

## Growing demand for THC has cities looking at ways to regulate products

By Jane McClure

Edible products and beverages containing THC are now legal in Minnesota, creating long lines and crowded stores, and making both manufacturers and distributors scramble to keep up with the demand. The new state law, which took effect on July 1, also has city officials throughout Minnesota looking at how they should regulate sales of the products.

THC is an abbreviation for tetrahydrocannabinol. It is the ingredient in cannabis that causes a person to get high.

Minnesotans age 21 and older can now buy edibles and beverages containing up to 5 mg of THC per serving and 50 mg per package. Packages must be tamperproof and childproof. Packaging is also restricted so that it does not appeal to children.

While gummy candies are a popular THC product, breweries have also announced that they will produce seltzers with THC.

Nothing But Hemp, 844 Grand Ave., and its sister stores in four other Minnesota cities have seen a steady flow of customers wanting the new products. "It really hasn't stopped," said CEO Steven Brown. "We can't keep up with the demand."

Nothing But Hemp sells an array of hemp

NEW THC LAW ▶ 2



**No strings attached.** Open Eye Figure Theatre presented *Tucker's Robot* outside the Highland Park Community Center on July 14. Among those watching the puppet show were Kathleen Anderson and her 3-year-old twins, Henry and Charlie. PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER



## Deep divisions remain in rent control debate

To amend or not to amend, that is question facing city

By Jane McClure

Reaching an agreement on a package of amendments to Saint Paul's new rent control ordinance may be as difficult for the City Council as it was for the Rent Stabilization Stakeholders Group. Following four months of meetings this spring, the 41-member group released a 301-page report earlier this month. If comments at a July 13 public hearing are any indication, deep divisions remain.

B Rosas, a member of the Stakeholders Group, was highly critical of the process. "I felt like there was total disrespect for renters," Rosas said. According to her, the City Council should respect what Saint Paul voters approved in last November's referendum and not amend the ordinance.

B Kyle, president and CEO of the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, said that her organization continues to oppose rent control in any form. She cited the city's 50-plus percent decline in building permits for new multi-family housing in recent months.

Saint Paul voters approved one of the

RENT CONTROL AMENDMENTS ▶ 3

## UST drops hockey arena from Highland sports complex plan

By Jane McClure

The University of Saint Thomas is no longer considering a hockey arena as part of its plans for building a sports complex at the Highland Bridge development on the site of Ford Motor Company's former assembly plant. However, new softball and baseball fields are still on the table, according to an email sent by university officials to students and staff on July 6.

The email stated that "the university has been exploring multiple off-campus sites in Saint Paul to support its hockey, baseball and softball programs" following a suc-

cessful first year competing at the Division I level. However, after further assessment, it has been determined the "Highland Bridge site is no longer a viable option for a future hockey facility, primarily due to financial considerations."

The university's email goes on to say it is continuing to evaluate other sites for a hockey arena and will share that information as its plans develop.

UST has been working with Highland Bridge master developer Ryan Companies to build a sports complex on a 23-acre site located on and adjacent to the Canadian Pacific Railway yard at the southeast corner of the former Ford site. The plans had

called for a hockey arena with a second sheet of ice for practices, baseball and softball fields, an indoor practice facility and a parking ramp.

It is unknown where the university would build a 4,500-seat hockey arena. The Tommies currently play at Saint Thomas Academy's ice arena in Mendota Heights.

Neighborhood reaction to the sports complex has been mixed. Some people have said they would welcome facilities that could be shared with youth and high school teams. Matt Anfang, a Highland Park resident and parent of three daughters who have played hockey, said that

two additional sheets of ice could ease the crunch on existing arenas.

"As a hockey parent, I was 100 percent behind the idea," he said. According to him, tight scheduling at existing rinks means some practices and games need to be held early in the morning or late at night. "Everyone is scrambling for premium ice time," he said.

Some neighbors oppose the sports complex, saying it would displace affordable housing, and take valuable land off of the property tax rolls. Several people also want to block the softball and baseball fields. A

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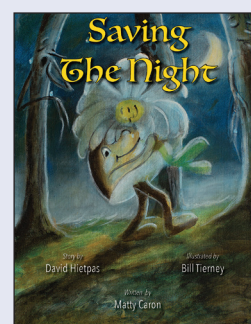
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products, ranging from CBD oils to clothing made of hemp. The company has a dozen franchise stores and delivery hubs in Minnesota and Florida.

The Grand Avenue store, which is moving to larger quarters soon, has quadrupled its workforce with about 20 employees now. Brown said the company has had to drop same-day delivery as demand greatly exceeded available products. It also paused virtual consultations.

The company is getting more than 500 orders for products each day, Brown said. Its capacity is about 200 orders per day.

“It’s pretty incredible,” he said. News that THC-infused products are now legal has sparked some controversy. House Democrats said they pushed the state legislation through quietly so it would not be blocked by the Republican-controlled Senate.

But the upshot of that is a law with fairly few restrictions. The League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) and individual cities, including Saint Paul, are looking at how to regulate THC-infused products on a local basis.

A spokesperson for the Saint Paul Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) said the city has no timeline for developing regulations. Mayor Melvin Carter, in a tour of Nothing But Hemp after the law took effect, called it an opportunity that gives safe access to THC products. Carter also said that cities should collaborate so their ordinances are not different

*There currently are no restrictions stating where THC edibles and beverages can be sold. The law also has no limit on how much product someone can buy.*

from one another.

“Cities are nimble and working quickly to review and respond to the new law and evaluate the unique needs of their communities,” said LMC general counsel Patricia Beety in a statement. “City leaders bring considerable expertise in regulatory considerations to the table, and league staff will be listening to the policymakers in our city halls to help shape the path forward in a way that is thoughtful and timely.”

Beety added that the LMC, city staff members and state lawmakers are working to gain more understanding of THC sales issues, and hope to provide more guidance in the weeks ahead. The LMC plans to work with Representative Heather Edelson (DFL-Edina). She authored the THC bill, which was included in the larger health and human services omnibus bill.

Edelson released a statement



Nothing But Hemp co-owner Eva Droz assists customer Jim Flagg in choosing THC/CBD edibles at the Grand Avenue shop, which has seen a steady flow of customers wanting the new products. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

saying she will seek state-level licensing and other changes during the 2023 legislative session. Edina is considering an ordinance that would license THC sellers similar to how tobacco licenses are issued, with background and compliance checks. Stillwater is looking at requiring THC products be kept behind counters. That city may also seek a cap on the number of sale licenses.

Under state law, products must be derived from certified hemp

and not marijuana, which is illegal in Minnesota. Hemp contains very small amounts of THC.

The new law does not restrict who can manufacture or sell THC products. There currently are no restrictions stating where THC edibles and beverages can be sold. The law also has no limit on how much product someone can buy.

Brown, who worked on the new law, would like to see additional restrictions. One limit is on places where THC products

could be sold.

“I don’t think we want products sold in grocery stores,” Brown said. He suggests sales in places restricted to patrons 21 and older, with extra protections on online sales to verify the ages of buyers.

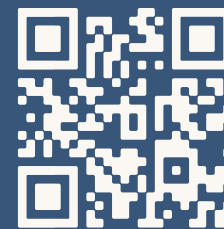
Another suggestion Brown has is that places that manufacture products with THC go through the same code inspections other food and beverage manufacturers must follow.



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**14 RENT CONTROL AMENDMENTS**

most stringent rent control ordinances in the country last November with a referendum that received the support of 53 percent of voters. The ordinance, which took effect in May, caps the increases in residential rents at 3 percent per year. It also calls for a process whereby landlords may apply for an exemption to the 3 percent cap if they have invested significant money in improving the property or have been socked with a large increase in property taxes.

Rent control advocates rallied before the July 13 hearing. Among them were representatives of ISIAH, the Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative and the Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing. Those who championed the rent control ballot measure questioned why the city would want to change the ordinance and go against the will of the voters.

Meanwhile, the opponents of rent control said they would like to see the ordinance scrapped. They cited the slowdown in rental housing construction since November and the growing number of small landlords who are getting out of the business and selling their rental properties to large housing management corporations.

Highlights of the 301-page report were presented to the City Council by Ed Goetz, a University of Minnesota professor who heads up the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs. CURA provided research and staff support for the Stakeholders Group. The group, which was appointed by Mayor Melvin Carter, included renters and renter advocates, small and large landlords, developers and leaders of for-profit businesses and nonprofit organizations.

With the required support of 60 percent of its members, the group recommended that the ordinance retain the 3 percent cap on annual rent increases, but with a 15-year exemption from the cap for newly constructed apartments. The group recommended just-cause protection for tenants who face eviction. The group also

*Under the new city rules, landlords may self-certify rent increases of up to 8 percent per year if they provide documentation supporting a claim of hardship.*

recommended that the City Council clarify the hardships under which a landlord may be granted an exemption from the 3 percent cap.

The group could not reach agreement on vacancy decontrol. That provision would allow a landlord who does not raise the rent for several years to bank those potential increases and then use them all at once when an apartment becomes vacant. The group did recommend some form of partial vacancy decontrol, but one that still limits how much rent can be increased.

City Council members have said they would like to have any amendments to Saint Paul's rent control ordinance in place by early next year. Under the City Charter, changes to ordinances adopted by referendum cannot be made for the first year following the referendum.

Saint Paul's new rent control ordinance has already been challenged in federal court with a lawsuit filed in June by two landlords. It also faces scrutiny in light of the recent decision by city officials to allow rent hikes higher than 3 percent in some cases. Under the new city rules, landlords may self-certify rent increases of up to 8 percent per year if they provide documentation supporting a claim of hardship.

Also causing consternation was Dominion's recent announcement that it was imposing a 7.97 percent increase in rent for its market-rate apartments at 808 Berry Place. Dominion maintains that the rents at 808 Berry St. fall under federal regulations because of the use of low-income housing tax credits to construct the building and provide some affordable units within it.

**14 UST SPORTS COMPLEX**

letter-writing campaign has focused on pollution on the site from decades of railroad and motor vehicle manufacturing uses.

Ward 3 City Council member Chris Tolbert said he has heard from many people both for and against the sports complex, with or without the ice hockey arena.

Maureen Michalski, Ryan vice president for development, said in a statement that Ryan Companies will be working with UST on a revised site plan to accommodate baseball, softball and associated facilities at Highland Bridge in the next month.

"We anticipate that after we have an updated proposal we will advance conversations with the city and community, including any official submittals," Michalski stated. "We will pause the alternative urban areawide review (AUAR) until such time as we have updated programming, and will remove the master plan amendment application previously submitted from the city review process. We plan on sharing dates and timing as we get further into planning and better understand a revised process."

The Saint Paul Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council are expected to review the revised master plan, development agreement, potential relocation of Mica Park and related issues throughout 2022. Dropping the hockey arena means changing the requests



The area in the dotted line shows the area the University of Saint Thomas has been eyeing for a new sports complex on the southern end of the former Ford site.

to the city and to the AUAR, which is a detailed study of environmental impacts that a major project can have.

The Planning Commission's public hearing regarding master plan amendments for the sports complex, originally scheduled for August 5, was canceled after the university withdrew its application.

The Highland District Council's Community Development Committee was expected to discuss the next steps in the review process during its meeting at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 19, at the Highland Park Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy.

A neighborhood meeting on the issue, originally planned for Tuesday, July 26, at Lumen Christi Catholic Community, 2055 Bohland Ave., has been rescheduled to 6 p.m. Monday, August 22, at that location.

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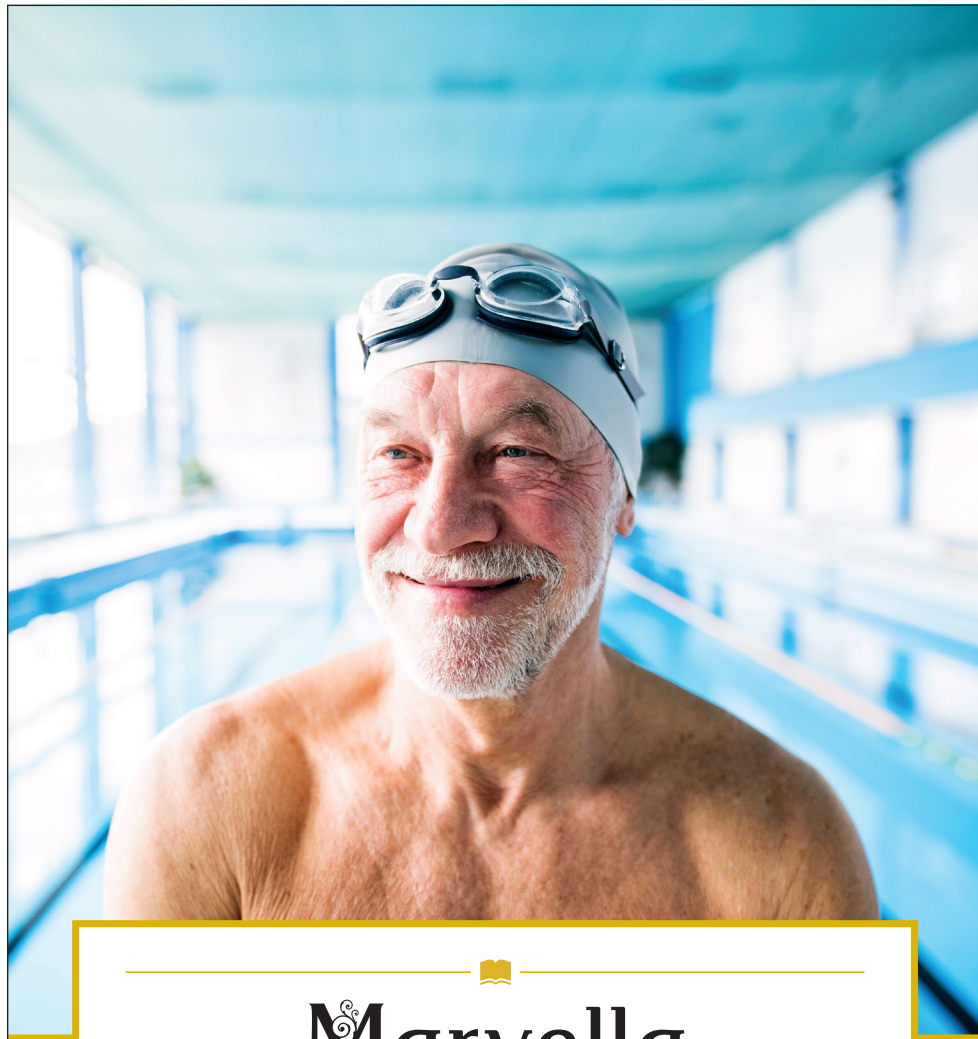


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## St. Paul ends its battle to retain street maintenance assessments

### Twenty-year practice was deemed tax on nonprofits

By Jane McClure

The city of Saint Paul's controversial street maintenance assessment program has ended 20 years after it began. City officials have opted not to appeal a May ruling by a Ramsey County District Court judge who found the assessments to be a tax improperly levied on all property owners. The result could be a \$15 million hole in the city's 2023 budget unless there is an offsetting increase in property taxes.

The city had faced a July 5 deadline to file an appeal.

"After protracted litigation and the decision of the court, we determined that it's in the best interest of our community that we identify a more sustainable means of providing this critical service for our residents," said city attorney Lyndsey Olson.

In light of that decision, the city's Public Works Department has been reviewing its options. Officials have decided that the city will not be seal coating any streets in 2022. That program was to be funded with about \$4 million in assessments, according to Public Works spokesperson Lisa Hiebert.

However, other street work is moving forward. "Public Works completed the spring residential street sweeping, is keeping the street lights on, and is still planning to do the arterial mill and overlay projects and fall street sweeping," Hiebert said.

Mayor Melvin Carter is expected to release his proposed 2023 city budget in August. By then, his administration will have figured out ways to provide street maintenance services going forward. One concern for Public Works is the poor condition of many of the city's streets. A report released in 2019 indicated that 90 percent of the city's residential streets will be in poor or failed condition by 2040 unless street maintenance funding is doubled.

Saint Paul's street maintenance assessment program was started in 2002 by then Mayor Randy Kelly as a way to hold the line on property taxes and get the owners of the city's many tax-exempt properties to help cover the cost of street maintenance. The assessments were extended in subsequent years to cover more and more of the maintenance services along city streets, includ-

ing tree trimming, streetlighting and sidewalk repair. At its peak, the right-of-way maintenance program covered more than three dozen services and topped \$30 million in annual costs.

City officials contend that almost a third of the properties in Saint Paul are owned by nonprofit organizations that are exempt from property taxes. These include colleges and universities, K-12 schools, hospitals, places of worship, railroads, social service agencies and city, county, state and federal governments.

As the assessment program grew, it drew more and more objections from nonprofits. The leaders of downtown churches questioned why they were assessed at the same rate as large corporations in towering buildings that generated much more traffic and wear and tear on the streets.

In 2011 attorney Jack Hoeschler filed a lawsuit on behalf of downtown's First Baptist Church of Saint Paul and the Church of Saint Mary. Hoeschler, who died this past June, contended that the assessments were an illegal form of taxation on nonprofits and that the amount of the assessments exceeded the actual benefits.

The case went all the way to the Minnesota Supreme Court, which in August 2016 issued a ruling that prompted the city to greatly scale back the assessment program. It also led to a 20 percent hike in the city's property tax levy for 2018 as about \$20 million was shifted from the assessments to property taxes.

The 2016 ruling did not end Saint Paul's street maintenance assessments entirely. Nor did it end the legal battle over what remained of them. In recent years, residential property owners who objected to the assessments for street seal coating joined the fight.

Saint Paul officials argued in court that the city services that were still being charged to all property owners after 2016 could be assessed under a 1967 state law. Ramsey County District Judge Robert Awsumb disagreed. He ordered in May that the remaining assessments cease.

According to attorney Ferdinand Peters, the plaintiffs in the lawsuit are still seeking a settlement from the city over the assessments they paid over the years. "It's a bit time-consuming due to the number of total cases, but we'll get it done within a few weeks," Peters said.

## County bans tobacco use on its properties

By Jane McClure

The Ramsey County board voted unanimously on July 12 to ban vaping, smoking and other forms of tobacco use on all of its properties. The vote includes everything from offices to ice arenas, corrections facilities, parking lots and about 6,500 acres of parkland. It covers all properties owned, leased or otherwise controlled by the county.

The county has long banned smoking in its facilities. But the new policy, which takes effect August 26, even bans smoking in personal vehicles parked in county lots.

"Ramsey County aims to reduce tobacco use and exposure in children, young adults and the entire community," said county public health director Sara Hollie.

A previous ban in 2015 allowed smoking outdoors at a distance of 25 feet or more from doorways and open windows. The county has also had designated smoking areas, including outside of some facilities.

The more stringent ordinance was passed at the behest of public health ad-

vocates, who have cited the popularity of e-cigarettes and vaping as causing a spike in tobacco use among young people. Half a dozen people testified at a public hearing earlier in July on the ordinance.

Ramsey County joins 27 Minnesota cities, counties and townships that have adopted similar ordinances.

The new ordinance lowers the fine for using tobacco on county property from \$300 to \$50, reducing the chance of citations and penalties being unequally applied to people from historically marginalized backgrounds. County officials said they do not want to unfairly penalize people who have nicotine addictions.

Smoking is allowed by members of the public passing through outdoor locations where smoking is prohibited by this ordinance while on their way to another location.

Use of sacred or traditional tobacco as part of an American Indian cultural practice or a lawfully recognized religious, spiritual or cultural ceremony, memorial or practice is allowed.

# Four candidates vie for open seat on County Board in District 4

By Dale Mischke

Voters in the nonpartisan primary election on August 9 will choose among four candidates for Ramsey County commissioner in District 4. Long-time commissioner Toni Carter is stepping down from that seat, which represents all or portions of the Saint Anthony Park, Hamline-Midway, Merriam Park, Snelling-Hamline, Lexington-Hamline, Macalester-Groveland, Highland Park, Summit Hill, Ramsey Hill and Summit-University neighborhoods of Saint Paul.

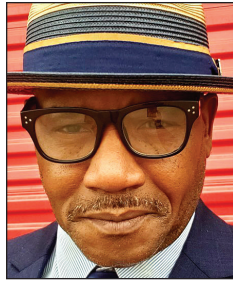
Appearing on the ballot will be Barbara Bolar, George Jackson, Rena Moran and Darryl Spence. The top two vote-getters in the primary election will advance to the general election on November 8.

**Moran**, 62, a resident of Summit-University, has represented District 65B in the Minnesota House of Representatives since 2010. She is stepping down from that post to run for Ramsey County commissioner.

“During my 12 years in the Minnesota House, I’ve worked alongside neighborhood partners to deliver unprecedented investments in our community,” Moran said. “As the first Black woman to chair the House Ways and Means Committee, I have unique knowledge of government budgets and a deep understanding of how investments can impact communities. As a county commissioner, I’d leverage my experiences, expertise and relationships to work hard for our county and our communities



Barbara Bolar



George Jackson



Rena Moran



Darryl Spence

with a vision rooted in equity, fairness and justice.

“Everyone deserves health, wellness and safety with the opportunity to succeed and thrive,” Moran said. “Unfortunately, we have unacceptable racial disparities in these areas. I’ll target the county’s services and programs to close those gaps.

“Budgets are moral documents that reflect our shared values,” Moran said. To control spending and limit future increases in property taxes, she said, she would support the county’s Resident First initiative to improve services, reform systems and increase efficiencies. “We cannot allow ourselves to be forced into false choices between providing the key support residents count on and limiting the critical resources necessary to deliver them,” she said. “As we make budgetary decisions, I’ll ensure that community engagement is paramount.”

**Jackson**, 60, a photojournalist from Snelling-Hamline, is a former precinct captain in Chicago’s 24th Ward. He helped establish the first model homes on Chicago’s

West Side using money from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development rather than the property tax levy.

“I’ve championed issues that affect the lives of people in the areas of health care, mental health, property taxes, justice reform, economic development and law enforcement,” Jackson said. Controlling spending and limiting future increases in the property tax levy are the biggest challenges facing Ramsey County, he said. To address those issues, he would implement a line-item budget.

**Spence**, 58, a Summit-University resident, serves as associate minister of New Hope Missionary Baptist Church in Dayton’s Bluff. He has worked as a community service officer in the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Department for the past four years. He has also led a crisis-intervention organization known as the God Squad for the past 25 years.

“I subscribe to the teamwork method of engagement and problem solving,” Spence said. “I have the communication, interper-

sonal and analytical skills necessary to perform the important tasks of a county commissioner. I’m adaptable and flexible while working with a wide range of individuals, groups and organizations.”

In his meetings with county residents, Spence said he has heard concerns about the high cost of government, rising property appraisals resulting in unaffordably high property taxes, and an increase in crimes committed by juveniles that come with few consequences in the courts.

“Controlling spending is essential if our county government is to meet its fiscal objectives and deliver desired programs and services outcomes,” Spence said. “The County Board must improve the level of management and monitoring to control costs more effectively. The board must control spending and eliminate fraud.”

**Bolar**, 62, a Frogtown resident, is retired following a 30-plus-year career in the U.S. Departments of Justice and Homeland Security. A graduate of Hamline University with an M.A. in Public Administration, Bolar said, “the county budget will need to be reviewed to see what costs and expenditures are of special concern. The constituents of District 4 cannot afford tax increases.”

Bolar said she has fielded concerns from residents about public safety, rent control and food security. “Seniors are having issues getting groceries to their homes due to physical challenges,” she added. “Some cannot afford the cost of delivery.”

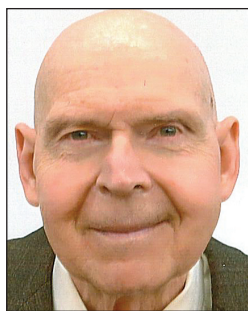
# Hosko, Barklind challenge Ortega in Ramsey County’s District 5

By Dale Mischke

Voters will head to the polls on August 9 to narrow the field in the nonpartisan race for Ramsey County commissioner in District 5. Incumbent Rafael Ortega’s bid for an eighth term is being challenged by Bill Hosko and Charles Barklind. District 5 includes the West End, West Side, downtown and portions of the Highland Park, Macalester-Groveland and Dayton’s Bluff neighborhoods of Saint Paul.

**Hosko**, 59, a resident of downtown, owns Hosko Gallery & Framing and Music Forest Cafe in downtown. He studied architecture, drafting and commercial art at Minneapolis Technical College. He has run unsuccessfully in the past for mayor of Saint Paul and for City Council from Ward 2.

“No one in this race has been a more steadfast supporter of the county and city longer,” Hosko said. “If elected, I’ll be your best public servant.”



Charles Barklind



Bill Hosko



Rafael Ortega

According to Hosko, the biggest challenges facing Ramsey County are the rise in crime and other antisocial behavior, the decline in transit safety, the exodus of downtown’s workforce and the erosion of downtown’s retail base. He criticized the county’s needless spending, tax increases and decline in quality of life.

During Ortega’s tenure, Hosko added, “the County Board has awarded itself pay raise after pay raise, including another this year. (That’s almost) \$100,000—for a part-time job.”

Hosko would give county residents the authority, via referen-

dums, to approve new spending, proposed tax increases and any County Board wage increases. “If I’m elected, these referendum questions will be on the ballot in the next county election in 2026,” he said.

“The County Board poorly planned Union Depot’s \$250 million renovation,” Hosko said. “That has resulted in massive financial losses. The board spent \$20 million destroying the West Publishing buildings without any redevelopment agreements in place. Given our current economy, can we still do something remarkable and viable with these

riverfront properties? Yes. In August I’ll show you how.”

**Barklind**, 78, has run unsuccessfully for the County Board every four years since 2002. A resident of downtown, he is a retired golf caddy, church custodian and delivery driver.

“I’m a people person with county social worker experience,” Barklind said. “I support women’s reproductive rights, common-sense gun control and climate change mitigation.”

Barklind declined to comment further regarding his positions on the issues and qualifications for the job.

**Ortega**, 70, has served on the County Board since 1994. A graduate of Fordham University with a master’s degree in social work from the University of Minnesota, he is a licensed social worker and founder of the nonprofit CLUES (Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio).

“I’m focused on protecting Ramsey County’s most vulnerable residents, building a great

transportation network, and making sure that we deliver the best service in a cost-effective way,” said Ortega, a resident of downtown.

“Housing is Ramsey County’s biggest challenge,” he added. “We opened two new shelters in my district in 2020. In 2021 we created the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) levy to provide money for housing every year. And with the help of the city and federal government, we provided \$74 million for housing this year.”

“To address public safety, we hired 40 new county staff, including specialists in the 911 call center and social workers to work with police and help with mental health. I also worked with (U.S. Representative) Betty McCollum to get almost \$1 million in Group Violence Intervention funding.”

The top two vote-getters in the August 9 primary election will advance to the November 8 general election.

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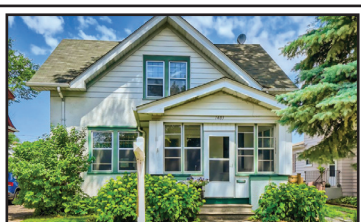
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# Interim successor sought for Ward 1's Thao

By Jane McClure

**D**ai Thao, the first Hmong-American ever elected to the Saint Paul City Council, recently announced that he will be leaving City Hall effective August 1 to become the executive director of Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity (SURE). The organization works on a wide array of social justice issues for residents of Sarasota County, Florida.

The City Council is now accepting applications to fill the remainder of Thao's four-year term, which runs through the end of 2023. Interested candidates may submit resumes and cover letters until 4:30 p.m. Friday, July 22, to Council-Vacancy@ci.stpaul.mn.us. Candidates must live in and be eligible to vote in Ward 1, which includes the Summit-University, Snelling-Hamline, Lexington-Hamline, Frogtown and part of the North End neighborhoods. The job pays \$70,262 a year, plus benefits.

Council positions are considered to be part time, and a few members hold outside employment. Thao has worked in information technology part time during his council years.

The council will only consider candidates who agree not to run for the seat in the November 2023 election. Interviews could be held as soon as August 3, and the interim council member would begin serving on August 10. That person will quickly face several big issues, including the 2023 city budget, rent control, affordable housing and zoning code changes to allow greater density.

Thao succeeded interim council member Nathaniel Khaliq in 2013 in a special election to fill the seat vacated by Melvin Carter, who had left office to join the Minnesota Department of



Dai Thao is leaving the Saint Paul City Council to take a new job in Florida.

Education. Thao won re-election in 2015 and again in 2019. He won the most recent election by fewer than 400 votes.

In a July 7 statement, he said that it has been "an honor of a lifetime" to serve the residents of Ward 1. "I believe all the progress, results and achievements we have accomplished in Ward 1 were through our faith and belief in each other," he said.

Referring to his roots as a young refugee from Laos, Thao added, "I believe if a once starving refugee boy who couldn't speak English, who grew up poor in the projects, who was raised by a single mother, who is not very tall, who is very average could become a council member and change the course of Ward 1, then you, too, can become any leader you wish to become."

Thao's new job will return him to his roots in community organizing. Before taking public office, he worked for the state organizations TakeAction Minnesota and ISAIHAH. He and wife,

Amee Xiong, have family members in Florida. He applied for the post with SURE months ago, but waited to announce the transition until the family's six children finished the school year here.

The Thao-Xiong family has long been active in DFL politics and public affairs. Former Saint Paul School Board chair Marny Xiong, who died of COVID-19 complications in 2020, was Xiong's sister.

Thao worked on many major issues in his nine years on the council, including construction of Allianz Field, earned sick and safe time, paid parental leave, the \$15 minimum wage and affordable housing. He has served on several city boards and committees, including most recently representing the City Council on the Saint Paul Port Authority board.

He has also faced controversy during his career, sometimes with different branches of the local Hmong community. Earlier this summer, Thao was at the center of a dispute between clans over dialect used on a sign at the Chinese garden at Lake Phalen.

During his 2017 mayoral campaign (he finished third), Thao was accused of improperly entering a voting booth to help a Hmong elder cast a ballot for him.

In October 2018, a Ramsey County District Court judge found that while Thao may have violated state law, there was a conflict with the Federal Voting Rights Act and the charges were dismissed.

Thao and Ward 6 council member Nelsie Yang then succeeded in changing state law on voter assistance. State officials agreed that part of the state's election law was unenforceable under federal law. The prohibitions against candidates helping voters were dropped.

# City vaccine mandate heads to higher court

By Jane McClure

**T**he dispute over the city of Saint Paul's COVID-19 vaccine mandate is headed to the Minnesota Court of Appeals. City officials on July 8 appealed a Ramsey County District Court ruling in June in favor of the city's three largest labor unions.

Last October Mayor Melvin Carter announced that all city employees would have to show proof of vaccination by the end of 2021 or face disciplinary action, including the suspension or permanent loss of their jobs. The Saint Paul Police Federation, Saint Paul Firefighters Local 21 and the Tri-Council then sued, saying the city violated their collective bargaining agreements and state labor law by failing to negotiate the terms of the vaccine mandate.

Saint Paul's vaccine mandate has been described as one of the most stringent in Minnesota. The city has granted exemptions for religious or medical reasons, but unlike other cities and counties, it does not allow employees who do not get vaccinated to abide by the mandate through regular COVID-19 testing.

The district court ruled that the city is required by Minnesota's Public Employee Labor Relations Act to negotiate its vaccine policy with employee bargaining groups, and that if an agreement cannot be reached, the

matter should be settled by an outside arbitrator.

The city maintains that state law allows Saint Paul to require vaccines as a matter of public health.

"Throughout the course of the pandemic, the city has prioritized the health and safety of those who live, work, visit and do business in the city," said mayoral spokesperson Kamal Baker. "The filing of the appeal is consistent with our commitment to do everything we can to support the health and safety of our city workers, as well as the residents, workers, businesses, and visitors we serve every day."

The Tri-Council, which represents the city's heavy-equipment operators, snowplow drivers, sewer workers and laborers in the Public Works and Parks and Recreation departments, expressed frustration with the appeal and its potential cost.

"During recent contract negotiations, the city told us it was broke," said Teamsters Local 120 president Tom Erickson and International Union of Operating Engineers Local 49 business manager Jason George in a joint statement. "Now the city seems intent on wasting more taxpayer dollars disputing the fact that it clearly violated a bedrock principle of labor law."

The Tri-Council said it will continue to do what is necessary to protect

workers' rights.

"We're disappointed but not surprised by the appeal," said Mark Ross, president of the Saint Paul Police Federation. He called the mayor's unwillingness to meet with union leaders "mind-boggling" after two court decisions against the city's vaccine mandate. "We just want to negotiate," Ross said.

Those sentiments were echoed by Mike Smith, who leads the firefighters' union.

Last December, a Ramsey County District Court judge issued a temporary restraining order prohibiting the city from enforcing its vaccine mandate for employees. The district court order in June set the vaccination policy aside permanently.

Saint Paul officials have taken steps to comply with the court rulings while its appeal proceeds. Although new employees are still being required to produce proof of vaccination or request other accommodations, the vaccine mandate is not being enforced for city workers hired prior to December 23, 2021.

To date, 2,662 city workers have provided proof of vaccination or requested an exemption from the vaccination requirement. Those with exemptions must submit to regular COVID testing.



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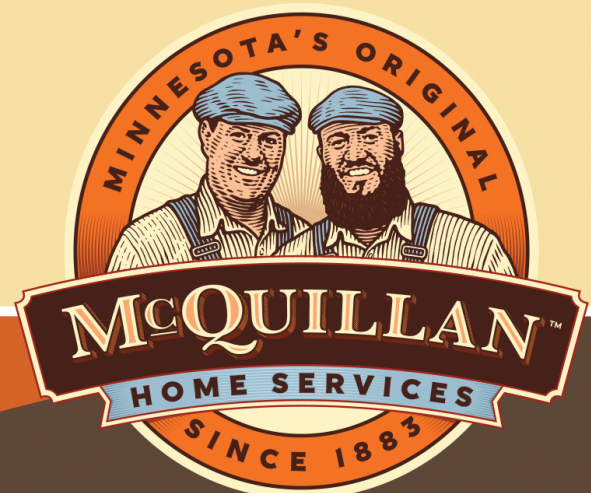
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# VIEWPOINT

## INBOX

### Say “no” to UST sports complex

Thank you for the informative piece on the status of the University of Saint Thomas’ move to occupy 23 acres of the Ford site (*MyVillager*, July 6). The three principal issues raised in the article and the variety of changes required to the Ford Site Master Plan answer any real question the city may have asked. The elimination of 110 affordable housing units, the displacement of a 1.5-acre park and the multiple changes to the master plan all dictate that “no” is the only reasonable answer.

UST may believe a new sports complex is necessary to feed its new Division I ego, but it is neither necessary nor desirable for the city of Saint Paul. Planning Commission chair Luis Rangel Morales is absolutely justified in his frustration after a 10-year public process, one that pitted neighbor against neighbor. It is indeed a “huge change to the plan.”

It does not, however, appear that the city is truly asking whether the sports complex is in the spirit of the master plan. Deep in the article we learn that the city is already “negotiating a change to the development agreement...to ensure that enough tax increment financing is generated” to cover various costs. It sounds like a foregone conclusion with public input mere window dressing, just as it was with organized trash collection, Ayd Mill Road and every other issue the city has faced in the last decade or more.

I call on City Council member Tolbert to publicly oppose this effort. If UST wants a new playground, let it be built across the river and not on the backs of the people of Saint Paul.

*James M. Hamilton  
Macalester-Groveland*

### Morning on Montreal Avenue

I’m sitting on the porch drinking my morning coffee, watching the traffic zoom by on Montreal Avenue. I do this most mornings while reading the news. I greet the early-morning dog walkers, runners and bicyclists and watch the squirrels run zig-zags across the yard, the median and the street. They do so at perilous risk.

Since construction began down the road at Highland Bridge, traffic on Montreal has zoomed up. Truck traffic, restricted between Snelling and Cleveland avenues, has swelled. Speed limits no longer apply. One would, and often does, swear that it has become a major truck route and a drag strip for cars and motorcycles.

The speed limit here is 25 mph. Truck traffic is “prohibited.” Buses are restricted, but for how long? There is no policing. How can there be when staffing is short and attention is diverted? So we dodge traffic, endure the noise and watch in awe as cars race past, even passing on the right, and construction and commercial

### One-way bike paths are best option for Summit

I have lived in Saint Paul for over 40 years and have biked all over the city on its bike lanes and off-road bike paths. I have resided on Summit Avenue for over 20 years. I support the idea of converting Summit’s on-street bike lanes to off-road bike trails for the safety and enjoyment of cyclists and pedestrians.

I have experienced many near misses while cycling on Summit. I have also been hit in Saint Paul by a car that ran a red light. I landed on the car’s windshield, luckily with only broken fingers, bruises and abrasions, thanks to a good bike helmet. I do not want to lose any trees on Summit or any other place. NIMBY groups along Summit claim that the off-road bike trail project would necessitate the removal of many trees. That is not true. The bike paths can be made to fit within the current width of the street without affecting the trees or tree roots.

The Summit Avenue Regional Trail Master Plan is a timely opportunity for the reconstruction of a century-

old street in vital need of upgrade and repair. Adding one-way, off-road bike paths on either side is the best option for two reasons: safety and ease of construction.

One-way protected bikeways have a better safety record than two-way bike paths where there are a lot of cross streets. This is because bikes are traveling in the same direction as car traffic. On a two-way bike path, bikes traveling in the opposite direction of street traffic may not be noticed.

The city could add the bike paths in stages as funding becomes available for street reconstruction, much as it did on Wheelock Parkway and Como Avenue. The one-way paths could be constructed so that they easily connect with the existing on-street bike lanes until those sections of Summit are also reconstructed.

Let’s get out of our cars, ride our bikes, save our trees and help fight climate change.

*Terry Brueck  
Merriam Park*

vehicles lumber by.

It’s just another quiet morning on Montreal. One can almost hear the birds singing and the breeze blowing through the trees.

*Gary Martland  
Highland Park*

### City needs to get back to basics

Enough already with the wasteful and dimwitted expenditure of city tax dollars. By the time I was in my 20s, I realized that whenever one acquires anything, one also acquires the cost of maintaining it, something our city doesn’t seem to get. The big riverfront project is in the planning, while our streets are falling apart.

A trip along Warner Road today revealed a multitude of sizable dead trees (in monoculture groups, of course, because the city forestry department still hasn’t caught on that if one plants five different kinds of trees, when the next Brand X tree disease comes along, one will lose only 20 percent of the trees). The trees are dead because they didn’t get regular sluicings from water trucks last year during the drought. So now we get to begin all over again. Meanwhile the forestry people cut down mature ash trees rather than treat them, which is cost-effective and works.

Our mayor has been so generous with hiring a chief resiliency officer and a PR person and three liaisons as intermediaries between him and the City Council. Can’t he communicate and save us the \$500,000 in salaries? Two weeks ago, I drove across the Ford Bridge to Minneapolis for the first time in years and I thought I’d left the planet: The streets were in good repair, even the

patched ones (not the slap-dash pothole fills we get here). There was a police presence. People were out strolling, biking and walking their dogs, apparently feeling safe enough to do so.

How about if we start trimming the fat, the deadwood dimwits in all departments, and go back to the basics with a moratorium on all new projects for a while? It’s clear we can’t afford the upkeep on what we already have, so let’s stop making cockamamie alterations of streets with bumpouts and other fripperies until we get the city budget back into the hands of competent people who understand that a city budget has to be where the rubber meets the road.

*Kathleen Deming  
Macalester-Groveland*

### Give women’s sports a chance

In his letter “Pursuing equality in athletics” (*MyVillager* Inbox, July 6), T.J. Sexton addresses Lindsay Crouse’s *New York Times* article calling for greater equality between men’s and women’s sports. In his rant, it is clear he did not understand Crouse’s arguments. Crouse wrote, “The joy or beauty of one sport or another is subjective, not an objective truth.” Crouse’s main point was that sports that value masculine strength, like football, are not inherently more exciting or fun to watch than sports that value feminine traits, like gymnastics, and we would do well to give them a chance.

Sexton concludes that there will never be a time when

INBOX ►9

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# BZA OKs variances for three dwellings on Holly lot

By Jane McClure

A three-dwelling housing cluster at 549 Holly Ave. is one step closer to development with approval of three variances on July 11 by the Saint Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). The next stop for Kal Construction and Design's plans is design approval from the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC), since the property is in the Historic Hill District.

Developers Kal and Faezah Effendi plan to renovate the existing house, which was built in 1916 and needs extensive rehabilitation. They also want to add a second, smaller house to the east of the current structure, and

build a third housing unit above a six-stall garage along the alley.

The approved variances were for the lot width (the property is 80 feet wide and 120 feet are required for three single-family dwellings), lot size (the lot is 12,046 square feet and 15,000 square feet are required) and rear-yard setback for the garage and upper dwelling (5 feet were sought and 25 feet are required).

City staff recommended approval of the variances, citing challenges with the existing lot and meeting historic guidelines.

The project has generated a mixed reaction in the Ramsey Hill neighborhood. Some neighbors said it would fit into the surroundings and

others contend it would add too much density.

Two residents sent letters to the BZA in opposition, but no one attended the July 11 meeting to speak against the project. Tomislav Mutak, who lives just east of the property, raised concerns in a letter about the extent of variances proposed and the loss of green space.

Effendi said the current plan was done in conjunction with city staff and provides sufficient green space for all three dwellings.

The BZA voted after much technical discussion. "This might open up homeownership in that neighborhood at a more affordable level," said BZA member Danielle Swift.

## 84 INBOX

women's sports receive similar attention as men's sports, no matter how many chances we give them: "It's never gonna happen. And the fact that it isn't ever gonna happen is nobody's fault." Unfortunately for Sexton, this is not true. Take women's volleyball as an example. In 2014, the Big Ten Network reluctantly began to broadcast more women's volleyball matches. A VP of programming at the network was admittedly surprised when it quickly surged to be the third most watched sport on the network.

The data indicate that when we invest in women's sports via marketing and broadcasting, the audience will follow.

*Lindsey Weaver  
Macalester-Groveland*

## Make river road safer for all

A recent letter highlighted the dangers on Mississippi River Boulevard associated with bicyclists, walkers and others sharing the combined path where it narrows under

the Ford Bridge ("River road to ruin," *MyVillager* Inbox, June 22). Because of the limited space, it makes sense to post signs telling bicyclists on the path to walk their bikes under the bridge. I hope that others join me in contacting the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department with suggestions for making Mississippi River Boulevard a safer place for everyone.

*Jean Parilla  
Highland Park*

## No more No Mow May

I believe that No Mow May was a flop. I only noticed two bumblebees on my lawn the entire month. Maybe I saw the same bee twice.

What No Mow May did do is generate more mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are known to be carriers of disease. Do we need to promote another pandemic? I don't think so.

Next spring, I will likely not participate in No Mow May.

*Sue Shetka  
Macalester-Groveland*



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**Maurice F. Mischke, 1920-1991**

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# Freedom School carries on tradition of closing achievement gap

By Carolyn Walkup

The nonprofit Children's Defense Fund's Freedom School at the Rondo Education Center, 560 Concordia Ave., is hard at work this summer reversing the learning loss so typical of grade school children during the summer and making up for the even greater loss resulting from the school shutdowns and distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The free school, which is open to all students in grades K-8, has a track record of achievement especially for underprivileged children. The students, or "scholars" as they are called, are tested at the beginning and end of the six-week session. Their scores have indicated gains of 12 to 18 months in proficiency in both reading and math, according to the Reverend Dr. Darcel Hill, the school's executive director.

"This is one of the largest summer school programs," Hill said. "And its record of attendance and retention of scholars carries over to the regular school year."

Freedom School traces its beginnings to Freedom Summer, or Mississippi Summer Project, a voter registration drive held in that Southern state in 1964 in the midst of the civil rights movement. Over the past six decades, the school has emphasized literacy, math, leadership development, character building, civic engagement, social action, and college and career readiness. Parental involvement is key to the program's success.

Most of the scholars come from households with incomes low enough to qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Their school day begins with breakfast. That is followed by an assembly of all the scholars in the gym for *harambee*, which means "pull together" in the Swahili language of



Guest speaker Lissa Jones reads a favorite book to students during Freedom School's daily Harambee program, held in the gymnasium of the Rondo Education Center. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

East Africa. There, the scholars, more than 300 strong, participate in chants and songs at full volume, setting an upbeat mood for the rest of the day.

Each harambee includes a guest speaker who reads from a book he or she has selected. Among the readers this summer are Saint Paul Mayor Melvin Carter, Saint Paul Superintendent Joe Gothard, members of the Saint Paul School Board, state legislators and local parents.

The scholars then adjourn to their respective classrooms for academic instruction. Among the subjects this summer are science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The youngest group is learning about heroes in science. The middle grades are studying engineering. The students in

grades 6-8 are building robots and being introduced to careers in STEM.

Musical enrichment is part of the curriculum. This may include singing, tap dancing and African drumming and dance. Some of the classrooms are creating music videos with choreography. Practical skills in nutrition, the best ways to lose weight, and hair care and grooming are also taught. The scholars, Hill noted, are often called on by their parents to share their newly acquired knowledge.

Freedom Schools across the country will participate in the National Day of Social Action in late July. This year's theme for the Rondo scholars is nonviolence. They will be making posters and writing letters to legislators inviting them to come to the

*"Being part of a program like Freedom School pushes me as a Black educator to want to be better and do better," said Talisha Jackson, who is currently working on her doctorate.*

school that day. They will also learn about conflict resolution, the importance of voting and how to work for peace and justice.

The Freedom School at Rondo sponsors several field trips during the summer to such places as the Science Museum of Minnesota, the Minnesota Zoo, a Conquer Ninja gym and Trollhaugen in Dresser, Wisconsin, for zip lining and other outdoor recreation.

Many of the scholars who come back to Freedom School year after year go on to college and good careers, according to Hill. One such alum, Talisha Jackson, is currently the assistant principal at Wellstone Elementary School in Saint Paul.

"Being part of a program like Freedom School pushes me as a Black educator to want to be better and do better," said Jackson, who is currently working on her doctorate. "Witnessing so many strong people of color in higher positions who strived to close the racial achievement gap inspired me to go back to school."

Mayor Melvin Carter endorses it. "Freedom School is an incredible example of what can be accomplished when the energy, passions and culture that young people bring to the world are leveraged to accelerate learning," he said.

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# July fundraiser aims to address a doubling of demand at food shelves

By Carolyn Walkup

Local food shelves are facing a perfect storm of price increases and supply chain problems as they struggle to provide food for a growing number of people who, like them, are having trouble keeping their larders stocked. The food shelves are seeing record numbers of clients, and many of them are first-time patrons.

Keystone Community Services, which operates food shelves in Saint Paul's Midway and North End neighborhoods as well as a mobile unit, tallied 1,138 new clients in June alone, according to president and CEO Mary McKeown. That is up from 371 new clients in June of 2021, she said. Total households served last month were 3,019, compared to 1,488 in June of 2021.

Neighborhood House, which operates the Francis Basket food shelf on Saint Paul's West End, and the Open Hands Midway food shelf at Bethany Lutheran Church reported similar trends. Operators there blame the increased demand on several factors, including inflationary increases in the cost of household goods and the expiration of government subsidies instituted during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Families are really struggling to make ends meet," said Nancy Brady, Neighborhood House president and CEO.

Keystone asks new patrons to fill out a short questionnaire regarding their job status and monthly income. The agency has found that the majority of those people have jobs but do not get paid enough to meet their living expenses. "Their budgets don't work any more," McKeown said.

A growing number of Keystone's clients are senior citizens. McKeown attributes that trend at least in part to Keystone's efforts to reach low-income seniors at their home with its mobile food shelf.

Open Hands Midway does not require clients to fill out any documentation, according to president and CEO Kay Kuehn. However, she has noticed an uptick in seniors served, especially near the end of the month when many people who depend on Social Security or other governmental programs run out of money.

The food shelves are also struggling with a shortage of food related to interruptions in the global supply chain. Adding to the challenge are the vastly increased prices charged by Second Harvest Heartland, the agency that distributes food to more than 1,000



Patron Steve Smith peruses the produce at Keystone Community Services' Midway Market food shelf. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

food shelves, shelters and other meal programs across Minnesota and western Wisconsin.

McKeown cited a doubling in the price of a case of ground beef over the past year—from \$35 to between \$65 and \$85. Open Hands Midway's cost for a 45-pound case of chicken has more than tripled during the same period—from \$20 to \$70, Kuehn said. In addition, many of the staples the food shelves used to purchase from Second Harvest Heartland are no longer available.

The three food shelves are hoping to benefit this month from the 13th annual Open Your Heart Summer Challenge sponsored by Hunger Solutions Minnesota and Open Your Heart to the Hungry. The two agencies will match dollar-for-dollar all of the funds

raised in July by participating food shelves.

Open Hands Midway received a Summer Challenge grant of \$4,000 last year. This summer, the food shelf has sent out an appeal to potential donors and hopes to raise at least \$1,000 from a golf outing, dinner and silent auction on July 31.

Keystone needs to raise \$250,000 by the end of 2022 to meet its expenses. "We have a generous community," said McKeown, including corporate and individual donors and local faith communities that conduct food drives for the items Keystone especially needs.

Keystone's Midway food shelf at 1916 University Ave. is open five days a week—from 10 a.m.-noon and 1:30-3:30 p.m. on Mondays,

Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and from 10 a.m.-noon and 5-7 p.m. on Wednesdays.

The Francis Basket food shelf, which is located in Unit 410 at Sibley Manor Apartments, 1295 E. Maynard Dr., is open from 9-11:30 a.m. on Mondays and from 1-3:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Open Hands Midway's food shelf at 436 N. Roy St. is open from noon-2 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. It also provides prepared meals for takeout on Mondays and Wednesdays beginning at noon.

For information on donating to the food shelves or on volunteering to work there, visit [keystonecommunityservices.org](http://keystonecommunityservices.org), [neighborhoodhouse.org](http://neighborhoodhouse.org) or [openhandsmidway.org](http://openhandsmidway.org).



**PRIMARY ELECTION DAY IS AUGUST 9TH**

You can find your polling place at:

<https://pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us/>

Polls open 7 a.m. - 8 p.m.

**YOU CAN VOTE TODAY!**

With your support, I am looking forward to serving you as your next Ramsey County Commissioner for District 4. Over the last 11 years, I have had the privilege of serving you at the Minnesota State Legislature as the State Representative of Minnesota House District 65A. I am entering this campaign cycle with the confidence that I will work on your behalf, every day to improve county support systems, ensure the health and public safety of our children and families, increase access to affordable housing, and create additional pathways for economic development. I ask for your vote for Ramsey County Commissioner!

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# Crime Report

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

## Highland Park

**Robbery**—A man was robbed at gunpoint in an apartment parking lot on the 1300 block of Saint Paul Avenue on July 6.

**Burglary**—Hertz Rental Car, 1420 Davern St., was broken into and two cars were stolen, along with keys and other items, on July 1. One car was found across the street and the other was towed back from Minneapolis with bullet holes in it.

—A home was burglarized on the 1800 block of Pinehurst Avenue on July 2-5.

—Highland Café & Bakery, 2012 Ford Pkwy., was burglarized on July 5. A suspect stole rolls of quarters from the cash register and left with an item under his arm.

**Theft**—A suspect stole seven pairs of glasses at Pearle Vision, 2024 Ford Pkwy., on July 1. The loss was estimated at \$2,100.

**Arson**—A male suspect reportedly tried to steal items from the Highland Target and then tried to light mulch on fire outside of the store on July 10.

**Miscellaneous**—Felony damage to property was reported at the Watergate Marina on July 1-3.

—A female damaged multiple windows at the Highland Aquatic Center, 1840 Edgumbe Road, on July 3.

—A male suspect broke the front door at Five Guys, 2026 Ford Pkwy., on July 11.

—Multiple callers reported hearing a person yelling in the woods and then what sounded like a gunshot at Hidden Falls Park on July 12.

## Lexington-Hamline

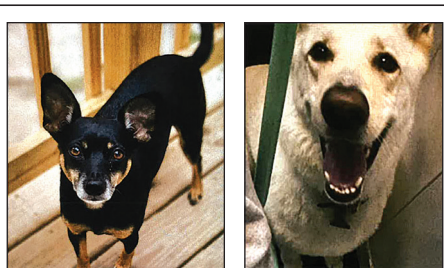
**Burglary**—A break-in was reported at White Castle, 1120 University Ave., on July 7.

**Miscellaneous**—Felony damage to property was reported at Wilder Center, 451 N. Lexington Pkwy., on June 26-28.

## Macalester-Groveland

**Burglary**—Electronics, jewelry and cash were among the items reported stolen during a home break-in on the 400 block of Brimhall Street on July 1-10.

—A break-in was reported at Grand



Cooper

Gunny

## Merriam Park kennel's missing dogs found

Two dogs were missing on July 14 after an overnight break-in at Saint Paul Paws, 1900 University Ave. Six of the dogs being boarded at the business were released from their kennels. Three were found running loose, while a fourth was recovered that afternoon. The two still missing were a miniature pinscher named Cooper and a white German shepherd named Gunny.

By July 16, police said both dogs had been returned. Gunny was reportedly located near Bde Maka Ska in Minneapolis, and Cooper was found near a railroad in Saint Paul.

Catch, 1672 Grand Ave., on July 11.

## Mendota Heights

**Theft**—A chainsaw was reported stolen from a driveway on the 1300 block of Wachtler Avenue on July 1.

**Miscellaneous**—The driver of a pickup truck and trailer reportedly passed out, went off the road and hit an occupied house on Rogers Avenue and Bluebill Drive on June 30. The house sustained significant damage, but no one was injured. The driver was transported to the hospital.

—Three toddlers were reportedly in the vehicle when a driver was arrested for DWI on July 4 on Mendota Heights Road and Lexington Avenue. The vehicle and children were released to their mother.

## Merriam Park

**Fire fatality**—A man died from smoke inhalation as the result of a fire that started in the kitchen of a residence around 8:40 a.m. Sunday, July 3, on the 1800 block of

Carroll Avenue. A cat was also found deceased in the home. Two firefighters were injured at the scene, which drew more than 70 crew members. Heat from the fire caused damage to an adjacent home. Four other individuals were displaced as a result of the fire. It reportedly was the second fire fatality in Saint Paul this year.

**Burglary**—Residential burglaries were reported on Cretin Avenue near Riverwood Place on July 2-9, the 100 block of Montrose Place on July 2-9, and the 2000 block of Marshall Avenue on July 4-5.

**Theft**—A trailer was reported stolen from U-Haul, 461 N. Wilder St., on July 6-9.

**Assault**—A woman was assaulted on Marshall Avenue and Otis Street on July 4.

—Five juveniles reportedly attacked a male on Lynnhurst and Feronia avenues on July 10. The victim was taken to the hospital with minor injuries.

**Miscellaneous**—Felony damage, including broken windows and graffiti, was reported at Birthright of Saint Paul, 299 N. Snelling Ave., on July 5.

## Snelling-Hamline

**Theft**—A theft and criminal damage to property were reported at Gangelhoff Center, 235 N. Hamline Ave., on July 10.

**Miscellaneous**—A female damaged a computer at the Midway McDonald's, 1570 University Ave., on June 30.

## Summit Hill

**Burglary**—A home break-in was reported on the 100 block of South Oxford Street on July 1-3.

—A burglary was reported at Lloyd's Automotive, 982 Grand Ave., on July 9.

**Assault**—A man was taken to the hospital with minor injuries after being stabbed in the back on the 600 block of Grand Avenue on July 2.

**Miscellaneous**—Police responded to a report of a security guard fighting with a person and arrested a 24-year-old man on a felony theft warrant on July 6 outside Grand Ole Creamery & Grand Pizzeria, 750 Grand Ave.

## Summit-University

**Robbery**—A woman said she was attacked by a man who slashed her arm with a pocketknife, pushed her to the ground

and stole her purse on June 27 on the 200 block of Marshall Avenue.

**Burglary**—A home break-in and possible arson were reported on the 200 block of Summit Avenue on July 10. The female suspect was taken to the hospital for evaluation before going to jail.

**Theft**—A 36-year-old man was arrested for felony mail theft after police received a report of a suspect looking into windows on the 600 block of Portland Avenue on July 11.

**Weapons**—Ten spent shell casings were found following a report of gunfire on Hague Avenue and Fisk Street on July 12.

**Assault**—A 32-year-old man was arrested for threatening a resident with a knife on the 800 block of Laurel Avenue on June 30.

**Miscellaneous**—Felony damage to property was reported at Obama Elementary School at 707 Holly Ave. on July 4, and at the YWCA of Saint Paul on July 7.

## West End

**Robbery**—A robbery at gunpoint was reported on West Seventh Street and Kellogg Boulevard on July 3.

**Burglary**—A home break-in was reported on Irvine Park and Ryan Avenue on July 1.

**Theft**—Suspects stole gas and damaged a vehicle's gas tank on Palace Avenue and Erie Street on July 1.

—Stolen license plates were discovered in a truck after police responded to a report of suspicious males tampering with vehicles on the 600 block of Canton Street on July 7.

—Handguns were reported stolen from vehicles on the 800 block of Watson Avenue on July 7, and the 1100 block of West Seventh Street on July 11.

**Assault**—A 34-year-old man was arrested for felony assault after hitting a woman in the face with a lamp on the 100 block of Forbes Avenue on July 7.

**Arson**—A trash can was set on fire with fireworks in the parking lot near Shepard Road and Eagle Parkway on July 3.

**Weapons**—Bullet holes were reported at the Victoria Park 2 Apartments, 750 Otto Ave., on July 11.

**Miscellaneous**—A 40-year-old man was arrested for disorderly conduct and obstructing the legal process after police responded to a report of a man pointing fireworks and fighting with another man on the 400 block of West Seventh Street.

# News Briefs

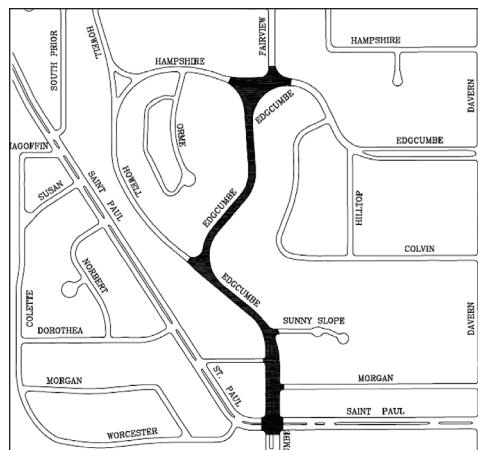
## Supply chain issues postpone Edgumbe Road reconstruction

Unforeseen issues with getting the needed materials have forced a delay in the reconstruction of a half-mile stretch of Edgumbe Road from Saint Paul Avenue to Hampshire Avenue. The approximately \$7 million project was to take place this summer, but has been postponed until 2023.

Affected property owners were notified of the delay in early July. The project has generated controversy in the Highland Park neighborhood. Some neighbors object to adding sidewalks along their sides of the street. Others have questioned street design changes and the addition of bike lanes.

According to the Saint Paul Department of Public Works, one factor in the delay is an unforeseen issue of obtaining the needed pipes. Part of the project involves replacing underground water and sewer mains.

The entire stretch will get new pavement, concrete curbs and gutters, driveway aprons, sidewalks, pedestrian ramps and resodded boulevards. Old light poles will be replaced with lantern-style street lighting. Some boulevard trees will be



Work on Edgumbe Road is delayed until 2023.

removed and replaced.

One benefit of the delay is that it allows the work on Edgumbe to be done in one construction season instead of two as originally planned. That will minimize construction disruptions.

In addition, Ramsey County is scheduled to do a resurfacing and lane reduction project on Saint Paul Avenue from Cleveland to Edgumbe this year. The delay in the Edgumbe Road project will allow the county

to complete its scheduled work without additional disruption in the area.

New construction timelines will be provided to Edgumbe neighbors next spring. Meanwhile, Public Works will continue to maintain the road and fill potholes.

Details are at [stpaul.gov/edgumberoad](http://stpaul.gov/edgumberoad).

## Capital City Bikeway extension approved on Kellogg Boulevard

The next leg of downtown's Capital City Bikeway is rolling forward, with approval on July 13 by the Saint Paul City Council of a stretch of Kellogg Boulevard between Saint Peter and Jackson streets. No one addressed the council at a public hearing prior to the vote.

The plans have been reviewed by several groups, including the Planning Commission's Transportation Committee. An open house on the project was held in June.

The bikeway is to be constructed in 2023, providing new two-way bikeways and sidewalks on the north side of the Kellogg. Signage improvements are also planned.

The latest stretch of the project would connect to bikeways on Jackson Street,

Wabasha, Saint Peter, and 9th and 10th streets. The 2023 project has its own website at [stpaul.gov/ccbkelllogg](http://stpaul.gov/ccbkelllogg).

## County commissioners grant themselves 1.5% salary hike

Ramsey County commissioners recently approved a 1.5 percent salary increase that takes effect on January 1, 2023. The new salaries will be \$99,052 for board members and \$102,149 for the chair.

No one attended a public hearing to speak on the proposed increase. In recent years, commissioners have proposed salary increases at the same level as the county's largest labor unions. Commissioners are considered to be part time, but none of them have held outside employment in recent years.

A staff study of regional county board salaries was presented to commissioners before the vote. Ramsey County commissioners are at the high end of the pay scale. Hennepin County's compensation for commissioners is \$113,566.

News Briefs were compiled by Jane McClure.

# ON THE TOWN

## Saving the Night

Children's book shines light on late friend

By Anne Haut

**S**aving the Night by Matty Caron is a children's book about a prince who overcomes his fear of the dark. It is also a tribute to Caron's friend David Hietpas, who died in 2017. Though Caron wrote the book, it was Hietpas who dreamed up the story.

Caron and Hietpas were friends at then Cretin High School in the late 1970s. Years later, Hietpas mentioned to Caron that he wanted to write a children's book. "I asked him to tell me the story, and I never forgot it," Caron said. "Whenever I'd see him, I'd ask how the book was going."

Hietpas did enjoy telling the story, but he died before he got around to writing it. Two years ago, Caron, a Highland Park chiropractor, decided to honor Hietpas by putting the story to paper.

Saving the Night, which Caron self-published through Book Baby, tells the story of King David, Queen Ellen and their son Prince Quentin. Quentin is afraid of the dark, and when he grows up and moves to a nearby town, he puts lights everywhere and leaves them on all night. That becomes a problem for the animals and plants of the town, especially the nocturnal ones.

In hopes of reclaiming the darkness, Monty the Mushroom and Patsy the Daisy travel to the kingdom to solicit the help of the king and queen. It is a long trip. During the day, Patsy uses her petals for shade to keep Monty in the dark, where the mushroom



Author Matty Caron

*'Saving the Night' may be about overcoming a fear of the dark, Tierney said, "but it can be helpful for any sort of problem people are dealing with. It's about leaning on your friends and your community to get through something hard. Every time I read it, I like it better."*

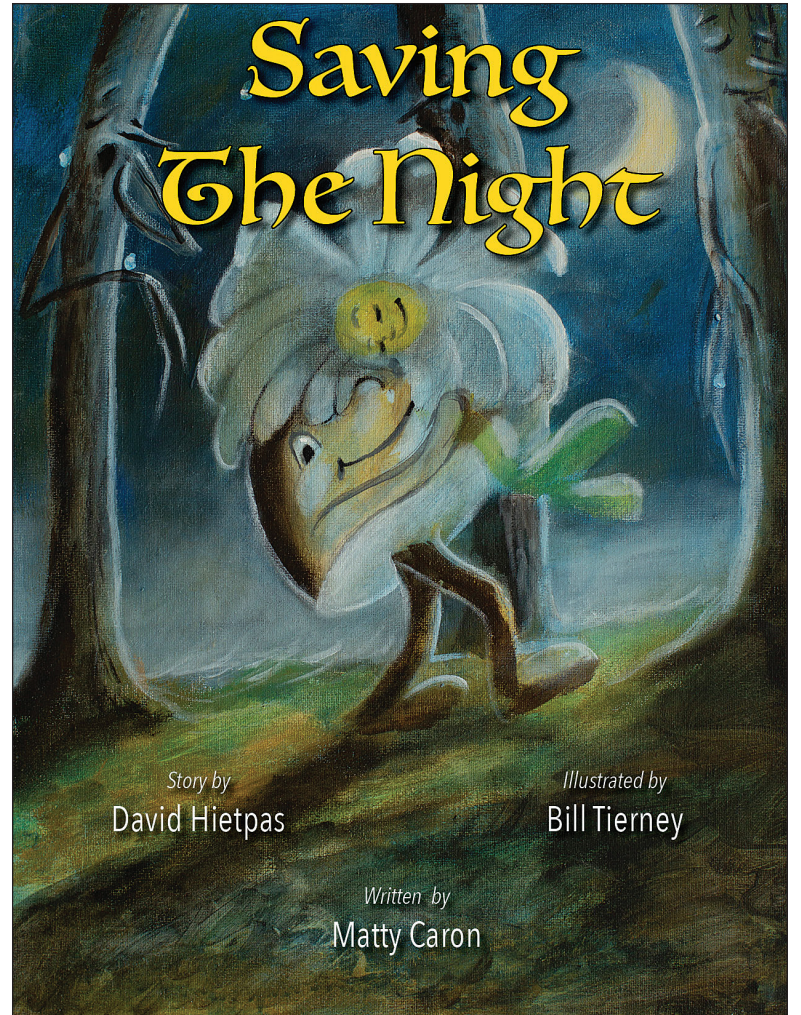
is most comfortable. At night, Monty carries Patsy because the daisy cannot see in the dark. The mushroom, the daisy and the many friends they make along the way ultimately convince the prince that light and dark are equally important.

Caron described Saving the Night as his creative outlet during the COVID-19 shutdown. Children's books are an important part of his life. "I have a 19-year-old son with special needs, and we still read books to him every night," Caron said. "I love children's books and I've read about a million of them, so I thought this would be a fun thing to try."

Caron named the characters in his book after people in his and Hietpas' life. King David is named for Hietpas; the character radiates such a bright light that people need to wear sunglasses in the king's presence. Prince Quentin is named for Hietpas' dad. Patsy the Daisy is named for Caron's mother, and Monty the Mushroom is named for another friend of Caron's who like Hietpas died too soon.

On their journey to the kingdom, Monty and Patsy receive the help of Wally the Wolf, whom Caron named for Wally Wescott, his teacher and football coach at Saint Luke's (now Saint Thomas More) grade school. Caron grew up near Saint Luke's, and in 1975 Wescott led him and his teammates to the Lukers' first CAA Twin Cities championship in football. Wally the Wolf was a way for Caron to honor his former coach, who is still an inspiring figure in his life.

As the book took shape, Caron set out to find an illustrator who could bring the story to life. He had an acquaintance, Bill Tierney, who liked to paint, but Caron was not aware of the extent of his talents. "Bill showed me a painting, and I was blown



Story by David Hietpas

Illustrated by Bill Tierney

Written by Matty Caron

away," Caron said. "It was just beautiful."

Tierney, a resident of Macalester-Groveland, has worked as a custodian at Assumption Catholic Church for the past 26 years. When he agreed to illustrate the book, Caron was thrilled.

Tierney created around 35 illustrations for Saving the Night. The original acrylic on canvas paintings vary from 11-by-14 inches to 3-by-4 feet. And just as Caron wove special people into the story, Tierney incorporated special people, pets and landmarks into the illustrations.

"Matty gave me a lot of freedom," Tierney said. "The black and white dogs in some of the paintings, those are my

Pomeranians."

Tierney painted the historic Highland Park water tower into some of the illustrations. Two friends he met at Assumption were the inspiration for the king and queen. Caron's sons are also represented in the book. And if you look closely, you can spot the images of rock stars Stevie Nicks and Prince as well as the current queen of England.

Caron's wife Michelle served as the book's editor. The nephew of a high school friend did the digital layout using images of Tierney's paintings that had been photographed by a friend Caron made through his son's adaptive sports program.

'SAVING THE NIGHT' ► 14

### Free NATIONAL NIGHT OUT GRILL PACK

National Night Out – August 2

Let's strengthen our communities!

The Odd Couple Team is providing FREE grill packs (burgers and hot dogs) for registered block parties in St. Paul neighborhoods.

Reserve by 7/28 for pickup at our office (1460 Grand Ave) on 8/2 between 12-5pm.



Reserve your grill pack by 7/28 at:  
[TheOddCoupleTeam.com/NNO](https://TheOddCoupleTeam.com/NNO)

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# ON THE TOWN *Briefly*

## Music

**Mariachi Mi Tierra** will perform live from 5:45-8 p.m. Tuesday, July 26, outside of the Minnesota History Center, 345 W. Kellogg Pkwy. Admission is free. Bring your own lawn chair or blanket for seating. Open dancing, lawn games and children's activities will all be part of the fun. No pets are allowed. Food trucks and a cash bar will be available.

**Trio Bossa Nova** will perform from noon to 1 p.m. Wednesday, July 27, in the cortile of Landmark Center. Admission is free.

**Sons of Groove** will present a free concert from 6:30-8 p.m. Wednesday, July 27, in Mendakota Park in Mendota Heights.

**The Will Kjeer Quartet** will perform classic and contemporary jazz in a free concert from 4-7 p.m. Thursday, July 28, in downtown's Rice Park.

**Songs of Hope**, a concert by children and adults from 10 different countries, will be held at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, July 30, at E.M. Pearson Theatre, 312 N. Hamline Ave. The singers from Guatemala, Costa Rica, Mexico, Jamaica, Italy, Finland, Germany, Israel, Turkey, the United Kingdom and United States will perform a mix of traditional and contemporary songs from their respective countries. Admission is \$10-\$15.

## Theater

**Glensheen**, the dark musical by Jeffrey Hatcher and Chan Poling about the 1977 murders of Duluth heiress Elizabeth Congdon and her nurse, is playing through July 24 at the Minnesota History Theatre, 30 E. 10th St. Jen Maren stars as Marjorie Caldwell, one of the prime suspects. Show times are 1 and 7:30 p.m. Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and 2 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$15-\$70. Call 651-292-4323 or visit historytheatre.com.

**Jesus Christ Superstar**, a concert-style performance of the rock opera by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice about the passion and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, will be performed by Theatre 55 at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 5 p.m. Sunday, July 22-24, in the amphitheater at Caponi Art Park, 1220 Duffley Road in Eagan. Van Nixon, Beverly Tipton Hammond, Gary David Keast and Lawrence Hutera star. Tickets are \$15, \$30 for 3 to 6 patrons who

arrive in the same car. Visit theatre55.org.

**Who is the real Sherlock Holmes?** That is the mystery to unravel in Jeffrey Hatcher's *Holmes and Watson*, playing through August 21 on the proscenium stage at Park Square Theatre, 20 W. Seventh Place. The drama opens when Dr. Watson receives a telegram from a mental asylum where three patients are all claiming to be the intrepid Holmes. Bruce Roach, Pearce Bunting, Paul de Cordova and Peter Simmons star. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays. For tickets, call 651-291-7005 or visit parksquaretheatre.org.

## Exhibits

**"Journey to Space,"** a traveling exhibit built with the support of NASA, is being displayed through September 5 at the Science Museum of Minnesota, 120 W. Kellogg Blvd. Learn about the trips humans are taking to space and imagine a future when earth is no longer the only planet we call home. An accompanying exhibit will test visitors' knowledge of space and engineering skills with the aid of a NASA model. Tickets should be purchased in advance. Visit smm.org.

**The history of plastic** and its beauty and diversity as a design material are explored in "Plastic Rapt: A History of Designing Forever," on view through September 25 in the University of Minnesota's Goldstein Gallery on the second floor of McNeal Hall, 1985 Buford Ave. It includes objects made from celluloid, the earliest semi-synthetic plastic, as well as Bakelite, the first true synthetic plastic. Admission is free. Call 612-624-7434.

**Dog Days and Art**, an art crawl for people and their four-legged friends, will be held on Saturday, August 6, on Harriet Island. Artists will be showing and selling their works from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. in their studios in Warehouse 2, 106 W. Water St. Dogs that are leashed and well-behaved are welcome at the outdoor portion of the festival, which runs from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.



The young acrobats of Circus Juventas take a death-defying journey through circus history in *Confetti*, running July 29 through August 14 under the big top at 1270 Montreal Ave. The time travelers juggle with minstrels in Renaissance Italy, meet up with Phillip Astley at the dawn of the circus ring, witness the invention of the flying trapeze and rub shoulders with P.T. Barnum. Among the performers are Highland and Macalester-Groveland students (clockwise from left) Isaac McEwen, Soren Chirhart, Finn Zwank, Keegan Bersie-Mize, Amarylla Chermak, Amelia Smith, Annie McEwen, Sofi Lennington-Chaffee, Elsie Newburg, and Everett Smith. Show times are 7 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 1 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Tickets are \$25-\$50, free to children age 2 and under on the lap of an adult. Visit circusjuventas.org.

There, people may commission a portrait with their pet, purchase gourmet treats for the dogs or order delicious edibles for themselves at any of several food trucks.

## Film

**Encanto** will be screened at 9 p.m. Friday, August 5, in Union Depot's Lot D, 392 E. Kellogg Blvd. The audio for the drive-in movie will be streamed over radio. Refreshments will be available. Contests, quizzes and prizes will all be part of the fun. Tickets are \$15 per vehicle. Visit uniondepot.org.

## Books

**Next Chapter Booksellers**, 38 S. Snelling Ave., will host readings and discussions with authors Brad Zellar and his novel, *Till the Wheels Fall Off*, at 6 p.m. Thursday, July 28; and Charles Baxter and his book, *Wonderlands: Essays on the Life of Literature*, at 6 p.m. Tuesday, August 2. For information, call 651-225-8989 or visit nextchapterbooksellers.com.

A free poetry workshop will be offered by Cracked Walnut from 10 a.m.-noon on Saturday, August 6, in the first floor meeting room at the Highland Park Library, 1974 Ford Pkwy. Bring eight to 10 copies of an original poem to read and have critiqued. For reservations, email donna@donnaisaacpoet.com.

## Et cetera

The Minnesota State Fair invites musicians, singers, dancers, jugglers and other performers to audition from July 25-31 for its Amateur Talent Contest. Semifinalists will perform on the first 10 days of the fair beginning at 6 p.m. at the Leinie Lodge Bandshell. Finalists will compete on the Grandstand stage at 7:30 p.m. Sunday, September 4. Nearly \$20,000 in prize money will be awarded to the 1st-, 2nd- and 3rd-place winners in Open, Teen (ages 13-18) and Preteen (12 and under) divisions. To register, visit mnstatefair.org/competitions/amateur-talent-contests by 4 p.m. Wednesday, July 27. For information, call 651-288-4395 or email msfent@mnstatefair.org.

Experience the Sibley Historic Site as it was in the 1830s when it was the center of the fur trade in the Upper Midwest. Fur Trade Weekend will be held from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, July 23-24, on the grounds at 1357 Sibley Mem. Hwy. in Mendota. Interact with fur trade reenactors, explore the historic homes of Henry Sibley and Jean-Baptiste Faribault, and enjoy live music and historical presentations. Admission is \$12, \$10 for seniors and college students, \$8 for children ages 5-17. For an additional \$8, take part in an Alexis Bailly Vineyard wine tasting on Sunday. For information, call 651-452-1596 or visit dakotahistory.org.

Actor Joshua Malina, known for his roles on the hit shows "Scandal," "The West Wing" and "The Big Bang Theory," will offer a behind-the-scenes look at the iconic television shows and why they resonated with the public at 3 p.m. Sunday, July 31, in the O'Shaughnessy at Saint Catherine University. In the second half of the program, Malina and cohost Rabbi Shira Stutman will present an episode of their new podcast "Chutzpod," exploring current events and ethical issues through the lens of the Jewish faith. Tickets are \$36-\$75. For reservations, visit oshag.stkate.edu.

### SUNDAY/JULY 24

THE LEXINGTON-HAMLIN Community Council will serve up its 50th Ice Cream Social from 1-3 p.m. in the tot lot at Hague and Hamline avenues.

### TUESDAY/JULY 26

THE FABULOUS FRIENDS CLUB is partnering with the Jewish Community Center to distribute fresh produce free of charge to local residents from noon-1 p.m. in the parking lot at Davern Street and Saint Paul Avenue. The

## KIOSK

produce will be available at the same time on the second and fourth Tuesdays of August and September.

### TUESDAY/AUGUST 2

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT will be marked from 4-7 p.m. with a celebration of art, music, food, prizes and other

free giveaways on the North Plaza of Saint Paul's Union Depot, Fourth and Sibley streets. Artists will show and sell their wares. A deejay will provide the tunes. Folks can also take part in the making of a mural.

### WEDNESDAY/AUGUST 3

GRAB A SWEET TREAT to beat the summer heat. Saint Peter's Lutheran Church, at 530 S. Victoria St. will be handing out the free frozen refreshment from 7-8 p.m.



Illustrator Bill Tierney and his portrait of David the King.

### 13◀ 'SAVING THE NIGHT'

When everything came together, Caron said he was surprised by the quality of the publication and humbled by the collaboration of so many of his acquaintances. He put together 100 signed first-edition copies of the book, and they sold out in five days.

In late June he hosted a book launch on the patio of Plum's Neighborhood Grill and Bar across the street from his Snelling Avenue chiropractic clinic. Over 100 people showed up. "It turned out to be a high school

reunion," Caron said.

Those who came admired Tierney's original paintings, which had been set up around the patio. Wally Wescott was there, and he bought some books for his grandchildren. Many of David Hietpas' relatives did the same.

Caron knew that writing his late friend's story would be a meaningful endeavor, but the process was even more rewarding than he expected. David Hietpas, Caron's son Danny and Tierney all have similarly sweet dispositions, Caron said. He loves that *Saving the Night* honors all three—and so many others—for what they

bring to the world.

"David was such a giver," Caron said, "if his story helps someone, I think he would've loved that."

*Saving the Night* may be about overcoming a fear of the dark, Tierney said, "but it can be helpful for any sort of problem people are dealing with. It's about leaning on your friends and your community to get through something hard. Every time I read it, I like it better."

Copies of *Saving the Night* are available online for \$32.99 in hard cover and \$23.99 in paperback. Visit store.bookbaby.com.

# SPORTS



## The Wright Call

By Dave Wright

### A summer hoops showcase at Mac

Macalester College has long been known as a beacon of diversity in academics as well as in athletics. So it makes perfect sense that the college would host a basketball showcase intended to find players from a country that is currently ranked No. 163 of the 164 teams listed in the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) World Cup rankings.

That country is Eritrea, located in northeastern Africa along the Red Sea. It's a relatively new country, having achieved its independence from Ethiopia in 1993.

In his five years as the Macalester men's basketball coach, Abe Woldeslassie has turned a 7-18 team into one that finished a game shy of making it to the NCAA Division III tournament last March. While venturing hither and yon looking for promising players, Woldeslassie has also kept in mind his heritage. Woldeslassie's father left Ethiopia in the 1970s to move here. The area where his father grew up is now Eritrea.

Alex Loul Syum, whose parents lived in the same region as Woldeslassie's father, is an old friend of the Mac coach. Loul Syum is an assistant community college basketball coach in Oregon and also works with that state's amateur athletes. The pair have teamed up to find potential players that could help Eritrea move up in the FIBA rankings. The result is the Eritrea Basketball Showcase that will take place from August 5-7 in the Macalester gym.

*"We were looking for a place to showcase talent," Alex Loul Syum said, regarding the Eritrea Basketball Showcase that will be held on August 5-7 at Macalester.*

"We were looking for a place to showcase talent," Loul Syum said. "We wanted to find a spot that's relatively easy to get to. Macalester isn't far from the airport, and Abe said he'd be happy to help. It fit nicely."

One of the things about international athletic competition is you don't have to be a citizen of the country you're representing. You just need a familial connection. But that connection goes further than just being a native who has moved to another country. If even one of your parents has that national heritage, you can represent the country in international competition.

While basketball is becoming more popular in Eritrea, Loul Syum readily acknowledges that the country is a long way from being able to move up in the international rankings on its own. Thus, several high school and college basketball players with Eritrean connections will be at Macalester to participate in drills and scrimmages. Woldeslassie will be one of the evaluators of the potential talent pool. (As an aside, his 2022-23 roster at Macalester currently lists players from Senegal, Nigeria and Pakistan to go with those from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Massachusetts and Maryland.)

The showcase is expected to draw 20-30 participants from all over the United States. "The idea is to find players who'll be able to compete in the Olympics down the line," Loul Syum said.

Getting to that level, however, is a few years down the road. Eritrea is currently ranked 35th among the 36 African nations playing men's basketball. But you've got to start somewhere. And what better place to start than a basketball camp at one of the most international colleges in the United States?

### New hockey arena just one issue for UST

As noted elsewhere in this issue, it's back to the

WRIGHT CALL ►16



Saint Paul Pioneers' quarterback Ronald Sackett looks for an open receiver during a recent practice. PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

## In 21st season, Saint Paul Pioneers remain among semipro football elite

By Bill Wagner

The Saint Paul Pioneers semipro football team had to work some new players into its lineup this year and the start of the season was a little rocky as a result. But now the jelling process seems complete.

"We've been kind of rising as we go," said second-year head coach Damien Rochon-Washington, who's been with the Pioneers as a player and then as a coach since their inaugural season in 2002.

As of press time, the Pioneers were 5-0 in the Northern Elite Football League (NEFL) and 5-2 overall. Their only losses were the season opener in May against the Newton Nite Hawks in Iowa and in week three versus the Racine Raiders in Wisconsin.

In their league battles, however, the Pioneers have done very well, including slug-it-out wins against the second-place Kansas City Bulldogs and third-place Fargo Invaders. As of this writing, the Pioneers had two regular-season games left—July 16 at Fargo and July 23 at Kansas City.

"They'll both be tough games, but we'll be ready," Rochon-Washington said. "We're a totally different team since the start of the year."

If they win those games, the Pioneers will own the top seed in the postseason that begins at the end of July and the coach sees no reason why his team shouldn't make another good playoff run this year.

The Pioneers, who practice at the Jimmy Lee Recreation Center and play their home games at Concordia University's Sea Foam Stadium, have put a good product on the field throughout their 21 seasons. They've won the NEFL title seven times and have three national crowns (2009, 2012 and 2014). And they haven't had a losing season since 2005.

There are 63 players on the Pioneers' roster, ranging from former college standouts to those who hadn't played since high school. "We have plumbers, electricians, teachers... people from so many backgrounds,"



Pioneers' kicker Hardin Henry tees off as teammate Daniel Smith breaks downfield during a special teams drill.

Rochon-Johnson said.

The one thing they have in common is their love of playing football, and the coach always wants to make sure that he doesn't take any of them for granted.

"We make sure that we use all our guys," Rochon-Washington said. "It's our job as coaches to make sure that we get the best out of our players."

The Pioneers are a well-balanced outfit, and have good athletes on both sides of the ball. The defense, coordinated by Jesse Luft, boasts several outstanding playmakers, and nowhere is that more the case than at linebacker.

Ryan Saumur, a veteran outside linebacker, usually can be found wherever the ball is. "He's one of the best in the league," Rochon-Washington said.

Saint Paul doesn't blitz often because it doesn't have to. The team has supreme confidence in its defensive line, which includes defensive ends Daniel Byse and Brandon Tamsett, to not only thwart the run but to generate a penetrating pass rush.

On the back end, safety Johnny Ware and cornerback Henrich Ezin also get after the ball well. At press time, the Pioneers had 10 sacks and five interceptions, and had only given up more than 14 points in a game once this year.

Still, it's when they're on the attack that the Pioneers are really dangerous. "We're an incredibly balanced team on offense," Rochon-Washington said.

The Pioneers took a while for their quarterback position to come around, but they appear to have found their guy in Ronald Sackett. He's shown efficiency with only one interception since he took over

as the team's signal-caller.

Jeffrey DuBose has solid running back skills, averaging 6.4 yards per carry. Newcomer Kwaawczar White averages about five yards a carry and has been a pleasant surprise for offensive coordinator Anthony Minus.

Wide receiver Landon Delcambre was sixth in the league with 14 catches for an average of 18.7 yards per grab. Anthony Baggett and Matt Crandall also contribute at the wide-out spots.

The Pioneers have an outstanding kicker in former Minnesota Gopher Eric Ellestad, who has a 53-yard field goal to his credit this year.

Center Shannon Johnson anchors an athletic and tough offensive line, which also includes brothers Carson and Travis Madigan at tackle and guard, respectively.

The 2022 season has also been a banner one for another reason. Mark Heiser, the team's longest-serving and most successful head coach, was inducted into the Pioneers Hall of Fame earlier this year. He led the team to three national titles, and is now president of the Pioneers' board.

Heiser started with the team as an assistant coach in 2006. He also coached on the high school level at Saint Paul Academy.

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drawing board for the University of Saint Thomas in its search for a place to build a hockey arena. In theory, this should be easy enough to accomplish. After all, Minnesota is supposed to be a hockey hotbed—the State of Hockey, no? Finding a way to accommodate the sixth Division I college hockey program in Minnesota should be a no-brainer, right?

Well, it turns out it's not as easy a problem to solve as first thought. The reality is there isn't a lot of room in town to build a new hockey arena. First, Town & Country Club said "no thanks" to UST's offer to buy its golf course for \$61.4 million in order to build an athletic complex there. Then the university's plan to include a hockey arena as part of a new sports complex at the Highland Bridge development fizzled out for a variety of reasons.

With 6,000 seats, the State Fair Coliseum would have been the right size for UST hockey, but the ice went out there years ago and there's zero interest in putting it back in. Saint Thomas Academy has been a nice temporary home for the Tommies to play hockey, but if the university wants to become a serious Division I player in the game down the line, a 1,000-seat rink like STA's isn't going to cut it.

Hockey hasn't been played on campus at the University of Saint Thomas since there was outdoor ice in the 1960s. While UST may not be as landlocked as Macalester, Concordia or Hamline, it would take some work—

*In one sense, the University of Saint Thomas' transition to Division I athletics would seem to be complete. However, the hard work is just beginning.*

perhaps at the sacrifice of another sport's field—to find a spot on campus to build an arena. However, if UST can make a deal to move its baseball, softball and/or soccer programs to an equitable place nearby, such as Highland Bridge, there might be room for an arena on campus.

Alas, an arena of even 4,000 seats requires parking and that's where the equation gets dicey. Would such a facility require building another parking ramp?

UST athletic director Phil Esten understood the move to DI would be complicated and adjustments would be needed to what's been done for years on campus. In the one year since Saint Thomas left the MIAC, the world of DI athletics has undergone significant changes. College athletes are now able to negotiate Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) financial deals similar to what a free agent in professional sports does. UST simply doesn't have the wherewithal to compete at the same level as the University of Minnesota when it comes to NIL deals.

A year ago, the U of M axed three sports. It used a lot

of rationalizations to justify the move, but the bottom line was money. The Gophers simply didn't want to fund men's gymnastics, tennis and track and field teams anymore. There was much grumbling when the axe fell but, in time, the complainers faded away and life went on.

UST may face this reality down the line. Fortunately, its football program is currently a nonscholarship sport with a workable stadium. Financially, the only downside to football is the travel expenses for hopping on a plane to play in places like San Diego. Basketball is set in stone and it's clear the school is committed to hockey. Volleyball would seem to be safe as well.

After that, however, all bets are off. One of the things that some of the backers of UST's move to DI athletics seem to underestimate is there's little room for sentiment at that level. Coaches with long-term deals get fired when things don't go well, but they still get paid for the duration of their contract. Players aren't sentimental, either. A player who thinks he or she can get more playing time or attention—and perhaps endorsement money—elsewhere can move freely from school to school.

Sports that fail to generate revenue may add to a school's athletic diversity, but it doesn't help the bottom line.

In one sense, UST's transition to DI athletics would seem to be complete. However, the hard work is just beginning.

*Dave Wright can be reached at [dwright53@msn.com](mailto:dwright53@msn.com).*

## Sports Shorts

**Tour de Rec**, a free drop-in program for kids ages 6-12, is bringing games, sports, arts, crafts and other activities to neighborhood spots in Mendota Heights and West Saint Paul this summer. The next two programs will be held from 1:30-2:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 26, at Mendakota Park and from 12:30-1:30 p.m. Tuesday, August 2, at Harmon Park. Supervision is provided during the listed event time only. For more information, visit [tinyurl.com/y922juf3](https://tinyurl.com/y922juf3).

**Gerry Brown**, the legendary former football coach at Saint Thomas Academy, has been named this year's recipient of

the John Gagliardi Legacy Award by the Minnesota Chapter of the National Football Foundation. Brown will be honored during this summer's Minnesota Football Honors show. During his 21-year career as STA's head coach, Brown posted a 173-34-1 record, led the Cadets to nine state playoff appearances, 13 conference championships, three section championships, one state playoff championship and two final No. 1 rankings. Brown retired as head coach following the 1989 season, but continued to teach math there until the mid-1990s, after which he served as alumni director. He has received countless awards for his

accomplishments on and off the field, including induction into the Minnesota Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame and being awarded the Myser Prize for Teaching Excellence. Additionally, STA named its football stadium after him in 1994. Minnesota Football Honors is hosting a show to honor this year's high school, college and Minnesota Vikings award winners. Special guests will be featured, including Vikings players. An official broadcast date will be announced soon on [minnesotafootballhonors.com](https://minnesotafootballhonors.com).



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# District Councils

## Highland Park

highlanddistrictcouncil.org • 651-695-4005

**Music and movie**—Join the Highland District Council at the Historic Highland Pool House, 1313 Montreal Ave., on Thursday, July 21, for live music, an outdoor movie and other fun starting at 6:30 p.m. There will be lawn games, a free art activity by ArtStart, and food from the Rustic Chef Food Truck and ice cream from Cold Front available for purchase. Music by The Bad Companions starts at 7 p.m., followed by the movie *Jumanji: The Next Level* at dusk. The event is co-hosted by Saint Paul Parks and Recreation.

**Transportation fair**—The Highland District Council's Transportation Information Fair will be held from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Wednesday, August 3, at the Minnesota JCC's Capp Center, 1375 Saint Paul Ave. Presenters will include the Minnesota Department of Transportation on West Seventh Street resurfacing; Ramsey County on the Blue Line/Riverview Corridor connection study, Saint Paul Avenue resurfacing, and the second phase of the Lexington Parkway reroute project; and the city of Saint Paul on Edgcombe Road's reconstruction, Mississippi River Boulevard's resurfacing, and an update on the city's Bike Plan.

**Lock and dam tour**—A years-long study about the future of Lock and Dam No. 1 just south of the Ford Bridge will begin soon. People can learn more about the issues involved by attending a free walking tour hosted by Friends of the Mississippi River at 3 p.m. Thursday, August 4. Meet at the splash pad at the Wabun Picnic Area in Minneapolis. No registration is required.

**Highland Park bike tour**—The HDC's Transportation Committee will host a 1.5-hour bike tour throughout Highland Park instead of its August meeting. Riders should meet at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, August 9, at the Highland Park Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy. From there they will explore various transportation-related sites. The pace will be slow, with several stops along the way.

**Outdoor movie**—Family-friendly activities and an outdoor screening of the animated film *Luca* will be presented by the Saint Paul Department of Parks and Recreation on Wednesday, August 10, at Sibley Manor Apartments, 1300 W. Maynard Drive.

**Jazzed About Highland**—Live jazz, food trucks and fun will once again fill the parking lot of Langford and Karls Chiropractic Clinic, 730 S. Cleveland Ave., during Jazzed about Highland beginning at 6 p.m. Thursday, August 11.

**Highland Bridge meeting**—Ryan Companies and the University of Saint Thomas postponed their July 26 neighborhood meeting regarding the university's plans for a sports complex at Highland Bridge. The meeting has been rescheduled for 6 p.m. Monday, August 22, at Lumen Christi Catholic Community, 2055 Bohland Ave.

**Upcoming meeting**—Community Engagement Committee, 7 p.m. Monday, July 25. There will be no board of directors meeting in August. HDC meetings are held at the Highland Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy., with an option to join online. Get the Zoom link and agendas at highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar.

## Macalester-Groveland

macgrove.org • 651-695-4000

**Racial covenants**—In collaboration with Mapping Prejudice, Welcoming the Dear Neighbor? and Just Deeds, the Macalester-Groveland Community Council will hold a public meeting on racial covenants at 6 p.m. Wednesday, August 3, in Weyerhaeuser Hall at Macalester College. Participants will be able to view the preliminary Ramsey County racial covenants map and discuss how to check their own property's title history or deed for racial covenants. Register for the event by visiting macgrove.org/event/racialcovenantsmacgrove.

**Great Mac-Grove and Summit Hill Garage Sale**—The Macalester-Groveland and Summit Hill district councils are teaming up to organize a joint garage sale from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, August 27. Residents of both neighborhoods can register their sales at macgrove.org/garagesale. The deadline is August 8. The sale will take place rain or shine.

**Alley Garden Awards**—Judging for the Macalester-Groveland Community Council's annual Alley Garden Awards is taking place through July 21. Those who believe their garden was missed should contact alyssa@macgrove.org after the judging period is over.

**Mac-Grove Fest**—Mac-Grove Fest will be held from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, September 10, at the Edgcombe Recreation Center, 320 S. Griggs St. Join the community council for a fun-filled day of live music, food trucks, craft fair, art activities, games, bounce house, face painting and business marketplace. For more information, visit macgrove.org/macgrovefest.

**Century building plaques**—Orders are still being accepted for the next round of engraved century building plaques. All owners of structures built in 1927 or before are eligible. Learn more at macgrove.org/100years.

**Upcoming meetings**—Inclusivity Task Force on Wednesday, July 20; Transportation Committee on Monday, July 25; and Housing and Land Use Committee on Wednesday, July 27. The meetings will begin at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. For monthly meeting notices and log-in details, visit macgrove.org/participate.

## Summit Hill

summithillassociation.org • 651-222-1222

**Free summer meals**—Free breakfasts from 9:30-10:30 a.m. and snacks from 4-5 p.m. are being served Mondays through Thursdays now through August 19 at the Linwood Recreation Center, 860 Saint Clair Ave., for Saint Paul residents age 18 and younger. The meals and snacks are being provided through a partnership with Youthprise, Saint Paul Public Schools and Recreation in Motion. For information, see "free meals and snacks" at StPaul.gov.

**Summit Hill plan**—The update to the Summit Hill neighborhood plan is now entering its final stage. Committee members are drafting and redrafting chapters that tentatively will be presented for public review during



District councils in MyVillager's area.

August. The Summit Hill Association's board will then review the plan before sending it on to the City Council.

**Join the board**—The SHA is inviting neighbors to join its board of directors. For eligibility information and to complete an application, visit SummitHillAssociation.org/join-the-board.

**Upcoming meetings**—Streetscapes Committee at 5:30 p.m. and Policies and Procedures Committee at 7 p.m. Wednesday, July 20; board of directors at 7 p.m. Thursday, July 21; and Neighborhood Plan Committee and Zoning and Land Use Committee (tentative) at 7 p.m. Tuesday, July 26. For meeting information, including locations and Zoom links, visit SummitHillAssociation.org/calendar.

## Union Park

unionparkdc.org • 651-645-6887

**Upcoming meetings**—board of directors, 7 p.m. Wednesday, August 3; and Transportation Committee, 6:30 p.m. Monday, August 8. To access the Zoom meetings, email wako@unionparkdc.org, Leah@unionparkdc.org or 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 Leah@unionparkdc.org.

## West Seventh

fortroadfederation.org • 651-298-5599

**Upcoming meetings**—Community Engagement and Outreach Committee, 6:30 p.m. Thursday, July 21; and Transportation and Land Use Committee, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, August 3. The board of directors will not meet in August. For log-in information to the Zoom meetings, visit fortroadfederation.org/calendar.

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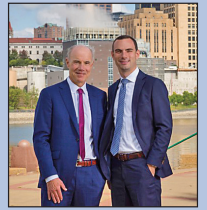
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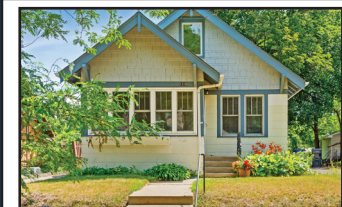


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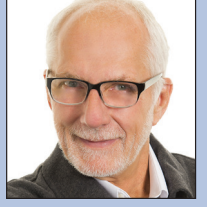
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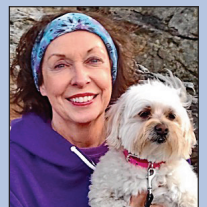
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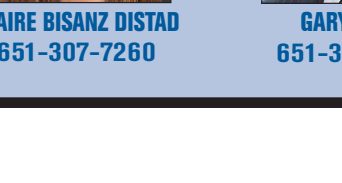
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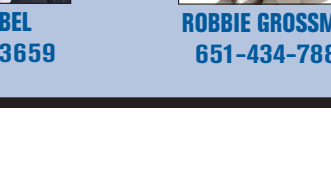
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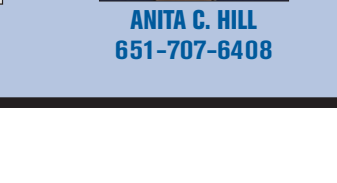
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