The most-watched film in the Cedar Lee’s history

Fred D’Ambrosi

It’s the most watched film in the history of the Cedar Lee Theatre. It’s not an award-winner, and it’s not “The Rocky Horror Picture Show.” Created by a director who’s a native of Cleveland Heights, it premiered in July 2014 and has been running daily ever since. By my back-of-the-envelope calculations, it’s played more than 10,000 times.

It’s the policy trailer that plays before every feature film. You know, the 95-second short that tells you to keep your feet off the seats, find the nearest exit, and turn off that cell phone! Locally produced for CH-based Cleveland Cinemas, it features local people, unlike most of its generic counterparts you see in national theater chains.

If you’re the rare Heights resident who hasn’t seen a film at the Cedar Lee in the past five years, here’s a recap for you: view it here: https://tinyurl.com/caddofortunefilm. The trailer starts with a couple buying tickets which shoot out animated confetti in joyful anticipation of the fun to come. The couple head to their seats, blocked by two rude dudes with their feet up. A subtitle tells you not to do that, and the dudes drop their feet. A few rows away, annoying text animations are rising from someone’s phone. The woman in the seat next to the texter tells her to knock it off. The texter mouths “sorry,” and puts her phone away. An older couple wisely phone away. An older couple wisely

Bob Rosenbaum

Local politician Cheryl Stephens, a Cleveland Heights resident, has announced that she will not run for mayor if voters choose to change the city charter to a “strong mayor” form of government this November. The announcement is significant because Stephens was an early supporter of changing Cleveland Heights’ government from its current “city manager/council” form. And some opponents to the ballot measure have pointed to her supposed interest in becoming the city’s first strong mayor as the real political motive behind the initiative.

Stephens made her announcement in an opinion piece written for the Heights Observer printed on p. 2. In it, she wrote, “We are being warned that cronynism and corruption will descend upon us if we dare let people vote directly for Cleveland Heights mayor. Rumors of ulterior motives and conspiracies—some even involving me—have already begun making the rounds. . . . So, let me state my position and put speculation about my motives to rest: I strongly support and fully endorse the proposed charter change. Also, when the amendment passes, I will NOT run for the position.”

Stephens, who is CEO of the East Akron Neighborhood Development Corp. and at one time served as Cleveland Heights Director of Plan- ccontinued on page 8

Cheryl Stephens

STEPHENS VOWS NOT TO RUN FOR MAYOR

In the run-up to the Nov. 5 election, the League of Women Voters (LWV) of Greater Cleveland Heights Chapter will present two informational forums for Heights voters.

The first, a Candidates’ Night planned for Thursday, Oct. 3, 7-9 p.m., will provide an opportunity for voters to hear candidates for Cleveland Heights City Council.

Because the races for University Heights City Council and Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education (BOE) will be uncontested, they will not be presented, in accordance with LWV’s forum guidelines. The Heights Chapter of the LWV of Greater Cleveland (LWVGC) and FutureHeights are presenting the Candidates’ Night forum, which will take place at the Cleveland Heights Community Center, 1 Monticello Blvd.

In Cleveland Heights, five candidates—Mary Danbar, Melody Joy Hart, Anthony Matterson Jr., Carol Roe and Kahil Seren—are running for three city council seats with four-year terms. Two candidates, Craig Cobb and Davida Russell, are running for a two-year term to fill the council seat vacated last year by Cheryl Stephens. (Cobb was appointed to the seat in April 2019, to serve through the end of the year.)

In the two uncontested races, Barbara Blankfield, Justin Gould, John P. Good and Michelle Weiss are running for four seats on University Heights City Council; James Pospich and Beverly Wright are running for two seats on the CH-UH BOE.

All of the candidates will be invited to participate in the LWV’s Voters’ Guide, which will be distributed with the October Heights Observer and be posted online at both www.heightsobserver.org and www.futureheights.org.

Cheryl Stephens is a native of Cleveland Heights, and have graduated from Cleveland Heights High School. She was the director of the Monticello Community Center, 2843 Washington Blvd. #105, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118, from 2017 to 2019. During that time, approximately $15-million renovation and new heating and cooling systems provide comfortable learning spaces. Surface and lighting upgrades reveal a height, revitalized aesthetic—all alongside the historic, familiar elements of the buildings.

“I know my staff, students and I are so excited to start the new school year together in our beautifully

Fred D’Ambrosi

Renovated middle schools open their doors

Cathen Cavanaugh

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District is celebrating the reopening of Monticello and Roxboro middle schools with community open houses. Monticello Middle School will be open on Sunday, Sept. 15, and Roxboro Middle School will welcome visitors on Sunday, Sept. 22, both from 1 to 4 p.m.

All families, students, staff, community members and friends are invited to enjoy guided tours, musical entertainment provided by students, a resource fair featuring school and community partners, giveaways, and light refreshments.

The buildings each received an approximately $5.5 million renovation from 2017 to 2019. During that time, ROXBORO MIDDLE SCHOOL

Cleveland Heights City School District

Roxboro Middle School

a resource fair featuring school and community partners, giveaways, and light refreshments.

The buildings each received an approximately $5.5 million renovation from 2017 to 2019. During that time, CH-UH students in grades 6-8 attended school at the Wiley Campus in University Heights.

The classrooms now boast new audio, visual and computer technology. New heating and cooling systems provide comfortable learning spaces. Surface and lighting upgrades reveal a height, revitalized aesthetic—all alongside the historic, familiar elements of the buildings.

“I know my staff, students and I are so excited to start the new school year together in our beautifully
Dear Reader,

The Heights Observer welcomes letters to the editor. They must be submitted electronically, along with the writer’s name, phone number and e-mail address, to: HeightsObserver.org/members.

Navigating an important civic debate

Bob Rosenbaum

For most of the nation, this is an off-year election. But in Cleveland Heights, the November 2019 ballot will offer one of the biggest decisions residents have ever been asked to make: Should the city change its basic form of government? The Heights Observer hasn’t taken sides on previous ballot issues, and won’t on this one either. Our guiding principal is to favor the individual voices arising from the community. So every opinion you read in the Heights Observer is that of the person or group whose name is attached to it. I’ve heard criticism that the Heights Observer should do more to explain pros and cons of the ballot issue to help people decide how to vote. But as a paper built entirely on contributions from the community, we can’t claim that kind of expertise. Further, this particular debate isn’t one for which there are credible, objective outside experts. So our approach has been to encourage those who care, on each side of the issue, to make use of the Heights Observer to explain their positions. I chafe a little at the early re-entry of the big-money candidates. I don’t think either side has done a good job yet of making its case. But unlike the marathon of a presidential campaign, local campaigns only last a couple of months. This one is just getting started, and I hope the next 60 days bring more clarity. I’m also realistic: No amount of information is likely to make this a simple decision for many voters.

After the August issue hit the streets, I saw a few complaints on social media that it contained too many opinions from the community, and not enough in favor of the change. We’re aware of the sensitivity, but we can only publish what we receive. If the result looks lopsided, it means the contents of the inbox that month were lopsided.

For the September Heights Observer, we’ve received more opinions on both sides of the issue than we have room to publish in print. Deciding which of those to print involves multiple variables—length, clarity, coherence, and factuality, to name a few. We aim to present a variety of viewpoints, opinions and arguments on both sides of the issue. And we try to present a fair, representative sample of the entirety of what people submit, without preference to one side or the other. It’s easier said than done, but that’s the goal.

Finally, a word about the organization that publishes the Heights Observer: FutureHeights’ leaders don’t have a role in deciding what gets published. They don’t call or write, and we don’t ask. Executive Director Deanna Bremer Fisher, who also holds the title of Heights Observer publisher, does participate regularly in editorial conversations but, after she provides her perspective, the editor and I work together to make a final decision.

Cleveland Heights resident Bob Rosenbaum is co-chair of the Heights Observer Advisory Committee, and is responsible for its advertising sales and market development.

Barrowell’s move from Cleveland to Cleveland Heights that legitimized the new league.)
Congratulations are in order for all three men who helped legitimize Cleveland Heights sports to be among the best in Greater Cleveland.

Larry Shaw
Cleveland Heights

Check facts before making assumptions

To the Editor:

Before Sarah West decided to “posit that CEM has already vetted possible mayoral candidates” (“CH and the strong-mayor dilemma,” Heights Observer, Aug. 4), she could have checked if her assumption was true. It’s not.

All 10 members of Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM), listed on our website and easily accessible if she had chosen to ask us, would have told her we have not vetted possible candidates.

We also agreed not to endorse a candidate nor run for mayor ourselves. We have not even discussed possible candidates, other than to say we are optimistic many qualified residents will be interested in running.

Only two CEM members were contacted by Crush the Mayors to present a petition of an elected mayor initiative she mentioned—a group that quickly disbanded itself from all elected officials. CEM’s actions are about structure, not people.

Michael Bennett
Secretary, CEM

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About the Observer

The Heights Observer is not an ordinary newspaper; it is a nonprofit publication for residents of Cleveland Heights and University Heights.

The Heights Observer has no writing staff, it is written by you—the readers.

Individuals throughout the community decide what stories they want to write, then submit them for publication to the University Heights or Cleveland Heights is welcome to contribute regularly, occasionally or one time. As a community newspaper committed to addressing that challenge, it is a nonprofit entity with no writing staff; it is written by you—the readers.

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CH needs strong responsive leadership

Cheryl Stephens

The campaign over the "strong mayor" charter amendment has barely begun, and the scare tactics that always accompany government reform efforts are well underway. We are being warned that cronism and corruption will descend upon us if we dare let people vote directly for Cleveland Heights mayor. Rumors of ulterior motives and conspiracies—some even involving me—have already begun making the rounds.

This is as silly as it is unfortunate. Cleveland Heights can't be afraid of voters. We can't fear our future. And we don't have any reason to be scared.

So, let me state my position and put speculation about my motives to rest. I strongly support and fully endorse the proposed charter amendment. Also, when the amendment passes, I will NOT run for the position.

I am a 38-year resident of the Heights and a career government and nonprofit professional who specializes in economic development and finance. I was a Cleveland Heights City Council member and mayor under our current "weak mayor" form of government. I am Cleveland Heights' current Cuyahoga County Council member. And EVERYTHING in my experience tells me that the strong-mayor amendment is right for Cleveland Heights.

Our municipal government in Cleveland Heights has many strengths and employs many talented, dedicated people with whom I'm proud to have worked. But it has a structural weakness when it comes to accountability and responsiveness.

In theory, if voters think Cleveland Heights is headed in the wrong direction, they can vote for new leadership. In practice, though, who are voters to hold accountable? City managers are insulated against being held accountable by residents by design. Their jobs require them only to keep the support of city council, not voters, and their tenures tend to outlast the council members who hire them. This arrangement may stabilize other cities against volatile political shifts, but volatility isn't Cleveland Heights' problem.

Council members, including weak mayors, cast votes. Strong mayors, on the other hand, have responsibilities and take action. They set priorities and build support for them. By combining administrative responsibility and political accountability, a strong mayor can engage and respond to residents and focus community attention in ways a city manager can't.

Cleveland Heights needs robust and accountable leadership, a clear agenda for the future, and an engaged citizenry supporting it. We have the capacity to improve our city, and with the recognition of this capacity we have an obligation to act.

A strong mayor will be a valuable asset for our city. I look forward to working with whomever ultimately fills the role to create a more vibrant and resilient future for Cleveland Heights.

Cheryl Stephens has lived on three continents (Asia, North American and Europe) and has chosen to make Cleveland Heights her home. Currently a Cuyahoga County Council member, she has worked for a variety of national and local nonprofits, as well as local government organizations, to help revitalize communities and help Americans live their dreams.

Now's the time for checks and balances

To the Editor:

Several authors of opinions published in the August Heights Observer lauded Cleveland Heights' current system of government as "collaborative." I agree. But it requires collaboration between two branches of government that ought to be separate: the legislative and the executive.

With the current system, city council not only hires, and can fire, the city manager, it is also charged with supervising the manager, and therefore, indirectly, city staff. This means that council, which is supposed to be the legislative branch of city government, spends much of its time protecting and attempting to manage the executive branch. Rather than providing checks and balances, council members have a vested interest in making the city manager look good, since that makes them look good. It may not always, however, be what is best for our city.

There is not a single elected official working at Cleveland Heights City Hall from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. A weak city council can become little more than a rubber stamp for the city manager.

Moreover, the spectacle of seven part-time council members trying to accomplish everything required of them can be painful. I am one of four or five CH residents who regularly attend the working sessions of council, called Committee of the Whole meetings, and we know. Most of our council members have day jobs and families, as well. While their service to the city for a pittance in pay is laudable, it really is hard for them to keep up with the volume of work required.

I have personally witnessed our current city manager lamenting the fact that she must answer to seven bosses. Surely this makes efficiently administering city affairs more difficult.

Part-time council members who don't have responsibility for supervising the city's administration will be better able to respond directly to constituents and fulfill their responsibilities as legislators. Having an elected mayor and appointed city administrator working full time to handle the executive branch will create a real system of checks and balances in our city government. For good governance, we need that!

Carla Rautenberg
Cleveland Heights
**Elected-mayor issue is really about discontent with status quo in CH**

Matthew Wilson

First off, I want to say there are bright and conscientious people making some good arguments for why the city-manager system is right for our city.

Second, I’m not a political science expert, but I’ve researched this topic, and it is clear that successful and unsuccessful cities exist with a variety of structures.

Third, I want to say that the people arguing for preserving the system are utterly missing the bigger picture.

If people were largely content, there is no way a handful of part-time volunteers would have been able to get this far.

Ask your activist friends just how much work it is to gather 4,000 signatures. Consider how many years you have lived in the Heights, and consider all the petitions you’ve been asked to sign in the past. How many of those went anywhere? The vast majority of the time, these projects never go anywhere.

But this Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM) issue tapped into a deeper sense of pessimism and dissatisfaction with our city leadership. If people were generally content, the adage “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” would make this effort impossible.

The popularity of CEM’s issue shows many believe that “it is broke,” so they’re eager for change.

My suggestion to the folks who want to keep things as-is: quit saying it could always be worse. That’s like Candide claiming that this is the best of all possible worlds. Instead, acknowledge the grumbling! Acknowledge that the status quo is not satisfying enough people, and then describe a new inspiring plan. Offer something new to inspire hope.

Normally I wouldn’t use a preten- tious literary reference, but since this is the Heights, I figure y’all would get it. That’s why I love it here.

Cleveland Heights resident Matt Wilson is an avid computer programmer, backyard gardener and Internet crackpot. He welcomes feedback at matt@tplus1.com.

To protect abortion rights, say ‘abortion’

Mallory McMaster

I’ve recently been criticized for using the word abortion too much because it makes people uncomfortable.

Well, you know what makes me uncomfortable? Abortion bans. Abortion stigma. People who have never been in my shoes, who don’t know what’s in my heart, ridicul- ing me, judging me, and calling me tunnel-visioned or clueless because I’ve chosen to dedicate my life to fighting for abortion access.

I’m a small business owner in Cleveland Heights. I’m politically active. I’m a parent of a young child who will grow up in the Cleveland Heights – University Heights school system. You see my family at the library every Saturday for story-time. You see us at the park. You see us at Tommy’s, at Stone Oven, and Dave’s. You’ve seen us at block parties, car washes and concerts. We’ve been behind you at CVS, in front of you at Starbucks, and you’ve probably said hello when we pass you walking into The BottleHouse. I’m your neighbor—I’m part of this community—and I wouldn’t be here if I hadn’t had an abortion when I needed it.

We have one of the best, most well-respected abortion clinics just a few miles away in Shaker Square. Preterm provides abortion care for more patients than any other clinic in the state. It trains doctors and nurses, provides counseling, and changes lives like mine every single day. Now, more than ever, it’s time for our community to rally around our abortion clinic, not turn away in shame. Though the horrific six-week abortion ban passed and was signed by Governor DeWine, we still have plenty of work to do to make abortion accessible and stigma-free here in Cleveland Heights.

Here are some steps we need to take as a community to ensure that people who need abortion care can get it when they need it:

First, we need to fight abortion stigma. That means using the word abortion. You don’t have to shout it from the rooftops like I do. But don’t be afraid to say it either. You can use broader terms like reproductive free- dom if you’d prefer to talk about the full scope of reproductive decisions we make in our lifetimes, but please don’t shy away from discussing the medical procedure that has changed so many lives. Ask your friends, your parents, your daughters if they’ve had an abor- tion. You don’t have to shout it when they need it: you don’t have to shout it.

Second, we need to protect our clinics. Preterm, our local independent abortion clinic, is a nonprofit that has existed since 1974. What I love most about Preterm is that it never turns anyone away who can’t pay. If you can donate, do so. Call to volunteer if you want. Preterm needs gardening help, escorts, and many other things.

Third, we need to strategize for the future. If Ohio’s abortion ban is upheld, let’s pursue legislation that allows people to use safe, effective medication abortion methods at home without risk of criminalization. We need to ask every single elected official if they’ll commit to this. This isn’t a partisan statement—there are plenty of anti-abortion Democrats and Republicans, even today—this is a values statement.

We need to ask our CH-UH council to welcome Preterm, a center that is a non-profit that has existed since 1974. What I love most about Preterm is that it never turns anyone away who can’t pay. If you can donate, do so. Call to volunteer if you want. Preterm needs gardening help, escorts, and many other things.

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The popularity of CEM’s issue shows many believe that “it is broke,” so they’re eager for change.
Elected mayor would be a slippery slope

Jimmie Hicks

A former African-American Cleveland Heights council member for eight years, and now pastor of Start-RightChurch for 13 years, I have stayed away from politics for almost 15 years. I enjoy the ministry that we do in the Caledonia neighborhood.

However, I feel the need to give my thoughts on the upcoming ballot initiative.

I believe that changing our form of government and an elected mayor would be a big mistake and not serve our community well. That type of change, if successful, would take us down a slippery slope and eventually lead to another ballot initiative asking that our city council be changed to an elected ward system. This would also be a big mistake.

The people from Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM) want our community to believe that this type of change would benefit our city. They are relying on the lack of knowledge our community has about the city-manager form of government to bring them success at the polls. I am praying that our community will not be deceived and [residents] will seek to understand what they currently have before they change to what seems familiar.

If I were still a politician and only cared about winning and political power, I would be the first to support this type of government, I would be the first to support this charter initiative because it is a citizen-led initiative powered by passion, leadership and vision from people right here in Cleveland Heights.

We've recently learned that the PAC formed to oppose this measure, Cleveland Heights Citizens for Good Government, is being funded with up to $25,000 from a D.C.-based lobbying firm that fights to retain city-manager forms of government all over the world. They're hiring Burges and Burges, well-known political strategists, to come to Cleveland Heights and craft a compelling message to convince voters not to change our current form of government.

This isn't who we are in Cleveland Heights! This is wrong! We are not the toxic political swamp that come with any elected official and they will plague an elected mayor but will never be an issue with a city manager. We benefit from having stability and resist efforts to collaborate and craft a compelling message to convince voters not to change our current form of government.

We benefit from having stability in city hall that is not jeopardized every time there is an election for mayor. Cleveland Heights Citizens for Good Government is being funded with up to $25,000 from a D.C.-based lobbying firm that fights to retain city-manager forms of government all over the world.

For far too long, we've been told by our elected city manager that we cannot do things on our own. That's what CEM is about. This initiative gives our citizens the power to choose the vision for our future. Having a full-time, directly elected mayor gives us a voice. Just imagine what we can do with that voice.

Look around you. Look at your neighbors. Think about who lives a few blocks over, and a few blocks over from there. Is that person someone who represents your interests in city hall? Is that person someone who respects council members who aren't accountable, don't represent their constituents, and resist efforts to collaborate with community members? It's time for a change.

The best thing about our city government, and what most people don't understand, is that our council members, from different corners of the city, come together from all ethnic, social and economic back-grounds to work for the betterment of the entire city. This includes hiring, directing and evaluating the work of the city manager.

As a council member, I received some of my best ideas from talking to residents, taking their ideas to our council committees and working out the details. Once approved by a majority of council, we instructed the city manager to get the job done with the knowledge and expertise of city staff.

Our city government is not perfect, but it is perfect for our community. We benefit from having a professional city manager who does not have to be concerned about running a campaign every four years, or accepting campaign contributions from people who might one day look to do business with the city. We benefit from having stability in city hall that is not jeopardized every time there is an election for mayor.

We benefit from not having to deal with politically motivated hirings that come with any elected official who rewards supporters after a victory. Not to mention the possible need for a transition team and chief of staff. It is ironic that members of Citizens for an Elected Mayor took issue with what they deemed a questionable donation made to Cleveland Heights Citizens for Good Government. This is the same type of contribution issues and questions that will plague an elected mayor but will never be an issue with a city manager. Please vote NO on changing our government to an elected mayor.

Jimmie Hicks Jr. was the first African-American man to be elected to Cleveland Heights City Council.

Support for elected-mayor charter initiative

Tas Nadas

I’m supporting the Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM) charter initiative because it is a citizen-led initiative powered by passion, leadership and vision from people right here in Cleveland Heights.

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**GREATEST HAPPY HOUR**

4-7pm Sun–Fri
Get yer margarita on!
Delivery with ubereats, delivermefood & doordash

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**Opinion**

**GREATEST HAPPY HOUR**

**Former union leader recalls Wiley wildcat strike**

Tom Schmida was president of the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union from 1990 to 2012. He currently serves as an advisor to me, the current president. Incidentally, Tom was also my homeroom teacher when I attended Wiley and had me in his seventh-grade social studies class. I asked Tom to write this month’s column, recalling a one-day teachers’ strike. — Ari Klein

This year marks the 40th anniversary of an unprecedented event that rocked the CH-UH school district.

In March 1979, teachers at Wiley Junior High (later Wiley Middle School) staged a wildcat strike. Surprisingly, this one-day walkout was not over typical bread-and-butter issues that divide union and management; it was instead a job action directed at the failure of district administration and the Board of Education (BOE) to effectively deal with student discipline problems.

The short story: A female student (white—not that it matters) refused the directive of a teacher (a newly hired African American—not that it matters) to leave a hallway; the student refused while swearing at the teacher. The teacher, in her attempt to escort the student to the office, was slapped by the student. The principal, who was new to the building, responded appropriately. The student was processed for suspension and recommended for expulsion. The teacher was instructed by her union to file a police report.

What happened next defied reason, and angered the teaching staff. The central office administration decided not to expel the offending student who committed the assault. Word spread quickly among the teaching staff, and that evening the union leadership in the building, Jack Quinn and I, used a phone tree to call every teacher and ask them to take a bold step by staging a walkout the next morning. Even though teacher strikes were illegal in Ohio at the time, nearly the entire teaching staff agreed to picket.

That morning, as students arrived, their teachers were on the sidewalk with homemade signs. The district administration had no choice but to cancel classes at Wiley. Throughout the day, there were numerous expressions of support for the teachers—coffee and donuts brought to the picket line by members of the community, car horns honking support.

The response from the BOE was quite different. Initially, the desire was to fire every teacher who participated. The union responded by giving notice that 600 teachers would be on the street the next school day if the board pursued that course. As it turned out, all of the participants received a written reprimand to which the union president attached a response in support of the Wiley teachers’ action.

In retrospect, while there was plenty of criticism from officialdom directed at the Wiley teachers, their job action led to the district taking a more serious approach to student discipline in the years that followed.

While assaults on teachers and school support staff are a rare occurrence in CH-UH, taking a strong action, when district leadership falters, is at times necessary to ensure the safety of our students and staff. — Tom Schmida

Ari Klein is a lifelong community member, math teacher at Cleveland Heights High School, and president of the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union.

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A message to CH’s neighbor cities

Heights of Democracy
Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg

Dear Neighbors:

Don’t worry—Cleveland Heights has not lost its collective mind. As a community, we’re struggling with how to improve our government. Some of us believe we need systemic change; others are convinced such change would be a mistake. We who favor changing the kind of government you have are optimistic. We look forward to electing a mayor as the full-time executive of our city, who will appoint a professional city administrator to manage daily operations. That mayoral administration will be checked and balanced by a legislative body, our elected city council.

Those who oppose the change to an elected mayor insist that it will bring corruption and “politics” into our city government. Meanwhile, they—a group that includes five sitting council members—sought and received a pledge of up to $15,000 in matching campaign funds from the International City/County Management Association, a Washington, D.C. lobbying organization. Yet they loudly insist direct mayoral elections will inevitably lead to political corruption, they insult and demean your duly elected mayors and, by extension, your voters. If they were less attached to the status quo, they might be able to see the advantages of having a democratically elected leader—one who is actually on the job at city hall during business hours, with a finger on the pulse of the city, and accountable to the voters every four years.

Fear of change is insidious. Opponents of mayor/council government have adopted it as their primary weapon against the citizens’ initiative for an elected mayor, which will appear on our Nov. 5 ballot. We believe these opponents will fail, and this is why: Not only did 4,000 voters sign petitions saying they wanted to vote on this issue, but since Citizens for an Elected Mayor launched that petition drive, resident conversation about and interest in city government have skyrocketed.

That is all to the good. As we outlined in a three-part Heights of Democracy series earlier this year, it was far-sighted Cleveland Heights residents who led the way when our municipal government resisted racial integration in the 1960s and 70s. More recently in 2015, outraged citizens informed the city manager and council that we would not allow our water to be privatized. Dedicated neighborhood advocates pressed for foreclosure bond legislation for five long years before council finally passed it in 2018. That same year, artists and residents fought successfully to preserve the former Coventry School building as a center for arts and education.

A significant number of Cleveland Heights residents—a majority we believe—are ready for systemic change. We’re tired of waiting for a solution to the civic disaster that is Severance Town Center. The fact that this is the location of our City Hall only aggravates an open sore. Plans for Top of the Hill—a council priority for more than five decades—may be threatened by mediocre design and sub-standard structural specs (cheaper pre-cast vs. superior poured-on-site concrete for the parking garage, for example). Although much of our housing stock is still distressed, today we have fewer inspectors than we did pre-2008.

So, neighbors, we aspire to our own version of what you already have, in Shaker Heights, South Euclid, University Heights and other area suburbs. We need, want and intend to elect a mayor who will communicate a vision, negotiate deals, and address the challenges of our aging infrastructure—while standing for election every four years.

Change is hard. Please bear with us, and wish us well.

Deborah Van Kleef and Carla Rautenberg are longtime residents of Cleveland Heights. Contact them at heightsdemocracy@gmail.com.

LAWV continued from page 1 cvv441.org

At the second forum, planned for Thursday, Oct. 10, 7-9 p.m., a panel will discuss a ballot issue proposal to change the Cleveland Heights City Charter to institute an elected mayor, supplanting current governance where city council hires a city manager. The panel will comprise representatives of two campaigns: Citizens for an Elected Mayor (CEM), which is promoting the ballot issue, and Cleveland Heights Citizens for Good Government (CHCGG), which supports maintaining the current city-manager form of government.

The ballot-issue forum, presented by the LWVG Heights Chapter, will take place in the Cleveland Heights High School cafeteria, 13203 Cedar Road.

Both forums will include formal presentations as well as responses to written questions from the audience. The events are free and open to the public. Both venues are accessible and free parking is available.

For more information, contact LWVG Heights Chapter Voter Services Coordinator Blanche Valancy, at blanche@valancy.com, or LWVG Heights Chapter Chair Maryann Barnes, at maryann@lwvgreatercleveland.org.

The League of Women Voters does not endorse candidates or support political parties. It encourages informed and active participation in government and works to influence public policy through study, education and advocacy. It has been a leader since 1920, empowering voters and defending democracy.

Blanche Valancy and Maryann Barnes are members of LWVG Heights Chapter.

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Time to fix the voucher problem

Susie Kaeser

In his 2003 book, *Seeking Common Ground*, Public Schools in a Diverse Society, education historian David Tyack observed that "government requires environmental impact statements for construction projects, but not student and teacher impact reports for educational reforms." If only Ohio’s policymakers had done an impact study of their voucher laws.

Vouchers are eroding, rather than improving, education available to children of color and those who are enrolled in high-poverty school districts in Ohio. The use of public funds to pay for private schools is deducted from state aid to local school districts, often taking funds away from public school students. EdChoice vouchers are triggered primarily by low test scores. Last year they were available in 39 districts in Ohio, and seven in our county. This year 138 districts are affected, including 10 in Cuyahoga County. Two special education voucher programs are available in all districts and are also funded by the deduction method.

The legislature sets the value of each kind of voucher. EdChoice costs $4,650 per elementary school student and $6,700 per high school student. Autism grants are worth $27,000 per student, and grants through the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship Program range from $7,500 to $27,000, depending on the diagnosis. Voucher payments are deducted from the state aid that is allocated to the school district where each voucher recipient lives. Voucher students are guaranteed that amount, and public school students get what is left.

This year, the Cleveland Heights-University Heights public schools will transfer $9.9 million in state aid to private schools for 1,473 voucher students. They constitute 21 percent of the students who must share in the state aid, but take 46 percent of the available funds. Five years ago, voucherers used only 7 percent of the funds. The growth rate is unsustainable!

Vouchers are particularly harmful to public schools that serve poor children, where the need for adequate funding and the likelihood of low test scores is the highest. Vouchers also increase funding inequality among districts and can increase reliance on local property taxes or prompt cuts in educational programs. Neither option is good for children nor the communities that public schools serve. CH-UH is one of the hardest hit districts in the state and this year the situation has gone too far. It’s time to examine the impact and repair the damage.

I looked at last year’s data for the seven EdChoice districts in Cuyahoga County. Three variables conspire to make the Heights situation unusual among our neighbors. Ours is a high-poverty district, receives less state aid than is required to fund vouchers of any amount, and has many families for whom religious education is an obligation. This translates into the largest number of EdChoice and special education voucher voters of any local district.

An impact analysis might have shown some critical flaws in the voucher programs that have led to their lopsided and untenable impact. Lawmakers did not address how to fairly distribute both the opportunity and burden of vouchers across the state. Second, they did not consider how the deduction method of funding would affect adequacy or equity, core objectives for fair state funding. Third, they ignored that their policy would discriminate against children in high-poverty districts. I wonder why they thought taking resources away from poor children would improve their schools.

Vouchers are part of the market approach to change. Competition is supposed to drive improvement. Experience shows that vouchers don’t cause consumers to shop around for the best education value. Rather, they help people who care deeply about educating their children in a religious environment and effectively diminish the capacity of public schools to serve the common good.

The experiment is over. It’s time to face the consequences and mitigate the impact.

Susie Kaeser is a 40-year resident of Cleveland Heights and the former director of Reaching Heights. She is active in the Heights Coalition for Public Education and the League of Women Voters.

StephenS continued from page 1

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Heights Observer September 1, 2019

8 www.heightsobserver.org
City seeks nominations for UH Civic Awards

Mike Cook

For years, University Heights was known as “The City of Beautiful Homes.” While houses in University Heights are still beautiful, the city is now focused on honoring the beautiful people who live inside those homes.

After a decade-long hiatus, the University Heights Civic Awards returned last year, and will once again be an annual event, honoring the people who make University Heights a great place in which to live, work, and raise a family.

If you know someone who is deserving of a Good Neighbor award, e-mail UH City Hall staff at info@universityheights.com. Awards will also be given to Citizen of the Year, Volunteer of the Year, and city Employee of the Year.

The deadline for nominations is Friday, Oct. 4, at 4:30 p.m.

The 2019 University Heights Civic Awards event will take place on Nov. 13, at 6:30 p.m., at the Jardine Room on the campus of John Carroll University.

Mike Cook is the communications and civic engagement coordinator for University Heights.

Registration is open for inaugural UH 5K

Mike Cook

The inaugural University Heights City Beautiful 5K Run is planned for Sunday, Sept. 22, with a start time of 9 a.m. Race proceeds will benefit the City Beautiful Community Investment Corporation. The course starts at Walter Stinson Community Park, and goes through “Logoville”—the streets that form the letter “U” inside an “H,” that inspired the new University Heights logo.

5K awards will be given to the overall female and male runners, and the top three runners in seven age groups. All race participants will receive a T-shirt and post-race refreshments.

SUPPORT continued from page 5

on the Nov. 5 ballot will bring that change.

I deeply appreciated the Aug. 1 Heights of Democracy column from Deborah Van Klief and Carla Rautenberg. The history of the city-manager form of government was awesome to read, and knowing that the structure rose in popularity because wealthy elites and leaders wanted to hold on to every last ounce of control and power they had in the 19th century makes me even more skeptical of the opposition to the initiative on the ballot.

It’s time to trust the residents of Cleveland Heights. Trust them to choose the next mayor. Trust them to identify the vision that will take our city to the next level.

Trust them to choose city council members who will do the vital work to make that vision a reality.

And trust them to put our city’s, our community’s, and our neighbors’ best interests first.

Tas Nadas is a resident of Cleveland Heights.

Advertise in the Observer
Eric Silverman

After reading opinions in the Heights Observer in defense of a city-manager system, I am confused. We need to maintain the status quo because the residents of Cleveland Heights are easily persuaded sheep apt to fall under a Tammany Hall style of corruption, which will lead us on a path of ruin? But these same voters are smart enough to elect a council that is a paragon of pure virtue?

I’ve been very much on the fence council that is a paragon of pure virtue? I’ve been very much on the fence the same voters are smart enough to elect a council not responding to my inquiries or answering my questions was due to animosity toward me, but it would appear that contempt for members of the public and the inability to respond to correspondence applies to ANYONE who does not support them and their actions without question. The only positive to their behavior, while it is reminiscent of the occupant of the Oval Office, is that they do have a better vocabulary—no one has called TOH “beautiful.”

The city manager form of government worked well for the first 50 years of Cleveland Heights, as it went from a “borderland” of farms and country estates to a built-out (former) streetcar suburb. For the next 25 years, this system coasted with a risk-adverse, status quo mentality of small, incremental changes, whose only concern was to avoid the disinvestment and decline that befell East Cleveland.

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For the last 25 years this system has not worked. A council operating from a sense of noble oblique has been unable to help business districts weather the rise of big-box retail, and now the rise of e-commerce; has displayed veneer support for the public schools; has shown consistent ineptitude in infill development projects; and, 10 years after the Great Recession, is only beginning to take the smallest of steps in regard to systemic housing renovation efforts—25 years after it should have. But these same voters are smart enough to elect a council not responding to my inquiries or answering my questions was due to animosity toward me, but it would appear that contempt for members of the public and the inability to respond to correspondence applies to ANYONE who does not support them and their actions without question. The only positive to their behavior, while it is reminiscent of the occupant of the Oval Office, is that they do have a better vocabulary—no one has called TOH “beautiful.”

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I don’t know if an elected mayor can bring the change we need, but I do know that doubling down on the soul-crushing mediocrity we currently have will not get us to where we can and should be.

Cleveland Heights resident Eric J. Silverman was a member of the CH-UH Board of Education, 1993–2002 and 2014–18, and a member of Heights Library Board of Directors, 2003–09.

Get all the facts before you decide

Don McBride

As the Committee for an Elected Mayor (CEM) steps up its campaign for passage of its charter initiative, I urge everyone to look closely at what [supporters] have written and what they are saying. I have attended CEM public meetings and have read the complete text of the proposed charter amendment on CEM’s website. To put it in the kindest way possible, I have found many inconsistencies.

During public meetings, members of CEM claimed that Cleveland Heights needs a full-time, directly elected mayor to be fully focused on the needs of the city. But CEM’s proposal specifically permits outside employment for the mayor. CEM members also said the mayor should be at city hall full time to be available to respond immediately to resident requests, and also spend 50 percent of his/her time on economic development.

Currently, the city manager hires and evaluates city employees. The city manager, in turn, is accountable to city council. A mayor’s hiring and firing decisions will not be subject to council oversight. That’s why too much power to entrust to one person in Cleveland Heights. It opens the door to city departments being led by the politically connected, rather than professionally qualified administrators. The risk is that a strong mayor may be more beholden to his or her donors than to residents. Political power and campaign contributions may well trump our interests. We will have only one opportunity every four years to replace a mayor. Today we can replace half our council every two years.

Not mentioned by CEM: a strong mayor, unlike city council, is not
The city's budget supports a mayor understanding that such arrangements It permits "limited teaching, consulting protection in the city's manager's restated
bers have agreed not to run for mayor. CEM mem-
not meet with, endorse, discuss, or advo-
single officeholder. We have not and will
structure for Cleveland Heights, not a
CEM welcomes any candidate.

CEM committee members and
canvassed locations in every corner of the
-based. CEM committee members and
vice manager—ample to support both
manager, and $94,030 to $150,522 for the
by council. Council sets salaries, which
ager—with the mayor as an elected execu-
revised an ethics provision, decided a

Lakewood's charter, provides a limitation
or general law." The clause, similar to
ing out the duties assigned by this charter

CEM and the charter initiative on the
sider the facts and clear up misinformation
Michael Bennett
30-year resident of Cleve-
eclected mayors are the overwhelming
weight of local government, who
in the current charter. Typically, when an

CEM thanks the CRC for its work.
But citizens can disagree with its 11-2
vote (with aabsent) to retain the cur-
ent government structure. Even council
discussed with some CRC recommen-
dations. For example, it substantially revisions an election provision, decided a
vacated council seat could remain open for
50 days instead of 90, and restored "mayor" as a council president title.

Cleveland Heights needs a change in
type of leadership. CRC and council
see that as a change in the manager's job
from "chief administrative officer" to "chief executive officer" with additional duties.

CEM prefers that the strong ex-
ecutive leader of local government, who
will represent us across a region where
elected mayors are the overwhelming
majority, be a mayor directly elected by
and accountable to all Cleveland Heights
citizens.

Michael Bennett, a 30-year resident of Clevel-
land Heights, is secretary of Citizens for an
Elected Mayor.

was a city manager with the vision and
leadership to ask: Where do our sanita-
trucks while we wallow in deciding (years
of dollars on rehabilitating old sanitation
shing the aesthetic appeal of our city.
Attracting vermin and significantly dimin-
strewn with garbage each collection day,
mayor was the overwhelming majority, be a mayor directly elected by
and accountable to all Cleveland Heights
citizens.

Jessica Cohen serves as chair of the Cleve-
land Heights Planning Commission and
was vice chair of the CRC. A law-school
was vice chair of the CRC. A law-school

Citing the mayor is the job of all vot-
ers—not four of seven council members
whom I concluded that CH Citizens for an
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Cleveland Heights City Council

Meeting highlights

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but this was the right decision in the interest of comity. Senen said he thinks voters should have a chance to decide on this issue and that critics are of the system, not of individuals occupying positions. Cobb stated that the decision on the CRC, with no idea he would ever be a council member, and he voted to keep the system. He said he will vote to do what is right, regardless of personal political consequences, and that he is committed to voters’ right to decide. Some people have alleged that he has been “bullied,” but he asserted he has only been strongly bullied. He desires a clear choice, with no confusion and will respect the outcome.

Initiative petition

The resolution to place the citizens’ initiative petition for the direct election of a mayor on the November ballot passed unanimously.

Seren said he agrees with the placement of the elected mayor issue on the ballot at this time, and so voted for the resolution. Cobb noted that this change is a vast improvement over previous versions.

Ungar said he favors the current form of government but will respect the decision of the voters.

DW Observer: Blanche Valancy.

Look for earlier, and often expanded, postings of meeting summaries online at www.highlightsobserver.org. Much of the information here is a compilation of public comments and selected highlights of public meetings and official statements of the LWV, the Charter Review Commission, and the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland. This disclaimer must accompany any republication of these reports.

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Photography: Bob Trilk
Design: Maryanne Hill Design

Cedar Uit continued from page 1

“something more reflective of the sophistication of Cleveland Heights. Diversity. Authenticity. A video with real people.” Huffman gave him “the autonomy and space for volunteers to create something special,” said Stewart. “And that’s what we did.”

Stewart credits Huffman with the casting. Everyone in the video is an unpaid volunteer. Huffman asked friends Lisa Pasquaile and Tim Polak to star as the couple who buys the tickets. Three years later, when Polak decided to propose to Pasquaile, Polak rented the same theater and played the trailer, with new video edited onto the end showing him walking out of the theater. When the lights came up, Polak walked in with the ring, and presented it to his future bride (they still haven’t set a date) in front of family and friends, including Huffman.

Huffman recruited Bill and Rose D’Ambrosi as the couple looking for the exit. Bill, now 95, served as a Seabees in World War II and helped build the runway in the Mariana Islands that launched the Enola Gay on its mission to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. He and Rose, 92, are legendary volunteers in the film and theater community, with 37 years at Playhouse Square, and 20 at Cain Park. They also usher at Dobama and Cleveland Public theaters. “Everyone we usher with says, ‘We see you in the theater!’” said Bill, adding that, when they work call at the Cleveland International Film Festival, “The real theatergoers know us.” Even if you’re not a theatergoer, you still might recognize Bill if you ever had your car repaired at the Cedar Taylor Garage in Cleveland Heights, which he owned until 1995.

The shoot, on April 17, 2014, took about six hours. Most of the extras were recruited from Cleveland’s Marquee Rewards Card members.

Both Stewart and Huffman said everything went pretty smoothly, but both remember having a hard time picking the music. “I took them through about 10 different songs,” said Stewart. Huffman said his colleagues liked an upbeat cat with a guitar solo, but he worried, “Everyone will be doing an air guitar solo, making fun of it.” Wanting something that would wear well after many viewings, “something that was innocuous, that you would rarely remember,” Huffman chose a less distinctive song. Five years later, Stewart agrees, saying, “David knew something I didn’t.”

Stewart said he called Huffman to ask Cleveland Cinemas wants to make a new trailer. Huffman told Stewart, the company has no plans to make a change. Stewart is OK with that. He said nothing pleases him more than to go to the movies and see his boyhood home and see something he created on the big screen. “I have an enormous sense of pride,” Stewart said. “It’s indescribable. If I’m sitting next to a stranger, I tap him on the shoulder and say, ‘I did that.’”

Fred D’Ambrosi has been an award-winning journalist for 40 years, mostly as a TV news director in Cleveland, D.C., San Diego and Milwaukee. He enjoys living in Cleveland Heights since 2015.
Noble Neighbors to host election forums

Brenda H. May

Noble Neighbors will host two election forums this fall, at Noble Road Presbyterian Church, 2780 Noble Road. The first, on Wednesday, Sept. 25, will feature candidates for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education and Cleveland Heights City Council. The second, on Wednesday, Oct. 2, will focus on proposed changes to Cleveland Heights’ form of government. Each forum will begin at 7 p.m.

Noble Neighbors forums are characterized by a few unique components. The audience is asked to agree to a social contract, a common expectation of one another intended to make the evening more productive. Audience members agree to refrain from responding to the candidates or the issue representatives throughout the presentations. No one applauds or makes any gesture or vocalization, either in support or disapproval of a candidate or representative’s position. Past audience members have observed that this has allowed them to listen more easily, without distraction.

Candidates and issue representatives are sent questions two weeks in advance. Noble Neighbors is currently accepting suggested questions, which will help forum organizers settle on the most relevant questions. Suggestions may be submitted to nobleneighbors@gmail.com by Sept. 9.

While every candidacy and issue affects everyone in the school district or city, Noble Neighbors asks that candidates and issue representatives craft their responses to address the particular concerns of neighborhoods along Noble Road. Participants will have a chance to submit additional questions at the forums.

Parking will be available in the church’s lot, across the street at Noble and Navahoe roads. The Kirkwood door of the church has a barrier-free entry and a chairlift to the upper-floor meeting space. A free-will offering will be taken at each forum to defray the costs of the host site.

More information on the Noble forums can be found at www.nobleneighbor.org. Voters will have additional opportunities to hear from candidates and issue representatives at forums sponsored by the Heights Chapter of the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland. For information on those forums, visit www.lwvgreatercleveland.org.

Brenda H. May is one of the leaders of Noble Neighbors.

First CH GardenWalk a success despite heat

The gardens included one with an adult tree house, and there were many with wonderful water features, and ponds with enormous koi. Others showcased beautiful perennial flower beds and several Japanese-inspired gardens. Old friends recon- nected, and neighbors met neighbors. The walk proved to be a great community-building event as well as an inspiration to all who enjoyed the beauty of the landscaping.

Tom Gibson, Elsa Johnson and Madeline Macklin worked with Cleveland Heights High School students to create a series of 10 pol- linator pocket gardens on Langton Road. For many people who visited them, it was the first time they had been in that neighborhood.

CH’s GardenWalk will be repeated in 2020, on July 18 and 19.

Jan Kious, resident of Cleveland Heights since 1973, founded and organized the Cleveland Heights Garden Walk.

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MaryLouMcHenry@HowardHanna.com
subject to state public meetings laws. This invites secrecy, which does not foster confidence in our city government.

Top of the Hill (a major component of CH’s master plan development objectives) has been the subject of dozens of public meetings with countless hours of resident comment, much of which improved the plan. Ironically, many of the folks who are disappointed about some aspect of Top of the Hill are fooling themselves thinking a strong mayor would be more accountable to their wishes. They don’t realize that strong-mayor favored development projects could be sped to completion with far less input than residents have had on Top of the Hill under our current council-manager structure. Again, this is way too much power to entrust to one person in Cleveland Heights. Not mentioned in CEM’s online summary is that, if passed, the proposal will add judicial powers to the mayor’s office. Does the CEM want a Mayor’s Court in Cleveland Heights as well as our existing municipal court? Or, is CEM’s hope to replace the municipal court and its elected judge, giving the mayor even more power?

Again, I urge everyone to look at ALL the facts and consider ALL the implications before making a decision. I believe we are more likely to thrive as a community with accountable, professional administration led by a democratically elected council.

Don McBride has lived in Cleveland Heights for close to 40 years, and in the Noble neighborhood for 35 of them. He is a member of the Noble Corridor Planning Project Steering Committee.

What about ethics?

Jack Newman

A strong-mayor system of government in Cleveland Heights would concentrate power in a single politically elected ruler. The proposal on this November’s ballot to do that lacks a modern ethics provision putting boundaries on how this power can be exercised.

Currently, city council is the sole legislative “authority, with substantial sway over the structure and powers of the city’s administrative units. Ex- ecutive authority is in the hands of a professional city manager educated for the task—an all-Will city employee, who is hired, monitored and, when called for, removed by council. This distribution of governing authority is completely upended by the strong-mayor initiative.

Let’s examine what happens if voters approve the proposal: The professional executive goes by the way-side. The powers of the replacement executive, the strong mayor, would be exercised behind the protection of a four-year term, with no term limits and no intra-term removal mechanism other than a potentially cumbersome, divisive, and generally ineffective voter-recall process. This mayor would have sole “control over all departments and divisions” of the city, as well as certain “legislative powers,” namely:

• Almost complete discretionary power of political appointment and removal, except four positions whose hiring (but not removal) must be confirmed by council.
• Authority to introduce ordinances and resolutions, though not a member of council.
• Power to veto ordinances and resolutions enacted by council, including, as to appropriations, the right to pick and choose which priorities will actually be funded or not.
• Sole power to create government departments, combine them, abolish them, and prescribe the functions and duties of each. This power would be taken away from council.
• In conjunction with a mayor-designated administrator, definitive authority as gatekeeper for any member of council to have business interaction with any city employee (other than for “inquiry”).

The strong-mayor ballot measure would give power in one individual, including power previously exercised by council. It would remove from council the authority to hire or contract with others for assistance in its own operations. So there would be not only a new, non-professional political leader with concentrated power, but also a weakened council with fewer re- sources available for directing a “check” or “balance” on the strong mayor. Take a moment to reflect on this.

With the new concentration of power, unprecedented in this city, one would think it critical to include a healthy, modern, updated ethics provision as part of the package. And all the more so when, as here, the new, powerful strong mayor would serve as, and be paid as, a “full-time” city em- ployee. Yet in the proposal, the strong mayor is explicitly authorized to have separate employment or other work. Incredibly this proposal has no such ethics provision. Why not?

Do proponents prefer that the new strong mayor not labor under such pesky restraints? Or perhaps they overlooked this in their zeal to upend and dramatically change our tradition of seven directly elected representatives, with equal voices, forming a council that employs a professional executive to direct and oversee city services and development based on expertise and experience, rather than political aspira- tions and personal agendas.

The strong-mayor proponents had squarely in front of them the substantial record developed by the Charter Review Commission on ethics provisions in city charters, together with a verbatim draft of a modern provision. Their rejection of that, or an equivalent ethics clause, or at best their woolen inattention to it, is reason enough to reject the seismic shift in power they advocate.

Jack Newman, a retired lawyer, is former chair of the Charter Review Commission and a co-chair of Cleveland Heights Citizens for Good Government, a political action committee formed to inform voters about the benefits of the council-manager form of government ahead of the elected-mayor charter amendment on the Nov. 5 ballot.

ABORTION continued from page 4

A Fall Celebration of Music featuring the beautiful organs of St. Paul’s

All Events Free — Please Join Us!

Friday, October 4, 7:30 p.m. —
Recital: Jay Peterson (Chicago), organ; assisted by Madelyn Hasebein, soprano; works by J.S. Bach, G. Boeheim, M. Reger, H. Hinderith and A. Heiller

Saturday, October 5, 2 p.m. —
Recital: Christa Rakich (Oberlin/Boston); works by P. Hinderith, J.S. Bach and A. Heiller

Friday, October 11, 7:30 p.m. —
Organ Plus

Erik Suter (Wash., D.C.); works by M. Duruflé, J.S. Bach and A. Heiller

Saturday, October 12, 4 p.m. —
Organ Music of the Seventeenth Century; Steven Flank (Oberlin/St. Paul’s); works by S. Scheidt, G. Frescobaldi, D. Buxtehude and L. Couperin

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Mallory McMaster is president and CEO of The Fairmount Group, a Cleveland Heights-based communications firm that specializes in social justice and abortion communications. McMaster is a We Testify abortion storyteller. (Premter is a former client of The Fairmount Group, prior to McMaster buying the communications firm. McMaster is a former employee of Premter; this opinion is written without Premter's knowledge or input.)
FutureHeights’ Cedarbrook Society revitalizes Cedar Lee Mini-Park

Sruti Basu

The Cedarbrook Society, a group of five Heights High students, worked with artist Tom Masaveg this summer to help FutureHeights enliven the Cedar Lee Mini-Park, a 7,500 square foot site located between Boss Dog Brewing Company and Heights Arts in the Cedar Lee Business District.

For six weeks, the students, with Masaveg’s guidance, served as ambassadors for the space, welcoming visitors and guests, planting flowers, weeding the flower beds and creating signage. Masaveg installed a mural of white trees on the side of the Cedar Lee Theatre building and worked with the students to create augmented reality artwork to interact with the mural via smart phone technology. With help from Heights Libraries, he installed a Little Free Library. He also gathered additional input on future use of the space following a study of the business district it commissioned in 2018. The study recognized the site’s potential to become a vibrant community space. The Cedarbrook Society student ambassador project was a direct outcome of the organization’s desire to include the voices of young people in the planning process.

The project was supported by the residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. Other aspects of the improvements made this summer, such as the café tables and chairs that were installed throughout the perimeter of the site, were funded through donations to the FutureHeights Cedar Lee Mini-Park Fund.

On Aug. 5, the project steering committee issued an RFP to architecture and design firms interested in illustrating the community’s vision for the site through a final design. Applications are due Sept. 15, and the organization expects to begin implementation in spring 2020.

FutureHeights representatives will demonstrate how to use a smart phone to activate the augmented reality mural at the 2019 Heights Music Hop on Saturday, Sept. 14. Learn more about the project by visiting www.futureheights.org, liking the FutureHeights Facebook page, or following @futureheights on Instagram.

Sruti Basu is the director of community building programs at FutureHeights.

42nd Annual Heights Heritage Home & Garden Tour
presented by: Heights Community Congress

Sunday, September 15, 2019 - Noon to 6:00 pm
Tickets: $20.00 - After Labor Day all tickets are $25.00
Saturday Preview Party - September 14, 2019 - 6:00 pm
For your special invitation call the BCF Office at: 216-321-6775
See group discounts or to order tickets on-line visit: www.HeightsCongress.org

Tickets can also be purchased at any of the following Tour Sponsor locations:
Appletree Books  •  Cedar-Fairmount  •  Bremer’s on the Heights  •  Cedar-Taylor
Benn Hardware  •  Lyndhurst  •  Heimer’s  •  South Green  •  The Stone Oven  •  Lee Road
Tommy’s Restaurant  •  Coventry Village  •  Zazura’s Marketplace  •  Lee Road

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Visit the new café on Coventry

Our Macarons are famous in New York, but you’ll love our other Café favorites, too!

European, French & Artisan Pastries  •  Donuts  •  Ice cream  •  Soups  •  Import Coffee  •  Sandwiches and more
Certified Kosher Products  •  Vegan and Gluten-Free options for those with food sensitivities

Now open in Cleveland at 1767 Coventry Road, Cleveland Heights

Visit the new café on Coventry
Registration is open for FH 2020 Neighborhood Leadership Workshop Series

Since 2015, 60 CH residents have completed the workshop series. Some participate because they are interested in learning more about the city, want to meet their neighbors and other civically-minded people, or have a specific neighborhood project they want to complete. Many program graduates go on to join nonprofit boards, or city committees or commissions. Some apply to receive funding for a project through FutureHeights’ Neighborhood Mini-Grants Program, which has biannual deadlines. (The fall mini-grants deadline is Sunday, Sept. 15.)

“I found the workshops to be extremely helpful in giving me a space to work out ideas I had, and shape them with the help of other people with similar interest in working for Cleveland Heights,” said Michael Hagelsfeld, a 2018 participant. “The speakers were interesting, and helped give different perspectives I could apply to my particular situation. Working with other people who also had a drive and love for Cleveland Heights inspired me, in addition to giving me ideas I could apply to my concept, and he able to help them with theirs.”

Donna Johnson, a 2019 participant, said that participating in the program “was the perfect impetus to help me rally and engage my neighbors!”

The program takes an assets-based community development approach, which means that it seeks to build upon a neighborhood’s strengths. It is funded by the city of Cleveland Heights through a Community Development Block Grant and by individual contributions to FutureHeights.

In 2020, the series will take place on Sunday afternoons, 3–6 p.m., on Jan. 26, Feb. 9, Feb. 23, March 8, March 22, and April 5 at FutureHeights’ offices at Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Campus, 2843 Washington Blvd.

Topics are: Individual Leadership; Asset Based Community Development; Planning Your Project; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Policy & Advocacy, Learning the History of Cleveland Heights and Your Neighborhood; Leveraging Community Resources; and Building Community. All Cleveland Heights residents are encouraged to apply to participate. Free childcare is provided during sessions.

The application deadline is 5 p.m., Jan. 17. The simple, two-page application can be found at www.futureheights.org/programs/community-building-programs. For more information, call 216-320-1423 or email sbasu@futureheights.org.

Sruti Basu is the director of community-building programs at FutureHeights.

LEI offers evening programs for teens

Adam James Zahren

The Coventry neighborhood bustles at night, and not just for adults. Lake Erie Ink (LEI), the nonprofit writing space for youth, provides a place where teens can hang out and explore their creativity in a variety of ways.

LEI has created various workshops for teens in grades 6–12 to help them express their unique visions and develop their literary style and form. These workshops, affectionately called Evening Ink, offer something for everyone.

The Teen Writers’ Workshop meets on Tuesday nights. Participants write, express themselves, and encourage one another in their literary pursuits. The workshop meets 6:30–8 p.m.

Another offering is Stage Write—a comedy club for teens that meets on Wednesdays, 6:30–8 p.m. Teens gather to find comic relief through stand-up comedy and sketch writing.

In addition, the teen editorial board is set to publish its fourth annual anthology of teen literary works. This year’s theme is Fundamental Elements. (Think fire, water, wind, and earth.) Teens interested in reading and compiling the publication are invited to join the teen editorial board. The board meets on select Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.

All Evening Ink programs take place at LEI’s offices at Coventry P.E.A.C.E. campus, 2843 Washington Blvd., and begin the week of Sept. 3.

Teens who have a poem in their notebook, a song in their heart, or a joke in their pocket are invited to share these (and other special talents) at LEI’s Teen Open Mic nights. Everyone is welcome.

For more information about these and other LEI programs, visit www.lakeerieink.org.

Adam James Zahren holds an English degree with an emphasis in creative writing from Allegheny College, and coordinates LEI’s Ink Spot program for third- to sixth-graders.
This land is your land

National Public Lands Day has been celebrated on the fourth Saturday of September for the past 25 years as a day of volunteerism on which people give back to the environment. This year Lower Shaker Lake will be the site of one of those volunteer opportunities on Saturday, Sept. 28, from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m.

The lake has actually been a volunteer site most Sunday mornings since May 2018. Much of the vegetation around it is a monoculture of aggressive non-native plant species.

Friends of Lower Lake, a volunteer project of the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership, has been removing and replacing invasive plants with native trees, shrubs, flowers, ferns and sedges. Most of the work, supervised by experienced volunteers, occurs at the Canoe Club site behind the wood chip pile on South Park Boulevard.

The 1.5 acre public parkland at the man-made lake has 300-year-old oak trees and groomed paths for walkers, runners, birders, bicyclists and botanists. It’s free and open to the public.

Adjacent to the lake, the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes is a 20-acre nonprofit educational nature preserve that also relies on volunteers under the expert oversight of Natural Resources Specialist Nick Mikash. Volunteers are important to both organizations, because resources for urban parks are often scarce. Mikash said, the more volunteers, the more invasive species removed. “This land is your land!” said Mikash. “Join the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes, the Doan Brook Watershed Partnership, and Friends of Lower Lake to restore a local ecosystem in your own backyard.”

The National Environmental Education Foundation reported that last year 113,055 volunteers worked 452,220 volunteer hours at 1,176 sites across the country on National Public Lands Day.

Volunteering is free but the organizations ask that you register so they can plan. Contact Kristina Arthur, volunteer coordinator at the Nature Center, at arthur@shakeralakes.org, or 216-321-5935. Families with school-age children or older, teens, and groups are welcome.

Work will be done at the dam on Brook Road at the west end of the lake. Parking is available on South Park Boulevard and on the surrounding side streets. Please bring a labeled reusable water bottle. Gloves and tools will be provided.

Peggy Spaeth is co-chair of Friends of Lower Lake with John Barber. Her personal goal is to have 100 volunteers at Lower Lake for National Public Lands Day.
Heights Heritage Home & Garden Tour is Sept. 15

Susan Roberts

The 42nd annual Home & Garden Tour, presented by Heights Community Congress (HCC), will be held on Sunday, Sept. 15, from noon to 6 p.m. This year’s theme is Timeless Elegance, and the tour will feature homes and gardens in Cleveland Heights’ historic Coventry and Fairmount neighborhoods.

The five homes on the tour, two of which have gardens, were all designed and built in the early 20th century, and are a testament to the timelessness of quality workmanship. Their elegance is displayed in ornate carved woodwork, beautiful molding and plaster friezes, hand-wrought ironwork, and expert tile work, among the many special features. There are also three stand-alone gardens to visit on the tour. Refreshments will be available at Fairmount Presbyterian Church from 2 to 4 p.m.

This year’s featured homes comprise an English manor house with an enivable collection of vinyl records and CDs, and a lush border garden; a “sister” house next door with contemporary furnishings, and a renovated kitchen with an eye-catching green marble table; a bright and spacious Tudor house that combines contemporary, art nouveau, and Craftsman-style furnishings with an intriguing mix of contemporary, and sometimes offbeat, artwork; a classic medieval-style house, owned by a self-described Anglophile, and notable for its carved woodwork and motifs, and its clay-tiled roof; and an English cottage and garden, first owned by a Cleveland toymaker and designed to appear larger than its actual size.

Then, there are the gardens: a playful, colorful space integrating many found objects of glass, wood and iron carefully placed by its imaginative owner; a garden of plants, birdhouses and feeders, as well as habitats for pollinators, such as bees and butterflies; and a backyard garden that features a flowery border of annuals and perennials around a travertine patio.

The traditional preview party is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 14, in Tucker Hall at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church. A limited number of tour sponsorships and preview party tickets may still be available by calling HCC at 216-341-6775 before Friday, Sept. 6.

Tickets for the Sunday tour can be purchased online at www.heightscongress.org, or in person at Appletree Books, Bremec’s on the Heights, Dunn Hardware, Heinen’s at South Green Road, Stone Oven on Lee Road, Tommy’s restaurant, and Zagara’s Marketplace. The cost of tour-only tickets is $20 per person through Labor Day, and $25 thereafter, including the day of the tour.

Susan Roberts led the home search for Heights Community Congress’ Tour Planning Committee this year.

CH Senior Center News

Amy Jenkins

On Tuesday, Sept. 10, 11 a.m., at the Cleveland Heights Senior Activity Center (SAC), Dennis Sutcliffe and Lost Cleveland Memories will present “Meet Me at Gate A – Cleveland Municipal stadium in the 1950s.” This free program will explore the vision for a city-owned venue that would draw thousands of people downtown for myriad events, including boxing, college and high school football, track and soccer, operas, and community celebrations with baseball as the lynchpin. It was expected that the stadium would bolster the local economy, increase tax revenues, and elevate Cleveland’s national status. But there was a problem—the Cleveland Indians didn’t want to play there.

On Tuesday, Sept. 17, 11 a.m., SAC’s partnership with University Circle’s distance-learning program continues with a lecture on “Healing Plants” from the Royal Botanical Gardens. After an exploration of plants used in traditional healing, that also provide inspiration for botanicals, the program will also consider their sustainability and impact on biodiversity.

The second part of the “Healing Plants” program will take place on Tuesday, Sept. 24, when participants will travel to Holden Arboretum for the “Healing Plants” program will take place on Tuesday, Sept. 24, when participants will travel to Holden Arboretum for a special tram tour of Holden’s forest and gardens. The tour will point out highlights of the season throughout the grounds, and there will be ample time for personal wandering or explorations of the Murch Canopy Walk or the Emergent Tower. Those who don’t want to explore will be treated to a talk about Holden’s rare book collection. Advance registration and payment for the “Healing Plants” program is required, as trip seating is limited. The fee is $20 for the Sept. 17 lecture and Sept. 24 trip; $5 for the lecture only.

The Cleveland Heights SAC, located in the CH Community Center at Monticello Blvd., offers a variety of programs for those 60 and older. A complete schedule of programs is published in the community center’s newsletter, available online at www.chparks.com. SAC membership is $5 for Cleveland Heights residents. To sign up, bring a recent piece of mail (such as a bill) and a photo ID.

University Heights residents who would like to join SAC must first register with Patrick Grogan-Myers, University Heights Community development coordinator, at 216-932-7805, ext. 203, or pgrogan@universityheights.com. Membership is $5 for University Heights seniors.

Amy Jenkins is supervisor at the Cleveland Heights Office on Aging and the Senior Activity Center. She can be reached at 216-932-7579 or by e-mail at ajenkins@clvhts.com.
Cleveland Heights - University Heights Board of Education

Meeting highlights

AUGUST 6, 2019

Board members present were President Jodi Sourini, Vice President James Posch, Dan Heintz, Malia Lewis and Beverly Wright. Also present were Superintendent Elizabeth Kirby and Treasurer Scott Gainer. The meeting began at 7 p.m. and ended at 7:50 p.m.

Recognitions

The board thanked Brian Williams for acting as interim superintendent, and congratulated the summer graduation class of 14 students.

Board policy approvals

The board unanimously approved the final 15 policy changes—the last of the policy changes it has worked on for the past year.

Treasurer’s five-year forecast

Treasurer Gainer presented the five-year forecast and commented on it. The EdChoice voucher program will cost the district about $4 million from 2019 to 2020. The levy that passed in November 2016 was calculated to last three years but has lasted four years.

Middle schools update

The middle schools’ construction is on time and on budget. Public open houses will be held at Monticello Middle School on Sept. 15, and at Roxboro Middle School on Sept. 22.

LWV Observer: Adele Cohn.

Look for earlier and often expanded postings of meeting summaries online at www.heightsobserver.org. See disclaimer on page 12.

MIDDLE SCHOOLS continued from page 1

upgraded building,” said Rachael Coleman, Roxboro’s principal. “Our school theme for this year is “Homecoming” because we’re coming back to the school that feels like home to us.”

“We really are lucky to have the privilege of being the first cohort of educators and students to walk these new halls,” said Jeff Johnston, Monticello’s principal. “I’m very thankful to the community for their support of this project and of our students.”

Cathan Cavanaugh is the supervisor of communications for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.
Library reaches out to non-users for Library Card Sign-Up Month

Sheryl Banks

September is National Library Card Sign-Up Month, a campaign established in 1987 by the American Library Association and the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. The campaign was designed to encourage parents and their children to sign up for library cards at the start of the school year.

In keeping with this original mission, Heights Libraries will be reaching out to kids this month, sending library card sign-up flyers home with school-aged children, and offering prizes to kids who check out a book with their new cards. The cover of the library’s fall program guide, Check Us Out, also encourages kids to get cards, proclaiming that “a library card is the most important school supply of all.”

This year, for the first time, library staff will also focus specifically on adults.

“A surprising number of adult residents don’t have library cards,” said Nancy Levin, Heights Libraries director. “We’ve compared our cardholders to the number of cardholders, and it’s clear that not everyone has a card—about 60 percent of residents have cards—so we’re heading out into the community to find those folks who don’t and see if we can get them signed up.”

Library staff will set up tables at Zagora’s Marketplace, Whole Foods, and elsewhere to talk to people about the benefits of having a library card. If someone doesn’t have one, library staff can sign them up on the spot, as long as they have a photo ID and live, work or own property in Ohio.

“It’s really important that we get out of our buildings and talk to residents,” said Isabelle Rew, the library’s community engagement associate. “It’s true that plenty of people without cards still enter our buildings and use our services—you don’t need a card to sit and read the paper or even use a computer—but we really want to reach the people who either don’t know about us or who know about us but don’t have cards.”

Staff especially want to find out why a community member may not have a card, even if they know about the library. That information could help guide the library’s outreach and communications efforts, as well as offer insight into present-day attitudes about public libraries.

“It’s possible they just don’t think we have anything they want or need,” said Rew. “And I would love to show them otherwise.”

In addition to providing free access to materials such as books, movies and music, the library buildings offer access to resources that can be essential to people’s lives, including high-speed Internet, printing and faxing, reference help, study and meeting rooms, low-cost copies, and a space to spend time in that does not require a purchase or have a time limit.

“Some people still think libraries are just about books,” said Rew. “We love books, and we have plenty, but we’re so much more.”

Sheryl Banks is the communications manager for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library System.

Cleveland Heights - University Heights Public Library Board

Meeting highlights

JULY 15, 2019

Present were Board President Chris Meemek, Vice President James Russo, and board members Annette Iwamoto, Susan Moskowitz and Vikas Turakhia. Donna Fivelax and Max Gerboc were absent.

Financial report

The board reviewed and accepted the February financial statement. Total cash balance across the operating accounts, Boxer Fund accounts, and investment accounts at the end of June was $15,025,248.60.

Service and Administrative Policies

The board approved the Service and Administrative Policies as amended for 2019. The updated policies will be posted on the library’s website. Policies relating to non-voting, photography, service animals, and meeting room guidelines are among the updates.

Lee Road chiller rental

The board approved rental of a chiller for a 12-week period, at a cost of $35,589, to maintain a comfortable air temperature in the Lee Road Branch, until the multi-an-interim unit can be repaired in the fall.

Parking lot improvements

The board authorized contracts in the amount of $11,535 for parking lot crack sealing, commercial seal-coating, and line stripping at the Lee Road, Noble Neighborhood and University Heights branches.

Summer reading programs

This year’s reading programs for children, youth and adults are up 70 percent and adult summer reading numbers are up 24 percent, with three weeks remaining in the program. New this year: day care programs and preschools can track daily reading and are eligible for a book prize at the end of the program.

Equipment for Coventry P.Z.A.C.E. Park

Soccer, kickball, frisbee, volley, badminton, football, baseball, and cones are now available to check out from the Coventry Village Branch for three hours to use in the park.

New monthly podcast

Hosted by Jessica Robinson, local history librarian, “Living in the Heights” is a monthly podcast that features interviews with local groups and individuals who have stories to share about the Heights community that are of historical interest. The podcast will also offer information on upcoming local history programs, including new additions to the Ohio Memory digital archive, and tips on researching local history. The podcast can be accessed on Google Play and the iTunes store.

Summer lunch program

Heights Libraries Summer Lunch Program, through the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, kicked off on June 3 and runs through Aug. 9. Youth service programming and projects are provided twice a week, coding and technology-related programming is provided once a week. In June, Heights Libraries served 502 lunches to 309 individual children.

Library board bylaws

The board approved the bylaws as amended for 2019. The updated policies will be posted on the library’s website.

Compressor replacement

The board approved replacing a rooftop compressor at the Washington Boulevard building (the former Coventry school) to be compatible with the building’s current HVAC system at a cost of $14,766. Tenants will pay back this cost.

Waterproofing project

Bid specifications for the Coventry Village Branch waterproofing project will be published Aug. 7 and 10 in The Plain Dealer. The board will hold a special meeting Sept. 3 to accept and award a bid.

Community survey on website

The public is encouraged to share community opinions as part of the library’s strategic planning process. A link on the library website leads to a brief survey.

Book Bike

In July, the Book Bike distributed more than 200 young adult and children’s books.

Voter registration

The library reminds all citizens to check their voter registration on the Ohio Secretary of State website.

Cleveland Heights - University Heights Public Library System.

LIBRARY NEWS
City managers are not immune to corruption

Jeanne Gordon

The August Heights Observer contained a series of opinions written by former members of the Cleveland Heights Charter Review Commission and members of the Cleveland Heights Citizens for Good Government PAC. They had headlines containing words like "risk," "conflict," "cronyism" and "politics." The authors went heavy on the scare tactics, regaling readers with examples of directly elected mayors acting badly. They claim the only way to prevent scary outcomes and bad behavior is to rely on city managers and "professionalism."

The problem with such a contention is that professionalism does not guarantee the absence of corruption, or cronyism, or conflict, or even politics. We all have read about corrupt professionals—doctors who scar Medicare, business persons who skirt regulations, attorneys who embezzle client funds—professions of all sorts are at risk of having corrupt professionals in their ranks.

In fact, corruption and cronyism can occur among city managers. A city manager in California, Robert Rizzo, received a 12-year prison sentence for a $6 million corruption scheme that nearly bankrupted the city (www.nydailynews.com/news/crime/bell-calif-city-manager-12-years-prison-1-million-corruption-scheme/article/1.275654). A Michigan city manager, Brian Kischnick, was sentenced to 30 months in prison this past January for bribery and pay-to-play scheming with city contractors (www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/oakland/2019/01/21/troy-city-manager-bribery-case/262999002/). The city manager of Opa-Locka, Fla., two city officials, and the mayor’s son were indicted on multiple corruption charges. Opa-Locka’s new city manager also came under a cloud of suspicion for corruption and was fired after nine months (www.miaminewtimes.com/news/opa-lockas-new-city-manager-accused-of-corruption-by-whistleblower-970459). In Texas, Crystal City’s city manager was sentenced to 35 years in prison for fraud, theft and bribery—a scheme that also implicated the mayor and most members of council.

Cities that have directly elected council managers and "professionalism." The problem with such a contention is that professionalism does not guarantee the absence of corruption, or cronyism, or conflict, or even politics. We all have read about corrupt professionals—doctors who scar Medicare, business persons who skirt regulations, attorneys who embezzle client funds—professions of all sorts are at risk of having corrupt professionals in their ranks.

Interestingly, while council-manager proponents assert that professionalism provides checks and balances that reduce corruption and produce better results, a University of Illinois professor determined in a 2015 study (https://indigo.uic.edu/bitstream/handle/10027/10217/438a7591585266657056.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y) that the empirical evidence is inconclusive. He did find, however, that council-manager cities experience lower voter turnout. And voters are key in demanding transparency and sunshine.

I believe that a directly elected mayor, with an appointed city administrator, provides for both professionalism and checks and balances. I believe that in a county where 55 of 57 municipalities have directly elected executive mayors, Cleveland Heights is at a disadvantage. I believe a directly elected mayor will do a better job engaging citizens and setting forth a vision by which to be judged.

I can advocate for what I believe and attempt to sway voters to my point of view without turning to "corruption, conflict, cronyism . . . oh, my" scare tactics. I can and do trust the residents of Cleveland Heights to determine the manner in which they wish to be governed—and I trust they can determine that without being frightened.

Jeanne Gordon is a member of Citizens for an Elected Mayor.
Exhibition explores ‘digital paradox’

Laura Freeman

Heights Arts kicks off its fall exhibition season with *Unshackled: The Digital Paradox*.

Matthew Hollern, professor and chair of jewelry and metals at the Cleveland Institute of Art, is the guest curator for the show, which explores the evolving role of technology in the creation of art.

“At other times the role of technology is there but it’s invisible. Sometimes a work seems like digital trickery but it is actually not. Digital work can really challenge assumptions.”

Artists in the show are George Kozm, Barry Underwood, Benitez_Vogl (Margarita Benitez and Markus Vogl), Janice Lessman-Moss, Marcus Brathwaite, Tony Ingrisano, Yaund Valdes, and Matthew Hollern. The exhibit is on view through Oct. 13.

On Thursday, Sept. 26, 7 p.m., Ekphrastacy will feature a group of invited poets who’ll perform original poems inspired by work in the *Unshackled* exhibition, along with brief artist talks. It’s a free event full of poetry, prose and artistic reflection. For a musical event, stop in to the gallery on Saturday, Sept. 7, 7 p.m., to hear No Exit open its season with new music for ensemble and cimbalom, with guest artist Chester Engleander. This is a free event with complimentary refreshments and cash bar.

In the Spotlight gallery this month is work by photographer and mixed media artist Jamie Richey. Visit Friday, Sept. 13, 6–9 p.m., for the opening reception. This show will be on view through Oct. 27.

For more information on Heights Arts community programs and events, including house concerts, gallery performances and outreach, visit www.heightsart.org.

Laurel Freeman is a marketing intern at Heights Arts.

White Gallery fall show opens Sept. 6

Robin M. Outcalt

The Nicholson B. White Gallery at St. Paul’s Church invites the public to an artists’ reception on Friday, Sept. 6, 5–7 p.m., to view work by photographer Thomas Abel, painters Patricia Ingram and Jerome T. White, and textile artist Martha Young.

Abel took the photographs in the 1950s and 70s in France, mostly in Paris, using the distinctively rich Kodachrome color film. He studied and worked in France for part of his life, and became fascinated with the architecture. His images capture a time gone by in one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Abel worked for more than 30 years in Cleveland as an architectural photographer and photographic artist. While in France, he met his wife, who shared his love of art and architecture. With the encouragement and assistance of his family, the White Gallery is thrilled to show Abel’s work.

Depicting subjects closer to home, Ingram is a much-appreciated longtime member of the St. Paul’s Church gallery committee. She has hair. To embellish the dolls, she adds beads, shells, buttons and other found items. Young began making dolls after attending a workshop by photographer Thomas Abel, painters Patricia Ingram and Jerome T. White, and textile artist Martha Young.

Wall Doll, by Martha Young.

Each doll is unique. Her early pieces depicted in his rich, expressive paintings about human experience. White is a teacher in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District, and author/illustrator of a children's book.

Young, a textile artist, uses fabrics from all over the world to create her wall dolls, showcasing materials she acquired through her extensive travels, or received as gifts. Each doll is unique. Her early pieces have eyes, but no mouths, and none have hair. To embellish the dolls, she adds beads, shells, buttons and other found items. Young began making dolls after attending a workshop by the Textile Art Alliance, of which she is a member. She is also a much-appreciated longtime member of the gallery committee at St. Paul’s.

St. Paul’s Episcopal Church is located at 2747 Fairmount Blvd. The nonprofit gallery is open weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and weekends, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Robin M. Outcalt is a committee member of the White Gallery at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Cleveland Heights.
Singing in tune—again

David Budin

I’ve noticed that when I hear groups of people singing, for instance, the “Happy Birthday” song, in restaurants and in videos, that almost everyone in the group is singing in a key that’s different than everyone else’s. And they don’t notice. Or care. That’s not the way it was when I was a kid. It was unusual when one person sang out of key.

I don’t think it’s a coincidence that I remember, and almost everyone I’ve asked who went to Cleveland Heights elementary schools from the 1930s through the ‘60s remembers, that there was a piano in every elementary school classroom, and that every teacher knew how to play it.

I attended Coventry School in the ‘50s. We did music with our individual instrument, with one of the music directors at Roosevelt Junior High.

My son’s elementary school did have an orchestra. It was made up of only fifth graders, and it met once a week, for free, on an individual instrument. Maybe none. In school talent shows, literally every time a kid or group of kids, black and white, said they had written a song, it was always a rap. There’s nothing wrong with rap, but a rap, by itself, is not a song; it’s a poem.

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Orchestrations

I’m told my son’s school orchestra. She thought the experience would be good for him, and I agreed.

I took him to see the music teacher, but he informed me right away that the orchestra was open only to fifth graders. I ignored him and told my son to take his violin out of the case and play some music.

There is a massive amount of evidence, from many studies, showing how important learning music is to learning everything else, for children and adults.

I used to mention that in the speeches I made every year, for 15 years, on behalf of the Friends of Cain Park, at Heights High’s Senior Awards Night, when I presented their arts scholarship.

And I also discussed how being in the Heights Choir had literally saved my life, and that I was sure it was the only kid to have had similar experiences. And I would say, to the administrators and board members seated behind me, “So keep these things in mind the next time a levy fails and you’re looking for something to cut.”

But it probably wasn’t totally necessary to tell them. The Heights school system seems to have come back around to understanding the value of arts education. Plus there are organizations like Reaching Heights that support and encourage and supplement music education in the schools.

And someday everyone—at least in Cleveland Heights—will sing “Happy Birthday” in tune again. There I hope for the world.

David Budin is a freelance writer for national and local publications, the former editor of Cleveland Magazine and Northern Ohio Live, an author, and a professional musician and comedian. His writing focuses on the arts and, occasionally, pop music history.