

UST now taking long, hard look at old Ford site for new hockey arena, ball fields

By Jane McClure

It may be a while yet before Saint Thomas is able to ice the deal for a new hockey arena and softball and baseball fields, but it appears that the university is now focusing its efforts on the Highland Bridge development in Highland Park. The Highland District Council (HDC) Community Development Committee learned on May 17 that Saint Thomas and Highland Bridge master developer Ryan Companies will soon be submitting requests for zoning and parkland changes and other amendments to the Ford Site Master Plan.

A detailed study of the impacts of the new sports facilities on the surrounding area will also be conducted. Just when ground will be broken for the new sports complex hinges on donor support. That could happen as early as the spring of 2023 if all of the needed city approvals fall into place. Ryan Companies and Saint Thomas officials will return to the HDC this summer to seek its support for the necessary changes, according to Maureen Michalski, Ryan Companies' executive in charge of Highland Bridge.

The part of Highland Bridge that is being eyed for the new sports facilities, practice

UST EYES HIGHLAND BRIDGE SITE ▶5



Give us those nice bright colors. Wet Paint's Chloe Knutson assisted young artists at a stenciling demonstration during the Chroma Zone Mural & Art Festival's kickoff on May 21 on Bradford and Endicott streets in Saint Paul's Creative Enterprise Zone. Mural-making, tours, artist-inspired events and other activities will follow throughout the summer. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Outgoing Chief Axtell led city's police force with a steady hand in challenging times

His dept. is credited with maintaining public's trust

By Jane McClure

Todd Axtell's tenure as Saint Paul police chief ends on June 1, but his legacy will live on through his efforts to build the public's trust, diversify the police department, expand opportunities for law enforcement careers and lead through particularly challenging times.

"It's been such a calling for me to serve Saint Paul as police chief for the last six years," he said. "I've embraced and enjoyed every minute of it."

Axtell announced last October that he would not be seeking a second term as chief. The decision was not easy, he said, and was only made after several months of "deep reflection."

"There's no greater responsibility than protecting people, seeking justice for victims and working to keep police officers safe as they rush into the unknown to help others," Axtell wrote in announcing his resignation. "It has been a wonderful and trying experience, one I will forever cherish. The trust bestowed upon me by this city is truly humbling."

Then as now, Axtell was frank in discuss-

CHIEF AXTELL STEPS DOWN ▶6

Neighbors produce an art fair and build a community in process

By Anne Murphy

One day last fall, Mary Jo Lawless was out for a walk. She crossed paths with Brenda Ryan. The neighbors had waved to each other in the past, but did not really know one another. This time, instead of going their separate ways, they continued walking together and were soon talking about their shared appreciation of art as well as their neighborhood. It was from that conversation that the Shadow Falls Art Fair came to be. The first-ever

event will be held from 9-3 p.m. Saturday, June 11, in the yard at 50 Exeter Place.

For Lawless, Ryan and others, the fair represents a confluence of the talent and community spirit found in the neighborhood bordered by Mississippi River Boulevard, Marshall and Cretin avenues—above and a bit north of where Shadow Falls flows into the Mississippi. Thanks to a cascade of interest from local residents, the art fair will feature a dozen artists showing and selling their paintings, collages, ceramics, paper mosaics, jewelry, fused

glass, weavings, and handmade scarves and other clothing.

Neighborhood musicians will perform, including a high school violinist, a bagpiper and a flute and guitar duo. Local children will operate a lemonade stand as a for-profit venture. Proceeds from all other refreshment sales, including cookies, snacks, coffee and water, will go to Children's Hospital.

"From the beginning, the fair has been not only about art," said Lawless, who has lived in the Shadow Falls area for more

than 40 years. "It's been about building something together, building community.

"I'm not an artist," Lawless said, "but Brenda is. I thought that with COVID, she must have accumulated a lot of art around the house. On our walk, I suggested we have a popup sale before the holidays. She mulled it over, but thought it might be too soon. Then she talked about how there are a lot of artists in our neighborhood. And lo and behold, pretty soon we had a commit-

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AFFORDABLE HOUSING OK'D
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Lawless surmised that the enthusiasm for the art fair was related at least in part to the isolation people were experiencing from COVID: "If not for COVID, the art fair might not have happened."

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tee planning the fair."

That committee includes artists Bebe Keith and Pete Lewis. Keith offered to host the art fair in her yard, which is located where Otis Avenue, Exeter Place and Mississippi River Boulevard all meet. To find other artists and volunteers to help out, the committee canvassed every house and apartment building in the neighborhood.

The group formed Shadow Falls Arts, a volunteer organization that celebrates art and artists by encouraging interaction among local residents. "The umbrella concept of Shadow Falls Arts includes other forms of art such as music and poetry," Lawless said. "We have a poet in our midst and several musicians."

Lawless surmised that the enthusiasm for the art fair was related at least in part to the isolation people were experiencing from COVID. "Most people didn't know each other in the beginning," she said. "Maybe I wouldn't have approached Brenda if there wasn't such a need for connection. If not for COVID, the art fair might not have happened."

Ryan, a ceramic artist, agreed. "The fair is far exceeding anything I thought it would be," she said. "So many people who didn't know one another or know one another well have come together. For me, the most important takeaway is the neighbors I've met. Even if we get rained out, I won't



Neighbors taking part in the Shadow Falls Art Fair on June 11 gathered where the event is taking place. They are, from left, Candace Campbell, Pete Lewis, Brenda Ryan, Connie Starns, Bebe Keith, Kirsten Madaus, Elizabeth Slattery, Scot Anderson, Mary Jo Lawless, Maggie Wirth-Johnson and Kathy Ebertz.

PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

regret one day of working on the fair."

Keith, who has exhibited her watercolors and other visual art throughout the state, said she is happy to have the art fair at her home. "This has been very little work and great fun," she said. "It'll have the energy of a popup event while offering a lovely blend of artwork in a festive setting." Keith is hoping for a good turnout from local residents as well as people walking, biking or driving by. "I think the day will be magical," she said.

"It's really exciting on a number of levels," said Lewis, a fused-glass artist. "Coming at this point in COVID, it's a nice way to have a neighborhood get-together and draw in other people. Bebe's house is the

perfect location to attract people who see our signs. There will be well-established artists, artists like me who have been in a couple shows and artists who've never formally shown their work."

Lewis, who has lived in the neighborhood for many years, was an architect for Opus before retiring. "We did a lot of the recent projects at Saint Thomas," he said. "During one of our early planning meetings, someone wondered if the university would be willing to supply tables. I volunteered to ask, and they will be providing 16 tables for the artists and the lemonade stand."

Another participating artist and long-time Shadow Falls resident, Candace

Campbell appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with neighbors on the venture. It spurred her to make silk scarves, an art she learned at the Wet Paint art supply store on Grand Avenue. "It's good to have a cohort to share your art with," she said. "And the fair will build this community to an even greater extent."

Connie Starns has been creating colorful kitchen towels on her loom for the fair. "At a recent meeting, I met half a dozen people I'd never known," she said. "So from that standpoint, the endeavor is a success already. I've lived here for 45 years, and I was just meeting people who live within six blocks. I hope I meet many more neighbors at the fair."



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County Board OKs \$25M for 1,393 affordable housing units

Millions are awarded to several projects in area

By Jane McClure

The Ramsey County Board approved almost \$25 million for affordable housing in May, providing financial assistance for 18 new and existing apartment buildings. Many of the buildings are in Saint Paul, including several downtown and in Highland Park and Ramsey Hill.

“Ramsey County is leading the way nationally in investing in permanent infrastructure to address the housing crisis,” said commissioner Jim McDonough, chairman of the county’s Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA). “This bold investment will bring lasting results.”

Ramsey County needs about 15,000 more affordable housing units to meet demand, according to McDonough. The projects approved in May were chosen from 36 applications with a total cost of almost \$56 million. The money allocated will provide 1,393 affordable units, including 218 units “deeply” affordable to households making 30 percent of the area median income (AMI). Ramsey County’s AMI is \$67,238 per year. Thirty percent of that is \$20,171.

The \$25 million is drawn from federal American Rescue Plan funds, Community Development Block Grants and HOME Investment Partnerships funds along with an HRA levy and general obligation bonds.

One of the projects is Trellis’ Treehouse, a low-income senior housing project on the bluff behind Highland Chateau, 2319 W. Seventh St. The nonprofit developer is planning 36 apartments, 27 of which would be deeply affordable and others reserved for seniors who were recently homeless.

Trellis has also received low-income housing tax credits from the city of Saint Paul. Dan Walsh of Trellis said the developer hopes to close on the property in 30 to 60 days. The parcel will need to be rezoned from single-family to multifamily residential. It will also need a conditional use permit for excessive height and possibly a frontyard setback variance.

Other projects in the area served by MyVillager include developer Reuter Walton’s plan to transform the Gallery Professional Building at 17 W. Exchange St. from

offices to affordable housing. A \$1.5 million county allocation will be used to renovate the building and provide eight apartments at 30 percent AMI and 72 apartments at 50 percent AMI. The project is expected to begin in 2023 or 2024.

The county allocated almost \$1.93 million to renovate RS Eden’s Ashland Apartments, a supportive housing facility at 532 Ashland Ave. Seventeen deeply affordable apartments are planned. The Saint Paul Planning Commission’s Zoning Committee on May 19 recommended approval of a conditional use permit for the project. The full Planning Commission will vote on the permit on May 27.

A third project is Mary Hall at 438 Dorothy Day Place. Nonprofit developer AEON plans to convert the six stories of single-room-occupancy apartments into 88 affordable housing units with support services for tenants. Forty-six units would be deeply affordable with the rest affordable to people at 50 percent AMI. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2023.

Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity was allocated \$800,000 by the county to buy and renovate single-family homes in Saint Paul, White Bear Lake, White Bear Township and Maplewood. The homes will be sold to households with low and moderate incomes. Other Saint Paul projects are in the Hamline-Midway, Payne-Phalen, West Side, North End and Saint Anthony Park neighborhoods.

Ramsey County officials admitted that they have much to do to meet the demand for housing. The federal funds that were used to operate overnight and day shelters for homeless people during the COVID-19 pandemic has run out.

The Freedom House day shelter on West Seventh Street and the overnight shelter in the former Bethesda Hospital have closed. Shelters at Mary Hall in downtown and Luther Seminary in Saint Anthony Park are slated to close on June 22.

Bethesda residents have been moved to Union Gospel Mission and other supportive housing. Listening House, Freedom House’s parent organization, is expected to announce the opening of a new day shelter close to downtown soon.

As this issue went to press, Ramsey County officials were still hoping for an allocation from the 2022 Minnesota Legislature to keep housing services going.

Four-story workplace apartments proposed for Highland’s south end

Property at Sue & Graham eyed for 79-unit building

By Jane McClure

Presbyterian Homes & Services and its affiliate, Senior Housing Partners, presented preliminary plans to the Highland District Council (HDC) Community Development Committee on May 17 for a four-story workforce apartment building in the southern end of the neighborhood.

The 79-unit building would be located on Sue Street between Graham and Norfolk avenues in an area adjacent to several senior living facilities. One issue to be addressed is parking, as neighbors said the area is already affected by worker and church parking spillover.

The building would meet a housing need for Presbyterian Homes, which has more than 500 employees living in Saint Paul

and will add to its workforce when its new senior housing complex opens in Highland Bridge. However, the new building would not be restricted to their employees.

Chris Palkowitsch of BKV Group said the building will complement area structures with its design and exterior materials. The building will have a mix of efficiency, one- and two-bedroom units, and below-ground parking. The number of parking spaces has not been set, but could be around 40. The city no longer requires developments to provide off-street parking.

The development team is aware of Saint Paul’s rent control regulations, said Sam Jagodzinski, development manager for Senior Housing Partners. However, development team members indicated that the project is still feasible.

The proposal would need approvals from the city, including rezoning and possible variances. More detailed plans are expected to go back to the district council this summer.

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Local projects among 36 finalists competing for \$1M in CIB funding

By Jane McClure

Time is running out for people to weigh in on how best to allocate \$1 million of Saint Paul's 2023 Capital Improvement Budget (CIB). An online poll closes on June 3. A public hearing on the subject is scheduled for 3:30 p.m. Monday, June 20, at City Hall.

Submissions were sought that specifically focused on improving public safety. Thirty-six projects have emerged as finalists out of 86 requests. The public comments will be evaluated along with district council reviews and initial rankings from the CIB Committee.

The committee is expected to finalize its recommendations on June 27 and forward them to the mayor and City Council. The mayor can make further changes before presenting them as part of the 2023 city budget in August.

The following are the local projects still in the running for CIB funding:

- The Highland District Council (HDC) is seeking \$830,000 for an improved pedestrian crossing at Alton Street and Shepard Road. When HDC hosted city officials at the intersection earlier this year, people were seen clambering over a metal barrier and rushing across four-lane Shepard Road, where vehicles travel at speeds exceeding 55 mph. The crossing is seen as important to improve access to Crosby Farm Park, Watergate Marina and the Samuel Morgan Trail.

- The HDC is seeking \$345,000 to improve the ballfields at the Highland Park Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy. It also submitted a proposal to widen or separate the combined pedestrian and bicycle path



Groveland Park Elementary School's PTO wants to improve crosswalk safety by adding a median at the busy intersection of Saint Clair Avenue and Kenneth Street.

- on the west side of Mississippi River Boulevard at an estimated cost of \$459,313. The city identified potential areas for improvement as Summit to Goodrich avenues, Hartford to Woodlawn avenues, and Elsie Lane to Prior Avenue.

- Macalester-Groveland activist Brian Martinson wants the city to lower the speed limit on Mississippi River Boulevard from 25 to 20 mph or 15 mph. The request suggests updating signage, and adding striping and delineators to mark the street. The city has estimated the cost at \$2.4 million to \$3 million based on the need to widen the sidewalk on the west side of the boulevard between the access roads to Ford Parkway. That would require bridge modifications.

- Groveland Park Elementary School's Parent Teacher Organization wants to improve crosswalk safety by adding a median at the Saint Clair Avenue and Kenneth Street intersection. The estimated cost is \$140,000.

- Sustain Saint Paul is seeking more than \$1.6 million for several pedestrian safety improvements near schools, libraries and recreation centers citywide. One would add a pedestrian island at the Jimmy Lee/Oxford Community Center at a cost of \$185,000.

- A request for \$65,675 was made by Union Park District Council (UPDC) Transportation Committee member Lisa Nelson to add bike racks at 13 city parks and playgrounds. Those could include Shadow

Falls, Iris, Mattocks, Webster and Carty parks. Nelson also is seeking \$65,000 to place a flashing beacon on Griggs Street between Skyline Tower and Midway Peace Park and \$75,000 to put a flashing beacon to help pedestrian and bikers safely cross Selby Avenue to get to and from the multi-use path alongside of Ayd Mill Road.

- Reconfiguring the Selby Avenue-Saratoga Street intersection was proposed by UPDC member Scott Berger. The estimated \$1.075 million project could include a roundabout or small island to separate bikers and pedestrians from cars. Removing adjacent street parking is also an option.

- Macalester-Groveland resident Joel Clemmer wants the city to add sidewalks in the Midway industrial area. City staff estimated it would cost about \$460,000 to add sidewalks on the south side of Charles Avenue between Hampden and Vandalia avenues.

- Volunteer John Hoeschen is requesting \$66,125 to elevate the northeast quadrant of Groveland Park's field and rink space at 2021 Saint Clair Ave.

- Highland resident Rachael Ryan is seeking an estimated \$118,215 to convert a vacant state-owned parcel at 1601 Middleton St., just west of I-35E, into a small park.

- West End resident Nicole Kitzhaber is seeking about \$200,000 to place motion-activated lights and security mirrors on the I-35E bike and walking trail. The trail extends from Pleasant Place Park to the Grand/I-35E area.

For more about the projects and to comment by the June 3 deadline, visit engagstpaul.org/14520/widgets/43754/documents.




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Council seeks \$942K to keep Hidden Falls parking lot high and dry

By Jane McClure

The Saint Paul City Council approved an application for a \$942,020 federal grant on May 18 to raise and reconfigure the parking lot on the south end of Hidden Falls Regional Park in order to address longstanding flooding problems.

City officials are seeking the grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The city's Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) Committee recommended approval of the request earlier in May.

The grant could result in long-awaited action on a master plan for both Hidden Falls and Crosby Farm parks. The plan went through years of review and public comment before it won City Council approval in 2019.

"We've for many years experienced flooding at Hidden Falls," said Paul Sawyer, management assistant for the Saint Paul Department of Parks and Recreation. The park was most recently closed this month due to flooding and will require cleanup in the weeks ahead.

In 2019, the two parks experienced a



Flooding at Hidden Falls Regional Park has been a problem for years. PHOTO BY ANNE BRANDRUD

particularly devastating flood. Several feet of sediment remain in Hidden Falls' south parking lot, on trails and in a picnic area. The city has discussed the problem with FEMA officials and is confident that the grant will be awarded.

The south entrance to Hidden Falls includes a long driveway with 77 parking spaces and a circular turnaround at the end. The area also has a picnic grounds. The master plan notes that the area is more natural and less used than the park's north area, which has shelter and picnic area. The south area is often closed due to flooding.

CIB Committee member Barrett Steenrod questioned the large amount of funding requested for the parking lot. He asked for the vote to be laid over for more information. However, Sawyer said there is a time limit to getting the funding and putting the project out for bid. The goal is to get the work done during this construction season.

Other committee members said the money is needed to alleviate the time and costs spent dealing with park floods, and to see some aspects of the park master plan implemented. "I'm excited to see this move forward," said committee member Ray Hess.

The improved lot and other amenities would also be a boon for future Highland Bridge residents as the former Ford Motor company site is developed, said committee member Rudy Burgos.

Raising and relocating the parking lot and reducing its size is just one master plan recommendation for the south end of Hidden Falls Park. Other recommendations include increasing natural plant areas and the tree canopy, improving trails, and adding a pump track and bicycle challenge course.

According to the master plan, pump tracks consist of a circuit of small hills and banked turns. The tracks are designed to help children develop bike riding skills and experience challenging terrain in a relatively small area. The plan recommends building the track out of material that will withstand flooding.

Sawyer said that without adding park amenities, "there's no real reason to visit the (south) area." A long-term goal is to seek additional funding to develop trails and other attractions in that area.

Attracting more people to the area is also seen as a way to increase park security. Hidden Falls' south entrance is at Mississippi River Boulevard and South Prior Avenue, just west of the Highway 5 bridge. A steep slope, vegetation and a curving roadway add to security issues. One longstanding issue in the south lot is vehicle break-ins.

Saint Paul announces temporary road, park closures due to river flooding

By Jane McClure

Flooding of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers this spring is expected to leave weeks of cleanup work in its wake. Users of boat launches and riverfront parks and trails should be alert to changing conditions.

Flood waters were expected to crest at 13.7 feet on the Mississippi in Saint Paul the weekend of May 21-22, according to the National Weather Service. That is just below the minor flood stage of 14 feet. However, the crest could change with rain. It will likely be late May before flood waters

recede. Cleanup will extend well into June.

On May 16, Saint Paul officials announced the temporary closing of Water Street/Lilydale Road, low-lying trails, and public boat ramps at Watergate Marina, Hidden Falls and Lilydale parks due to flooding. Riverfront roads, including Shepard and Warner roads, typically only become impassable when the flood stage reaches 18 feet.

The public has also been advised to watch for possible temporary closures at Meeker Island Dog Park/Desnoyer Trail, Crosby Farm Regional Park, City House, Upper Landing, Chestnut Plaza, Lambert's Landing, Harriet Island, Kelly's Landing

and Raspberry Island. Anyone with reservations to use the facilities in riverfront parks should check beforehand to see if they are open.

Saint Paul officials are urging people to watch for signs announcing temporary park and trail closures. People are also being warned not to cross barricades if and when they are posted. Parks and trails typically stay closed after flood waters recede for cleanup.

Saint Paul flood information and closures can be found at stpaul.gov/departments/emergency-management/flood-information. The page has links to other

city websites that are updated with information on closures, as well as local flood forecasts from the National Weather Service. The public can also sign up for email updates on flood conditions and can follow the departments of Parks and Recreation and Public Works on Twitter for the latest information.

Minnesota state parks also post flood information. Pike Island and Picnic Island closed at Fort Snelling State Park in mid-May due to flooding, but the rest of the park is still open. Check for updates by visiting dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/park.html?id=spk00154#homepage.

1< UST EYES HIGHLAND BRIDGE SITE

space and parking ramp is in the southeast corner of the 122-acre site, near the intersection of Cleveland and Montreal avenues.

Ryan has the former Canadian Pacific Railway yard there under contract, and those 13 acres will become part of the development package along with Mica Park, a green space that was deeded to the city but has not been developed. The area is zoned as a gateway to Highland Bridge where institutional, commercial and residential uses can be built. Mica Park would be moved to another part of Highland Bridge. That change would require the approval of the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council.

In June, Ryan Companies will apply for

amendments to the Ford site redevelopment agreement from the Saint Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority and City Council. It also needs to apply for zoning changes and to sort out the impact on wetlands and the height restrictions related to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

The Alternative Urban Areawide Review for Highland Bridge will need to be updated. The original plan was to build offices and 110 affordable housing units in the southeast corner of the Ford site. Michalski said the city is hiring a consultant to update the document. That work is to be completed by September.

Plans call for relocating the affordable housing elsewhere at Highland Bridge in collaboration with developers Project for Pride in Living and CommonBond Com-

munities. The offices and other commercial spaces proposed for this area would be eliminated from the Highland Bridge development. Those changes require master plan amendments related to density and land uses. Another change would be to the proposal for bicycle and pedestrian trails in this area and a possible transit route.

Minor master plan amendments could be handled internally by city staff, Michalski said. One is for field lighting. Ninety-foot-high light poles are typically needed to meet NCAA requirements. A second change would allow chainlink fences for the ball fields. Chain link fences are currently forbidden by the Ford site master plan.

Highland Bridge neighbors have raised concerns about parking and traffic congestion from the UST facilities. Amy Mc-

Donough, the chief of staff for UST's president, said the increased demand for parking would be addressed by the parking ramp adjacent to the sports complex. The parking ramp also could be shared with users of the nearby Highland Ball fields, thereby addressing a longstanding complaint in the neighborhood.

Design work for the new university facilities has not been completed. The hockey arena would have 4,000-4,500 seats, the baseball field 1,000-1,200 seats, and the softball field 750-1,000 seats.

UST is still researching how its hockey arena and ball fields could be shared with local teams without violating NCAA regulations. Under those regulations, university facilities cannot be shared for free, McDonough said.

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Dollar Tree's plan for West 7th Street site is denied by zoning board

By Jane McClure

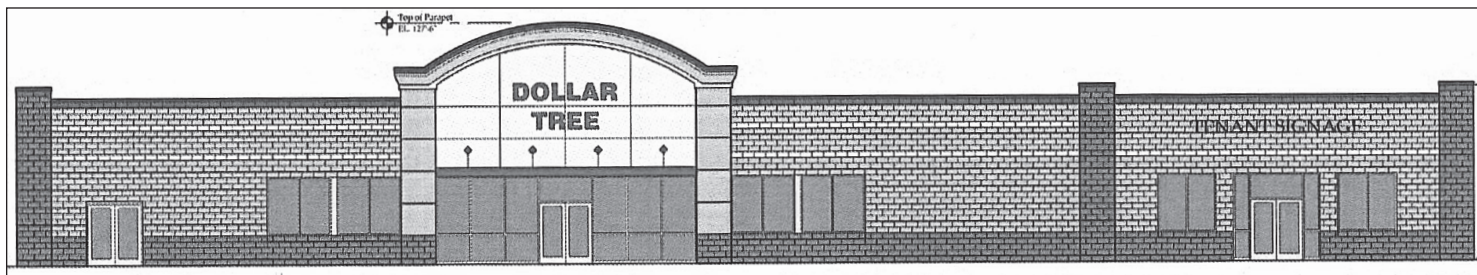
Plans to demolish a West End warehouse and replace it with a one-story commercial building were rejected by the Saint Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) on May 16. The plans called for replacing the 86-year-old warehouse and parking lot at 1324 W. Seventh St. and 671 S. Victoria St. with a new Dollar Tree store and unnamed restaurant.

Eden Prairie-based 2-C Development was seeking six variances for the new structure. Twenty-six legal findings had to be met, and the project met only two of them.

"When a proposed project needs this many variances, it's clear that it's not right for the location and for the community," said BZA member Diane Trout-Oertel.

The plans drew vehement opposition from neighbors. City staff and the West Seventh/Fort Road Federation recommended denial of all six variances.

One red flag was that the back side of the building would face West Seventh. The main entrance and a 36-space parking lot were proposed for the Victoria Street side. The developer had proposed opaque glass windows for the West Seventh side and



The facade of the proposed Dollar Tree store at 671 S. Victoria St. would front on a 36-space parking lot on Victoria. The back of the building along West Seventh Street would have featured several opaque windows.

part of the building's east side, but that did not mollify BZA members. Another concern was how close the new building would be to adjacent homes. In addition to the variances, a rezoning of the Victoria parcel would have been needed.

"We understand we're asking for a lot, but we think it's a good cleanup of the property," said developer Paul Tucci. "We're always challenged to thread the needle between what a municipality requires and what the tenant wants."

The West Seventh Federation had little time to review the request for variances. "No one reached out to us," said federation member Tanya Fabyanske Beck.

Members of the Biagi family, whose elderly mother lives next to the Victo-

ria parking lot, complained that the new building would have been constructed right up against the side of her home. They said they were pressured to sell the home, and that they had to stop contractors from digging on their property.

Some neighbors objected to the presence of a big box store like Dollar Tree, saying the neighborhood needs to preserve its small businesses. However, BZA member Luis Rangel Morales noted that the zoning allows for a larger retail business. With plans to construct a streetcar line on West Seventh, he added, the neighbors should be prepared for change.

The six variances that were sought for the development were for the following:

- The lack of a primary building entrance

on Victoria and West Seventh.

- Opaque glass in windows and doors, which would not allow people to see into and out of the store.

- No doors, windows, projections, awnings, canopies or other design features on the lower 25 feet of the building.

- The windows, doors and other openings did not comprise at least 50 percent of the length and at least 30 percent of the area of the ground floor facades.

- The one-story building did not give the impression of greater height through the use of pitched roofs, dormers or gables, a higher parapet, or a cornice line separating the ground floor and upper level.

- The trash enclosures along Victoria lacked any setback.

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ing the pressing challenges facing the police department. Civil unrest in the wake of the 2020 murder of George Floyd stretched his department's resources and caused millions of dollars in property damage in Saint Paul. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed an array of issues. Concurrent with those has been an increase in homicides, gun violence, catalytic converter thefts and carjackings.

Axtell has butted heads with city officials as he sought more resources for the Police Department. Although they have not always agreed, elected officials praised Axtell's performance.

"From a global pandemic and civil unrest to a nationwide crime surge, Chief Axtell has been a steady hand through some of Saint Paul's most challenging moments," said Mayor Melvin Carter. "I'm grateful for his lifetime of service to our city and enormously proud of our work to build a department that is stronger and more deeply connected to the communities we serve than

"From a global pandemic and civil unrest to a nationwide crime surge, Chief Axtell has been a steady hand through some of Saint Paul's most challenging moments."

— Mayor Melvin Carter

ever before."

"Chief Axtell is an exemplary servant leader," said Ward 2 City Council member Rebecca Noecker. "He knows and loves Saint Paul, he walks the walk of authentic community engagement, and he has made courageous choices to move the department in the direction that our community needs and expects. His focus on de-escalation, mental health and crisis intervention training, genuine relationships with the community and intentional recruitment and retention of diverse officers have led his department to embody its motto—'Trusted Service With Respect.'



Outgoing Saint Paul Police Chief Todd Axtell presided over a memorial service on May 18 in Mears Park for all Saint Paul police officers killed in the line of duty.

PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

He'll be missed, but his vision will live on."

"Todd Axtell has been an amazing police chief and leader in Saint Paul," said Ward 3 City Council member Chris Tolbert. "He has led the police department during a pivotal time in policing in America, and has shown through example how a modern and reformed police department should provide trusted service with respect to all of our residents."

"Chief Axtell has been an outstanding advocate and friend of the Hmong, Southeast Asian and immigrant and refugee communities in Saint Paul," said Mayor Thao, president and CEO of the Hmong American Partnership. "The success of our communities is because of his leadership, his vision and his commitment to elevate the voices of the disenfranchised. The chief puts community and people first, and we'll be forever grateful for his championship and the many lives he has touched."

Axtell credited his parents for

his guiding principles and laying the foundation for his life's work. His family moved around Minnesota while he was growing up. At times he called Northfield, Silver Bay and Brainerd home.

He said his inspiration for a career in law enforcement came from his grandfather, who was a police officer in Silver Bay. His grandfather died of a heart attack when Axtell was still a toddler, but the stories of his grandfather's kindness and commitment to public service enthralled young Todd.

Axtell earned a two-year degree in law enforcement at Alexandria Technical College. His first job as a police officer was in Breezy Point and Pequot Lakes. He later earned a master's degree in police leadership, administration and education at the University of Saint Thomas.

Axtell joined the Saint Paul Police Department in 1989. He became a watch commander in 2008. He also served as a commander of support services and

homeland security, Western District commander and assistant police chief.

Highland District Council executive director Kathy Carruth said Axtell will be missed. "He's just been outstanding to work with," she said. "He's always been responsive and able to help district councils deal with issues in our neighborhoods."

Axtell was on the police force in August 1994 when a drifter ambushed and killed Saint Paul officers Ron Ryan Jr. and Tim Jones and Jones' canine partner Laser. He also suffered the loss of fellow police officer and friend Gerald "Jerry" Vick, who was shot and killed in 2005 while working undercover in Saint Paul.

Much has changed in Axtell's years on the force. "The constant evolution of technology has very much impacted how we do our jobs," he said. Another change that he will not miss is the prevalence of social media and the spread of misinformation.

What has stayed the same is the strong culture of community engagement in the police department, Axtell said. He credited his predecessors and other leaders in the police department for instilling that culture. "We see people when they are really suffering and are at the worst moments of their lives," he said. "That requires a level of empathy and humanity."

Saint Paul's former police chiefs challenged him and made him a better professional, Axtell said. "Every one of the chiefs I worked under left the department better than they found it," he said. "I hope to have done the same."

Axtell is not retiring. He anticipates starting a consulting business, to pay forward what he has learned in his years in law enforcement. He also will be spending more time with family, including his parents, wife Lisa, his two adult children and seven grandchildren.

"It's been bittersweet," Axtell said of his final days in office.



Police Chief Todd Axtell visits with Jeanette Sackett, who lost her husband, Officer James T. Sackett, in the line of duty in 1970. The two chatted at the memorial service on May 18 for all Saint Paul police officers slain in the line of duty.



Memorial Day

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VIEWPOINT

Too many toys? Mom seemed to think so, so we improvised

By Beth Voigt

Mom never liked toys. Despite a house full of children, our home was never cluttered with toys. No race cars or Tonka trucks splayed across the family room floor. No Barbie dolls or doll accessories lost in sofas. No board games hidden under beds. Cooking, cleaning and otherwise maintaining a household of 11 was enough for Mom.

When relatives asked for Christmas gift ideas, she'd say, "Clothes. They need clothes." And so my grandmother would dutifully sew nine pairs of pajamas each Christmas. When birthday parties rolled around, she'd tell our friends' mothers, "They really don't need any toys. Some hair ribbons or colorful socks would be just fine. Maybe a book." Our friends were mortified at the thought of giving us practical gifts, but our mothers knew they needed to band together. So they did. And when it came time for Mom to bestow gifts upon us, they, too, were practical.

One Christmas she gave us all winter outerwear. Another year it was books. One year we all got pants—jeans, dress pants, even a pair of school uniform pants for my oldest brother, who seemed to wear through them faster than anybody else.

When, on the rare occasion, a toy

This didn't really bother us much. We made our own fun or had friends who had toys. We built tents in the basement with blankets and chairs. We read books. Sometimes we played on the front steps with our friends' dolls."

managed to get into the house—usually from a godparent or babysitter who wasn't aware of Mom's distaste for toys—Mom quickly discovered it. And, if we didn't put it away every time we played with it, it was gone. That's how we lost our Lincoln Logs.

We knew enough to put the can of Lincoln Logs out of sight, but didn't always pick up all the logs. Thus, in less than a month's time, the can was half empty. Each time Mom found a Lincoln Log on the sofa, under the table or behind a chair, she tossed it. Every so often we searched the trash looking for lost Lincoln Logs and other toys that may have been left out, but we usually weren't stealthy enough to retrieve it under Mom's watchful eye. Within a few months, all of the logs were gone; Mom

had thrown them all away, one by one, as she discovered them on the floor as she vacuumed, on the table as she wiped it, in the dog's dish as she filled it. Eventually, the can was gone, too.

This didn't really bother us much. We made our own fun or had friends who had toys. We built tents in the basement with blankets and chairs. We read books. Sometimes we played on the front steps with our friends' dolls. Other times, we rode bikes or played kickball in the vacant lot next to our house.

Outdoor toys were OK with Mom. So were stuffed animals. Mom wanted a decluttered home, but didn't deny us the comfort of stuffed animals. One of my favorite pastimes was playing with Red Horsey and Grey Horsey, which my younger sister Myra received after her eye surgery. Myra and I had hours of fun with them when we were supposed to be asleep. She graciously loaned me the grey one—the bigger, more tattered but equally loved of the two—to play with each night.

From our twin beds we created Grey Horsey's house and Red Horsey's house, a neighborhood, school and playground. The horseys were neighbors sometimes. Other times they were married. Regardless, there were always lots of

imaginary horsey children. When we got tired, we would trot them off to our respective beds and fall asleep holding them. When Myra went back for another eye surgery, which she did repeatedly in her younger years, I usually just hugged Grey Horsey and Red Horsey at night; it wasn't fun playing without her.

My own children were inundated with toys. They had balls and dolls and cars and board games and computer games. They received toys every Christmas and birthday and a few celebrations in between—mostly as gifts from others but many from me as well. The kids enjoyed these toys for a while, but most of them were put aside as building snowmen, climbing trees, playing hopscotch, painting pictures, riding bikes and running through the sprinkler grabbed hold of their imaginations and lured them into the bigger world of play.

Maybe Mom's policy was a good one after all. Maybe on their next birthday, I'll focus more on sparking my grandchildren's imagination with gifts of "Adventures with Grandma" rather than mounds of toys and wait to see what happens. Then again, I may break down and give them a set of Lincoln Logs.

Beth Voigt is a writer from Summit Hill.

INBOX

A scholar coach to celebrate

As the school year comes to a close, I'm writing to celebrate someone who has dedicated the last four years to supporting our students. As an AmeriCorps member with the Total Learning Classroom initiative of Reading Corps, Kim Johnson has supported the students at Benjamin E. Mays School to build their reading skills. Over the past four years, she has served a total of 4,500 hours to help our students succeed.

Kim works one-on-one with students who need extra help. With Kim supplementing the excellent work our teachers do in the classrooms, we've seen wonderful growth. After the challenging last few years, Kim's consistent, positive support and her ability to build strong relationships with students has made all the difference. With her four years of experience, Kim has also provided leadership, support, encouragement and advice to her fellow tutors at Benjamin E. Mays.

As Kim moves on to her next adventure, we'll have big shoes to fill in the fall.

*Laura Isdahl, Lead Program Manager
Total Learning Classroom
Benjamin E. Mays Elementary School*

Schools need more counselors

Counselor Becky Mendoza at Como Park Senior High School is seeing more students in her office with high levels of anxiety and suicidal thoughts than ever. As president of the Minnesota School Counselors Association, she's hearing the same message from all corners of the state. In a story in the *Minneapolis StarTribune*, Mendoza said she's noticing more fights. Kids who have never had mental health concerns are walking into her office with overwhelming anxiety.

This mental health crisis has led to a rise in bullying, emotional outbursts and not listening to school staff. School social workers have seen a huge increase in students needing support from counselors. In some cases, mental crises have forced schools to go into lockdowns. With distance learning, students haven't been able to socialize properly and mature emotionally.

Students with unresolved trauma or other mental health issues are not able to do their school work. They need help from therapists, but might not have access to them. That's where school counselors come in. School counselors are free for students to use, but they can have

an overwhelming number of students to help.

In the Minneapolis Public Schools, there are 450 students for every counselor. According to the American School Counselor Association, the maximum should be 250 students per counselor. The Saint Paul Public Schools has 230 students for every counselor. However, the teachers in Saint Paul didn't just get that; they fought for it in their 2020 teachers' strike.

As a student who struggles with mental health, it's extremely important to have someone to talk to. When I don't have someone to help me, I'm not able to learn, and I know other students who have the same struggles. Counselors make it possible for us to learn. As students deal with the fallout from distance learning and the pandemic, counselors will be more necessary next year. We must start funding and hiring more counselors now.

*Vincent Summers
Highland Park*

Editor's note: Summers, 13, is a student at Sunny Hollow Montessori School who will be transferring to Ramsey Middle School next year.

Reimagining public safety

Police Chief Todd Axtell's retirement gives us an opportunity to reimagine how we deepen the alignment with Saint Paul's new Office of Neighborhood Safety. It also is a chance to not settle for our current work on public safety. The need to continue setting a high bar is great. The pandemic has laid bare our need to address a rise in mental health crises and our potential to care for each other through restorative and redemptive processes and investments in housing, libraries and youth centers. Black, brown and white, we all need to continue to reimagine how we serve our community and create a sense of belonging and purpose for all.

*Ann Mongoven
Highland Park*

Interpreting Jesus' truth

Regarding Diane Smith's letter to the editor, "Bring children to the truth" (*MyVillager*, May 11):

First, Christianity is not the U.S. state religion. We don't have one, because so far in that sense we are a free country. We don't all have to accept "the truth," or Ms. Smith's interpretation of what Jesus preached.

I wonder if some of the instances of sexualizing, stigmatizing, etc., of our children are gleaned from sources that have their own motives to distort the truth? "Grooming" is a buzz word for this alarm.

I wonder what motives, besides profit, an entity would have for grooming children to take a path toward immorality. I am no Biblical scholar, but from all I have heard in my long life about Jesus of Nazareth, I doubt He would have wanted our children to learn only part of the truth.

*Jane Thomson
Summit-University*

The truth kids need to hear

It pains me to know that my gay and trans neighbors had to read this letter to the editor ("Bring children to the truth," *MyVillager*, May 11). These rumors about child grooming that are spreading across the country are right out of the satanic panic playbook. They're aimed at providing an excuse for turning LGBT people back into second-class citizens.

If anyone suspects that someone is grooming a child—that is, that someone is trying to manipulate a child into having sex with them—they should immediately alert the authorities and shield the child from contact. Writing letters to the editor can wait.

Perhaps there is reason to be suspicious of why suddenly a group of concerned citizens have hit on an inflammatory term and are using it often but in the most vague way. It's harder to be called a liar when your claims are so ambiguous. Kids should know that it's OK to be gay and that if you are, you won't go to hell for it. That's the truth they need to hear.

*Maria Lin
Macalester-Groveland*

Do write, won't you?

MyVillager welcomes letters to the editor and longer 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.

County studying ways to improve transit locally

By Jane McClure

With as many as 3,800 new houses and apartments expected to be built over the next 20 years at Highland Bridge, Ramsey County has initiated a \$500,000 study of how best to improve transit in and around Highland Park. The Blue Line/Riverview Connection Study includes the Highland Park as well as the West End, Macalester-Groveland, Merriam Park and Summit Hill neighborhoods of Saint Paul and the adjacent neighborhoods of South Minneapolis.



The study will identify possible connections to the light-rail Blue Line in South Minneapolis, the A Line rapid transit bus between the Blue Line and Rosedale, and the proposed Riverview Corridor streetcar line from downtown Saint Paul to Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport and the Mall of America.

Ideas for improved transit will be evaluated beginning in the fall. Bus route changes are possible, as are enhancements to the A Line and improved pedestrian and bicycle connections. However, the study is not

expected to produce any recommendations for more light rail or streetcar lines, according to Scott Marek, senior transportation planner for Ramsey County.

The Union Park District Council (UPDC) and Highland District Council transportation committees reviewed the upcoming study in February. A virtual open house on the study was held on March 31.

Support builds for easing development process

By Jane McClure

Eliminating the required consent of local property owners for certain land use changes in Saint Paul has little opposition if a May 13 public hearing before the Saint Paul Planning Commission is any indication. The proposal is touted as a way to allow smaller-scale housing and commercial projects to proceed without the need for a petition that has the signatures of two-thirds of the property owners within 100 feet.

ter was not received prior to the public hearing.

According to Saint Paul city planner Kady Dadlez, developers have had difficulty obtaining signatures for consent petitions, especially from absentee landlords and the owners of condominiums in security buildings. Foreign languages and racial prejudice have also been cited as obstacles by applicants for the land-use changes. Property owners have even demanded to be paid for their signatures, according to some applicants.

Two people addressed the commission at the public hearing, expressing support for removing the petition requirement. City planning staff also heard from a few individuals and groups, all of them in support of the change. The Macalester-Groveland Community Council's board of directors voted in support of eliminating the requirement on May 12, but its let-

The proposal before the Planning Commission would drop the consent petition requirement for the establishment of a legal nonconforming use, the re-establishment of a nonconforming use, the expansion or relocation of a nonconforming use, and the use of a nonconforming commercial parking lot.

The consent petition requirement

would also be eliminated for two conditional use permits—for a new carriage house and for the conversion or reuse of a residential structure or a church or school with more than 9,000 square feet of gross floor area.

Even if the consent petition requirement is eliminated, anyone seeking the approval of the Planning Commission for a land-use change must meet other technical requirements, such as consistency with the city's comprehensive plan and with the character of the surrounding neighborhood. Consent petitions would still be required for zoning changes.

The comments received by the Planning Commission will be reviewed by its Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee. The consent petition changes will then be sent back to the full commission for review and ultimately their approval or denial.

to begin service in 2024 along Selby and Marshall avenues in Saint Paul and Lake Street in Minneapolis.

The transit study comes at a time when some local bus routes are actually being suspended by Metro Transit. The Route 84 bus along Snelling Avenue and the Route 70 bus along Saint Clair Avenue were discontinued late last year.

Transit ridership has shrunk appreciably over the past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the increase in the number of people working from home. Total ridership fell from 17.3 million during the first quarter of 2020 to 7.6 million during the first quarter of 2021. Metro Transit has also been struggling to hire enough bus drivers and train operators.

"We don't know what the future of transit (ridership) will be," Marek said. "We assume we'll see a gradual return (of riders), but we also may be looking at a new normal."

MyVillager

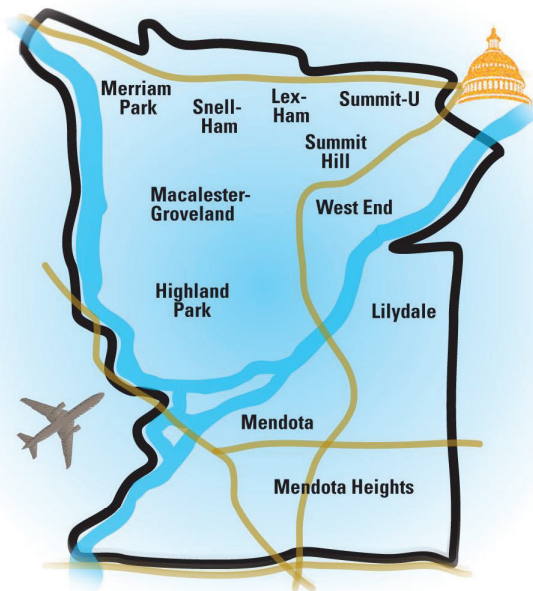
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Maurice F. Mischke, 1920-1991

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News Briefs

Comments sought on rebuilding Grand from Snelling to Fairview

Plans for reconstructing Grand Avenue between Snelling and Fairview avenues will be the topic of a virtual meeting from 5:30-7 p.m. Wednesday, June 1. Sign up for the meeting, take a survey and get information at tinyurl.com/2p8ffedj.

Grand Avenue property owners, businesses and residential renters were notified of the meeting earlier in May. That section of Grand is slated for reconstruction in 2024 at an estimated cost of \$6.9 million.

The project calls for replacing street pavement, sidewalks and underground utilities. The existing cobra-style tall light poles would also be replaced with lantern-style street lighting.

Grand's pavement is in very poor condition in places, ranging in rank from 13-51 on a scale of 100 being the best. The Saint Paul Department of Public Works sees the project, which is the first full reconstruction of that section of Grand in decades, as a chance to refresh and the historic street and better accommodate all modes of travel.

The project area borders Macalester College, businesses, Ramsey Middle School, and a mix of houses and apartment buildings. Public Works hopes to have the final design wrapped up by early 2023.

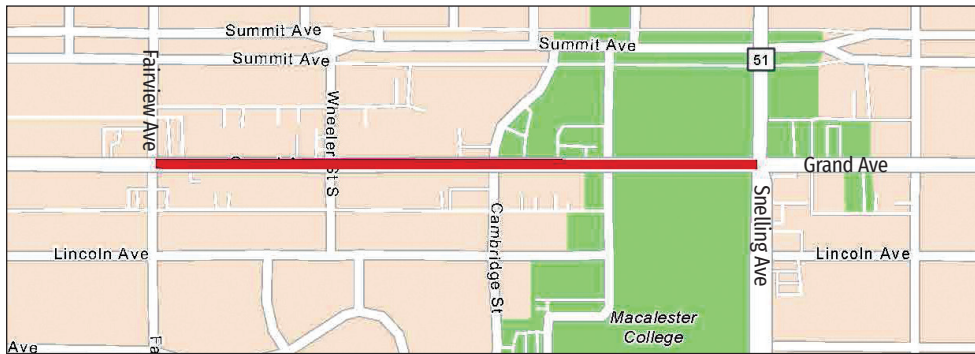
Public comments are being sought through a project survey and interactive web map at stpaul.gov/projects/publicworks/pw2024grandreconstruction.

Meeting to lay out options for Summit Avenue regional trail

A virtual meeting to review options for the Summit Avenue Regional Trail Master Plan will be held from 7-8 p.m. Monday, June 6. Participants must sign up at tinyurl.com/22cbm4k4. The city is also taking comments at engagstpaul.org/summit.

The city's Department of Parks and Recreation has been working on design ideas for the trail for several months. The plans cover the entire length of Summit, from the Mississippi River to downtown. Summit has sidewalks on both sides, and on-street bike lanes or shared traffic lanes.

City staff and a task force have looked at several ideas for the corridor, including separating the bike and walking trails from the street. That could mean losing trees



A virtual meeting will be held on June 1 regarding the city's plans to reconstruct Grand Avenue from Snelling to Fairview avenues (shown in red above) in 2024 at a cost of around \$6.9 million.

along Summit, which has drawn objections from homeowners and the Summit Avenue Residential Preservation Association. City staff is emphasizing that no critical decisions have been made at this time regarding green space.

After design ideas are presented to the public, the master plan will go through a review and approval process with the city's Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council. That should wrap up this fall.

No funding for changes is allocated. In the future, the city could seek regional trail funding from the Metropolitan Council.

Public can get in-person look at plans for River Learning Center

Three proposed plans for a Mississippi River Learning Center will be unveiled at an in-person public meeting from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Thursday, June 9, at Watergate Marina, 2500 Crosby Farm Road. Three initial design concepts will be presented, along with a list of guiding design principles. Meeting participants will be encouraged to share their preferences for each alternative.

Some ideas for the plans came from an online meeting in April to discuss center ideas. Attendees are welcome to wear masks, though they are not required.

The River Learning Center is a city-led project combining a mixed-use, river-focused space and a National Park Service headquarters at Crosby Farm Regional Park. The center would serve as a national gateway to the Mississippi with year-round river learning and outdoor recreational experiences on and along the river.

The Great River Passage Conservancy and the city of Saint Paul are working with

New York-based W Architecture & Landscape Architecture to lead the schematic design process.

Schematic design includes site analysis, exploring design concepts, providing a general overview of the River Learning Center's basic features and programming, and getting a general idea of the look and feel of the project.

The group planning the center hopes to have a final design ready for public review in July, with design completion in the fall. Construction hinges on when funding becomes available.

Rodriguez, Wiese to lead city's parks, inspection departments

Two new city department heads have been named by Saint Paul Mayor Melvin Carter. Andy Rodriguez will lead the Department of Parks and Recreation, and Angie Wiese will take the helm at the Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI). Both take over in June.

"From his childhood days to two decades of service as a city employee, Andy has invested a lifetime in our nationally-renowned parks and recreation system," Carter said. "His energy, creativity and vision will benefit our city greatly."

Carter said Wiese has been an "invaluable teammate in our work to support residents and businesses these past two years. I'm thrilled to welcome her into our cabinet."

Rodriguez has worked in parks since 2005, serving in an array of program and management positions, including recreation program supervisor overseeing nine community recreation facilities, and volunteer coordinator for more than 2,000

parks volunteers annually. Since 2019, he has been recreation services manager.

The Saint Paul native took part in parks programs growing up. He is a graduate of Central High School and has a bachelor's degree in urban studies from Augsburg.

For nearly 17 years, Wiese has been championing the health and safety of city residents. She has served as the DSI's interim director, fire safety manager and fire protection engineer, as well as handling public information for the department.

She also served as president of the Fire Marshals Association of Minnesota for eight years and as a board member of the International Code Council since 2018. She has a master's degree in public administration at Hamline University, and a bachelor's in mechanical engineering at Purdue University.

Billy's seeks noise variances for outdoor summer events

Billy's on Grand, 695 Grand Ave., is requesting noise variances in order to have amplified music during a handful of outdoor events this summer. The Summit Hill Association (SHA) will hold a virtual meeting at 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 24, to review the requests with neighbors. The link is at <https://bit.ly/SHA-ZLU>.

The proposed events include celebrating what was being called Grand Days on June 5, Juneteenth on June 19, Freedom Day on July 2, a food truck event on July 23 and Kids' Day on August 20.

A previous request to extend alcohol service into its parking lot for each of these events has been withdrawn.

Billy's request for city liquor and entertainment licenses is still pending. The business is operating under licenses held by the previous owner, as is city practice when a business changes hands. The city's Department of Safety and Inspections has not announced a hearing date. The request will eventually go to the Saint Paul City Council for action.

SHA recommended in April that Billy's not be allowed to stay open until 2 a.m., citing neighborhood concerns about patron behavior and problems in the surrounding neighborhood.

News Briefs were compiled by Jane McClure.





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District Councils

Highland Park

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Garage Fest—Highland Park’s annual garage sale is back this spring. Garage Fest will take place from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Friday and Saturday, June 3-4. People can register their sale by May 26 to be included in promotions of the event. For more information, visit highlanddistrictcouncil.org/events/.

River Learning Center—The city of Saint Paul and the Great River Passage Conservancy will host an in-person meeting from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Thursday, June 9, at Watergate Marina to view and share thoughts on initial design concepts for the River Learning Center. The center will combine a mixed-use, river-focused space with a National Park Service headquarters at Crosby Farm Regional Park.

Blood and donation drives—Blood can be donated by appointment between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Friday, June 17, at the Highland Park Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy. The link to sign up with Memorial Blood Center can be found on the HDC website. The council will also be collecting nonperishable food for Francis Basket food pantry during the same hours.

Movie and bike giveaway—Join the HDC and the Saint Paul Department of Parks and Recreation at the Sibley Manor Apartments, 1300 W. Maynard Drive, on Friday, June 17, for outdoor games, snacks and the showing of the movie *Soul* starting at dusk. A limited number of free bikes and helmets for kids ages 5-10 will be available beginning at 6:30 p.m. on a first-come, first-served basis.

Upcoming meetings—board of directors, including a presentation by the Highland Heritage Project, at 7 p.m. Thursday, June 2. The meeting will take place at the Highland Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy., with an option to join online. Get the Zoom link and agendas by visiting highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar.

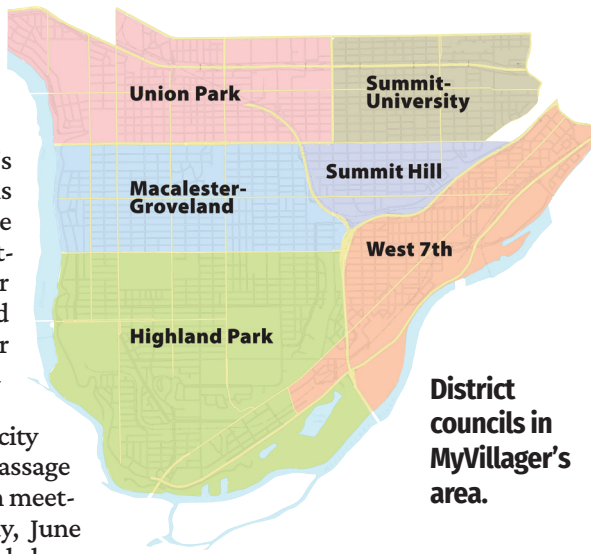
Macalester-Groveland

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Little Free Library tour—The Macalester-Groveland Community Council is conducting a self-guided tour of the Little Free Libraries in the neighborhood from now through June 4. People are encouraged to walk or bike to as many libraries as they can and complete the crossword clue at each one. They can then log the libraries they have visited with the correlating code and submit their logs for a chance to win a prize. A map and library log can be found at macgrove.org/littlefreelibrarytour.

Mac-Grove Fest—The community council is looking for people to participate in the 2022 Mac-Grove Fest on September 10 at the Edgcombe Recreation Center. Possible activities include stage performances and interactive art projects. Artist stipends are available, and the application deadline is June 1. The festival also will include a Makers Market, where local artists and craftspeople can sell their work, and a Business Marketplace, where local businesses and organizations can sell their products, conduct giveaways and provide activities related to their businesses. The registration deadline is July 13. For information, email alyssa@macgrove.org or visit macgrove.org/2022registration.

Office hours—The community council office is now open to the public from 5-6:30 p.m. on Mondays and from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Masks are required.



District councils in MyVillager’s area.

Upcoming meetings—Housing and Land Use Committee on Wednesday, May 25; and board of directors on Thursday, June 9. All meetings will begin at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. For log-in details, visit macgrove.org/participate.

Summit Hill

summithillassociation.org
651-222-1222

SHA’s neighborhood role—The Summit Hill Association’s board of directors has added an article to its website to clarify its role and guide neighbors to the correct city departments if they have concerns about incidents in the neighborhood. Visit SummitHillAssociation.org/news.

Board openings—Volunteers are sought to join the SHA board. The monthly time commitment is one evening board meeting (2 hours) and a committee assignment (1-4 hours). To apply, visit SummitHillAssociation.org/join-the-board.

Upcoming meetings—Development Committee on Wednesday, May 25; and Neighborhood Plan Committee on Tuesday, May 31. For more information and to participate in the 7 p.m. Zoom meetings, visit SummitHillAssociation.org/calendar.

Union Park

unionparkdc.org • 651-645-6887

Micro-grants—The Union Park District Council is accepting applications for 2022 micro-grants. Funds of up to \$400 can be granted. Projects must occur in Union Park and should be activities that foster neighborhood togetherness. Applications will be accepted until June 1. Email wako@unionparkdc.org for more information.

Upcoming meetings—board of directors, 7 p.m. Wednesday, June 1; and Transportation Committee, 6:30 p.m. Monday, June 13. To access the Zoom meetings, visit 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 wako@unionparkdc.org.

West Seventh

fortroadfederation.org
651-298-5599

Blood drive—The West Seventh/Fort Road Federation and the American Red Cross will hold a blood drive from 1-7 p.m. Wednesday, June 1, at Clutch Brewing in the Keg & Case Market, 928 W. Seventh St. Visit RedCrossBlood.org to sign up.

Upcoming meetings—Transportation and Land Use Committee, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 1; and board of directors, 7 p.m. Monday, June 13. The meetings will be held via Zoom. For information, visit fortroadfederation.org/calendar.

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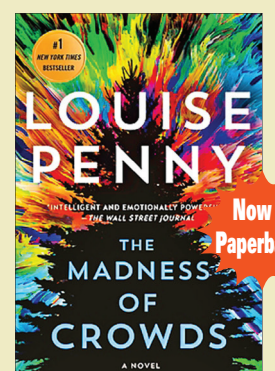
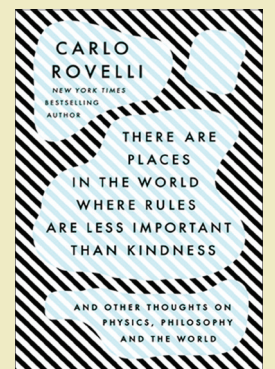
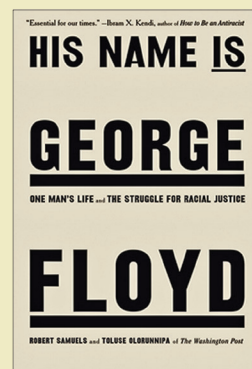
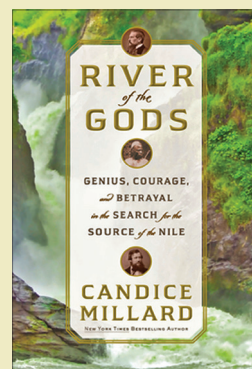
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Crime Report

The following criminal incidents were compiled from Saint Paul and Mendota Heights police reports. For car thefts and more crime reports not mentioned in this print edition, go to MyVillager.com.

Highland Park

Robbery—A carjacking at gunpoint was reported at an apartment on the 1900 block of Ford Parkway on May 17.

Burglary—Highland Collision Center, 2042 W. Seventh St., was broken into on May 11.

Theft—A theft from auto of items valued at more than \$1,000 was reported at Hidden Falls Park on May 4.

—A man and woman reportedly stole a work truck and attached trailer on the 1400 block of Pleasant Avenue on May 6.

—A theft of items valued at more than \$1,000 was reported at Five Guys Burgers and Fries, 2026 Ford Pkwy., on May 6.

—Catalytic converters were reported stolen from vehicles on the 2000 block of Yorkshire Avenue on May 6-7, the 700 block of Mount Curve Boulevard and the 1800 block of Bohland Avenue on May 8, the 1200 block of Hartford Avenue on May 8, the 1300 block of Highland Parkway on May 7-19, and on Scheffer Avenue and Brimhall Street on May 10.

—A known male and female shoplifter stole two shopping carts full of merchandise from Target, 2080 Ford Pkwy., on May 10. The female suspect was arrested for theft and drug possession after trying to flee police, but the male suspect got away.

Assault—A student was reportedly assaulted by another student at Holy Spirit School, 515 S. Albert St., on May 5.

—A vehicle was shot at near Cleveland Avenue and Ford Parkway on May 6.

—A 19-year-old man was arrested for domestic assault and giving false information to police on the 1400 block of Pleasant Avenue on May 10.

Miscellaneous—Three windows were broken at Edgcombe Presbyterian Church, 2149 Edgcombe Road, on May 6-7.

—Highland Park High School, 1015 S. Snelling Ave., reported receiving a voice-mail threat at 5:33 p.m. on Friday, May 6, stating that three bombs would go off in the school in three hours. The school did not listen to the message until Monday, May 9.

—Felony damage to property was reported at Edgcombe Presbyterian Church, 2149 Edgcombe Road, on May 7-8, and at Saint Paul Academy, 1810 Randolph Ave., on May 8-9.

—A woman was arrested for criminal damage to property after reportedly kicking over a moped and for harassing a man on the 1500 block of Saint Paul Avenue on May 12. She was back banging on the walls of his apartment and damaging his vehicle again the next evening.

—Felony damage to property was reported on Hamline and Juno avenues on May 15.

—Someone threw a stone through the door window at Firestone, 2269 Ford Pkwy., on May 16-17.

Lexington-Hamline

Burglary—An apartment burglary was reported on the 1200 block of Marshall Avenue on May 13.

Theft—A theft from auto of items valued at more than \$1,000 was reported at Skyline Tower, 1247 Saint Anthony Ave., on May 8.

—A purse-snatching was reported at HealthPartners, 451 N. Dunlap St., on May 12.

Assault—A mother of a special needs

student said her child was assaulted by staff at Central High School on May 17.

Miscellaneous—Felony damage to property was reported on the 1200 block of Goodrich Avenue on May 5.

—A man was taken to the hospital for evaluation after he was seen on the east side of the Midway Target huffing Endust and drinking alcohol on May 10.

—A man was arrested on an outstanding warrant after he was found slumped over in a vehicle at the Midway Target on May 15.

Macalester-Groveland

Theft—Catalytic converters were reported stolen from vehicles on the 1800 block of Randolph Avenue on May 4, the 1400 block of Fairmount Avenue on May 5, the 1100 block of Juliet Avenue on May 6-8, the 1300 block of Lincoln Avenue on May 7-8, the 2100 block of Goodrich Avenue on May 8, on Howell Street and Sargent Avenue on May 5, the 1200 block of Fairmount on May 7, the 1200 block of Palace Avenue on May 10, and the 1800 block of Berkeley Avenue on May 11-12.

—Two men were found slumped over in a stolen vehicle on the 1600 block of Juliet Avenue on May 10. The 21-year-old male driver was arrested for possession of stolen property.

Miscellaneous—Criminal damage to property was reported at Cinema Ballroom on May 6.

Mendota Heights

Theft—Credit cards and cash were reported stolen from an employee break room on the 700 block of Main Street on May 2.

—Catalytic converters were reported stolen from vehicles on the 2300 block of Nashua Lane and the 1000 block of Northland Drive on May 3, the 1400 block of Northland on May 4, and the 1300 block of Northland and the 1200 block of Centre Pointe Curve on May 6.

—A loaded handgun that turned out to be stolen was found in the woods on Highway 13 and Acacia Drive on May 10.

—A running truck with a loaded gun inside was reported stolen on the 1700 block of Dodd Road on May 12.

Assault—A woman was cited for assault after police responded to a report of a couple arguing on the 700 block of South Plaza Way on May 11.

Miscellaneous—Police saw a suspicious vehicle leave the vicinity of a closed business on the 1600 block of Lilydale Road on May 6. Illegal drugs were recovered and formal charges against the driver and passenger were pending.

Merriam Park

Burglary—A business was burglarized and a vehicle was stolen on the 1700 block of Selby Avenue on May 6.

—Kinder Village Child Care Center, 504 E. Lynnhurst Ave., was burglarized on May 13.

Theft—A gun was reported stolen from a room at the Quality Inn, 1964 University Ave., on May 6.

—Catalytic converters were reported stolen from vehicles on Laurel Avenue and Wilder Street on May 6-7, on Hague Avenue and Pierce Street on May 8, the 1800 block of Portland Avenue on May 11, and the 1900 block of Ashland Avenue on May 15.

—Five males stole a vehicle on Cleveland and Ashland avenues on May 15.

Assault—A man was taken to Regions Hospital after being assaulted by three boys and a girl on the 1800 block of University Avenue when he left the light-rail train platform on May 7.

Miscellaneous—Felony damage to

property was reported at Pelham Boulevard and Myrtle Street on May 8-9.

Snelling-Hamline

Theft—A running vehicle was reported stolen on the 1400 block of Marshall Avenue on May 11.

Assault—A 38-year-old man was identified as the perpetrator of an assault at LA Fitness, 1370 University Ave., on May 9.

Miscellaneous—Felony damage to property was reported at the Holiday Station, 1345 Marshall Ave., on May 9.

—A man was arrested on a felony warrant after he caused a disturbance at Park Liquor, 140 N. Snelling Ave., on May 10.

Summit Hill

Robbery—Freewheel Bike, 799 Grand Ave., was robbed by a suspect who implied he had a knife on May 13.

Theft—A laptop computer and iPad were reported stolen from a vehicle on the 800 block of Grand Avenue on May 4.

—Catalytic converters were reported stolen from vehicles on the 900 block of Fairmount Avenue on May 4-5, the 200 block of South Dunlap Street on May 8, the 700 block of Lincoln Avenue on May 11-12, the 600 block of Summit Avenue on May 11, and the 700 block of Fairmount on May 15.

—A shoplifting loss of items valued at more than \$1,000 was reported at Evereve, 867 Grand Ave., on May 7.

Assault—A woman was reportedly punched and kicked by two other females inside Billy's on Grand, 857 Grand Ave., on May 15. Security personnel broke up the fight and escorted the suspects out of the bar.

Miscellaneous—A 60-year-old man was arrested for DWI after he was found unconscious behind the wheel of his vehicle on May 13 at Victoria Crossing South, 850 Grand Ave.

—Felony damage to property was reported on the 700 block of Summit Avenue on May 13.

—A 27-year-old man was arrested for DWI after being stopped for speeding on Pleasant and Saint Clair avenues on May 15. A 27-year-old male passenger was cited for obstruction for yelling at the officers and getting out of the vehicle when being told multiple times to stay inside.

Summit-University

Robbery—A suspect stole a man's wallet during a strong-arm robbery on May 14 on the 400 block of Dayton Avenue.

Burglary—A residential burglary was reported on the 900 block of Selby Avenue on May 16.

Theft—Catalytic converters were reported stolen from vehicles on the 300 block of Laurel Avenue on May 2-3, and the 900 block of Portland Avenue on May 11.

—An accident that caused injuries involving a stolen vehicle was reported on Summit Avenue and Victoria Street on May 6. A 17-year-old female suspect was evaluated at the hospital and later booked for receiving stolen property, careless driving and driving without a license.

—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from a construction site on the 500 block of Selby Avenue on May 11-12.

—A moped was reported stolen on the 900 block of Selby Avenue on May 13-14.

—A 35-year-old man was arrested for felony possession of stolen property and drugs after he was found slumped in a vehicle in an alley on the 1000 block of Carroll Avenue on May 16.

Assault—A female was taken to Regions Hospital for non-life-threatening injuries

after being shot on the 800 block of Selby Avenue on May 7.

—A girl reportedly received minor injuries during an assault at Carty Park, 705 Iglehart Ave., on May 9.

—A man was the victim of an assault with a dangerous weapon on Avon Street and Concordia Avenue on May 16.

Weapons—Four large bullet holes were discovered in a vehicle that had been parked on the 1000 block of Hague Avenue on May 10-20.

—A shell casing was found in a driveway after gunfire was reported on the 900 block of Carroll Avenue on May 10.

Miscellaneous—Officers were called to the Dale Street Place apartments, 313 N. Dale St., on May 9 regarding a suspect who was pouring lighter fluid on victims. The suspect was taken to the hospital for a mental health evaluation.

—Felony damage to property was reported on the 600 block of Portland Avenue on May 12-13.

West End

Burglary—A break-in of a unit at Public Storage, 875 Montreal Way, was reported on May 6.

Theft—Catalytic converters were reported stolen from vehicles on the 400 block of Saint Clair Avenue on May 5-6, the 1100 block of Elway Street on May 7-8, the 700 block of Bayard Avenue on May 7-8, and on Drake Street and Juno Avenue on May 10.

—Police received a report of a person stealing copper wire on James and Randolph avenues on May 7.

—A suspect stole money from the cash register of a smoke shop at 201 W. Seventh St. on May 9.

—A man was seen stealing copper wire from light poles near the High Bridge dog park on Randolph Avenue on May 14.

Assault—A woman reported being assaulted by a suspect who took indecent liberties with her at the Holiday Inn, 175 W. Seventh St., on May 8.

—A 36-year-old woman was arrested for felony assault and obstructing the legal process on May 7 in an apartment on the 500 block of West Seventh Street.

—A person was taken to the hospital after reportedly being shot in the hand and leg in an apartment on the 200 block of Wilkin Street on May 9.

—A man reported being punched in the face by a suspect on West Seventh and Chestnut streets on May 15.

—A 37-year-old man was arrested for assault after he reportedly spit at a female when she was entering the Downtown-er Woodfire Grill, 253 W. Seventh St., on May 15.

—A 28-year-old woman was arrested for domestic assault, obstruction, providing a false name and an outstanding warrant after she was found with another person slumped over in a vehicle on the 1100 block of Pleasant Avenue on May 17.

Miscellaneous—Officers responded to a report of a man down in an alley on the 900 block of Juno Avenue and arrested a 35-year-old man for drug possession on May 6.

—A male reportedly threw a rock through a window causing felony damage to My Darling Bridal, 277 W. Seventh St., on May 6.

—Damage to property was reported on the 100 block of Forbes Avenue on May 7, and at the Highland Nursery, 1742 W. Seventh St., on May 8.

—A male suspect was seen breaking windows at the former Freedom House, 296 W. Seventh St., on May 12.

ON THE TOWN

Out of the ashes

Composed during COVID: Jeff Ray & the Stakes release 'In the Fire'

By Carolyn Walkup

Guitarist Jeff Ray and harmonica player "Hurricane" Harold Tremblay met in 2009 when Ray was playing a solo gig at J.S. Bean Factory on Randolph Avenue. "I heard him and asked him to be on my show," recalled Tremblay, host of the long-running weekly blues and roots radio show "House Party" on public radio station KFAI.

The two formed a duo and recorded their first album, the bluesy "Carriage House Sessions," in 2011. They entered the Minnesota Blues Society's Road to Memphis competition and won in the duo category. That led to a performance at the annual International Blues Competition in Memphis. Soon after, they joined with Mikkel Beckmen on percussion and washboard and Nick Salisbury on electric bass and foot shaker to form the band Jeff Ray & the Stakes.

Jeff Ray & the Stakes will celebrate the release of their new album, "In the Fire," in concert on June 9 at the Hook & Ladder

The release party for "In the Fire" will be held from 7-10 p.m. Thursday, June 9, at the Hook & Ladder in Minneapolis. Jeff Ray & the Stakes will play first, followed by the Pistol Whipping Party Penguins.

Theater in South Minneapolis. The album is their first since "Valhalla" in 2015. It features 11 songs of roots and bluegrass music, nine of which were written by Ray.

Ray, a Highland Park resident whose real name is Jeff Digre, plays finger-style and resonator guitar. He wrote the nine songs during the pandemic when he and the band had nowhere to play except their front yards.

Tremblay, who lives in Macalester-Groveland, described the original compositions as a collaborative effort. Ray introduces the songs, but the rest of the band "fleshes them out," he said. There is a lot of improvisation involved, which seems to work well for the quartet.

While the band has fun playing together, most of the songs on "In the Fire" have serious messages. The track "Hard Times," for example, is a reflection on the impacts of the pandemic as well as the civil unrest that followed the murder of George Floyd in May of 2020.

Ray, who works as a pharmacist at Cub Foods on University Avenue, said his pharmacy was the only one in that Midway neighborhood that was spared in the riots. Nearby Lloyd's Pharmacy was burned to the ground, and the



Jeff Ray and "Hurricane" Harold Tremblay jammed in Ray's Highland Park home in preparation for Jeff Ray & the Stakes' album release show on June 9 at the Hook and Ladder. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

CVS Pharmacy at University and Snelling avenues was badly damaged.

"We evacuated (Cub Foods) as the riots started," Ray recalled. "At the same time, people were dying from COVID. It was pretty intense."

Most of Ray's songs have positive messages. Some are related to his appreciation of nature and his philosophy about life. "I dabble in Buddhism and meditation and reflect on existence and the world," he said.

Instrumental guitar and harmonica solos are featured on almost all of the tracks. Bluegrass predominates, though British folk, rock and world music with an East Indian edge can also be heard on the album.

Tremblay retired a year ago from his long-time job in letterpress and specialty printing. He now has more time to devote to music, including emceeing a weekly program of national and regional bands at the 331 Club in Minneapolis and recruiting top Twin Cities talent for his All Star Blues Revues at several local venues.

Beckmen has played and recorded with

many local musicians, including Charlie Parr, Mike Munson and Pat Donohue. Salisbury is a full-time musician who recently toured Germany with the band Brian Fallon & the Howling Weather.

Ray said his band is best showcased at listening rooms and auditoriums rather than in bars. They perform all over the Twin Cities area and in other parts of the state.

Tremblay and Ray will be playing together at the Smokin in Steele BBQ & Blues Festival on Friday, June 3, in Owatonna. Beckmen and Ray have a duo gig from 5-7 p.m. Thursday, June 23, at the Dubliner on University Avenue and Vandalia Street.

The release party for "In the Fire" will be held from 7-10 p.m. Thursday, June 9, at Hook & Ladder, 3010 Minnehaha Ave. S. in Minneapolis. Jeff Ray & the Stakes will play first, followed by the bluegrass band the Pistol Whipping Party Penguins. Tickets are \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door, \$25 for reserved front-row seats.

For more information and a copy of the album, visit jeffraymusic.com.



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ON THE TOWN *Briefly*

Music

Bach Tage (Bach Day), the 15th annual celebration of the music of J.S. Bach, will be presented on June 4 and 5 at Mount Olive Lutheran Church, 3045 Chicago Ave. S. in Minneapolis. The two-day convocation will feature two free public concerts. The magic of three voices will be highlighted at 4 p.m. Saturday in a concert featuring soprano Heather Cogswell, baroque flutist David Ross, cellist Tulio Rondon, violinist Marc Levine and harpsichordist Tami Morse. Bach's Cantata 78 and Pachelbel's Magnificat will be performed by the Bach Tage orchestra and chorus with guest soloists, conductor Kathleen Romey and organist David Cherwien at 4 p.m. Sunday, June 5.

Theater

Runestone! A Rock Musical, the larger-than-life story of a Minnesota farmer caught in the whirlwind of an ever-growing myth, is playing through May 29 at History Theatre, 30 E. 10th St. The new play by Mark Jensen with music by Gary Rue is the true story of Swedish immigrant Olof Ohman, who in 1898 dug up a rock on his farm near Kensington that contained carved runes indicating that the Vikings were in Minnesota centuries before Columbus. Tickets are \$15-\$65, and streaming will be available. Visit historytheatre.com or call 651-292-4320.

Airness, playwright Chelsea Marcantel's comedy about the world of competitive air guitar playing, is playing through June 5 on the proscenium stage at Park Square Theatre, 20 W. Seventh Place. Call 651-291-7005 or visit parksquaretheatre.org.

Mikell Sapp will present his one-man autobiographical show, *Charlie Black*, from May 28 through June 12 at Pillsbury House Theatre, 3501 Chicago Ave. S. in Minneapolis. The comical and heartfelt drama tells of the trials and triumphs of a young Black man from Alabama striving to find his place as a theater artist in Minnesota. Show times are 8 p.m. May 28, June 1-4 and 8-11 and 5:30 p.m. May 29, June 5 and 12. For ticket information, visit pillsburyhouseandtheatre.org.

A madcap comedy inspired by the earliest stirrings of the gay rights movement, *Perfect Arrangement* will open on June 3 at Theatre in the Round, 245 Cedar Ave. S. in Minneapolis. Set in 1950, the play by Topher Payne tells of two State Department employees who have been tasked with identifying sexual deviants within their ranks. The problem is, they are gay and have married each other's partners as cover. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays through June 26. Tickets are \$25, \$20 for students and seniors. Call 612-333-3010 or visit theatreintheround.org.

The Roommate, a dark comedy by Jen Silverman about an empty-nester who takes in a Bronx lodger sight unseen, will be performed June 3-19 at Mixed Blood Theatre, 1501 S. Fourth St. in Minneapolis. Greta Oglesby and Alison Edwards star as an unlikely pair of women who in sharing pieces of their past discover what it takes to reroute your life and what happens when the wheels come off. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Tickets are \$20-\$32. Visit primeprods.org.

Twelve Angry Men, a musical version of the courtroom drama about jury deliberations in the trial of an alleged murderer, will open on June 11 at Theater Latté Da's Ritz Theater, 345 13th Ave. NE

in Minneapolis. Peter Rothstein directs the production, which was adapted from the play by Reginald Rose and features music and lyrics by Michael Holland. Curtis Bannister, T. Mychael Rambo, James Detmar and Bradley Greenwald star. Following previews on June 8-10, 33 evening and matinee performances are scheduled. Tickets start at \$35. Call 612-339-3003 or visit latteda.org.

Film

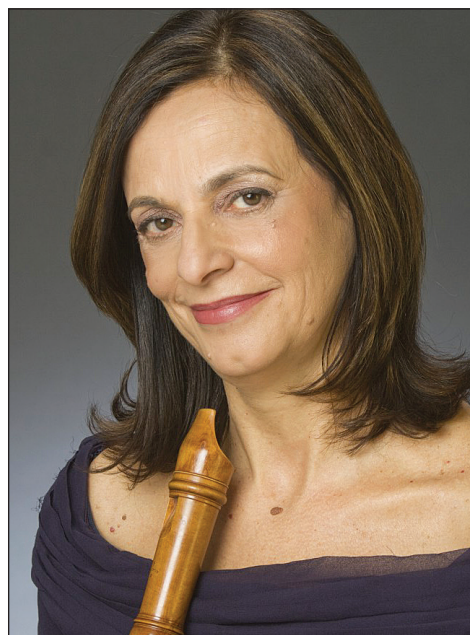
The Minnesota Cuban Film Festival will light up the big screen at 7 p.m. Thursdays, May 26 through June 30, at the MSP Film Society's Saint Anthony Main Theatre, 115 Main St. SE in Minneapolis. The schedule includes *Canción de Barrio (Neighborhood Song)*, a documentary about Silvio Rodríguez's tour of Cuban neighborhoods; *La Emboscada (The Ambush)*, a drama about a standoff between four Cuban soldiers and counterrevolutionary forces in Angola; *Cuba in Africa*, a documentary about the 420,000 Cuban soldiers, teachers, doctors and nurses who gave everything to end colonial rule and apartheid in southern Africa; *El Mayor (The Major)*, a drama about Cuban revolutionary Ignacio Agramonte y Loynaz (1841-1873); *Los Hermanos (The Brothers)*, a documentary about Cuban-born brothers living on opposite sides of a geopolitical divide; *El Último Balseiro (The Last Rafter)*, a drama about a young Cuban who risks his life crossing the Florida straits to search for his father in Miami; and *Volverán los abrazos (I'll hold you again)*, a documentary about the Cuban doctors who have fought the coronavirus pandemic. For reservations, call 612-824-6109 or visit facebook.com/MNCubanFilmFestival.

Exhibits

Minnesota Center for Book Arts, 1011 Washington Ave. S. in Minneapolis, will display the works of its own artist collective from May 26 through July 30. Featured book artists include Robyn Awend, Julie Bagnet, Celeste Brosenne, Megan Burchett, Marjorie Fedyszyn, Wendy Fernstrum, Robin Garwood, Genevieve Lapp, Jessie Merriam, Raven Miller, Bridget O'Malley, August Schultz, Christopher Selleck, Richard Stephens and Ben Weaver. An opening reception is scheduled from 6-8 p.m. Thursday, May 26. Admission is free. To RSVP, visit mnbookarts.org.

Historic Fort Snelling will reopen on Memorial Day weekend with a new visitor center, rehabbed cavalry barracks, expanded interpretive displays, Indigenous landscapes, scenic paths and stunning river overlooks. See the \$34.5 million in recent improvements to the Minnesota Historical Society's premier site. New exhibits relate the history of this place where the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers meet. In addition to the fort's century and a half as a U.S. Army post, the displays address the area's long history as home to the Dakota, Ojibwe and other Native Americans. Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday through Monday, May 28-30, and 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays during the rest of the summer. Admission is \$12, \$10 for seniors and college students and active military, \$8 for children ages 5-17. Visit mnhs.org or call 612-726-1171.

Walking tours of the historic areas in and around downtown Saint Paul will be offered at 10 a.m. Wednesdays in June, July and August. Led by the Landmark Center Volunteer Association, the tours



'Venice of the North.' Recorder player Cléa Galhano will join Lyra Baroque Orchestra in concerts at 5:30 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday, June 11, in Sundin Hall, 1531 Hewitt Ave. The "Venice of the North" program will feature a concerto by Mancini based on a sonata for recorder and basso continuo by Dutch composer Wim ten Have, along with works by Albinoni, Bernardi, Locatelli and Vivaldi. Tickets are \$5-\$30. Visit lyrabaroque.org.

are free with pre-registration. The schedule includes It Happened Right Here: Saint Paul's Origins Tour, conducted by storyteller J.B. Eckert on the first Wednesday of each month beginning at the Robert Street entrance to Kellogg Park; the Rice Park Tour beginning at Landmark Center on the second Wednesday of each month; and the Great River Tour beginning at Upper Landing Park on the third Wednesday of each month. The Rice Park and Great River tours are also available virtually. For reservations, visit landmarkcenter.org or call Sydney at 651-292-3063.

Books

SubText Books, 6 W. Fifth St., will present a virtual discussion with Stephanie Trudeau, editor of Anthony Scaduto's Bob Dylan biography, *The Dylan Tapes*, at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 26; and an in-person discussion with Andrea Gilats, author of *After Effects: A Memoir of Complicated Grief*, at 7 p.m. Thursday, June 2, at the Jewish Community Center, 1375 Saint Paul Ave. Both programs are free. Call 651-493-2791 or visit subtextbooks.com.

Family

The Teddy Bear Band will present a free show from 6-6:45 p.m. Wednesday, June 1, in Mendakota Park, located off Dodd Road and Highway 62 in Mendota Heights.

The Flint Hills Family Festival returns to downtown Saint Paul on June 3 and 4 with scores of free and low-cost performances. Featured in the Ordway Concert Hall or the adjacent Landmark Center will be Cirque Mechanics in *Birdhouse Factory* at 6 p.m. Friday and 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Saturday; Shapeshift in *Be Your Own Superhero* at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Saturday; and Artistry in *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical* at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. Saturday. Tickets for these shows are \$8. More than 50 free performances will be presented on Friday evening and all day Saturday in Rice Park, in front of the Ordway or on Landmark Plaza. Performers include Squonk Opera, Chicks on Sticks, Afrocontigbo, Dao Lan Dance, drumHeart, Enso Daiko, Katha Dance Theatre, DJ Digie, DJ Huh? What?!, Kalpulli Yaocenoxtli, Los Alegres Bailadores, Natyakala Dance, House of Dance, Native

Pride Dancers, Salsa del Soul, Siama's Congo Roots, Nunnabove, magicians Kristoffer Olson and Markus Klegg, Todd 'n' Tina and the Unicycling Unicorn. Free art activities, face painting and balloon artistry will also be in abundance. Food trucks and a beer garden will be available. For information, visit ordway.org/festival.

Juneteenth, a commemoration of the end of slavery in the American South in 1865, will be celebrated with live music, art exhibits, a story stroll and food trucks from 11:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, June 11, outside of Latimer Library, 90 W. Fourth St. Thomasina Petrus, Junauda Petrus-Nasah and Lance Brunius will be among the performers. Call 651-266-7000.

Et cetera

Kickoff to Summer, a five-day event with 31 State Fair food and beverage vendors and live entertainment on three stages, will be held from May 26-30 at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds. Children's activities, Trivia Mafia, board and yard games, specialty shopping and Memorial Day programs will also be featured. Attendance is limited. Timed tickets are \$12.50, free for children age 4 and under. Hours are 4:30-9:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. and 4:30-9:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, and 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Monday. Visit mnstatefair.org or call 651-288-4427.

Two free courses in mindfulness meditation will be offered this summer by Highland Park resident Diane Rubright of Compassion Within LLC. Four 90-minute classes will be held on Wednesdays, June 1-22 or June 29-July 20. They meet three times by Zoom and a final time outdoors as a group. They are part of Rubright's participation in a meditation certification program. For information or to register, contact her at drdianerubright@aol.com or 612-723-0569.

Safe Passage for Children will hold its spring open house from 3-8 p.m. Saturday, June 4, at the Highland Picnic Pavilion, 1200 Montreal Ave. Learn more about this child welfare organization and enjoy food, beverages, live music, games and a silent auction. To RSVP, visit safepassageforchildren.org by May 28.

"What the World Needs Now," the Northern Spark arts festival, will be held from 9 p.m.-2 a.m. June 11-12 on University Avenue and downtown in Saint Paul. Featured at each location will be the following: Victoria Theater Arts Center, 825 University Ave.—the interactive puppet show *Drive-In Movie Extravaganza*, the interactive *Post Office for the Ancestors*, and community panel painting; Springboard for the Arts, 262 University Ave.—Mangoes are Memories soundscape, improvisational shadow puppetry of the Bureau of Lost Things, an interactive exhibit of traditional Hmong embroidery, Frogtown Neighborhood Association's theater-of-the-oppressed performance about the politics of displacement, the weaving of a community tapestry, and the audiovisual Waves in the Night vampire dance club; Rondo Library, 461 N. Dale St.—"Rooted in Rondo," a documentary exploring the past, present and future of Saint Paul's Rondo neighborhood; and the Minnesota Museum of American Art, 450 N. Robert St.—guided tours of the Mestizaje: Intermix-Remix exhibit and screenprint-making. Northern Spark will close with an art installation of song, visual storytelling and movement celebrating the Mississippi River from 2-5:30 a.m. on Raspberry Island. Visit northern.lights.mn.

SPORTS



The Wright Call

By Dave Wright

Boys' volleyball vote fails despite spike in interest

Adding boys' volleyball as a high school varsity sport should be easy to do—at least in theory. There's little dispute that volleyball has become a popular addition to boys' athletics. In a relatively short time, club teams have popped up all across the state. The Minnesota Boys High School Volleyball Association lists 55 teams playing this spring. Central has a team in the East Conference. (The governor's son, Tim, is a member.) Minnehaha Academy, which is part of a cooperative team with Great River Academy, is competing in the same conference. Junior Olympic volleyball enrollment is growing as well.

As was the case when girls' hockey started up as a high school sport, coaches like Kim Benka, who guides Minnehaha's girls' volleyball, have stepped up to provide guidance and advice for the boys' club players who compete at the Redhawks' gym.

Nearly every high school in the state has a girls' volleyball team that plays in the fall. Thus, having the boys play in the spring when no other indoor sports are scheduled shouldn't be a problem. Unfortunately, there were just enough question marks raised concerning the move that only 31 members—one less than was needed for passage—of the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) Representative Assembly voted in favor of it at the last meeting. As a result, boys' volleyball advocates went away disappointed—for the third time.

"There are always people who see ghosts in their job," said Minnehaha athletic director Josh Thurow, who voted in favor of adding boys' volleyball. "I think the potential cost scares them. But if it had passed, we'd have found the money to make it work."

Money is tight in many schools and high school athletic directors can only stretch their allotment so much. All of them will have to find the cash to install shot clocks for basketball next winter. Coming up with funds to pay for coaches, officials, buses, uniforms, etc., for boys' volleyball was viewed as an added expense some schools felt they couldn't afford. After all, there's only so much money a school can gain from fundraisers.

For some larger schools, fatigue and staff shortages were also a concern. One athletic director said, "We're beat up after a long winter. In addition, with the poor weather in April, the gyms got a lot of use anyway. Adding

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Redhawks are pleasant surprise in softball

By Bill Wagner

Coach Meghan Thurow knew she was in the minority in her belief early on that the Minnehaha Academy softball team would be greatly improved this spring. So she might be justified if she's inclined to muster up a little "I told you so."

"I might have been the only one who thought that before the start of the year," said Thurow, who can laugh about it now.

She certainly has had plenty to be cheerful about. With the regular season winding down and the Section 4AA playoffs ahead, the Redhawks were a solid 11-4 overall and 8-2 in the Independent Metro Athletic Conference, good for second place behind undefeated Mounds Park Academy.

Both of Minnehaha's conference losses were to the Panthers, though one was a tight 12-11 affair that could have gone either way. That could bode well should the Redhawks run once again into Mounds Park, currently ranked among the top 10 teams in the state in AA. The Panthers are the top seed in the Section 4AA playoffs, which run from May 19-June 2.

Thurow knew she had some highly skilled players going into 2022, with six seniors returning and significant talent in the younger classes. She figured she had good hitting and decent team speed, and was hoping there would be a serious upgrade in pitching and defense. It all came together famously.

"We've had some girls who really stepped up," Thurow said.

She was particularly right about the hitting. Through



Minnehaha's star pitcher, senior Payton Glenn. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

May 15, Minnehaha had scored some 160 runs in 15 games. However, it's the pitching and defense that have really improved.

Senior pitcher Payton Glenn might not throw the hardest, but she gets the ball over the plate and allows the Redhawk defense to do its job. Glenn had a 9-4 record and 3.30 ERA as this was written, logging the overwhelming majority of the team's innings.

Behind the plate is freshman catcher Mara Jimenez, who's been hitting .500 out of the leadoff spot. She "catches everything," Thurow said.

Overall, the Redhawks have some real offensive guns. "We can hit," Thurow said. "We've had patient at-bats and we're hard to

pitch against."

Minnehaha did have to weather a major setback this spring. Gifted senior center fielder Caroline McHugh recently suffered a torn hand ligament diving for a ball and is out for the season. Thurow said McHugh had all-state potential, but senior Lydia Schroeder shifted from right to center and has done a fine job filling in.

The other Redhawk position players have all done their parts as well. At first is junior Camryn Thurow, the coach's sister, who was batting a sizzling .596 out of the No. 3 spot.

At second is senior Penny Sedgwick, who was hitting .439 at the No. 2 spot. She can steal bases after getting on with her solid

contact hitting.

At short is sophomore Maddie Ciccarelli, whose .500 batting average and ability to hit for power earned her the cleanup spot.

Playing third is junior Abby Theisen, who bats fifth and has lightning-quick reflexes at the hot corner.

Junior Danae Goree moved from designated player to right field and has been filling in well. Senior Annika Benson shows fine glove work and speed in left. Senior Ella Quale is now the designated player.

The Redhawks have shown they can handle most teams this spring, but Thurow pointed to two wins against Saint Agnes for their special significance. The first was a 7-4 victory at Minnehaha in which the Redhawks gained more confidence as the contest wore on. "We just knew we'd win it," Thurow said.

The second was a 7-3 triumph at Saint Agnes, which featured a cameo appearance by McHugh. Her hand injury prevents her from doing anything but bunt and she laid down a perfectly placed single to start a rally that climaxed when Jimenez hit a grand-slam.

"Our girls won that game for Caroline," Thurow said.

The coach is more than a little charged when she thinks about her club's chances in the postseason, which incidentally was set to begin on May 21 against Saint Agnes. She noted that the Redhawks seem to play better when they're fired up.

"It always comes down to the energy we have when we step onto the field," Thurow said.



Central's Cole Spitzer (10) is congratulated by teammates after hitting a solo home run in a 10-2 win over Highland Park on May 5. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Central's Spitzer sizzles on mound

By Bill Wagner

Central junior Cole Spitzer might just be the best high school pitcher in the state few people have heard of. But like anything else, if you're good enough you don't stay unknown forever.

The 5-foot-10, 180-pound lefty has a fastball that tops out at 88 mph. He also throws a curve, slider and changeup. Through May 18 he had a miniscule 0.39 ERA, which ranked among the best in the state, over 35⅓ innings pitched. He also had recorded 72 strikeouts, second most in the state, while allowing only 16 hits and giving up just 15 walks.

He's 2-1 this year, with nothing but quality starts. That includes a complete-game shutout against a talented Highland Park

team in early May in which he fanned 15 batters. "The last time I faced them I struggled with my command," Spitzer recalled. "This year I threw mostly fastballs in the game."

Central coach Adam Hunkins doesn't hold back when asked about the performance of his pitching ace. "He's been fantastic," he said. "He just pounds the strike zone. He gets all of our tough games, and he knows it."

Hunkins served up the major reason why Spitzer has gone unheralded. "Our conference doesn't get a whole lot of respect," he said.

It's true that inner-city baseball has taken it on the chin in recent years, as better-

15-4 WRIGHT CALL

volleyball games would have meant longer days for all.”

For some smaller schools, the issue is more than money. The worry was that if volleyball was played in the spring, it might take some athletes away from baseball and track teams that need all the bodies they can get. Another fear was if one school offered volleyball and another didn't, the latter could lose students who transfer.

In some cases, a boys' volleyball team would have required forming a cooperative entity with another school. Though that has worked out in sports like football and hockey, it's tricky coming up with a site that everybody agrees on.

Title IX is another potential problem. “If we add boys' volleyball, do we have to add something for girls?” one athletic director asked.

Thurrow acknowledged all the concerns, but said the advantages outweigh the potential issues. He noted that boys' volleyball is very popular in the state's growing Asian American community.

Indeed, Como Park athletic director Koua Yang was one of the leaders of the charge to add the sport. “If we value something, we include it in the budget,” he told reporters. “If we value something in the league, we include it in the league. Obviously we don't value boys' volleyball, according to this vote.”

Lindsey Weaver, who coaches Minnehaha's co-op team, is all in on the subject of boys' volleyball. “We had

35 players at tryouts and kept 30 on the roster,” she said. “We have six kids from Highland Park and one from Saint Paul Academy involved.”

Weaver, who is an assistant volleyball coach at Macalester, coached prep boys overseas in Japan and the Czech Republic before returning to the Twin Cities. She has been involved in the boys' game since leagues started in 2018. “The number of players involved have jumped from 80 to around 1400,” she said.

Weaver noted a key part of the proposed legislation was that the sport would start in the 2023-24 school year, thus giving administrators plenty of time to get ready. “The people who fought for this did all the right things. There are students involved who don't play any other sport,” she said. “It's the right thing to do for the kids.”

Another sign of growth is summer boys' volleyball leagues are starting to pop up around the Twin Cities. “The momentum is exponential,” Weaver said.

MSHSL executive director Erich Martens said he understands the dismay of the boys' volleyball advocates, but his hands are tied. The league's bylaws state that only the 48-person Representative Assembly can authorize the move of a sport to varsity status.

Saint Kate's extends championship spring

It was a busy and extremely successful sports season at Saint Catherine University this spring. It actually started last October when the Wildcats rallied from a

slow start to win the MIAC women's golf championship by 15 strokes over Gustavus Adolphus. It was their second straight conference title. Their reward was a berth in the NCAA Division III team championships in Houston earlier this month.

Eight months is a long time to wait. The Wildcats spent a lot of time practicing indoors, but escaped to Saint Louis and Illinois for a pair of tournaments in early April. Minnesota's fickle spring weather left the Wildcats with two tournaments on local soil before heading to a warmer climate.

Saint Kate's was seeded 15th in the 29-team field and finished right where it was projected, saving its best day on the course for its last. It ended up with a score of 1,258 over the four days of competition.

The future looks bright for SCU golf. Greta McArthur, the Wildcats' low scorer at nationals with a 46th-place finish overall, and Kyra Venner, who was the team's fourth-lowest scorer, are just freshmen.

School may be out for the summer, but SCU junior tennis player Kelsey Dorr still has work to do. The Princeton, Minnesota, native went 13-2 playing No. 1 singles and earned an invitation to the NCAA women's individual tennis championships on May 27-29 in Orlando. It's her second straight trip to nationals. Last year, she won a first-round match, but lost in the round of 32.

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

15-4 CENTRAL'S SPITZER

funded and more visible suburban and outstate programs have developed better players. But Hunkins quickly added, “That has nothing to do with Cole.”

Heading into the final week of the regular season, Central was 8-5 overall and on top of the Saint Paul City Conference with an 8-0 record. And Spitzer is a big reason why.

Spitzer can bring the heat and can generally put the ball anywhere he wants to. He knows he'll probably need to fill out through weight-training and other con-

ditioning for him to pitch successfully in college. But he said strength isn't the only thing a pitcher needs.

“I try to use the ground really well,” he said. “You just try to move your body the right way to get everything you have into each pitch.”

While many young pitchers shy away from throwing the slider because it can injure their arms more easily, Spitzer doesn't feel that way. To throw a good slider, he said, you have to grip the ball and then pull down on it as if closing a shade. “You just need to find the safest way to throw it,” he said.

Spitzer never really thought much about being a pitcher as a youngster playing ball in the Highland Groveland Recreation Association. Then one day when he was about 8 years old, “I just volunteered for it,” he said. He credits his father for helping him hone his throwing technique.

Spitzer started pitching for Central last year when he was one of only two sophomores to make the varsity squad. He's been so good since that he's earned himself a personal catcher, Peyton Vang, who is the only one who can handle his stuff. Spitzer said he and Vang are always on the same page.

“Peyton really knows how to call a game and he's very athletic behind the plate,” Spitzer said.

Spitzer recently was offered a college scholarship to a Division I university. He's grateful for the offer, but that's not to say he doesn't look forward to many more as he looks ahead to his senior year.

When Spitzer isn't pitching, he's more than capable of swinging a bat. He was hitting almost .400 through May 18. He can also play outfield and serve as designated hitter when he's not pitching.

“I'm just a guy who likes to run around and have fun on the ballfield,” he said.

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Click through the Classifieds @ MyVillager.com

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PART-TIME MAINTENANCE/Custodial help needed for Condominium building in Highland Park. Call for more details, 651-690-3400. AGE 55+ WORKERS needed for PT light custodial work at the Fort Snelling State Park. Contact Green View at 651-639-1913.

SMALL DOG WALKER NEEDED. Experienced, dependable and reliable dog walker needed for daily walks twice a day. Highland Park area, West 7th Street area. Start today! Call Joanne, 651-398-3753. Wanted immediately.

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Customer Service/Sales Representative. PT. Seeking enthusiastic and sharp cust. service rep. for a local flower shop. Rep. will work 1-3 days per week and at least one Saturday per month. Flexible schedule but must be able to work beyond the summer and additional hours prior to floral holidays. Apply in person to: Ann at A. Johnson & Sons Florist, 1738 Grand Ave., St. Paul. 651-695-3225.

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STATE OF MINNESOTA CERTIFICATE OF ASSUMED NAME, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 333C. The filing of an assumed name does not provide a user with exclusive rights to that name. The filing is required for consumer protection in order to enable consumers to be able to identify the true owner of a business. 1. List the exact assumed name under which the business is or will be conducted: **Ralph St. Pierre** 2. List the Principal Place of Business: **C/o Schenck Avenue, Brooklyn, NY [11207] USA** 3. List the name and complete street address of all persons conducting business under the above Assumed Name, OR if an entity, provide the legal corporate, LLC, or Limited Partnership name and registered office address: **Ralph St. Pierre; C/o Schenck Avenue, Brooklyn, NY [11207] USA** 4. By typing my name, I, the undersigned, certify that I am signing this document as the person whose signature is required, or as agent of the person(s) whose signature would be required who has authorized me to sign this document on his/her behalf, or in both capacities. I further certify that I have completed all required fields, and that the information in this document is true and correct and in compliance with the applicable chapter of Minnesota Statutes. I understand that by signing this document I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Section 609.48 as if I had signed this document under oath. **Date filed:** April 20, 2022 **Signed by:** Ralph St. Pierre **Mailing Address:** None Provided **Email for Official Notices:** saint.ra718@gmail.com

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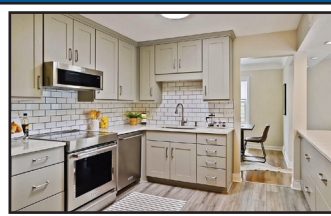
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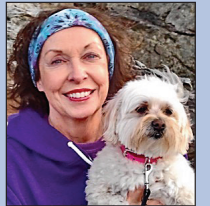


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