber Music Society of Minnesota at 4 p.m. Sunday, February 27, in Sundin Hall, 1531 Hewitt Ave. The concert will feature four works, including a song cycle by Shaw and Mozart's String Quintet in G Minor. Tickets are \$25, \$20 for seniors, \$15 for students, or free for students with paying adult. Visit chambermusicmn.org or call 651-560-0206.

Pianist Kate Liu, the audience favorite at the 2015 International Chopin Competition in Warsaw, will perform at 3 p.m. Sunday, February 27, in Mairs Concert Hall at Macalester College. Tickets are \$40, \$20 for students if any are available 30 minutes before the concert. Visit chopinsocietymn.org or call 612-822-0123.

Et cetera

Black History Month will be celebrated by the National Alliance on Mental Illness with a virtual program at 7 p.m. Wednesday, February 9, featuring Twin Cities comedian Khadijah Cooper. To register, visit namimn.org.

Celebrate Super Bowl Saturday from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. on February 12 at the Saint Paul Farmers' Market at Fifth and Wall streets. A dozen and a half vendors will welcome customers with the warm embrace of a Super Chili Sampler and other ideas for a festive Super Bowl Sunday celebration at home. Shop for root vegetables, fresh microgreens, mushrooms, humanely raised meats, cheese, eggs, honey, baked goods, jams and jellies, syrups, pierogis, salsa, coffee and other specialty foods from independent producers. Sample three different chilis made from market produce between 10 a.m. and noon and take home the recipes. Shoppers are asked to bring a donation of nonperishable food for the Neighborhood House Food Support Program. For a list of food needs, visit neighb.org/programs/.

Twin Cities Jewish Humor Fest, three nights of comedy and human connection, will be presented virtually on February 17, 19 and 20 by the Minnesota JCC. The series opens with comedian Jo Firestone in the film *Good Timing* and in conversation with Alicia Eler of the *Star Tribune* at 7 p.m. Thursday (available on-line or in person at the Capp Center, 1375 Saint Paul Ave.); queer comedy night with comedians Guy Branum, Robby Hoffman, Jared Goldstein and Geulah Finman at 8 p.m. Saturday, February 19; and Jewish storytelling with Jonathan Gershberg, Max Hornstein, Steve Mintz, Amy Salloway, Jonathan Savitt and Riv Shapiro at 7 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$12-\$15. To register, visit tcjhumorfest.org.

SPORTS



The Wright Call

By Dave Wright

Scots sizzle in Nordic skiing

For a lot of people, the recent spell of polar weather has been miserable. That includes a group you might not have expected: the Highland Park High School boys' and girls' cross-country ski teams. A novice to the sport may have guessed that below-zero temps at night and single-digit daytime highs would be ideal for the Scots, whose girls' team is expected to compete for top honors at the state Nordic ski meet on February 16-17 at Giants Ridge in Biwabik.

Not so. Just ask Highland head coach Brad Moening. "When it gets below 10 degrees, it's not healthy to be out there for long," he said. "This week, we've only had one real good day to practice."

The Scots have managed to perform commendably anyway. On January 28, the Highland girls and boys each won Twin Cities Nordic Conference championships at Theodore Wirth Park. The girls bested rival Central by a 396-370 margin and the boys topped the Minutemen 394-383. The same held true for the JV races on February 1. Highland and Central went 1-2 with both boys' and girls' teams as well.

Moening didn't have to wonder who was leading the varsity girls on the slopes. His daughter Molly, now a senior, is a two-time state individual champion in Nordic. She helped lead the Scots to a state title in 2020 and a runner-up finish in 2021. Molly hopes to join current Olympian Jessie Diggins as a three-time Nordic winner at this month's state meet. But before that takes place, Highland was set to face Central again at the Section 3 meet on February 8 at Wirth.

Molly tamed Wirth in style at the Twin Cities Nordic event, winning the race with an overall time of 29:08, or 77 seconds ahead of second-place teammate Chloe Koch. The Scots' remarkable depth was on display as they also claimed third through seventh place in the race, with Central grabbing the eighth and ninth spots.

"This is probably the deepest team I've had," Moening said. "They challenge each other all the time."

Presuming they advance to state, the Highland girls expect to tangle with defending champ Forest Lake as well as Duluth East. "We've seen them once each in meets this year," Moening said, "and we know what we'll see there."

The Highland boys' team may not be quite as deep as the girls, but there's plenty of quality at the top to make Moening feel his team could have a very rewarding February. The boys finished third in the 2020 state meet and were ninth last year. At the Twin Cities Nordic meet, junior Davis Isom outdueled Central's Charles Ostergren to win by 66 seconds. The Scots then took the next three places.

"The boys really duke it out against each other," Moening said. "It's fun to watch." Isom was the top Highland boy to finish at last year's state meet at 20th. Ostergren, a senior, was 34th.

One thing that has changed at both state meets is the addition of a two-person sprint relay event. In that race, a skier zips through a 1K and then tags off to a partner who goes the same distance. The pair then do it a second time. On the boys' side, Moening found a hidden gem for that race in senior Alex Pfankuch. In the standard 5K races, Pfankuch consistently trailed Isom and others. However, in the shorter race, he proved to be Highland's Road Runner.

"He won easily at the Nordic meet," Moening said. "He can really fly at the short distance."

For Moening, this year's state Nordic ski meet may have special meaning. Molly is the last of his three daughters he'll have coached. "I've been here 21 years and I've coached my daughters for at least half of that time," he said.

WRIGHT CALL ►17

Defying gravity

Well-balanced Central/Como gymnasts continue to impress

BY BILL WAGNER

The cooperative Central/Como gymnastics team has vaulted over much of its competition this winter. Heading into the Saint Paul City Conference meet at Highland Park on February 4, Central/Como was 4-0 in the league and 5-1 overall, its lone defeat coming against Breck in mid-January.

Central/Como tuned up for the conference clash by winning the Best of the Twin Cities meet on February 2, edging out second-place Highland Park 124.5 to 121.1. (The Scots' Nuria Rodriguez-Foster was the all-around winner with a score of 32.7.)

Coach Tammy Little realizes that her Central/Como squad may not have the feeder programs, financing and off-season training that many suburban teams do, but she knows good performances when they happen. And she likes the season that her club has put together this winter.

"I'm very impressed with them," Little said. "They've been working very hard."

Senior Eden Hunt has been the all-around winner in three different dual meets for Central/Como this season. She has a team-leading average of 31 points competing on the bars, balance beam, floor and vault, with her best event being floor. She also had one of her better performances during the Best of the Twin Cities meet, scoring 32 in the all-around.

Little has tutored Hunt going back to youth gym-



Central/Como standout gymnast Eden Hunt practices on the balance beam. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

nastics, so she knows her abilities. "The thing that strikes you is that she has the dedication to be a team leader," Little said.

Sophomore Zamaria Scott provides consistency on the floor and vault, averaging 8.6-8.7 in those competitions. She took the all-around in a meet against

Johnson on January 19 with a 29.65. She also had one of her top all-around scores in the Best of the Twin Cities event with a 30.6.

Junior Sydney Ayers has also been a well-rounded performer in several events for Central/Como this season. She scored an 8.4 in the vault during the Best of

the Twin Cities meet. Senior Lily Hamacher added a 7.9 in the beam in that event.

Assistant coach Kaia Tautges liked the way the squad looked heading into the late season. Tautges noted that the team has 11 girls who can compete on beams, which shows its depth. "Meet to meet, it's not always the same group," Tautges said.

This season, the team has logged an average score of 28 when its top four performances on beam are added together. The team's average total score has been around 120 points per meet.

Little said she also enjoys how the junior varsity team makes sure that the varsity gymnasts put in a solid effort. "Our JV pushes them every day," she said. "We have a great younger crew."

Tautges noted that the gymnasts deserve special recognition for the way they compete in the face of adversity, especially regarding the financial impact of participation. "It takes a lot of resources to join a gymnastics team," she said. "It's an expensive sport."

Next up for Central/Como is the Section 4AA meet on February 12 at White Bear Lake. The state tournament will take place on February 18-19 at Roy Wilkins Auditorium.

Editor's note: Central/Como scored 123.625 points to win the conference meet on February 4, followed by Highland at 117.5. The Scots' Rodriguez-Foster won the all-around with a score of 32.575.

It's been 'tale of two seasons' for Highland wrestlers

BY BILL WAGNER

The Highland Park High School wrestling team got off to a great start this winter despite having to battle through some health issues. The Scots were 9-1 overall and 2-1 in the Saint Paul City Conference heading into the last week of January, their lone loss coming to a historically dominating Humboldt squad.

That's despite not only having to deal with COVID-19, but being ravaged by an onslaught of flu and sinus infections from which the team has yet to fully recover.

Second-year head coach Wayne Otto said the team has consistently been missing wrestlers from three or four weight classes in the lineup because of illness. That has translated

to a loss of from six to 18 points per match, depending on the team the Scots are facing. "We simply can't field a full lineup," he said.

Highland started the season by reeling off straight wins over Central, Saint Agnes, Harding and Southwest before running into that tough Humboldt team. The illness bug bit so bad right after Christmas, however, that the Scots had to shut down wrestling entirely for a week. Highland had 37 wrestlers come out at the start of the season, but that number had sunk to 24 as of January 30.

Otto said four of his wrestlers were pulled from the team by parents who were nervous about the multiple illnesses. He added that there was no way to argue with those decisions. "Parents are going to do what they

think is best for their child," he said.

As a result, several of his wrestlers were asked to move up to heavier weight classes just to fill out the lineup. Otto said his youngsters responded positively to such requests and he didn't want such deeds to go unrecognized. "I know I've asked a lot of our kids," he said.

The Scots were able to string together five straight wins beginning in mid-January, including victories over North Saint Paul, North, Hopkins, Saint Croix Lutheran and Columbia Heights.

Highland's record dipped to 9-3 with losses to Ogilvie and Washington in a triangular meet on January 26. And by early February, there was

HIGHLAND WRESTLING ►17

16◀ HIGHLAND WRESTLING

no guarantee that the Scots would get anything near the lineup they had at the start of the season

Otto singled out senior Dominic Ramirez at the 138-pound class for his physicality and junior Gabe Wright at 152 as an athletic wrestler with a strong work ethic. Junior Fabian Torres is a competitor who studies his opposition and works the 120 class in blue-collar fashion. Freshman Isaac Roberts, whose father was a wrestling coach in Wisconsin, already is a two-year varsity wrestler with a lot of promise at 132.

The Scots were hoping to stay competitive as they approached the Section 4AA team tournament on February 19 at Cretin-Derham Hall, followed by the individual meet on February 25 at Chisago Lakes.

While a late-season surge appears unlikely due to illness, Otto said there have been some good developments this year when he looks at the big picture. That includes the fact that the Highland Booster Club has raised well over \$3,000 to get paid assistant coaches for the program.

Otto also hopes to continue building Highland wrestling by encouraging more of the Scots' football players to come out for the sport. He said six of his current wrestlers played football in the fall, and that there is a natural connection between the two sports because of the strength and conditioning skills they share.

Just the same, he can't help but think about what might have been if he had anything close to a healthy squad this winter.

"It's been a tale of two seasons for us," Otto said.



Highland Park junior captain Fabian Torres (in dark shirt) and sophomore Angel Moreno-Rodriguez work on their moves during practice.

PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

16◀ WRIGHT CALL

Molly will attend and compete at the University of Vermont next year. "That's probably the closest you can get to being in northern Minnesota," Moening said. He also mentioned one side benefit to seeing his youngest go away to college. "I'll get to drive my car again," he said.

Macalester basketball playoff bound

When Abe Woldelessie was hired as the head men's basketball coach at Macalester College in 2018, he said one of his goals was to get the Scots back to the MIAC playoffs – something that last occurred in 2005.

Thanks to COVID, the Scots will do just that. A couple of weeks back, the MIAC declared that everybody was in the mix this year for the playoffs, and games that had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus would simply be ignored.

Ironically, the way the Macalester hoopsters have been playing this winter, they could qualify anyway as one of the top six teams in the league. Despite battling through COVID and injuries, the Scots are hovering around the .500 mark. As this is being written, they're tied with Saint Olaf for fifth place in the league. They would need to win

three of their last five games to finish with an overall .500 mark—a statistical mountain last reached in 2004.

"We're fighting hard for a good seed. The goal is to get a home playoff game," Woldelessie said. "We've had a lot of close games."

One of those was a 72-63 win over Bethel on January 15. It was the first Scot triumph over the Royals since 2005, when Mac was still playing in its old cracker box gym. That triumph ignited a five-game winning streak, something that hasn't been enjoyed by the Scots for nearly two decades.

Woldelessie contends the foundation for this current run of success was laid last year. Because of COVID, the Scots only played four games last season—all of them against Saint Olaf. They won the last two of those tilts. The mojo from that stretched over to this season when Mac won its first three non-conference games in November. Then COVID and the injury bug knocked the team backward for a month. Only two players—leading scorer Caleb Williams and marksman Coby Gold—have played every game this season.

All is well again, however. Williams, a 6-foot-2 sophomore guard, ranks second in the MIAC with more than 17 points a game. He hails from Wild Rose, Wisconsin, which numbered 720 residents in the last

census. Mac's roster is a mixed geographical bag with eight states and three foreign countries represented among the 17 players.

"We look for Minnesotans," said Woldelessie, who has four of them on the roster, "but we also get student-athletes that other schools won't look at."

Hence, there are players such as Ahad Anjum, a junior from Karachi, Pakistan, who played high school ball in Dubai. His coach there was a student manager at Davidson when Woldelessie was employed there as director of basketball operations.

Woldelessie, a Saint Thomas Academy grad, played two seasons at the University of Saint Thomas before transferring to Macalester. As a Scot, he was an all-MIAC guard who led the conference in assists as a senior. He freely admits that not having the Tommies looking over his team's shoulders this year is helpful.

"I'm very happy for them and think they'll be very successful as a D-I program," he said.

The Scots' success this year has brought considerable excitement to campus. With that exhilaration, however, comes a new reality. "We're not going to sneak up on anyone," Woldelessie said.

Dave Wright can be reached at dwright53@msn.com



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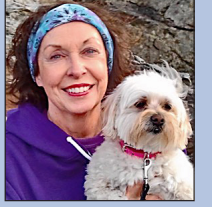
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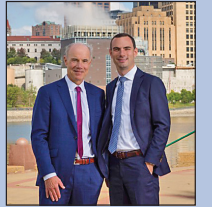
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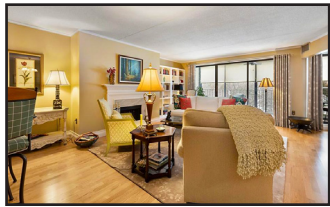
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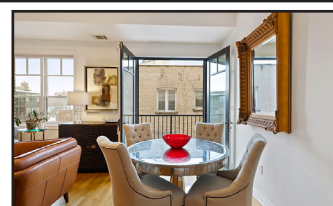
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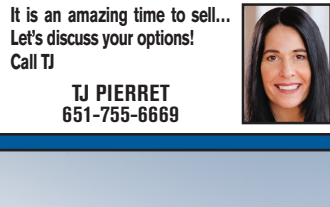
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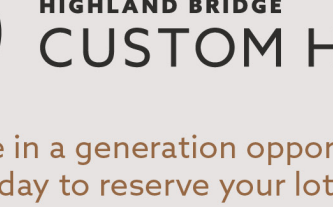
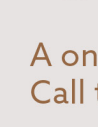
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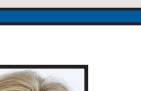
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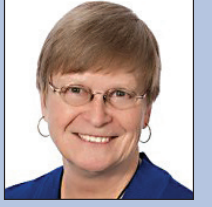


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