

Saint Paul spends bulk of remaining 2022 rescue funds

\$42M earmarked for areas ranging from snowplowing to redoing council offices

By Jane McClure

The Saint Paul City Council earmarked another \$42 million in federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds on December 7 for several city departments and programs.

ARP is a program launched during the COVID-19 pandemic. Local and state governments are to use the dollars for pandemic-related needs and to stabilize local economies, according to federal websites.

Laura Logsdon, who oversees ARP dollars for the city's Office of Financial Services, said the city had \$166.6 million to spend in 2022. Of that amount, \$123 million was budgeted prior to December 7. The city still has \$1.6 million left, which Logsdon said will be allocated in early 2023. She added that the city has met all federal reporting deadlines.

The largest allocation on December 7 was \$17.5 million toward affordable housing for households at 30 percent of the Twin Cities area median income. That brings the total city ARP dollars spent on affordable housing to \$37.5 million. Ramsey

RESCUE FUNDS ▶2



Santa's workshop.

Visitors lined up to sit on the jolly old elf's lap and tell him their Christmas wishes at Landmark Center on December 11. At right, storyteller Jim Eckert spun yuletide yarns during the special holiday event.

PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

Tolbert plans to step down after serving 12 years on City Council

By Jane McClure

The Saint Paul City Council will have a majority of new members in 2024, with four of the seven incumbents stepping down at the end of next year. The latest to announce he will not seek reelection is Ward 3's Chris Tolbert.

Tolbert, who represents the Highland Park and most of the Macalester-Groveland neighborhoods, made his announcement on social media on December 15. He joins council president Amy Brendmoen from Ward 5 and council member Jane Prince from Ward 7 in announcing that they would not run again in 2023.

Russel Balenger will also not run next year. He was appointed earlier this year to fill the Ward 1 seat on an interim basis after Dai Thao resigned to take a new job in Florida.

"It's just time," said Tolbert when announcing his decision. He said he would like more time for his family, which includes wife Kelly, daughter Natalia and son Dylan, who was born almost a year ago.

"It's been an absolute honor to be a council member for the city that raised

CHRIS TOLBERT ▶2

Neighbors raise questions about UST's plans for on-campus arena

By Jane McClure

The proposed construction of a multi-use facility for hockey and large events on the University of Saint Thomas' south campus is raising many questions for neighbors, the West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee (WSNAC) was told on December 13.

UST plans to host public meetings about the project. When those will happen has not been finalized, but some Macalester-Groveland neighbors want to start talking sooner rather than later. Neighbors worry about the review process and the ability to get additional information on anticipated

parking, traffic and other impacts.

Amy McDonough, chief of staff to the university president, said UST is in the process of requesting proposals from design/build firms for the project. A specific south campus site has not been chosen, nor is there a budget or timeline for the project, which will not proceed until UST has the money in hand to cover 75 percent of the costs, McDonough said.

UST men's and women's hockey teams currently play at the Saint Thomas Academy arena in Mendota Heights.

Neighbors and WSNAC members raised questions about the review process and how the project changes the campus mas-

ter plan, which was approved several years ago. That plan was developed before UST moved to Division I sports.

"This is very much a chicken and egg proposition," said WSNAC member Marc Manderscheid. According to him, using design/build means that completed plans could be ready with not much chance for public comments.

The location is also an issue. Goodrich Avenue residents are worried about having such a facility so close to their homes. However, locating the facility closer to the center of the south campus would likely put the university's historic Grace and Cretin halls at risk. Other buildings could also

face demolition to make room for the new building.

One issue raised at the WSNAC meeting is if Grace and Cretin must come down, the dormitory beds in the two buildings need to be replaced.

Parking is another red flag for neighbors. When the Anderson Student Center was built on UST's north campus in 2010-2012, part of its required parking was included in the Anderson Parking Ramp at Grand and Cretin avenues.

However, the city recently eliminated parking minimums, which took parking

UST HOCKEY ARENA ▶3

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KEYSTONE SERVICES



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CITY BEAT

HPC denies demolition permit for the historic Justus Ramsey House ▶4

DOWN TO THE WIRE

St. Paul tweaks budget, adopts 14.65% hike in property tax levy ▶6-7

ON THE TOWN



Circus Juventas finds its place in Soleil ▶14

PREP HOOPS PREVIEWS



Boys', girls' teams take the court ▶16-17

VIEWPOINT..... 8
DISTRICT COUNCILS..... 9
CRIME REPORT 12
ARTS LISTINGS14-15
CLASSIFIEDS 18

1◀ CHRIS TOLBERT

me,” Tolbert said. “This is a city that I love with absolute bias, a city that continues to evolve and change, a city with even brighter days in its future. But more than anything, this amazing city is the one that we all have the privilege of calling home.”

Tolbert cited the transformation of the former Ford Motor Company site into the Highland Bridge development as a major accomplishment during his council years. Not long after he was elected, the last Ford Ranger rolled off the plant’s assembly line.

Tolbert said he never avoided difficult issues and cited many accomplishments during his time representing Ward 3.

“In just over a year, my 12 years on the City Council will come to end,” he said. “However, this won’t be goodbye. Rather, it’ll be the start of the next chapter of public service and family for me.”

Tolbert was born and raised in Saint Paul.

A Central High graduate, he played sports including football and hockey. He earned a bachelor’s degree from Saint John’s University in 2005, and a juris doctorate from Hamline University School of Law in 2008.

After law school, Tolbert served as a clerk for Ramsey County Chief Judge Kathleen Gearin, and then became an assistant attorney for Hennepin County.

Tolbert currently chairs the city’s Housing and Redevelopment Authority board. He also chaired the Library Board and is a member of the Board of Water Commissioners, where he championed efforts to replace lead water service lines to homes. He was the council representative on a work group that focused on the city’s rent stabilization regulations.

His other experience includes serving on the boards of the League of Minnesota Cities, Ramsey County League of Local Government, Saint Paul Children’s Collaborative, Ramsey County Workforce Innovation, Greater Metropolitan Workforce

Council, Metropolitan Council Transportation Advisory, and Visit Saint Paul.

He has been involved with the proposed Riverview Corridor modern streetcar line and serves on its Policy Advisory Committee. As part of that work, he sought a study of transit options for the Highland area.

Other efforts include work on the Right Track youth jobs program, and Full Stack economic development initiative.

Tolbert also worked to make changes to Saint Paul’s on-sale liquor regulations, to make it easier for restaurants to get licenses.

Brendmoen, who represents north-central Saint Paul, and Tolbert will finish their third, four-year council terms in 2023. Prince, a former Ward 4 legislative aide, will complete two terms representing a large chunk of the East Side.

All seven council seats will be on the ballot next November. Council members Nelsie Yang, Mitra Jalali and Rebecca Noecker are seeking reelection.



Ward 3 City Council member Chris Tolbert.

1◀ RESCUE FUNDS

County has allocated the same amount. The city and county have a shared goal of creating 1,000 deeply affordable housing units.

The second largest allocation was \$7.5 million to stabilize the 2023 and 2024 city budgets. The city’s strategy has been to use the federal funds to stabilize city budgets, then cycle programs and services off of ARP funds over time. The Department of Parks and Recreation will use \$1.3 million for staffing. The department laid off staff during the pandemic, then rehired staff with ARP funds.

Another \$1 million will be for a police academy pilot project to recruit and train new officers in 2023. The remaining \$5.2 million will be used for street resurfacing work in 2023 and 2024.

The third largest allocation was \$6.1 million for city staff time to administer and manage ARP spending. The total spent on administration is \$7.9 million, and represents 5 percent of the city’s total allocation, Logsdon said.

Another \$1.8 million is set aside as matching funds for city grant applications. Many city departments apply for outside grants and there are times the city is required to put up a match.

The city’s parking fund, which took a hit during the pandemic as downtown workplaces and businesses were largely deserted, will receive \$2 million. The parking fund is derived from meter revenue and fees paid to use city-owned parking ramps. The \$2 million will be used to make structural repairs and parking contract equipment upgrades at eight parking ramps.

Another \$2 million allocation will allow

for electronic payments for various city services, something council members have sought for some time. This will be across city services, and will include payments the public makes to the city and payments the city makes to vendors.

A total of \$1.9 million was allocated to design and make changes to the City Council offices. The goal is to modernize office space and create better public access.

Library materials throughout the entire Saint Paul Public Library System will transition to radio frequency identification technology, with every item tagged, at a cost of \$1.25 million. This will speed material checkouts and returns, reduce staff time and repetitive stress injuries, and mean less equipment will be needed in libraries.

Another \$1 million will go to the Department of Safety and Inspections, which will

be able to conduct some inspections virtually. That should speed up the finalization of all types of permits.

The smallest allocation was \$900,000, but may have the greatest visible impact on city streets as part of an upgrade of the Department of Public Works’ snow removal equipment. The goal is to modernize navigation systems as streets are plowed.

Council members worked with Mayor Melvin Carter’s administration on the ARP allocations. Council president Amy Brendmoen said the one-time funds are a way for the city to make expenditures that are long overdue, yet cannot be accommodated in the city budget.

Other council members agreed, although Ward 7’s Jane Prince said, “I kind of choked” when she saw the expenditure for the council offices. Her hope is that work can be done at a lower cost.

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New structure suggested for longtime UST advisory group

By Jane McClure

The West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee (WSNAC) debated a proposal on December 13 that would turn the longtime group set up to address University of Saint Thomas and neighborhood relations into a committee of the Macalester-Groveland and Union Park district councils.

The proposal was brought forward by the leadership of the two district councils that adjoin the campus. Neither district council has voted on the proposal, nor has a timeline been set for any action.

The written proposal says the work of WSNAC is “duplicative and time-consuming” for people in the two neighborhoods and calls for restructuring the 18-year-old group. It also criticizes the current WSNAC membership, saying it represents a very narrow segment of the neighborhoods.

Alexa Golemo, executive director of the Macalester-Groveland Community Council, said the structural change could provide a better joint working relationship on issues involving students, landlords and UST. It could also provide the benefit of paid staff for WSNAC, which has none.

Abdulrahman Wako, the outgoing executive director at Union Park, also cited the potential advantage of restructuring WSNAC. He and Golemo said the district councils and WSNAC could be seen as sharing the same goals. “We need to see if there’s interest” in a change, Wako said.

Longtime WSNAC members pushed back, saying that the organization serves an important role. They questioned whether making WSNAC a district council committee would serve the same purpose.

One option raised on December 13 would be to share staff and projects with the district councils, rather than have a full merger or handoff of duties.

WSNAC was created in 2004 when the Saint Paul City Council approved a conditional use permit that allowed UST to expand its campus onto the two blocks bounded by Summit, Cleveland, Grand and Cretin avenues. That approval capped a long battle between university officials and neighbors opposed to the expansion.

The Summit Avenue Residential Preser-

vation Association (SARPA) sued the city and UST during the conditional use permit process. The permit and its conditions were the result of a legal settlement.

Amy McDonough, chief of staff to the university president, said UST would not favor a change in WSNAC structure if it would violate the 2004 conditional use permit.

Marc Manderscheid, who represents the Macalester-Groveland Community Council on the advisory committee, said the district councils and the group Neighbors United, which was established in response to the controversy over UST’s expansion, were not parties to the suit. They are referred to in a 2004 legal release of claims, which outlines the terms of the conditional use permit.

The 10-page release of claims restates the height, setback, enrollment and other issues dictated by typical campus conditional use permits. However, it also contains unique conditions.

One such condition is the creation of the group that became WSNAC. The advisory council was to be composed of representatives of the Saint Thomas board of trustees, senior management and students, and neighborhood representatives from the Merriam Park (now Union Park) and Macalester-Groveland district councils, SARPA and Neighbors United.

The scope of WSNAC’s work would include the creation of a community development corporation or similar entity to purchase and rehabilitate housing in the neighborhood, parking, Saint Thomas construction impacts, student housing both on and off-campus, and neighborhood quality of life issues.

While a community development corporation was never formed, UST and WSNAC did work on the rehabilitation and resale of 30 dilapidated houses.

The leadership of the two district councils believes that if some kind of group is in place, the conditional use permit requirement would be met.

Funding was discussed at length. The conditional use permit and legal settlement call for each district council to receive \$10,000 per year from UST. WSNAC also receives \$10,000 per year.

14 UST HOCKEY ARENA

standards out of the longtime conditional use permits that are used to regulate campus development. As a result, the new facility could be built with no additional parking.

WSNAC member Tom Dietsche said it would be important to not have events scheduled at the Anderson Student Center and the new multi-use facility at the same time.

UST has been looking at various sites for new sports facilities. Plans to build softball and baseball fields at the southeastern corner of the 122-acre Highland Bridge site have been discussed for several months. A hockey arena was dropped from those plans this summer.

UST, Ryan Companies and Saint Paul Port Authority representatives are involved in the Highland Bridge proposal. Ryan is the master developer for the site, which was the home of Ford Motor Company’s



The University of Saint Thomas’ south campus, including the location of its new STEAM building on Summit Avenue. Cretin and Grace halls are buildings 71 and 70, respectively.

Twin Cities Assembly Plant for many years. Converting the former Canadian Pacific Railway yard at Highland Bridge into ballfields and parking space has meant partnering with the Saint Paul Port Authority to work on environmental cleanup.

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Preservation board grants Justus Ramsey House temporary reprieve

By Jane McClure

The historic Justus Ramsey House is still standing for now. A permit for its demolition was denied on December 5 by the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) by a vote of 7-1-1. That denial could be appealed to the City Council, but as of December 16 no appeal had been filed.

The two-room limestone house stands on the patio of Burger Moe's restaurant at 242 W. Seventh St. Owner Moe Sharif had sought the demolition after a wall of the house collapsed last summer. Local preservationists are worried that the 1850s-era building could sustain further damage in the weeks ahead.

HPC staff had recommended against demolition, citing the structure's historical significance. "While damage is severe, it is possible to repair the structure," the staff report stated.

One HPC recommendation is to shore up the building until the next steps can be determined. The HPC resolution denying the demolition permit calls for the building to be secured while a more detailed analysis of its condition is conducted.

Sharif, his attorney and their engineering consultants want the building to come down, saying it is a public safety risk. Staff from the city's Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) agreed by condemning the building due to its unsafe condition.

One argument Sharif's attorney Brian Alton made for demolition is the city's delay in acting on the permit request. State law requires that demolition permit requests be acted on within 60 days. If that does not happen, the permits are automatically approved, according to Alton.

However, a majority of HPC commission-

ers said the permit should be denied, citing the building's 170-year history. Commissioner Joseph Peroutka called the potential loss of the Justus Ramsey House "devastating." Other commissioners agreed, citing the structure's presence on national and local historic registers.

Commissioner Mark Lindley cast the sole vote for demolition, citing the building's precarious condition and potential danger. Commissioner Stuart MacDonald recused himself because his architectural firm drafted one of the city's reports on the building's condition.

Sharif became emotional as he testified before the HPC. He said the city has never come to his aid when he sought its help. As an example, Sharif cited the illegally constructed lean-to that sent water runoff onto the Justus Ramsey House. "Am I the bad guy? Am I a criminal here?" he said. "You are literally liable if a wall falls down and somebody gets killed there."

More than 60 people attended the HPC hearing on the permit. Most of them opposed demolition. The HPC received several dozen letters urging that the building be saved.

Preservationists and representatives of neighborhood groups that have united to save or move the Justus Ramsey House testified against demolition. They have not had the chance to meet with Sharif or his legal counsel to discuss the options for saving the structure, they said, although meetings have been scheduled and then canceled at the last minute.

According to Carol Carey, executive director of Historic Saint Paul, city officials have set aside \$150,000 in federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to begin the process of preserving the Justus Ramsey House. She cited its long



A view of the collapsed wall and damaged roof from the interior of the 170-year-old Justus Ramsey House at 242 W. Seventh St.

history, its use as a home for members of the city's early African-American community and how the antique store it housed for several decades was owned by a gay couple.

Community partners would very much like to be part of the historic preservation of the building, Carey said. Various sites on the West End have been offered as new locations, including the patio outside Keg & Case Market on West Seventh Street. However, she said, Sharif and Alton have refused to meet with the neighborhood groups, which also include the West Seventh/Fort Road Federation, the Little Bohemia Neighborhood Association and the Historic Irvine Park Association.

Representatives of all three neighborhood groups testified at the December 5 hearing against demolition. Several speakers questioned how city officials could allow the house to get into such a deteriorated condition.

Tom Schroeder, owner of Waldmann Brewery at 445 N. Smith Ave., is serving as legal counsel for the neighborhood groups. He is concerned that heavy snowfall could further damage the Justus Ramsey House, which now has a hole in its roof and is missing some of its roof support elements.

According to Schroeder, preservation professionals are available to assist Sharif, but the restaurant owner appears to prefer tearing the structure down. If Sharif is so worried about public

safety, Schroeder said, he should repair the building.

Although the years differ in some accounts, most date the Justus Ramsey House's construction to 1852, making it the oldest existing house in the city. Justus Ramsey was a developer and political figure in the early days of Saint Paul. He was the brother of Alexander Ramsey, the first governor of Minnesota Territory and the second governor of the state of Minnesota.

The Ramsey brothers jointly owned the property around the house until 1852. Among the early residents of house was Robert Smith, who later became mayor of Saint Paul.

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Eureka's bid doubles the cost of city's curbside recycling program

Single-family home's annual fee increases from \$60.24 to \$129.41

By Jane McClure

The cost of curbside recycling will more than double for most Saint Paul property owners in 2023 under a resolution approved on December 14 by the City Council. For the owners of 4- to 11-unit apartment buildings, however, the rates will more than triple.

"The recycling rate we're bringing forward is not a rate we're excited about," said Sean Kershaw, director of Saint Paul's Department of Public Works. Kershaw's department will be working in the months ahead with Eureka Recycling on a new contract for curbside recycling in Saint Paul. The city's current five-year contract with Eureka expires in April. City Council members urged Kershaw to seek cost savings in the upcoming contract negotiations.

The annual rates for the weekly collection of recycling will now be \$129.41 per dwelling for buildings with one to 11 units and \$65.69 per dwelling for buildings with 12 or more units.

The current annual rates for recycling are \$60.24 per dwelling in buildings with one to three units and \$38.16 per dwelling in buildings with four or more units.

Eureka was the only recycling company to respond to an initial request for proposals from the Public Works Department. Public Works reissued the request, and once again Eureka was the only company

to respond, although with a slightly lower rate.

Eureka co-presidents Kate Davenport and Lee Hoffman said they could not specify the reasons behind the 2023 recycling rates. While their bid was accepted by the city, contract talks are just getting underway.

Hoffman noted that the recycling industry as a whole has faced many challenges. "There's a huge labor shortage," she said. That shortage is especially acute in employees with commercial driver's licenses, she said. Hoffman also cited the effects of inflation, high fuel costs and the difficulty of obtaining replacement vehicle parts.

Fluctuations in the market for recyclable materials are also factored into operating budgets. In good times, Eureka can share its profits in material sales with the cities it serves. When markets are not as favorable, cities must subsidize more of the recycling costs.

The new rates dismayed members of the City Council. "That's a significant increase for our citizens, for our property owners," said Ward 7 council member Jane Prince. While Eureka is a good vendor, she said, "the cost is much higher than it needs to be." Prince pointed out that Eureka charges less for recycling in other cities.

Hoffman replied that there are many factors to consider when comparing urban and suburban recycling costs. Suburbs have fewer alleys and fewer parked cars to navigate around, she said. The recycling rates in Roseville, for example, are lower than Saint Paul's, Hoffman said, but in that suburb recycling is picked up only every other week.

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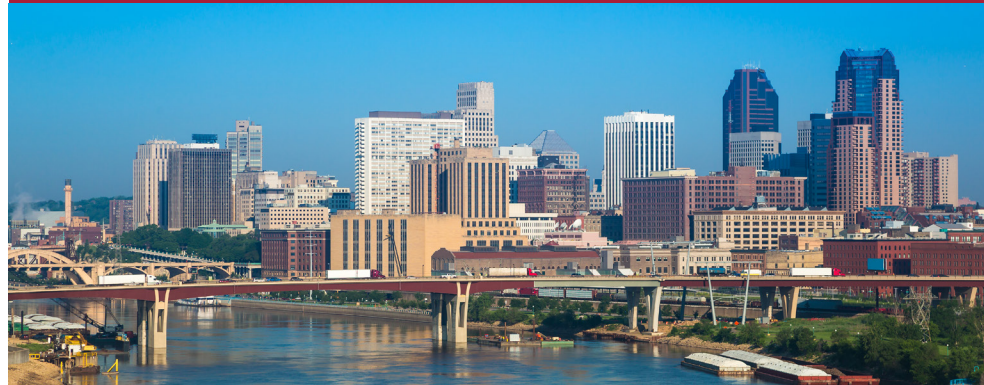
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City Council tweaks 2023 budget with last-minute cuts and additions

By Jane McClure

With a flurry of last-minute cuts and additions, the Saint Paul City Council on December 7 adopted a \$781.5 million city budget for 2023. That is up \$40.2 million or 5.4 percent from the 2020 city budget. It includes a \$201.06 million property tax levy—up \$25.7 million or 14.65 percent from the tax levy in 2022.

Mayor Melvin Carter had proposed a budget with a 15.34 percent increase in the tax levy. However, the City Council was able to trim the levy by \$1.21 million following a sometimes heated Truth-in-Taxation hearing on December 6 (see story below).

In its final weeks of budget discussions, the council made several shifts and changes. Due to an increase in city sales tax revenue, it not only trimmed the tax levy, but reduced overall spending by \$1.6 million. The council was able to add about \$330,000 in operational changes and make \$1.3 million more in one-time capital investments.

Among the budget cuts was the elimination of the City Council’s Community Or-

ganizations Partnership Program (COPP), for a savings of \$105,000. COPP was used for many years to fund various nonprofits and a few select programs. Those programs will now be overseen by the city’s Office of Neighborhood Safety. The council also cut \$350,000 in various expenditures by the Office of Neighborhood Safety. That office was recently allocated \$4 million from federal American Rescue Plan funds to help cover its program costs.

The council added \$320,000 to the city budget to improve safety in Saint Paul’s public libraries, match private donations to make it possible for 500 low-income children to get free swimming lessons, and repurpose a vacant City Council staff position to support the city’s new African-American reparations commission and begin work on racial reparation efforts.

The \$1.3 million in additional capital spending includes \$480,000 for bicycle and pedestrian improvements, \$469,684 for landscaping and litter cleanup on city property, and \$355,991 to address the growing problem of copper wire thefts from city streetlights. Various measures ranging from solar-powered streetlights to

alarms on light poles will be tried as a deterrent to theft.

The City Council, acting as the city’s Library Board, eliminated the fees charged for faxing in public libraries. That is expected to cost the city an additional \$6,000 per year. In recent years, the city had only collected about \$3,000 in faxing fees from library patrons.

The council also established a permanent allocation of \$320,000 per year to pay for substitute staff when library workers are out sick. Some of the city’s libraries have had to cut hours or close when not enough staff was available. The libraries will also be adding two new specialists to work with their increasingly diverse clientele.

Some council members expressed frustration with the budget process. Mayor Melvin Carter’s office did not share details of the proposed 2023 budget until the full document was released in August, they said. They also did not get all of the budget additions they wanted. Ward 7 City Council member Jane Prince noted that despite at least two weeks of negotiations with the mayor’s office, the two sides were unable

to agree on a source of funding to add four Saint Paul firefighters.

City employee unions have also raised concerns about Carter’s budget, especially in the area of public safety and in the hiring of a part-time sheet metal worker. Union leaders have questioned whether a half-time employee is enough to keep up with the growing city backlog.

City Council members conceded that the nearly 15 percent increase in the property tax levy will be tough for some homeowners to afford. Several council members noted the new DFL majorities in the Minnesota House and Senate and the \$17.6 billion state surplus. Together, those developments could provide a rare chance to make long-awaited adjustments to the state’s Local Government Aid formula, they said.

“We all have struggled with the levy increase,” said Ward 3 council member Chris Tolbert. “More people are struggling now, and they need public services more than before.”

“We have a chance going into this legislative session to start to change that,” said Ward 4 council member Mitra Jalali.

Taxpayers give city officials an earful over 15% levy increase

By Jane McClure

Saint Paul property owners did not take kindly to the city’s plan to increase the property tax levy by as much as 15.34 percent in 2023. More than two dozen of them turned out on December 6 for the City Council’s Truth in Taxation hearing. Over a dozen of them spoke about the hardships they are experiencing as the result of their burgeoning property

tax bill.

Brian Bergson of Merriam Park wondered how long his family would be able to remain living in Saint Paul. A former state legislator and a disabled veteran, Bergson lives on a fixed income. His estimated property taxes are going up 48 percent in 2023.

“I love my city and my neighborhood,” Bergson said. “We’re blessed to have a home. We bought it six years ago because it

was affordable.” However, he said, the assessed value of his home has increased 62 percent since then, “and my family budget, because of these tax increases, is going to be in a deficit.”

The City Council adopted a final city budget and property tax levy for 2023 on the day after the Truth in Taxation hearing (see story above). The council trimmed the tax levy by \$1.6 million, bringing it down to \$201.06 million. However, the levy in-

crease still stood at 14.65 percent, in support of a total city budget of \$781.5 million.

City officials explained on December 6 that much of the increase in individual property tax bills was the result of an increase in the value of individual properties. However, homeowners scoffed at that notion. Several speakers said that city spending is the problem.

CITY TAX LEVY HEARING ▶7





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64 CITY TAX LEVY HEARING

Homeowners told of having to skip dinners out, cancel trips and forgo other purchases just to cover their property tax bills. Several were on the verge of tears, telling the City Council how they have had to work more than one job to cover rising taxes. Several said they would never be able to sell their homes for the assessed value.

"I live in Frogtown and my house has been assessed at over \$200,000," said Cosandra Lloyd. "That's ridiculous."

Lloyd said she is looking at a 28 percent increase in her property taxes for 2023. "To see numbers like that really alarms me," she said. "I keep getting these increases, yet our services aren't increasing."

"Our house has increased in value by \$100,000 in two years," said Gloria Zaiger of Highland Park. "How do we stop this madness year after year after year?" According to Zaiger, there is a lack of accountability on the City Council when it comes to spending. She urged city officials to do more to bolster the tax base.

Too many industrial properties are being redeveloped for housing and not higher-valued uses, Zaiger said. She complained about the use of tax increment financing (TIF) for redevelopment. TIF diverts property tax revenue from local governments to cover development costs, and that increases the tax burden on other property owners, she said.

The median-value home in Saint Paul now stands at \$266,300. That is up from \$228,700 a year ago—a 16.4 percent increase. The property taxes on that home would increase by 14.8 percent, from \$3,418 to \$3,924, if the city, county and school district adopted their maximum levies.

The city's property tax levy is increasing from \$175.37 million in 2022 to \$201.06 million in 2023, or slightly less than the \$202.27 million tax levy in Mayor Melvin Carter's proposed 2023 city budget. About half of the tax levy increase can be attributed to a ruling last spring by the Ramsey County District Court that found the city's 20-year practice of assessing all property owners for street maintenance costs—even tax-exempt property owners—to be unconstitutional.

"I believe we're in a crisis situation," said Summit-University resident Barbara Gail Rohde, referring to the steep increase in property taxes and inflation. Rohde regularly hears from investors wishing to buy her home. That is a trend the City Council should be following, she said. "But where will the people who can't afford their homes move to?" she asked.

Joe Jansen, who owns a home in Highland Park, said his rental property in Summit Hill is seeing a 17.2 percent increase in property taxes. With rising expenses and a recently enacted 3 percent cap on annual rent increases, he asked, "How am I supposed to run a business?"

Roxanne Stickney of Payne-Phalen has seen her property taxes increase by \$3,000 over the past year as the value of her home more than doubled, she said. She estimated that about 10 percent of her take-home pay will now have to be spent on property taxes. "You're squeezing us out," she said.

Catherine Bickharry, who shares a home in the North End with her children and grandchildren, was near tears as she described how she struggled to become a homeowner again after losing her husband and their previous home. Bickharry said the North End is "not a high-buck neighborhood at all, but I'm getting to the point where I can't afford to keep this home anymore. The house was built in 1910. It's an old house, and I've done nothing to it." But in four years, her home's assessed value has increased from \$147,000 to \$251,000.

Meg Duhr of Saint Paul's West End bought and rehabilitated two vacant homes. She now lives in one and rents out the other. Duhr said she can afford to pay her property taxes now. "But like a lot of people, I wonder, what is the end point?" she asked. "Seeing how property taxes have spiraled makes me wonder about the future and how long we'll be able to afford it."

Faith Gil bought her West End home in 2021. "I can tell you without a shadow of a doubt that I wouldn't be able to buy that home today," she said. "Please, please don't raise these taxes."

Catherine Bickharry was near tears as she described how she had struggled to become a homeowner again after losing her husband and their previous home. Bickharry said the North End is "not a high-buck neighborhood at all, but I'm getting to the point where I can't afford to keep this home anymore."

County, school district adopt their tax levies for '23

By Jane McClure

Saint Paul property owners' 2023 tax bills have come into focus with the recent approvals by the Ramsey County Board, Saint Paul School Board and Saint Paul City Council of their respective property tax levies for next year.

The County Board on December 13 approved a 2023 tax levy that is 5.54 percent higher than the tax levy in 2022. The levy will support a 2023 county budget of \$785.71 million. This is the second year of the county's two-year budget process. The 2023 supplemental budget represents an increase of about \$2.3 million over the 2022 budget.

Ramsey County increased its regional rail authority levy by 2.7 percent—from \$29.6 million in 2022 to

\$30.41 million in 2023. The county Housing and Redevelopment Authority levy also increased 2.7 percent—from \$11.1 million in 2022 to \$11.42 million in 2023.

While the amounts of the county's 2023 budget and levy are unchanged from what were proposed last August, the budget approved on December 13 does have \$283,850 in administrative adjustments to cover a temporary increase in County Board staff and changes in civil process and other fees in the Sheriff's Department. More information on the 2023 supplemental budget is available at ramseycounty.us/Budget.

The Saint Paul School Board on December 13 approved a 2023 tax levy of \$201.03 million. That is down 0.87 percent from the \$202.79 million levy in 2022.

The school district divides its levy into four categories. The only levy category showing an increase is Facilities, which will increase from \$74.3 million in 2022 to \$81 million in 2023.

The district's Operating Levy for 2023 will decrease from \$80.17 million in 2022 to \$78.37 million in 2023.

The levy for Pensions, Benefits and Contractual Needs will decrease from \$44.25 million in 2022 to \$38 million in 2023.

The Community Service levy will decrease from \$4 million in 2022 to \$3.61 million in 2023.

The district's overall tax levy makes up 22 percent of the school district budget. The district's fiscal year begins on July 1, and the district budget for 2023-24 will be adopted in the spring.

2023 Publication Dates

MyVillager Publication Date	News Deadline	Want Ad Deadline	Display Ad Deadline
JANUARY			
1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
8 9 10 11 12 13 14			
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11 Education Health & Fitness			
25 Education			
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		22 Holiday Gift Ideas	
		Grand Meander	
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		20 Last Minute Gift Guide	
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		6 Holiday Gift Ideas	
		20 Last Minute Gift Guide	

VIEWPOINT

INBOX

An idea worth recycling

I was very disappointed to see yet another increase in the cost for city services. Having the recycling service increase by \$60-plus is just another drip in the slow drowning of Saint Paul and its residents (see story on page 5). If the city is continuing the program as currently structured, it shouldn't have been surprised at the higher bid by Eureka Recycling, given the inflationary economy. However, the city should change the program and require residents to place their recycling container on one side of the alley or street.

Eureka Recycling's trucks are designed for a right-hand pickup only. So a minimum of two trips are required for each street or alley, resulting in more fuel and labor costs. Having the recycling carts on one side would require half as many trips.

Learning to put recycling carts on the designated side of an alley or street wouldn't be difficult. For example, on north-south streets the bins would go on the west side, and on east-west streets the bins would go on the north side. The savings in fuel, labor and equipment wear would be significant, not to mention the wear and tear on our alleys and streets. I proposed this change to the recycling director five years ago when the program was rolled out. She dismissed the idea. Testing the concept in a neighborhood would be very low risk.

Our City Council members and department heads need to start thinking of new ways of doing business. Raising taxes and fees is their default setting, and it is wrong. They need to find new revenue sources and leaner operating methods just like any successful business.

*Peter Engel
Highland Park*

No place for cigarette sales

Walgreens sells cigarettes? Indefensible. Cigarette smoking, a leading cause of preventable death and disability, is a major public health threat. As a hospital internist, I've cared for countless patients with debilitating or fatal smoking-related diseases, and multiple relatives have died from smoking-related cancer or emphysema. That Walgreens distributes this killer product and profits from its nicotine-addicted victims makes a travesty of Walgreens' "health and wellness" slogan, reflecting a shameful level of corporate cynicism. Walgreens should cease this practice immediately.

*James R. Johnson, MD
Merriam Park*

Dangerous change for Summit

Logging 5,000-6,000 miles a year on Saint Paul streets, commuting to Minneapolis year-round, I might be so immodest as to call myself a serious cyclist. Which is not to say Andy Singer isn't. He's a decent guy and means well, for sure, but he's just got his facts wrong on this one ("This serious cyclist is pumped about plan for Summit Ave. trail," *MyVillager* Viewpoint, December 7).

The fundamental problem with the city's proposal to eliminate the existing on-street bike lanes and replace them with an off-road trail is that it tries to shoehorn a design meant for protected and unpopulated areas into a residential setting. The city's proposal would require hundreds of uncontrolled crossings of driveways, not to mention the loss of parking and hundreds of mature trees.

Intersections are where cyclists get hit, injured and sometimes killed. Off-road bike paths can work in the right setting, but Summit Avenue isn't one of them. In fact, study after study has proven that the bike path being proposed by the city is actually more dangerous to cyclists than the existing bike lanes. The design being promoted by the city is now actually prohibited in many European countries because it's too dangerous. And we haven't even talked about the serious problems this path would create for the disability community, as a recent lawsuit in D.C. on this exact issue has pointed out.

Adding to the lack of transparency, the city refuses to engage recognized experts in bike-facility design to help them and the residents of Saint Paul and the region understand all of the complexities associated with trying to improve the existing bike facility on Summit. It can and

City's elderly population deserves a break

By Kathleen Deming

It's past time that Saint Paul and Ramsey County gave elderly people a break on the cost of living in their own homes. For many seniors, that is the only affordable option. Other cities have frozen the property taxes of retired people who continue to live in their homes. Why is Saint Paul so dense about finding ways to help its elders? This city really needs to rein in spending and stop proposing new expenditures when it's clear from all of the proposed tax increases that we can't even afford what we have.

Suggesting that elders go to places for financial help is demeaning. So was a recent instance in which I had to refuse a new prescription medication from the pharmacy because I couldn't afford it. So is having to keep the thermostat in my house at 66 degrees.

Last winter, after surgery and being sick for months, I kept my thermostat at a blazing 68 or 69 degrees. That bit of splurging has me adhering to a payback plan to Xcel Energy for \$1,000 more than my average monthly payments.

Why can't people have their taxes frozen when they go on Social Security, if their incomes are below a certain amount? Why can't we opt out of the city's mandatory garbage collection program and fee when we share a cart with a neighbor, as I've done for the past 12 years? I don't generate more than a plastic shopping bag full of trash every two weeks.

When I look at all those advertisements aimed at laughing elderly people, I wonder what planet they're living on. Here, it's a sad joke.

The writer is a resident of Macalester-Groveland.

should be improved. For example, a vendor specializing in bike-facility design offered to install high-visibility bike lane markings at no charge to the city to demonstrate how safety could be improved, but the city declined.

While Andy Singer and I can agree to disagree, the simple fact is that we all don't have the information we all need to make informed decisions, because the city refuses to make the process transparent. It's time the city acknowledges that it needs the help of experts in bicycle facility design for complex situations, which Summit clearly is. This is too important and expensive to leave to amateurs—even those who profess to be serious cyclists.

One last comment on that note. Patrick Contardo, the cyclist Andy Singer calls into question, is a transplant from Duluth where he served on the Parks and Recreation Commission for more than a decade and is a committed lifelong road cyclist. He knows a bit about the issues.

*Bob Cattach
Ramsey Hill*

Keep bike lanes on Summit

Andy Singer, in his guest editorial ("This serious cyclist is pumped about plan for Summit Ave. trail," *MyVillager* Viewpoint, December 7), represents himself. He does not represent all bicyclists, and he is not an expert. I would never claim that anyone else does not have the right to have an opinion about Summit Avenue or about biking, as Singer's article seems to suggest about Patrick Contardo and Robyn Roslak.

I want safe bike facilities within a multimodal structure, and I agree 100 percent with the opinion piece by Contardo and Roslak ("Summit Ave. trail plan overlooks needs of serious cyclists," *MyVillager* Viewpoint, November 23). It was reasoned, rational and represents a balanced position. Further, it provides supporting evidence. Their conclusion is spot on: "Safe bicycling...can be achieved on Summit by less intrusive means, such as paving and striping the avenue, installing traffic-calming devices at each intersection and strictly enforcing current speed limits."

Contardo and Roslak outline a path that would cost less and improve safety for the benefit of more people in all modes of transport without the huge negatives to trees, parking access, traffic speeds, not to mention Summit's incredible historic character.

*Alex Johnson
Summit-University*

Safer option for Summit cyclists

I support the city's plan for one-way, separated bike paths on Summit Avenue. I agree with the guest editorial by Andy Singer that these are proven safer than on-street bike lanes (*MyVillager* Viewpoint, December 7). I have recently experienced cycling in New York City on one-way, parking-protected bikeways that are definitely safer than on-street riding.

I have cycled in the Twin Cities region for over 40 years on both city streets and separated trails. Years ago, when riding in downtown Saint Paul, I was hit by a car that ran a red light. I landed on the car's windshield—luckily with only broken fingers and many bruises, thanks to a good helmet. I've had several other near-miss incidents with motor vehicles on city streets.

I have lived and owned a home on Summit Avenue for over 20 years, so I'm well familiar with the existing on-street bike lanes. The subtle assertion in the previous guest editorial by Patrick Contardo and Robyn Roslak that "serious cyclists" will not use the separated bikeways proposed for Summit Avenue does not negate their proven purpose of safer travel for many riders. I consider myself a serious cyclist, and I will definitely use separated bikeways (but not combined pedestrian-bike paths) in city riding.

The master plan for the Summit Avenue Regional Trail (preferred option) is a practical solution for both tree preservation and street reconstruction, as well as pedestrian and cyclist safety. Promoting cycling as a safe transportation option over carbon-emitting motor vehicles will enhance our community health and help mitigate our climate crisis.

*Terry Brueck
Merriam Park*

No honor among crooks

Saint Paul Mayor Carter, City Council, Ramsey County Commissioner Rafael Ortega, state Senator Pappas—all of you have heard about the two who were killed in a shooting at the light rail transit station in downtown Saint Paul. All of you are culpable. For years, every one of you has known how to stop this.

The root cause of crime on board and surrounding the light rail trains in Saint Paul is the honor system for paying to ride light rail. More security will never make these trains safe nor restore the massive drop in ridership. It is time to get bids posthaste and start retrofitting each and every one of the light rail station platforms with fences and gates to control access.

It is also time to acknowledge once and for all the fraud that is being perpetrated on the public by Commissioner Ortega and his plans for a modern streetcar in the Riverview Corridor on West Seventh Street. The honor system that is being planned for that transit line can only cause further safety and security harm to Saint Paul and its citizens.

Can there be another city so beleaguered with willful incompetence at so many political levels? And it is all largely because the local newspapers and television media have protected these local officials. All of you have the power to largely stop another person from being robbed, beaten, stabbed or shot on and near light rail platforms. Will you now actually and at last do it?

*Bill Hosko
Downtown Saint Paul*

Do write, won't you?

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

District Councils

Highland Park

highlanddistrictcouncil.org • 651-695-4005

Holiday hours—The Highland District Council’s office will be closed from Monday, December 26, through Monday, January 9.

Riverview Corridor—The public is invited to share their thoughts about proposed transit stops along West Seventh Street in Highland Park by taking the Riverview Corridor Station Area Planning survey at bit.ly/3UPQhgk.

Board opening—The HDC is seeking a candidate to represent Grid 11 on its board of directors from February through April 2023. The position will be up for election at the board meeting on Thursday, February 2. The deadline to apply is January 31. For details, visit the HDC website.

Workshop presenters sought—The Highland and Macalester-Groveland district councils are bringing back their home improvement fair next year under the newly titled Home Improvement Workshop Day. Presenters are now being sought to give 45-minute to one-hour workshops during the event, which will be held on March 11 at Cretin-Derham Hall. Visit macgrove.org/events/hiwd.

Upcoming meetings—Board of directors, 7 p.m. Thursday, January 12; and Transportation Committee, 7 p.m. Tuesday, January 17. Meetings are held at the Highland Park Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy., with the option to join online. Visit highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar.

Summit Hill

summithillassociation.org • 651-222-1222

Yard and organic waste—Ramsey County yard waste sites are open from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sundays until April. The Summit Hill site at 870 Pleasant Ave. does not accept trees or shrubs, but kitchen scraps can be brought there during staffed hours or anytime at the collection site at the Highland Ice Arena, 800 S. Snelling Ave. The free pickup of one holiday tree is included in the city’s trash collection program between January 2-15.

Upcoming event—board of directors, 7 p.m. Thursday January 12, Linwood Recreation Center. For updated events and participation information, visit SummitHillAssociation.org/calendar.

Macalester-Groveland

macgrove.org • 651-695-4000

Shopping locally—Support small businesses by shopping locally this holiday season. The Macalester-Groveland Community Council has created a gift guide of local businesses to help spark ideas for goods and activities this year. Visit bit.ly/MGHolidaygiftguide.

Frost Fest 2023—The community council will hold Frost Fest from 2-5 p.m. Saturday, January 28, at the Groveland Ice Rinks, 2021 Saint Clair Ave. There will be free ice skating, games, hot chocolate, a bonfire and other activities. Visit macgrove.org/frost-fest to learn more.

Home improvement workshops—The Macalester-Groveland and Highland district councils are bringing back their home improvement fair, newly titled Home Improvement Workshop Day, from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, March 11, at Cretin-Derham Hall. Residents can attend a

variety of workshops throughout the day. Presenters are being sought to offer 45-minute to one-hour workshops. For more information, visit macgrove.org/events/hiwd.

Mac-Grove pride—Locally designed Macalester-Groveland T-shirts can still be ordered online and delivered within days. Check macgrove.org/tshirts for the current availability of sizes and colors.

Upcoming meetings—There are no meetings scheduled in December. For monthly meeting notices and log-in details, visit macgrove.org/participate.

Union Park

unionparkdc.org • 651-645-6887

Fire & Ice—A Fire & Ice Rink event will be held from 5-6 p.m. Wednesday, December 28, at Desnoyer Park, 525 Pelham Blvd. There will be a bonfire, hot dogs, s’mores, hot drinks and games, as well as ice skating if weather permits. The event is sponsored by the Desnoyer Park Improvement Association and Union Park District Council.

Upcoming meetings—board of directors, 7 p.m. Wednesday, January 4; and Transportation Committee, 6:30 p.m. Monday, January 9. All board meetings will be held on Zoom. To access meetings, email wako@unionparkdc.org, Leah@unionparkdc.org, or find the calendar on the website.

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

Federation updates—The West Seventh/Fort Road Federation has recognized the Saintry City Snow Angels as its 2022 Volunteer of the Year. The distinction honors individuals and organizations that embody a spirit of giving, and have made the West Seventh neighborhood a better place to live.

Justus Ramsey House—The Fort Road Federation continues to support the preservation of the historic Justus Ramsey House, 252 W. Seventh St., as did many others who showed their support for preserving the 170-year-old house at the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission meeting on December 5.

Board openings—There are currently four vacancies on the Fort Road Federation board of directors: Area I coordinator (renter), Area I coordinator, Area III coordinator and treasurer. For more information, email fortroadfed@fortroadfederation.org.

Holiday Decor Competition—Nominations are now open for the first Fort Road Federation Holiday Decor Competition. Nominations may be submitted via Google Form at tinyurl.com/yj4vtc2n by December 31. Voting will take place at the January board meeting and the winner will receive a Cossetta’s gift card.

Upcoming meetings—Transportation and Land Use Committee, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, January 4; board of directors, 7 p.m. Monday, January 9; and Community Engagement and Outreach Committee, 6:30 p.m. Thursday, January 19. The meetings will be held via Zoom. For log-in details, visit fortroadfederation.org/calendar.

Names in the News

Randolph Liquors opened to little fanfare just before Thanksgiving in the storefront formerly occupied by McCafferty Liquors, 1325 Randolph Ave. The owners of the shop—Joe Kasel, Lara Scanlan and Laura and Andy Triplett—are new to the retail liquor business and wanted to make sure they had the operation running smoothly before they announced the changeover. They spent the last three months giving the store a bright and fresh new look. Randolph Liquors will be holding a grand opening from noon-6 p.m. Saturday, January 7. Ted Casper from the nearby Nook will be grilling burgers in the parking lot, and there will be door prizes and wine, beer and spirit tastings throughout the day.

Richard D. Thompson has been named as the fourth artistic director in the 44-year history of the History Theatre, 30 E. 10th St., after a nationwide search. Thompson has more than 30 years of experience as a director, administrator, choreographer, dramaturg, educator and performer. He is familiar with the History Theatre, having worked on various projects over the past 25 years, and has been

the producing and directing associate for the past year. Thompson also worked as the managing director and associate producer for Penumbra Theatre, and directed shows for the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra and the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Thompson will start his new role with the History Theatre on January 10. Earlier this year, current artistic director Ron Peluso announced his plan to step down at the end of December.

Ramsey County Commissioner Mary Jo McGuire has been elected president of the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) for 2023. She is also the current first vice president of the National Association of Counties.

World Without Genocide, 875 Summit Ave., a nonprofit human rights organization operating at Mitchell Hamline School of Law, was awarded Special Consultative Status by the United Nations Economic and Social Council on December 7. The status gives it access to the council and its many subsidiary bodies, to the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations, to ad hoc processes on small arms, and to attendance at special events.



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Maurice F. Mischke, 1920-1991

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Volunteers are still cornerstone of Keystone's services

Agency has been operating with 140 or fewer volunteers since COVID, but needs 180 to meet growing demand

By Anne Murphy

Nancy Scanlan's son was 12 when she started volunteering for Keystone Community Services' Meals on Wheels program. "I wanted him to share some volunteer work with me," recalled the Macalester-Groveland resident. That was 30 years ago, and Scanlan has been volunteering with Keystone ever since.

Scanlan has always believed her volunteering to be critical, not only during the holidays when the needs are especially apparent and donations of time and resources tend to increase, but throughout the year. Fellow Keystone volunteers Beth and Bill O'Connor of Macalester-Groveland also stressed the importance of consistent volunteering.

Bill O'Connor, a retired teacher, began volunteering with Keystone's Meals on Wheels program about 30 years ago after watching his father volunteer for many years. Beth O'Connor was inspired by her husband's service. Once she retired six years ago, she too began volunteering with Keystone. "I started slow volunteering, but amped it up three years ago and find it very fulfilling and rewarding," she said.

"Keystone provides support to more



Keystone Community Services volunteer Beth O'Connor fills orders for the meals on wheels drivers who operate out of the nonprofit organization's Merriam Park location. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

than 40,000 neighbors each year in the Saint Paul area," said Jen Winterfeldt, Keystone's director of development and community engagement. "We have approximately 75 full- and part-time staff, and we simply couldn't provide the programs we do without the incredible generosity of our volunteers. In a typical year, about 2,000 people volunteer with Keystone."

More than half of those volunteers sign on for special events or short-term assignments, Winterfeldt added, and though they are greatly appreciated, the ongoing support of regular volunteers is especially

needed.

"Our foodshelf services and Meals on Wheels program couldn't operate without the generous time given by our volunteers," Winterfeldt said. "They not only help make sure shelves are stocked and meals are delivered, they create welcoming spaces and offer friendly support to everyone who participates in our programs."

Keystone needs about 180 volunteers each week to carry out the tasks for program operations, according to Winterfeldt. "But with the ongoing challenges related to COVID-19, we're sometimes operating

"Keystone was founded on the basis of neighbors helping neighbors. Our community is strongest when everyone has the support they need and feels connected to their neighbors."

with 140 or fewer volunteers," she said. "That means staff are filling in to cover volunteer duties, which takes away from their core responsibilities."

Scanlan, who like her husband, Mal, was a Saint Paul teacher before retiring, took her son along on meal deliveries to teach him the importance of volunteering and the services Keystone provides. "He was my right hand when I first started," she said, "helping me find addresses and knocking on doors to greet meal recipients. Over the years, I've had my children and grandchildren deliver meals with me and then my husband after he retired."

Scanlan worked out of Keystone's Merriam Park location for 25 years before the meals on wheels program moved to the West Seventh Community Center. "I've been all over the city covering different routes," she said, "and that has certainly made me more aware of the nooks and crannies of Saint Paul. But for a long time, I had the same route and I got to know some of my recipients very well."

In addition to delivering their meals,

KEYSTONE VOLUNTEERS ▶ 11

Assumption plans \$3.5M renovation of historic school building

HPC applauds parish's sensitivity to original look of limestone structure

By Jane McClure

The old limestone school building next to Assumption Catholic Church at 68 W. Exchange St. will get a new addition and extensive exterior renovations with the approval of the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission. The HPC voted 9-0 on December 5 to allow the project to move forward. Commissioners applauded the plans to rehabilitate the building. The improvements will enable Assumption to host more classes and community gatherings in the building, according to project architect Bruce Caulfield.

Assumption Parish was founded in 1856 by Bishop Joseph Cretin and served newly arrived immigrants from Germany. The

current church was built between 1870-74. It replaced a smaller church. Historical records disagree on the year of the stone school's construction. Both the church and school are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. When the school was nominated for the National Register, 1864 was given as the year of construction.

According to James Reardon's book, *The Catholic Church in the Diocese of Saint Paul*, the stone school was built in 1867. It replaced a wooden frame school for boys, which was built in 1860 and destroyed by fire in 1863. The building's use as a school ended in the 1880s when a brick school was built nearby. The brick school has been gone for many years.

Assumption has used the old



Assumption School as it appeared prior to 1870, when the original Assumption Church (seen at left) was replaced with the existing church.

stone school for various purposes over the years, including a home for the church's caretaker, parish meetings and religious education classes. Reardon's history indicates it was used in the 1950s as a meeting place for local German-American groups.

According to the Reverend Paul Treacy, the pastor at Assumption, the renovation project will cost about \$3.5 million. A capital campaign is underway. "It just has not been used (in recent years), and it's deteriorating," Treacy said of the old school. "We need more

space, and we have this treasure that needs care."

Renovations would make the former school a more integral part of Assumption's campus, Treacy said. It would also allow some functions that have been moved off-site to return.

Like the church, the school was built of Platteville limestone. The architectural style is described as Italian Villa. The building has had some changes over the years, including the removal of two rooftop chimneys and the removal and replacement of the original cupola.

The renovation of the school includes replacing the windows, repointing exterior stone, removing existing landscaping, and repairing, repointing and waterproofing the existing foundation. A dewatering system will be installed around the perimeter of the foundation and below a new

ASSUMPTION SCHOOL ▶ 11

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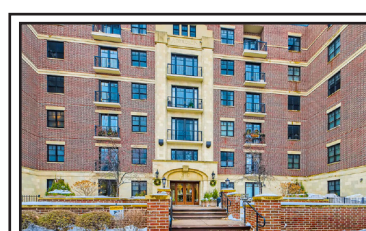
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10- KEYSTONE VOLUNTEERS

Scanlan would check on her clients to make sure they were doing well. "I could report back if someone didn't look good or if they failed to answer the door when I came," she said. "One time I heard a dog barking inside, but received no response. When Keystone followed up, they found that the woman had fallen in the bathroom. With a call to the family, she got the help she needed."

"Today, I'm a meal packer at the West Seventh Community Center," she said. "I help other volunteers prepare the lunch bags and totes for the drivers. The Meals on Wheels program brings a good meal to people in need and provides an additional contact that enables people to remain living in their homes. I've met so many wonderful people over the years, and I hope the funding remains strong so that this service can continue for many years to come."

For the O'Connors, volunteering became especially critical during the pandemic. "Once COVID hit, we both stepped up our volunteering," Beth said. She and her husband appreciate Keystone's new online system that allows volunteers to sign up for time slots easily. "We work mostly at the Midway food shelf," she said. "I pack groceries typically once a week." The couple also deliver meals once a week to clients who are unable to get to the food shelf.

Meal delivery is a necessary part of addressing food insecurity, Beth O'Connor said. "The awareness of just how many people are food insecure is growing," she said. "I faced food insecurity when I was attending Saint Catherine's and living off campus. It was a humbling experience. I didn't have a car, so I bought food at the 7-Eleven."

Beth and Bill O'Connor do feel appreciated by the neighbors they help. "Anytime a client thanks us or remarks how important the service is to them, it's rewarding," Beth said. "I remember a woman who had just gotten an apartment and was early in her sobriety telling me how fortunate she was because of the food shelf and how grateful she was for all the food and other items she received. She had very little in her checkbook to be able to afford anything."

"Clients are very grateful for what Keystone provides," Bill said, "and they're appreciative of the fact that volunteers help make it run."

"Keystone was founded on the basis of neighbors helping neighbors," Winterfeldt said. "Our community is strongest when everyone has the support they need and feels connected to their neighbors. There are so many great organizations in our community, so no matter what you're passionate about, find an organization to give your time, talent or treasure to and you'll strengthen our community."



An artist's rendering of the south side of the old Assumption School showing the addition and new entrance following its renovation.

10- ASSUMPTION SCHOOL

basement floor.

The concrete stairs at the back entrance will be removed. Stone lintels around the doors and windows will be repaired and reinforced. Stone windowsills, which have deteriorated, will be replaced. New electrical, HVAC and plumbing systems will be installed. The stairway at the north end of the building will be rebuilt, and the building will be made more accessible for people with disabilities.

The biggest change is the 18-by-36-foot addition, which will include an elevator, kitchenette, accessible restrooms and an accessible ramp from the building to the parking lot. Saint Croix Valley limestone will be used for the addition's exterior walls.

The project will have its challenges, given the structure's age and location. The building is sitting on bedrock, according to Caulfield, and the water table is high.

HPC commissioners applauded the plans to rehabilitate and reuse the building. Their discussion centered on window design and the original appearance of the building. It is assumed that the original windows were replaced at some point. Caulfield said early photographs of the school are being used to select new windows that are similar in appearance to those installed when the building was constructed.

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8:30am and 10:30am.

Nativity of Our Lord:
Christmas Eve Masses at 2:00pm,
4:00pm and 6:00pm
Midnight Mass
Christmas Day Masses at 7:30am,
9:00am and 11:00am.



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CATHOLIC cont.

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and Midnight.
Christmas Day Mass at 10:00am

St. Peter of Mendota:
Christmas Day Masses at 8:30am
and 10:30am.

St. Thomas More:
Christmas Eve Mass at 4:00pm
and 12:00am
Christmas Day Masses at 7:00am,
8:30am, and 12:30pm
(Carols at 10:10am).

LUTHERAN

Gloria Dei: Christmas Eve Services at
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Christmas Day at Gloria Dei - 10:00am.

Immanuel Lutheran: Christmas Eve Services:
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Christmas Day 9:30am.
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Crime Report

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

Highland Park

Robbery—A robbery at gunpoint was reported at Speedway, 1580 Ford Pkwy., at 8:12 p.m. on December 7.

Burglary—A burglary was reported at the Highland Shopping Center on Ford Parkway and Cleveland Avenue at 5:37 a.m. on December 7.

Theft—Backpacks were reported stolen at Panera Bread, 2056 Ford Pkwy., on December 1, and at Tiffany's Sports Lounge, 2051 Ford Pkwy., on December 11.

—Several items were reported stolen from vehicles at Crosby Farm Park on December 3, and at Hidden Falls Park on December 7.

—A 23-year-old woman was arrested for trying to steal more than \$500 in merchandise from the Highland Target, 2080 Ford Pkwy., at 9:06 p.m. on December 8. She had outstanding theft warrants from Ramsey and Hennepin counties.

Assault—A woman was reportedly assaulted near Pearle Vision, 2024 Ford Pkwy., at 10:49 a.m. on December 9.

—A woman reported an assault at Panera Bread, 2056 Ford Pkwy., at 10:30 a.m. on December 9.

Miscellaneous—A driver reportedly ran into a house on the 1700 block of South Mississippi River Boulevard around 4:04 p.m. Monday, December 12. The driver fled the scene, but later crashed a second time.

Lexington-Hamline

Robbery—Speedway, 399 N. Lexington Pkwy., was robbed at 3:52 p.m. on December 3.

—A robbery at gunpoint was reported on Lexington Parkway and Central Avenue at 7:07 p.m. on December 8.

Theft—A 21-year-old woman was arrested for trying to steal more than \$1,000 in merchandise from the Midway Target at 7:36 p.m. on December 10.

Assault—A 13-year-old girl was arrested for theft and assaulting a police officer after she was stopped for shoplifting at the Midway Target at 2:33 p.m. on November 30.

Miscellaneous—A pedestrian was struck by a vehicle on University Avenue and Lexington Parkway at 6:28 a.m. on December 7.

—A 28-year-old man was arrested for DWI after he crashed into the light-rail platform on University Avenue and Lexington Parkway at 10:51 p.m. on December 9.

—A 41-year-old man was arrested for failing to register as a sex offender after he reportedly tried to break into a building and was found sleeping next to it on the 1100 block of University Avenue around 12:29 a.m. Wednesday, December 14.

Macalester-Groveland

Robbery—Wells Fargo Bank, 1827 Grand Ave., was held up by a lone suspect around 2:11 p.m. Thursday, December 15. The suspect fled west on Grand.

Burglary—Residential burglaries were reported on the 1700 block of Stanford Avenue at 4:40 p.m. on December 4, the 1800 block of Berkeley Avenue on December 4-5, and the 1400 block of Grand Avenue on December 5-6.

—A 43-year-old man was arrested for felony burglary, fleeing police and violating an order for protection on the 1900 block of Jefferson Avenue at 6:50 p.m. on December 6.

—A home break-in was reported on the 2100 block of Princeton Avenue on December 2-12.

—Around \$2,000 in items were reported stolen from Patagonia, 1648 Grand Ave., during a break-in around 3:26 a.m. Friday, December 16.

Theft—An empty safe and a power generator were reported stolen from a garage on the 1900 block of Fairmount Avenue during the evening of December 8-9.

Assault—A bar fight involving a suspect smashing an empty beer bottle on a victim's forehead was reported at Plums, 480 S. Snelling Ave., at 1 a.m. on December 2.

Miscellaneous—Police responded to Walgreens, 1585 Randolph Ave., for a 911 hang-up call involving human trafficking at 4:23 a.m. on December 8.

—A swastika was reportedly spray-painted on a tree facing a residence on the 100 block of South Mississippi River Boulevard at 12:52 p.m. on December 10.

Mendota Heights

Burglary—Police received a call about someone trying to get into houses on the 500 block of Kirchner Avenue at 6:38 a.m. on November 19. A suspect was arrested after he tried running away.

Theft—Fraud scams were reported on the 2200 block of Wagon Wheel Court on December 5 and the 600 block of Hampshire Court on December 6.

Miscellaneous—A driver was arrested for DWI after reportedly veering off the road with a child in the vehicle at Delaware Avenue and Mendota Heights Road at 5:21 p.m. on November 25.

Merriam Park

Robbery—A robbery and kidnapping at gunpoint were reported on the 1700 block of Hague Avenue on December 9-10. The victim was later located and was unharmed.

Burglary—An apartment break-in was reported on Oakley Avenue near Portland Avenue at 9:38 p.m. on December 11.

—A break-in was reported at the Marshall Stop Station, 2057 Marshall Ave., around 2:11 a.m. Tuesday, December 13.

Theft—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were stolen from a vehicle on the 300 block of North Mississippi River Boule-

vard between 7:15-10 a.m. on November 29.

—A woman reportedly jumped into a running GMC Acadia that was being cleared of snow and took off from Auto Tech Sales, 461 N. Wilder St., at 4 p.m. on December 2.

—A suspect in a vehicle was reportedly stealing copper wire from light poles on Mississippi River Boulevard and Marshall Avenue around 3:06 a.m. Tuesday, December 13.

Weapons—A boy was arrested for felony possession of a firearm and burglary tools following a gun-pointing incident on Marshall and Cretin avenues at 3:26 p.m. on December 11.

Assault—A 15-year-old boy was arrested for assaulting his father with a pair of scissors on the 1600 block of Portland Avenue at 8:07 p.m. on December 1.

—Two victims said they were assaulted by two males at the University of Saint Thomas at 7:22 p.m. on December 2.

—A man said someone struck his head with a steel bar on University and Snelling avenues at 3:29 p.m. on December 3.

—A 44-year-old man was arrested for felony assault after police received a report of an assault with a firearm at the Quality Inn, 1964 University Ave., at 5:26 a.m. on December 6.

—A 28-year-old man was arrested for assault with a dangerous weapon after police responded to a report of a domestic assault and discovered numerous individuals with injuries at an apartment on the 1600 block of Marshall Avenue at 7:20 p.m. on December 11.

Miscellaneous—A vehicle's tires were slashed at the University of Saint Thomas at 8:36 p.m. on December 6.

—Five Level III predatory sex offenders are relocating to Saint Paul. They include Jeremiah Marquis Johnson, 38, who has registered to live on the 2100 block of University Avenue. A community notification meeting about these offenders will be held at 6 p.m. sometime in January at the Western District Station, 389 N. Hamline Ave. For information, contact Officer Jeremy Doverspike at 651-266-5871 or Officer Paul Kuntz at 651-266-5706.

Snelling-Hamline

Theft—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen out of a man's locker at LA Fitness, 1370 University Ave., at 5:59 p.m. on December 9.

Assault—Police responded to a report of an assault with a dangerous weapon and discovered a man with a head laceration on the 1400 block of Ashland Avenue at 12:58 a.m. on December 10.

Miscellaneous—A pedestrian was taken to the hospital for injuries after being hit by a vehicle on Snelling and Portland avenues at 7:20 p.m. on December 10.

Summit Hill

Robbery—A strong-arm robbery was reported at La Cucaracha, 36 S. Dale St., at 11:17 p.m. on December 11.

Weapons—A suspect in a white SUV reportedly fired numerous shots in the air while driving on Saint Clair east of Lexington Parkway at 9:24 p.m. on December 9.

Summit-University

Burglary—An apartment burglary was reported on the 400 block of Selby Avenue at 6:42 p.m. on December 9.

Theft—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from a building on the 400 block of Portland Avenue on November 29.

Assault—Police received a report from a woman who said her children's bus driver assaulted them on the 200 block of Selby Avenue at 5:54 p.m. on December 8.

—A woman was reportedly assaulted by a resident at the Dale Street Place apartments, 313 N. Dale St., at 7:10 p.m. on December 9.

Miscellaneous—A 37-year-old man was arrested for DWI after he reportedly drove up on a sidewalk, got out of the vehicle and fell down on Dale Street and Ashland Avenue at 9:21 p.m. on December 2.

West End

Robbery—Speedway, 1125 W. Seventh St., was robbed at gunpoint around 9:45 p.m. Monday, December 12.

Theft—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from Speedway, 1734 W. Seventh St., at 10:05 a.m. on November 30.

—A female reportedly stole cash from a victim on the 600 block of West Seventh Street at 5:47 p.m. on December 5.

—A gold chain and Rolex watch were reported stolen at Best Pawn, 966 W. Seventh St., at 1:04 p.m. on December 5.

Assault—Felony terroristic threats were reported at Livli Homes, 905 Jefferson Ave., at 1:30 p.m. on November 30.

—A 54-year-old man was arrested for felony assault of another man on Eagle Street and Kellogg Boulevard at 1:42 a.m. on December 2. The victim was taken to the hospital.

—A 31-year-old man was arrested for felony domestic assault by strangulation and felony possession of a firearm by an ineligible person on the 500 block of Jefferson Avenue just after midnight on December 4.

—A juvenile was arrested for threatening people with a kitchen knife on the 1000 block of Pleasant Avenue at 2:30 p.m. on December 5.

—A female patient reportedly punched a nurse in the chest at Children's Hospital around 4:30 p.m. Monday, December 12.

Weapons—A person was found grazed by a bullet after police responded to a report of gunfire on West Seventh Street and Goodrich Avenue at 12:32 a.m. on December 10.

Miscellaneous—A driver attempting to leave reportedly backed into a victim, pinning his leg between two cars, at Speedway, 1174 W. Seventh St., around 10:30 p.m. Tuesday, December 13.



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News Briefs

Plans keep rolling for making a B Line from Mpls. to Saint Paul

One big step toward construction of the new \$54 million B Line bus rapid transit (BRT) route along Lake Street in Minneapolis and Marshall and Selby avenues in Saint Paul was taken on December 7 when the Saint Paul City Council approved a joint powers agreement with Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit.

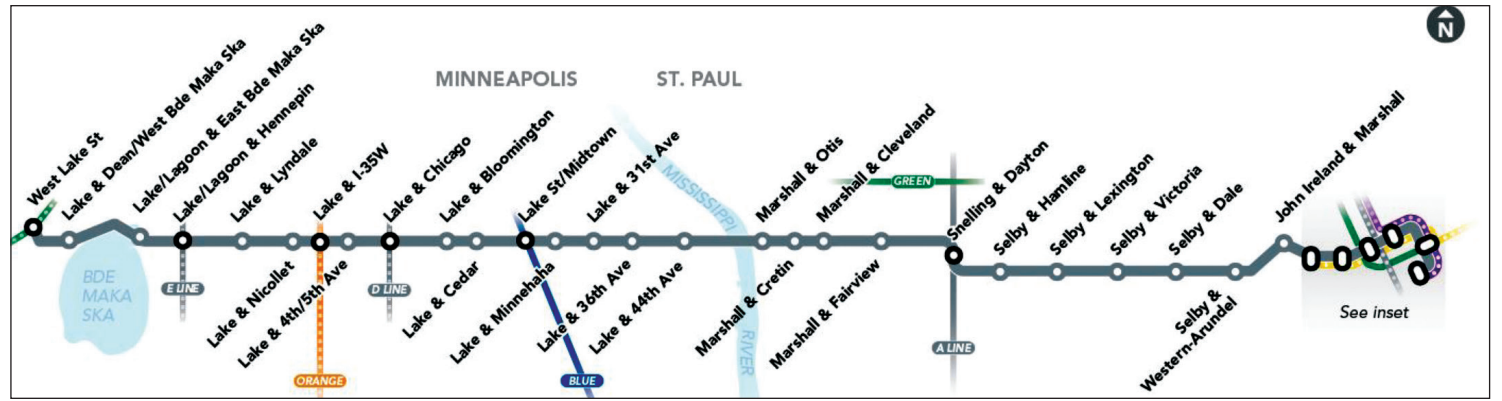
The 12.6-mile B Line will follow much of the same corridor as the Route 21A bus, traveling from Minneapolis' Bde Maka Ska to Saint Paul's Union Depot. However, it will eliminate a loop to the Midway using Snelling and Hamline avenues. The B Line will connect with Selby from a short jog on Snelling, rather than at Hamline as the 21A does today.

Those who take the B Line will also be able to connect at Snelling and Dayton avenues to the A Line, a BRT route that has been running on Snelling, Ford Parkway and 46th Street between Roseville and the light-rail Blue Line in Minneapolis since 2016.

Construction of the B Line is scheduled to start in 2023, with service to begin in 2024. Construction was to start earlier, but encountered delays during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For several years, Metro Transit staff have met with local district councils, business associations, the Saint Paul Planning Commission Transportation Committee and other groups to discuss the route, stops and potential service changes. BRT service offers the advantage of faster trips with fewer stops than regular bus routes.

Riders pay before getting on the bus, and bus stations offer more amenities, such as



The 12.6-mile B Line is designed to provide faster bus service in the corridor along Lake Street in Minneapolis, and Marshall and Selby avenues in Saint Paul.

heating and real-time bus schedule information.

While there has been general support for the B Line, the Selby stops near Hamline have raised concerns among some Lexington-Hamline neighbors who objected to stations in front of their homes.

The joint powers agreement allows Metro Transit to work with the city on improvements along Marshall, Selby, John Ireland Boulevard and Smith Avenue.

Saint Paul set to allow more time to celebrate this New Year's Eve

Those who go out for New Year's Eve in Saint Paul may have a bit more time to enjoy a champagne toast this year. The City Council is poised to adopt an ordinance change on December 21 that would allow restaurants with on-sale liquor licenses to stay open until 1 a.m. on January 1.

Those restaurants currently must end all food and beverage service by midnight and close by 12:30 a.m.

The council heard no objections to the

change, which was brought forward by Ward 2 council member Rebecca Noecker at the behest of local restaurateurs. No one spoke on the change at a December 14 public hearing.

The council got around its longtime per- ward cap on liquor licenses several years ago by allowing restaurants to apply for on-sale service. Restaurants with such licenses have to abide by several conditions, including deriving a substantial amount of their income from the sale of food and non-alcoholic beverages and having a full-service kitchen. Meals have to be served at tables or other eating surfaces, and must be prepared on the premises.

However, the midnight closing condition on the licenses has created complications on the last day of each year.

County Board allows Capital City Bikeway in front of courthouse

Another small piece of the downtown Capital City Bikeway fell into place on December 13 with the Ramsey County Board

of Commissioners' approval of a temporary construction easement and permanent right-of-way and bikeway easement to allow the bikeway to run in front of the City Hall/Courthouse building at 15 W. Kellogg Blvd. The temporary easement will be in place during construction from March 1 to November 1, 2023.

The Capital City Bikeway has been taking shape for several years. It provides a separated bike lane, and will eventually extend throughout downtown, connecting to other bike lanes and routes.

The city is undertaking the Capital City Bikeway project along Kellogg Boulevard adjacent to the City Hall/Courthouse. The project consists of constructing bike lanes, concrete sidewalks, street lighting, signage and landscaping.

The City Hall/Courthouse is co-owned by Ramsey County and the city of Saint Paul. A permanent right-of-way and bikeway easement is necessary for continued use of the bikeway by the city.

News Briefs were compiled by Jane McClure.

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ON THE TOWN

Their place in Soleil Partnership boosts aspirations of Juventas' advanced students

By Carolyn Walkup

People who have seen a performance by world-renowned Cirque du Soleil cannot help but notice the similarities to Saint Paul's own Circus Juventas. Those similarities are likely to become more pronounced with a new partnership between the two companies. Circus Juventas is one of a handful of youth circuses to be chosen by Cirque du Soleil as a training center for emerging circus professionals.

During its 28 years in Highland Park, Circus Juventas has seen hundreds of students become professional performers, according to Dan Butler, who with his wife Betty Butler directs the youth circus school

that they founded in 1994.

Butler said there is a growing interest in the circus arts throughout the world. Nearly 1,000 students are enrolled at Circus Juventas this year. The new collaboration with Cirque du Soleil "puts us on the map globally," said Butler, who trained as a trapeze artist with Ringling Brothers in the 1970s. "Cirque is the pinnacle of everybody in our industry."

"It's amazing what they have built (at Circus Juventas)," said Andre Lachance, the Cirque du Soleil program director who earlier this year visited the youth circus' big top on Montreal Avenue. "You can see the passion and drive they have. The quality of the program and the people really impressed us. We can do great things together."

According to Lachance, trainers from Cirque du Soleil's headquarters in Montreal, Canada, will travel to Saint Paul some time in 2023 to begin conducting NexGen development workshops for young artists and trainers in Circus Juventas' professional development program. Just four other youth circuses were selected for similar partnerships, including those in Brattleboro, Vermont; Avignon, France; Budapest, Hungary; and Maia, Portugal.

Circus Juventas managing director Rob Dawson performed and coached with Cirque du Soleil for 21 years. He was behind the invitation to Cirque to visit Circus Juventas last October and see its advanced students perform. "They were amazed by the facility," Dawson said. "They found our students to be very professional already."



Rob Dawson serves as co-director of Circus Juventas' program for students who are pursuing a professional career in the circus arts.



Two students in Circus Juventas' professional development program, Emme Martini (top) and Lindsey Johnson, perform high above the crowd under the big top at 1270 Montreal Ave. PHOTOS BY DAN NORMAN

Dawson and Sun Yanhong will co-direct the Circus Juventas program for advanced students who are pursuing a professional career in the circus. Yanhong is a Cirque du Soleil alum and a former performer with China's Flag Circus.

Circus Juventas' professional development program is a two-year course that augments advanced training in the circus arts with instruction in theater, dance and injury prevention. It also teaches career skills such as contract negotiations.

One advanced student at Circus Juventas who is considering applying for the Cirque du Soleil workshop and eventually becoming a professional circus

performer is Lindsey Johnson. Johnson, 21, who grew up in Macalester-Groveland, was introduced to the circus arts at age 7 at a Circus Juventas summer camp. Although she is working toward a degree in graphic design, "my real passion is circus," she said.

Johnson specializes in dance trapeze and silks. Silks involves climbing several stories up on silk drapes and performing acrobatics high above the ground. In addition to such skills, she credits Circus Juventas for teaching her resilience and a solid work ethic.

Aidan Chang, 21, of Highland Park is

CIRCUS JUVENTAS ►15

ON THE TOWN *Briefly*

Books

League of Minnesota Poets members will read from their verse in a free Literary Bridges program at 2 p.m. Sunday, January 8, at Next Chapter Booksellers, 38 S. Snelling Ave. Taking the dais will be Bill Anderson, Jessi Atherton, Mugunthan Ganesan, Patrick Cabello Hansel, Donna Isaac, Stan Kusunoki, Dralandra Larkins, Barry MacDonald, Michael Kiesow Moore, Tony Plocido and Micah Ruelle.

Music

Jazz and finger-style guitar will be showcased in a Minnesota Guitar Society concert on Wednesday, December 21, in Fingal's Cave at MetroNOME Brewery, 289 E. Fifth St. Briand Morrison of Grand

Portage will open the show from 6-7:30 p.m. followed by Daniel Volovets of the Twin Cities from 7:30-9 p.m.

Trans-Siberian Orchestra will return to Xcel Energy Center on Friday, December 23, with two performances of its 2022 winter show, *The Ghosts of Christmas Eve: The Best of TSO & More*. The concerts will begin at 3 and 7:30 p.m. For reservations, visit ticketmaster.com.

Hand drumming for beginners will be taught from 3:30-4:30 p.m. Wednesday, December 28, at the Women's Drum Center, 2242 University Ave. The cost is \$15. Drums are provided. To register, visit womensdrumcenter.org.

The Minnesota Orchestra rings in the new year with concerts on December 31 and January 1 under the baton of

Marin Alsop and featuring guest pianist Awadagin Pratt. The program includes Leonard Bernstein's *Overture to Candide*, Jessie Montgomery's *Rounds for Piano and String Orchestra* and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. The music begins at 8:30 p.m. Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday. Saturday's show will be followed by vintage jazz from the band Belle Amour and a champagne toast at midnight. Tickets are \$25-\$130. Call 612-371-5656 or visit minnesotaorchestra.org.

The Minnesota Boychoir will present its winter concert at 1 and 3:30 p.m. Sunday, January 8, at Landmark Center. Free and open to all, the program will feature traditional favorites as well as secular hits, including Philip Brunelle's arrangement of "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" sung in English and Latin, "It's the Most

Wonderful Time of the Year" and a sing-along to "Good King Wenceslas."

Katelyn Emerson will present an eclectic recital on the 55-rank Schlicker organ at 4 p.m. Sunday, January 8, at Mount Olive Lutheran Church, 3045 Chicago Ave. S. in Minneapolis. Admission is free and open to the public, though donations are welcome. A reception will follow in the Chapel Lounge. Call 612-827-5919 or visit mountolivechurch.org.

Film

Sound Unseen will screen *The Elephant 6 Recording Co.* at 7 p.m. Wednesday, January 11, at Trylon Cinema, 2820 E. 33rd St. in Minneapolis. Winner of the jury

ON THE TOWN BRIEFLY ►15

14 ON THE TOWN BRIEFLY

award at the 2022 Sound Unseen festival, director Chad Stockfleth's documentary tells of the Louisiana high schoolers who through experimentation with musical instruments and recording equipment created whole new worlds as members of the bands the Olivia Tremor Control, the Apples in Stereo and Neutral Milk Hotel. Tickets are \$13. Visit soundunseen.com.

Exhibits

Relive Christmas in Saint Paul circa 1910 during guided tours of the James J. Hill House, 240 Summit Ave. The 60-minute tours of the Gilded Age mansion step out between 10 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. daily, now through December 31. They feature holiday memories of both the Hill family and their domestic staff. The cost is \$18, free for children age 4 and under.

"Threads of Freedom," the art of veteran Jeffrey Stenbom, is being displayed through January 8 in the North Gallery at Landmark Center. Using primarily glass, Stenbom has created works shaped by his experiences in the Armed Services. Admission is free and open to all.

Tiny Art Expo, a show and sale by 40-plus artists from across the region, continues through January 8 at the Argyle Zebra Gallery, 308 Prince St. The exhibit includes 490 works measuring no more than 12-by-12 inches and selling for \$100 or less. The gallery is open from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Call 651-224-3757 or visit theazgallery.org.

Examine history with the skills of detective Sherlock Holmes at the Minnesota History Center, 345 W. Kellogg Blvd. Holmes, a creation of author Arthur Conan Doyle, was ahead of his time. Learn how he used seemingly trivial observations



He put the saint in Santa Claus.

Nicolas, the story of the real-life Father Christmas, is being staged through December 29 at Open Window Theatre, 5300 S. Robert Trail in Inver Grove Heights. Written and directed by Open Window artistic director Jeremy Stanbary, the drama tells of the 4th-century Saint Nicholas of Myra whose life of faith, heroic generosity and humble service to the less fortunate inspired the modern-day Santa Claus. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday with additional shows on December 20, 21, 27 and 28. Tickets are \$18-\$28. Call 612-615-1515 or visit openwindowtheatre.org.

PHOTO BY KAYLA NINNEMANN

to solve the most puzzling mysteries. Then see how his techniques are used today in criminal investigations. The exhibit will remain on view through April 2. Admission is \$12, \$10 for seniors and college students, \$6 for children ages 5-17. Visit mnhs.org or call 651-259-3000.

Theater

A long-running holiday tradition, Langston Hughes' *Black Nativity* will be performed on December 20-24 at Penumbra Theatre, 270 N. Kent St. Lou Bellamy directs. Musical direction is by Sanford Moore and the Kingdom Life Church Choir. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 2 p.m.

Saturday. Tickets are \$20-\$45. Call 651-224-3180 or visit penumbraetheatre.org.

Disney's Beauty and the Beast, a musical adaptation of the classic folk tale, is being performed through December 31 at the Ordway Music Theater. Rajané Katurah, Nathaniel Hackmann and Jamecia Bennett star. For reservations, call 651-292-3268 or visit ordway.org.

Family

The Snowy Day, a drama about the joys of the season through the eyes of a child, will be performed by SteppingStone Theatre for Youth at 7 p.m. Thursday and Friday, December 22-23, at Park Square Theatre,

20 W. Seventh Place. Written by Jerome Hairston with music by Victor Zupanc, the play is based on the books by Ezra Jack Keats. Tickets are \$16 and \$20. Visit steppingstonetheatre.org.

The Twin City Model Railroad Museum, 668 Transfer Road, has brought back its Night Trains experience. From 3-7 p.m. on Saturdays (except Christmas Eve), now through February 25, the lights will be turned down and the model trains and the miniature villages through which they pass will be aglow in holiday decor. Admission to the museum is \$15 for Night Trains, \$10 at other times, free for children age 4 and under. For more information, visit tcmrm.org or call 651-647-9628.

Et cetera

More than 1,600 dogs in 197 breeds will compete for top honors in the Land O' Lakes Kennel Club Dog Show on January 5-8 at Saint Paul's RiverCentre. The show will run from 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Thursday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday, 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday and 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday. Owners of puppies ages 4-6 months may enter them in a mock dog show on the mornings of January 6-8. Experts will be on hand on January 7 and 8 to discuss the various breeds. A junior handling competition will be held on January 7. Admission is \$10.50, \$8.50 for seniors and veterans, \$5 for children ages 5-12, \$26 for a family of four. For information on particular show times, visit landolakeskennelclub.org.

Join District 64B Representative Dave Pinto for an informal conversation about the Minnesota Legislature's 2023 session between 1 and 2:30 p.m. Saturday, January 7, at the Highland Park Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy.

14 CIRCUS JUVENTAS

also planning to apply for the Cirque du Soleil workshop. Chang devotes about 40 hours per week to training at Circus Juventas. He hopes to go professional someday with Cirque or another troupe. Chang said he has learned some 20 disciplines in the four years he has been enrolled at Circus Juventas, including what he described as "throwing and catching people."

Circus Juventas' programs for less advanced students will continue as usual. "There are no tryouts," Butler said. "All students can find something they do well and build their self-

confidence." Training under the big top goes on year-round. The school has a large coaching staff and a production crew that includes script writers, set designers and builders, costume designers, and sound and lighting designers.

Plans are now in the works for the circus' 2023 season, which kicks off in April with the production *Time Travel*. The spring show will feature four stage sets and more than 1,300 costumes for the 740 beginning and intermediate students who will be performing. The summer show, *Arthurian Legends*, will follow in July and August.

For more information, visit circusjuventas.org.



Circus Juventas founders and directors Betty and Dan Butler. EXPOSED TO LIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

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SPORTS



The Wright Call

By Dave Wright

Concordia has volleyball season to remember

Ten days after seeing his team come so close to winning a 10th NCAA Division II volleyball championship, Concordia University-Saint Paul head coach Brady Starkey was still trying to put the 2022 season in perspective. “You always remember the times you don’t succeed more than the times you did,” Starkey said, referring to his team’s 3-1 loss to West Texas A&M in the championship match on December 3 in Seattle. “You feel bad for a group that worked so hard for so long.”

Despite a 16-game winning streak during the regular season, the Golden Bears, a perennial Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference power, managed to spend most of the season under the radar. The main reason for that was a pair of early 3-0 losses to conference foe Wayne State University. The first came in the finale of a tournament on September 3 in Denver. The teams met again in the conference opener in Nebraska six nights later. The Golden Bears responded with that impressive winning streak. Only twice was CSP forced to a deciding fifth game during that run.

When the teams met at Gangelhoff Center in early November, CSP took two of the first three sets against the Wildcats. But WSU slithered off the hook to win the next two and take the match.

With the NSIC tournament set for Gangelhoff, the Golden Bears were ready to get revenge on their home floor. But one of the beautiful things about sports is its unpredictability. Augustana, the eighth seed, stunned the top-seeded Wildcats in the quarterfinals. The Golden Bears ripped through Northern State and Minnesota-Duluth in straight sets, but lost 3-2 in the title match to a Saint Cloud State team that needed the win to advance to the NCAA tournament. That loss was basically an annoyance to Starkey.

“We knew we were going to get into the NCAA tournament one way or the other,” he said. “When you know that, you often think differently.”

The NCAA Central Region tournament found CSP going back in Nebraska. Starkey reminded his charges there were no easy games in the tournament and they needed to bring their “A” game to succeed. The Golden Bears did just that against Nebraska-Kearney and Minnesota-Duluth to advance to the final where Saint Cloud State was once again waiting. As in the conference championship match, CSP found itself in a 2-0 hole. But the Golden Bears responded with a pair of wins and turned the tables with a 15-13 win in the climatic fifth set.

It was then off to the West Coast in search of the school’s first NCAA crown since 2017. CSP was sharp in the quarterfinal and semifinal matches, rolling to 3-0 wins over Southern New Hampshire and Cal State. They started off the championship match against West Texas A&M with a 25-23 triumph, but dropped three sets by a combined nine points to finish in second place.

“We were close in all three sets (the finale was 28-26),” Starkey noted. “That’s what hurts. It’s about missed opportunities. Maybe you’ll get another chance, but nothing is for sure next year.”

Though the Golden Bears had just one senior (Kennedy Brady) on their roster in 2022, Starkey is busy beating the bushes for players. He knows prospects can find a website and see there’s a lot of returning talent. So his approach to recruits is simple: Each season is different. Today’s current starters may be next year’s reserves. Starting with the offseason drills in January, you work for your spot in the lineup. A skilled new player can take a spot quickly. Exhibit A: Ellie Sieling, a freshman from Bloomington who led the team in digs with 452.

WRIGHT CALL ►17

Boys’ hoops preview

Coaches aren’t guarded about need for defense

By Dave Wright

When the boys’ high school basketball season begins, most coaches already have a pretty good idea of the type of players they’ll have on hand. Between summer workouts and Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) games, they know who can shoot, who can drive the lane and who can pass the ball. That leaves one key facet of the game: who can stop opponents from scoring.

“When you play two or three AAU games a day in a tournament, defense tends to get lost. They’re trying to outscore the other side,” said Cretin-Derham Hall coach Jerry Kline. As a result, the Raiders spend a lot of early practice time working on defense.

“Defense is all about limiting opportunities,” said Saint Thomas Academy coach Khalid El-Amin. “It’s difficult, but what you want is to influence the ball.”

Two Rivers coach Doug Linton said the difficulty for JV players moving up, especially on defense, is the need to adjust quickly to the faster pace of varsity ball.

Highland Park coach Saladin Wright put it succinctly. “Defense is hard because kids are often taught only to shoot,” he said.

That’s particularly pertinent to guys like Nova coach John Carrier, who has a team with no seniors and not a lot of size. “We need to be patient and opportunistic at the same time,” he said. Thus, steals and defensive rebounds will be a more important statistic for Nova than points.

Here’s how local boys’ basketball teams stack up in 2022-23:

CENTRAL

(Saint Paul City Conference, 11-15 prior record, coach Scott Howell)

Key players: senior guard PJ Blakey, sophomore guard Allen Langford, senior center Henry Acker.

Outlook: With four starters returning, Howell is looking for his team to be competitive in what he said will be a very good conference. Offense is not an issue, with the Minutemen averaging 67 points in their first two games, but defense is. “We’ve been starting slowly, but we get better as the game goes on,” Howell said. One fresh face who may contribute a lot is 6-foot-1 freshman guard Eli Moseman.

CRETIN-DERHAM HALL

(Suburban East Conference, 21-11 prior record, coach Jerry Kline)

Key players: senior guards Adam Tauer and Luke Jacobson, junior guard Miles Bollinger.

Outlook: Tauer and Bollinger are the lone returning starters from a CDH team that took third at state last season. This year’s team is smaller than in the past, so Kline said they’ll need to be opportunistic. “We have a lot of guys who’ve been around the program at the lower levels,” he said. “It’ll take a while for them to get up to where we want to be. Eventually,



Central senior Tage Johnson nabs a rebound over Nate Gervais of River Falls in the Minutemen’s 73-70 loss at home to the Wildcats on December 13. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

we’ll be good offensively.”

HIGHLAND PARK

(Saint Paul City Conference, 8-19 prior record, coach Saladin Wright)

Key players: junior guards Andrew Bacigalupi and Xavier May, senior guard Ishmael Powell.

Outlook: “We’re not big, but we can run,” Wright said. “We have the capability to score.” Highland scored 71 in its five-point loss to Saint Thomas Academy in the season opener and had 68 in a win over Hill-Murray three nights later. “If we improve on our defensive play as the season goes on, we’ll be difficult to beat,” he said.

MINNEHAHA ACADEMY

(Independent Metro Athletic Conference, 19-11 prior record, coach Lance Johnson)

Key players: senior forward Rolyns Aligbe, junior guards Jerome Williams and Lorenzo Levy.

Outlook: The traditionally strong Redhawks may take a while to get in gear, despite being ranked among the top five teams in the state in Class AA. Minnehaha opened the season with a 74-33 win over Rochester Lourdes, but lost the next day to Maple River 68-63. “We didn’t push the pace,” Johnson said. “We need to do that.” The Redhawks apparently got the word; they scored 92 and 97 in their next two games.

NOVA ACADEMY

(Skyline Conference, 7-21 prior record, coach John Carrier)

Key players: junior guards Alex Ehlebracht and Omeed Tabrizi, sophomore guard Mason Engelking, junior forward Silas Revenaugh.

Outlook: This is possibly the youngest varsity hoop team in the state. There are a handful of freshmen, including Caleb Taylor (averaging nearly 10 points a game), and an eighth-grader on the 17-man roster. “But we’ve got very smart kids,” Carrier said. “They’re learning quickly.” Nova got its first win on December 12 by limiting Trinity to 28 points.

SAINT PAUL ACADEMY

(Independent Metro Athletic Conference, 16-1 prior record, coach Kevin Keto)

Key players: junior forward Tysen Hayes, junior guard Ethan Carter, senior center Maverick Wolff.

Outlook: The Spartans have seven players 6-foot-3 or taller in the nine-man rotation. Keto said Hayes is the team’s most versatile player, while Carter was averaging 20.3 points in the first three games. The goal is to improve on offense to compete in a small but very good conference that includes undefeated Blake and perennial power Minnehaha.

BOYS’ HOOPS PREVIEW ►17

Girls' hoops preview

Shooting the three takes practice, practice, practice

By Bill Wagner

A lot of basketball teams live by the three-point shot, only to die by it on other occasions. Girls' high school basketball is no different.

Local prep coaches agree that the three-pointer can produce a prolific offense if they have players with the skills to be consistent from long distance. Still, some coaches have other preferences about what their first offensive priority should be.

"I'm more in favor of working it inside first, then working it back out," said Highland Park coach Chris Steenberg. "I don't like rushed threes."

Steenberg said a few years ago there weren't many good three-point shooters on most teams, but that has changed. "Now it's pretty much if you're open, it's going up," he said. "And it's practiced a lot more now."

Saint Paul Academy coach Willie Taylor said that three-point shooting is a product of hard work. "I think good three-point shooting is 100 percent practice," he said. "But they're not going to make them if you get a hand in their face."

Nova Classical coach Mychal Morris noted that good offenses do well relying on one of two options as they attack the basket, and the short outside shot is not among them.

"Either get it inside or shoot the three," he said. Morris wants to see his team connect on about 35 percent of its three-point attempts, while keeping opponents to under 30 percent.

Threes or not, here's now the local girls' basketball teams measure up in 2022-23:

CENTRAL

(Saint Paul City Conference, 8-15 prior record, coach Allen Atkins)

Key players: senior guard Anna Rynkiewich, senior forward Ellison Northop-Kiel.

Outlook: Central hopes to finish .500 or better this winter, Atkins said. The team has fair height and can hit its shots, but it'll all come down to how well it plays defense. "If we can compete for two halves, the wins will take care of themselves," he said.

CRETIN-DERHAM HALL

(Suburban East Conference, 7-20 prior record, coach Crystal Flint)

Key players: junior forwards Lauren Bengtson, Suraya Hodges and Lilly Hahs, junior guard Tank Edwards, eighth-grade guard Aniyah Gorman.

Outlook: Though the Raiders have just one senior, Flint thinks they have plenty of depth. She believes this is the best club she's had as coach. "Our upperclassmen are doing a fantastic job of teaching the younger players what it takes to be successful," Flint said. "Expect great things from this group."

HIGHLAND PARK

(Saint Paul City Conference, 6-14 prior record, coach Chris Steenberg)

Key players: junior forward Tereya Vaughn, sophomore guards Hannah Gliedman and Kylah Coleman.

Outlook: The Scots have three players back who saw varsity minutes last year, including one starter. Steenberg believes his young group will continue to get better. "We want to make sure we keep developing," he said.

MINNEHAHA ACADEMY

(Independent Metro Athletic Conference, 22-6 prior record, coach Matt Pryor)

Key players: sophomore point guard Addi Mack, junior forward Angel Hill, eighth-grade guard Ava Cupito.

Outlook: Pryor has good reason to be optimistic this year because his squad is almost without a weakness. "We're very excited about this year," he said. "Year in and year out we're going to compete for the state title." Last year, the Redhawks finished third at state. This year, they're ranked second in the state in Class AA.

NOVA CLASSICAL

(Skyline Conference, 11-14 prior record, coach Mychal Morris)

Key players: senior guard Bella Arco, freshman point guard Ava Winslow, freshman center Emma Lair, senior forward Lucy Blood, junior forward Tomi Akinmusire.

Outlook: Nova has two seniors and coach Morris will try to develop the underclassmen. "We need to break some younger players into the lineup," he said. "But I'd like to see growth among all the players." The Knights have won four of their first five games.

SAINT PAUL ACADEMY

(Independent Metro Athletic Conference, 5-17 prior record, coach Willie Taylor)

Key players: junior point guard Naomi Kempcke, senior guard Catherine Hooley, sophomore guards Madelyn Moser and Julia Taylor (the coach's daughter), freshmen guards Katy Devine and Clare Ryan Bradley, sophomore forward Natalie Waibel, junior forward Ayla Rivers.



High-flying sophomore forward Emersen Russell lofts a shot for Two Rivers in the Warriors' 67-57 loss to Mound Westonka on December 13.

PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Outlook: Taylor is measuring success with the Spartans in increments. The team is small and competing in the rugged IMAC is a stiff challenge. "Winning a conference game would be a step in the right direction," Taylor said, "but we'll be better." He said his sophomores and freshmen are talented and should develop well.

TWO RIVERS

(Metro East Conference, 6-21 prior record, coach Harry Jenness Jr.)

Key players: junior center Gabi Kirchner, freshman forward Sophia Amundson, sophomore guards Izzy Kirchner and Taylor Taurinskas, sophomore forward Emersen Russell, junior point guard Meghan Waters, junior forward Anna Wilson, eighth-grade guard Briana Simek.

Outlook: The Warriors have a

strong inside game and some potentially good shooters, but they may need time to develop as well. "We have some experience, but we're still young," coach Jenness said. "It comes down to how fast we can put it together."

VISITATION

(Tri-Metro Conference, 16-7 prior record, coach Faith Johnson Patterson)

Key players: sophomore all-around player Samantha Wills, senior forward Catherine Breyen.

Outlook: A solid freshman class gives the Blazers a good reason to look ahead. Johnson Patterson said that the more this squad plays together, the better it will be. Following two losses over Thanksgiving weekend, Visitation won five in a row, including a pair against Tri-Metro foes.

16◀ BOYS' HOOPS PREVIEW

SAINT THOMAS ACADEMY

(Metro East Conference, 16-12 prior record, coach Khalid El-Amin)

Key players: senior guards Michael Kirchner and Jack Chamberlain, junior guard Luke Dobbs.

Outlook: In his second year at the helm,

El-Amin has a veteran returning cast with 11 seniors. "I'm excited about the season," he said. "I expect we'll be really competitive." Kirchner is a three-year starter who averaged 15.1 points last year. Dobbs is averaging nearly 18 points a game in the early going for the Cadets, who were ranked among the top 10 in the state in Class AAA. Chamberlain's return in January from injury will add more speed and

strength to the lineup.

TWO RIVERS

(Metro East Conference, 16-10 prior record, coach Doug Linton)

Key players: senior guards Carson Christiansen and Keeshawn Powell, senior forward Thomas Lutz.

Outlook: When you lose six of your top

nine players from the year before, you know you're going to have some work to do in the early part of the season. Fortunately, Christiansen and Lutz are accomplished scorers and Powell is an excellent playmaker. "We lack varsity experience," Linton conceded, "but the kids are adjusting to the speed of the game and the defensive intensity at the varsity level."

16◀ WRIGHT CALL

One of the most pleasant facets of the season for Starkey was coaching his daughter Teagan, a sophomore. The pair had previously been together in AAU and other leagues, but it's different when you're a member of one of the best Division II teams in the country.

"She's a coach's kid, so she knows the drill," Starkey said. "It's a lot of fun."

Some of that understanding may come from Teagan's mother, Penny, who was a two-time all-American, setting school records in volleyball at the University of Saint Thomas and is a member of the Tommies' Athletic Hall of Fame.

After 21 years, a coach tends to get a little philosophical about things. So Starkey can appreciate the season that just ended, his 14th with 30 wins or more. But like the fisherman who sees a big one get off the hook, he sounded a bit remorseful about how it ended. Still, a 31-6 overall record for a team that had just one senior on its roster and didn't win its regular-season or postseason conference championship is something to cherish.

"Yes, it was a very good season," Starkey said. "We did a lot of things very well. However, as a coach, you're always looking for the things you can do—or should have done—better. That's what frustrates me."

UST not immune from college football portal

On November 28, the University of Minnesota football team scored its second win in three days over Wisconsin when wide receiver Markus Allen announced he was pulling up stakes and leaving Badgerland for life as a Golden Gopher. However, seven days later Allen, who had quit the team when head coach Paul Chryst was fired, had a change of a heart and decided to return to Madison.

The portal where players add their names in the hopes of finding greener turf has wormed its way to the newest member of the Division I football fraternity at Saint Thomas. The Tommies' second season in the Pioneer League was a rip-roaring success. UST won its last 10 games in a row and rolled through the Pioneer League with an 8-0 mark.

Success attracts attention and so UST head coach Glenn Caruso and staff waded through some 650 requests from

potential transfers. But there's a catch here. Football is a non-scholarship sport at UST. Applicants who wish to attend must be able to earn scholarships the old-fashioned way—with their brains.

"We haven't changed the manner we use to look at transfers," Caruso said. "It's the same as in our DIII days. If it's a player we're interested in, we'll look at him. But any offers we make have to be academic."

The Ivy League is the only other entity that plays Division I football without athletic scholarships. Caruso thinks a football partnership between the two leagues is a smart thing to do. UST will make a step in that direction when it plays a nonconference game at Harvard on September 16. The Crimson are scheduled to visit Saint Paul in 2029.

Caruso has his eye on other potential Ivy League foes as well. The Harvard game lands UST in Boston, a football hotbed. Asked about the prospect of a game against Columbia in New York City, Caruso declared that he'd be all in.

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

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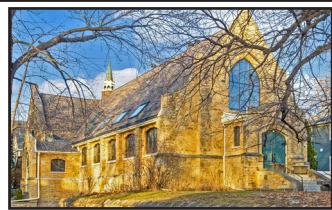


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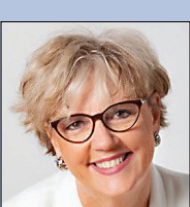
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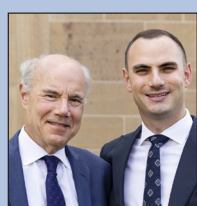
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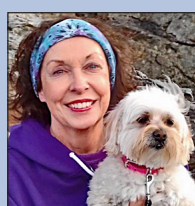
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