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— HAMTRAMCK'S NEWSPAPER OF RECORD —

Town Hall meeting lays it on the table, but for some the writing is on the wall

By Ian Perrotta

By now you've probably seen it on TV or heard about it from someone else, but that doesn't mean last Thursday's (Jan. 6) Town Hall meeting is old news — the reverberations can still be felt a week later.

The meeting, which was held at People's Community Services on Joseph Campau, was widely attended by residents, city personnel and other curious onlookers, as well as about a half-dozen media outlets. Organized by City Councilmember Kazi Miah and promoted by a group of residents who braved the elements to go door-to-door to spread the word, the number of assembled public easily surpassed the 165-person occupation limit of the PCS gym.

"When I ran for office I didn't promise the people anything other than that for any decision we (the council) make, I'll get the people involved," Miah said. "I felt like that with the way the situation in the city is now, we needed to have a meeting at someplace other than at City Hall and give residents a chance to be heard."

Mayor Karen Majewski started things off with a brief overview of the city's history, providing a context from which City Manager Bill Cooper could extrapolate upon further. Stating that Hamtramck's history has often been "punctuated by periods of struggle and sometimes by very public drama," she also noted that "the fate of our little city has risen

and fallen and risen again in cycles," offering examples like the Great Depression, when Hamtramck's unemployment rate was over 50 percent and the city had to issue its own currency to keep things running.

Majewski also said that underfunded police and fire pensions were a "fundamental structural deficiency that was adding to our debt and silently undermining our stability" throughout the city's history, noting that the issue continues to be a problem for both Hamtramck and the rest of the country. In 1970, this led to a \$400,000 budget shortfall and over \$31 million in debt — including \$28 million in unfunded pension obligations — which caused the Michigan Deputy Treasurer to declare, "I have never seen a city in the state of Michigan in such a mess as Hamtramck."

After touching on the hardships caused by the closing of the Dodge Main Plant, Majewski brought the story into the 21st century by mentioning the period the city was in receivership under the guidance of state-appointed Emergency Financial Manager Louis Schimmel. Recognizing that "Schimmel's measures and methods are still the subject of debate," she also stated that "he certainly instituted changes that would not have been accomplished at that time by any other means."

Ending her speech, Majewski

Continued on page 6



At last Thursday's Town Hall meeting, Hamtramck residents spoke out on the possibility of the city applying for a state loan or filing for bankruptcy to help solve the city's financial problem.



What they had to say at the Town Hall meeting

By Ian Perrotta

"I'm not willing to pay any more taxes." — Former City Councilmember Dr. Abdul Algazali, as he denounced the council and accused them of not making necessary cuts and not saving money for a rainy day.

"These are the people who run the city. You work for us." — Bill Meyer, Executive Director of the new group OneHamtramck LLC, to the council, as he motioned to those sitting in the audience.

"When I heard the request to skirt state law and request bankruptcy instead of first suggesting an emergency financial manager, honestly, I thought it was really

arrogant and I was surprised and upset about that." — A still-visibly upset Eric Burkman, community activist, as he denounced the policies of those in charge.

"The city of Hamtramck has not had a sprinkler system for about 100 years until now, and now you want us to pay more taxes?" — Former City Councilmember Kathy Kristy, on ways that the city has apparently misused discretionary money.

"I've recorded lots and lots of code violations to you and you've ignored me. You stopped returning my e-mails and I think you're liars and I don't trust that you're listening to any of us for

anything." — Ramsey Hussain, irate with the fact that he has invested his life savings in his house and the city has "crapped on it for the last five years" by allegedly failing to enforce building codes at other structures.

"We sued the city to protect the rights of the bad guys we had to lock up. There was no bathroom. There was no running water. I used to go to my locker at work and have to jump over a puddle of urine." — Police Officer Walter Tripp, explaining the reasoning behind one of the department's lawsuits against the city. He also noted that it was the department's drug fund that pur-

chased new sprinklers for City Hall.

"Mr. Cooper, you've done a disservice to our city by going out and telling the national media that we need to file for bankruptcy." — Local resident Tim Hanks, on what he believes are the ramifications of Cooper's letter to the state.

"I want to know why is our overpaid and undereducated lawyer James Allen not here?" — A soon-to-be corrected Tywla Meyer, who was quickly alerted by shouts from people in the crowd that the man in question was in the back of the gym.

Continued on page 8

For now, state loan is rejected

By Charles Sercombe

It looks like Hamtramck will head straight into being broke by March.

Four City Councilmembers formed a majority vote to reject applying for a \$2.5 million state loan. The loan would have kept the city financially afloat until 2012, but now without the loan the city will simply run out of money within the next two months.

A lengthy and heated debate took place at Tuesday's City Council meeting. Despite passionate pleas by Mayor Karen Majewski and Councilmember Catrina Stackpole to save the city and apply for the loan, the loan was shot down by Councilmembers Cathie Gordon, Kazi Miah, Tom Jankowski and Mohammed Hassan.

On top of heading into payless paydays, Hamtramck faces a \$3.5 million deficit. A few weeks ago, City Manager Bill Cooper took the bold and unheard of step to ask permission from the state to file for bankruptcy protection.

State Treasury officials rejected the proposal, saying state law requires the city to first be

Continued on page 2

City still fighting to keep Kowalski

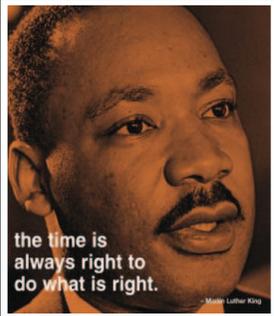
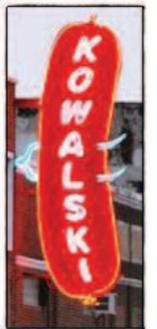
By Charles Sercombe

There's been little new development since last week's media frenzy over the Kowalski Sausage Co. thinking of moving out of Hamtramck.

The company became the focus of massive media coverage after recently receiving a zoning change to make way for a possible relocation at a vacant Sam's Club in Madison Heights.

Hamtramck city officials say they have met with the company to find out how it could be persuaded to remain here. The upshot is that Kowalski needs a huge warehouse space to consolidate its business and expand.

Continued on page 4



the time is always right to do what is right.

Quick Hits

Monday (Jan. 17) is Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and once again The Concerned Women of Hamtramck will sponsor their Prayer Breakfast in honor of the civil rights hero.

The breakfast will be at the Hamtramck High School Community Center, at 11350 Charest, and goes from 9 to 11 a.m. Admission is \$15 for adults and \$5 for children.

This week in history

• In 1920, John Dodge, one of two brothers who created the famed auto line and were responsible for building Hamtramck's top employer the Dodge Main plant, died.

• Can't Hamtramck and Detroit ever get along? Back in 1874, the two municipalities battled it out over Detroit's attempt to do a land grab in Hamtramck.

• It's 1942 and World War II is only going so-so for the Allies. To whip up national spirit, a massive defense rally was held at Hamtramck High School.

Source: Hamtramck Historical Commission

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For now, state loan is rejected

Continued from front page

under the control of an emergency financial manager (EFM) who has to make the request.

The bankruptcy plea caught the attention of the national press, which characterized Hamtramck as a forerunner of what's to come for many struggling communities.

State officials offered the city four loan options. Cooper initially rejected the offer, saying a loan would not solve the city's underlying financial problem and, on top of it, a loan would only add to the city's debt.

He has since come around on the loan offer, saying it will buy the city some time to negotiate new contracts with the city's union workers. Cooper said he has asked the city's unions for contract concessions with no luck.

He specifically wants to replace expensive Blue Cross

health insurance plans with a less expensive deal. So far, the unions have rejected concessions.

Cooper also wants to throw out minimum staffing requirements in the police and fire departments.

Cooper was diplomatic about Tuesday's rejection of a state loan, saying those who voted against it were "voting their conscience."

"I'm a little disappointed," he said about the vote.

He said he will now have to work up another plan, but conceded the city will be broke within several weeks.

Terry Stanton, a spokesman for the Michigan Department of Treasury, said he could not comment on the council's decision not to apply for a loan. He said if the city were to go

into payless paydays, the state could immediately step in and

appoint an emergency financial manager.

Hamtramck had been under the control of an EFM for several years, and only about four years ago was local control handed back.

In a recent Reuters news interview, Gov. Rick Snyder said the possibility of bankruptcy is still on the table for Hamtramck, but first he'd rather work with local officials.

Mayor Majewski pleaded with the council to apply for the loan, saying it will keep control of Hamtramck local for another year-and-a-half, which would give the city time to work out the crisis.

Councilmember Stackpoole said the loan is part of a three-prong approach to solving the city's financial problem, which will require residents to also take a hit with a property tax hike and the unions to agree to contract concessions.

Councilmember Jankowski insisted that the unions must first agree to concessions, and he also complained that Cooper's deficit recovery plan was not adequate.

Councilmember Gordon said there are still plenty of budget cuts that can be made. She said she would be willing to revisit the loan option after more cuts are made.

"Sometimes you have to shake the tree to see what falls out," Gordon told The Review a day after the meeting.

(Read more about the loan debate in this issue's "City Hall Insider" column to the right of this story.)

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City Hall Insider ...

What is our City Council up to these days? We have the scoop and the highlights - as well as the lowlights - of the latest council meeting.

By Charles Sercombe

The City Council met on Jan. 11 with all members in attendance. The meeting lasted for over an hour-and-a-half.

We're telling you folks, as the city's financial crisis continues to fester, these meetings are getting pretty intense. The majority of the meeting focused on a debate over whether to apply for a \$2.5 million state loan in order for the city to avoid payless paydays.

But before we get to that portion of the meeting, let's recap what happened during the moments leading up to that discussion.

Chris Sexon, the publisher of the Metro Times, asked to have \$5,000 worth of the city's bus credits for the SMART system set aside for the upcoming Hamtramck Blowout, a music festival that the MT sponsors here in Hamtramck.

The bus credits allows the MT to offer free shuttle service for festivalgoers

The city has been agreeable to setting aside this bus credit for the past few years, and this year was no exception. The music event occurs during the first weekend of March in about 20 bars and halls and odd spots throughout town. Sexon said some 7,000 music lovers visit the town during the three-day music fest.

We're not sure what that attendance figure referred to, because it's at least 7,000 people a night who visit the city.

Note to local restaurants: you might want to stock up and extend your hours. These music kids can get hungry after a night of beer swilling and hair twirling.

We could make a pot joke here, but since the good folks at Patient Caregivers Connection Association really are sincere in what they talk about, we won't trivialize a very real issue of the day: medical marijuana, and the public's right to use it for prescribed purposes.

Greg Pawloski calls himself a patient advocate, and he noted that Hamtramck is about to take a historic turn.

(Editor's note: ever notice when you do a computer spell-check you get, well, unintentionally funny suggestions for spellings? For example, take the name Pawloski. One suggestion is the word "padlock" - yeah as in law enforcement has been "padlocking" marijuana clubs in recent months. Sorry, we couldn't resist. And heck, for you rabid right-wingers, the name "Pelosi" is also suggested for Pawloski.)

The city has a moratorium on allowing marijuana growing facilities to operate.

But in the meantime, the city council is also looking at adopting a zoning law that would regulate where growing facilities can operate.

While Pawloski praised city officials for taking a step toward welcoming medical marijuana to be grown here, he noted the city's proposed law could use some "tweaking."

Namely, he suggested allowing places to open where patients can partake in the weed. Why the need of a public house for medical marijuana patients to ingest pot?

Pawloski said some patients need a place to use the drug, away from children in their house, or perhaps avoid smoke odors from wafting into the houses of neighbors.

These private clubs, so to speak, would be "safe havens."

So, Pawloski urged the council to withdraw its current proposed law and study one that was drafted by an attorney from the marijuana advocate organization, NORML (National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws. Check out its webpage, Willie Nelson is right there. Can't get more authentic than that.)

OK, let's take a deep breath, inhale. Ahhhhhh.

From the public, former city official Robert Zwolak took to the lectern. He said that before the council voted on whether to apply for a state loan to keep the city from going broke, there ought to be an "honest public debate" on the matter.

(Editor's note: Bob, there was a town hall meeting on the subject just days before this council meeting where the public indeed was allowed to express their view on the subject. Ah, was that not "honest" enough for you?)

He also noted that the minutes of a previous meeting should have noted that Councilmember Mohammed Hassan announced that he is donating his council salary back to the city. Zwolak also said that Mike Wilk has been working for free as city treasurer.

(Editor's note: Mike Wilk was dismissed a few months ago as treasurer by the city manager. Those duties were transferred to another employee in the Finance Department. No reason for the

shift in duties has been given.)

Former Human Relations Commission member Bill Meyer offered some advice on how to run a city. He said that, speaking as a former businessman, the city needs to live within its means, avoid borrowing money and don't go into debt.

He also said the city needs to figure out new revenue sources.

And on that note, the council then dived into the issue of whether to apply for a state emergency loan worth \$2.5 million. The loan deal would require the city to pay it back within 20 years at an interest rate of .075 percent, or to say in another way, less than 1 percent per year.

City Manager Bill Cooper said this is the best loan deal the state offered. Other offers would require the city to repay the loan within 12 months at an interest rate of 4 to 6 percent.

One such loan offer was a loan against next year's state tax revenue payments, which Cooper characterized as going to a check cashing place, only to dig the city deeper and deeper into debt.

The 20-year loan deal, he said, would allow the city repay the loan at any time.

(Let's pause for a moment. What comes next is lengthy and brutal. For you medical marijuana patients out there, take a moment and light up and inhale - it's no time to go Clinton on us. For non-certified patients, go crack open a beer or pour a stiff cocktail. Joan Barrios, we know you're reading this, go get another cup of Joe over there at Café 1923. ... OK, everyone ready?)

Councilmember Tom Jankowski said he is dissatisfied with the deficit reduction plan submitted by City Manager Cooper. He said the plan should include what to do when part of the GM Poletown plant revenue agreement expires with Detroit, and the city will receive about half less than it does now, or, should be receiving now if it weren't for a dispute with Detroit about an alleged past overpayment from the plant.

Jankowski said that the overall plan contains too many "ifs." Plus, he said, the city needs to first get contract concessions

Continued on page 4

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ESL Class for Beginners - Saturday, January 15 at 10:30 a.m. Christine Templin is the instructor for the ESL class for beginners. Everyone is invited. Free to the public.

Storytime for Children - Saturday, January 15 at noon. All children are invited to storytime featuring, "Wild About Books" by Judy Sierra. Afterwards, we will show you how to be an author too.

Computer Classes for Beginners - Tuesday, January 18 at 11:30 a.m. Basic instructions on computer use for beginners will be held on Tuesdays. Number of participants is limited to available computers.

Reading and Conversation for ESL Students - Tuesday, January 18 at 5:30 p.m. Jide Aje is the instructor for the reading and conversation ESL classes.

Math Club Meeting - Tuesday, January 18 at 4 p.m. Mr. Nuo is the instructor for the math club and math tutoring.

Movie Wednesday - Wednesday, January 19 at 3:30 p.m. Every Wednesday is movie day at the library. Come and enjoy our feature presentation, which includes free popcorn and snacks.

Winter Teen Club - Thursday, January 20 at 5 p.m. Members of the Teen Club will be making their own photo memory boxes to save all the good memories from 2010. Everyone is invited to join.

Jeopardy at the Library - Thursday, January 20 at 4 p.m. Sign up and participate in Jeopardy games held on Thursdays at the library. Compete against friends, win prizes and have fun developing your knowledge skills.

Computer Classes for Advanced Users - Monday, January 24 at 11 a.m. Adults with basic computer skills can enhance their computer literacy each Monday at the library. Number of participants is limited to available computers.

Meeting of the Library Board - Thursday, February 10 at 6 p.m. Regular meeting of the Library Board will be held in the auditorium. Open to the public.

Friends of the Library Meeting - Thursday, January 20 at 6:30 p.m. FHPL President Kathy Kristy and Treasurer George Gorday, invite all members and volunteers to participate in the regular monthly meeting and election meeting of the FHPL.

For more information about events at the library call (313) 365-7050, or visit our website at <http://hamtramck.lib.mi.us> where you can also access our online catalog.

Second Front Page

Hamtown's movers and shakers...

by Charles Sercombe

Who she is:
Christine Komisarz

You have created a Hamtramck-themed T-shirt. Tell us what it is, and what inspired you to create it.

Komisarz: Except for a period of about five years, I've lived in Hamtramck my entire life. I've seen the changes in the city. It's not too difficult to see that Hamtramck is no longer primarily Polish but, in fact, consists of many different ethnicities.

In 2008, when The Citizen held a new Hamtramck slogan contest, I entered several slogans – one of which turned out to be the winner! (Hamtramck: The World in Two Square Miles). I kind of forgot about it until I found out someone else was trying to take credit for my slogan.

Well, that catapulted me into action. I decided to put the slogan on T-shirts. I created the T-shirt design, found a web-based local company and had a few shirts printed, just to see how things go. I selected the colors green and blue. Green to represent the lush green-ness of Michigan in the spring and summer and blue to represent the Great Lakes.

How are the sales going, how much are the shirts and where can we purchase them? Is this a limited run?

Komisarz: Honestly? Shirt sales are going very slowly. I've given away more for Christmas gifts than I've sold! They are available for \$15 at Café 1923 on Holbrook and Dubois. Mem-

bers of my family and I are going to Poland. Proceeds from the sales of the T-shirts will help fund my dad's and my trip. (Looks like I'll be using my income tax refund!)

If sales don't improve, this will definitely be a limited run. So, for those of you that have a T-shirt, hang on to them, they could become a collector's item!

If this goes well, will you expand your T-shirt line? Maybe T-shirts for other cities? Or favorite causes of yours?

Komisarz: I hadn't really thought that far ahead. With the way things are going now, I don't think I need to either! Although, if this were to take off, sure, I'd love to expand the line. I'd have to feel a connection to whatever I created though.

You obviously love Hamtramck. What are some of the things that you like about the city, and what are some of your pet peeves about Hamtramck?

Komisarz: I love the quaintness and friendliness of (most) of the people. It's really nice to be known at the stores I frequent most; to be on a first-name basis with the proprietor or employees and get special treatment.

Sometimes, I feel like the mayor without all the hassle! (Hi Karen!) I love hearing the church bells. I love the aroma of freshly-baked bread in the morning. I love being able to smell the kielbasa smoking. I love talking to people I pass on the street, usually while walking my dog. I love the history. (Although, I admit, I must learn



more.) I love that artists are flocking to Hamtramck.

Oh dear, pet peeves. I have a few.

People who park in my dad's handicap spot. People who show no respect for their elders when walking down the street. Loud music late at night. A horn blaring early in the morning. Open trash bins. Litterbugs. Unshoveled sidewalks and unmowed lawns.

Basically, rude, inconsiderate, disrespectful, lazy people. I call lazy people F.L.A.P.s. You'll have to figure out on your own what F.L.A.P. stands for. Anyway, none of my pet peeves is unique to Hamtramck, by any means.

Speaking of pet causes, you are a big animal lover. Tell us about your passion for animals and animal rights.

Komisarz: I don't know when or even why it started. All I know is that I do love animals.

Animals are innocent beings. They are completely reliant on us, much like children. They love you unconditionally. I'm convinced they feel sadness and happiness. I know they feel pain.

Hearing about animal abuse is horribly disturbing and hurts me terribly. But I feel it's my responsibility, as an animal lover, to shove your face in it, so-to-speak. People need to be aware. They need to believe they can make a difference and need to keep trying. Who knows? Your signature on that petition just might make the difference in an animal's life. Many of my friends and family "hide" me on Facebook because they can't stand to read the stories. But, like I said, I feel it's my duty.

I've had a pet for as long as I can remember. No matter how bad a mood I'm in, just looking at my dog, Lucky, brings a smile to my face. Everyone should understand, however, that having a pet is a big responsibility.

They're not here simply to "exist" or just be. They need to be well-cared for, shown love, affection and attention. They get bored too and need to be kept busy, for at least part of the day. I walk Lucky every morning (unless I'm sick or it's treacherous out). Not only is it good exercise for the dog, it's good exercise for me and it also forms a deeper bond between us.

Hamtramckans are known to have pets, but what do you make of so many landlords not allowing pets?

Komisarz: In one sense, I can understand it. The landlord wants his or her place to be kept clean. Dogs use the yard to do their duty. Pets shed. Pets have accidents. On the other hand, I think the landlord must never have felt the love of a pet, otherwise he or she wouldn't be so cold-hearted. Realistically, though, the landlord could ask for extra security deposit if the tenant has a pet. It all boils down to responsible pet ownership (and not being lazy).

Continued on page 5

Local business owners invited to network

Hamtramck merchants are invited to mingle and get to know one another next Wednesday (Jan. 19).

Hamtramck's Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and Economic Development Department are hosting the meeting, which will feature Murray Feldman, business reporter for Fox 2 news in Detroit, as well as speakers from PNC Bank and

the city's Paczki Day Committee.

The meeting will be at People's Community Center at 8625 Jos. Campau. It starts at 8 a.m. and ends at 10:30 a.m.

It's free, but you must first register by calling (313) 870-0346. A complimentary breakfast will be provided by Hamtramck Coney Island. The Polish Market is also a sponsor of the meeting.

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* These gatherings replace our Sunday events in Hamtramck.
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Review: Opinion Page

Vote against loan puts Hamtramck's future in jeopardy

Irresponsible. Yes, that's the word to use to describe the actions of City Councilmembers Tom Jankowski, Kazi Miah, Mohammed Hassan and Cathie Gordon. These four councilmembers voted against having the city apply for a state loan that will keep the city afloat for the next year-and-a-half.

Their majority vote against the loan means there's no chance of getting one, at least at this point.

By rejecting the loan, these four councilmembers have elected to do absolutely nothing about the city's financial crisis. It means the city will be broke in about two months, unable to pay employees or vendors.

It means it will open the door for state officials to appoint an emergency financial manager to take control of the city. It will mean a loss of local control and possibly – possibly – the merging of Hamtramck into Detroit.

What we have here is a financial crisis and a crisis in leadership.

The action of these four councilmembers is so egregious we're tempted to recommend their recall from office.

They have shown complete disregard for the health and well-being of our community. They have shown an utter lack of understanding on how to govern a city.

By allowing the city to crash full speed into insolvency, it's a good guess that state officials are going to take a dim view of ever allowing local control to return.

After all, it's just been four years since the last state-appointed EFM left town. Why should state officials agree once again to clean this town up and return it to the locals?

As for the reasons behind rejecting the loan, give us a break.

Councilmember Jankowski first said the city unions have to agree to cuts before he will agree to take a loan. Then he said he's rejecting the loan because he doesn't think the deficit recovery plan that the city manager drew up is adequate.

Councilmember, even if you got the unions to agree to contract concessions today, the money from those savings wouldn't roll in until about a year from now. The city will still go broke in two months.

And as for the deficit plan, Jankowski has found fault with every bit of financial information the city manager submits to the council. He obviously has a bone to pick with City Manager Bill Cooper. That's fine, but don't do it at Hamtramck's expense.

Councilmember Gordon didn't really offer a clear cut reason why she's against the loan other than to agree with Jankowski that the deficit reduction plan isn't up to snuff.

Councilmember Miah insists more cuts are needed in the budget and even suggested hiring a new city manager. First, because of contract obligations and minimum staffing requirements in the police and fire departments, the only cuts left will re-

sult in a savings of \$200,000. The city is facing a \$3.5 million deficit. Gutting City Hall won't get you near that amount.

And as for finding a new city manager, good luck with that. First, the current contract with Cooper would require the city pay him \$100,000 to exit. Next, try to find another city manager when the city is going to be broke in two months and then will face being taken over by the state.

Who in their right mind would volunteer to find himself without pay in two months and then be out of a job?

Councilmember Hassan is also of the belief that more cuts can be made, but then he also added that he has a house in Warren, and although he loves Hamtramck, he could easily move out.

Well, that's nice to know that he and his family can escape Hamtramck when there's no money to pay for police and fire service. Hopefully, voters will send him off to Warren soon.

On the flip side of this issue, Councilmember Catrina Stackpoole and Shahab Ahmed, as well as Mayor Karen Majewski, should be praised for having the courage to support the loan, which in turn would give the city time to work itself out of this financial jam.

We're crossing our fingers that reason will prevail and that another vote will be taken to OK the loan application. Perhaps this is a calculated step to wake up the unions, but it sure smacks of reckless brinkmanship.

Street Life

New Public Pool exhibit spotlights autos and their impact

(Editor-at-Large Walter Wasacz writes a weekly column on life in Hamtramck.)

<http://www.modeldmedia.com/features/modeldtpublicpool111.aspx>

By Walter Wasacz

I've always been drawn to Caniff, the main east-west artery in the city. OK, some could argue the point that Holbrook holds that claim.

But the mix of storefront businesses (including The Review), churches and mosques, social halls and cultural centers, impressive markets and restaurants – and, of course, the longest, sweetest residential strip in Hamtramck from Conant to just past Buffalo – tilts it in Caniff's favor.

My rhapsodizing comes with a purpose. I'm so excited about the development of an art space on Caniff called Public Pool (yes, I've written about it before; and yes, I am member who has a role in programming and publicizing events there) that I'm always trying new ways to frame the story about this unique place.

It's an art gallery, hosting shows by visual artists, but it's a performance space home to improvisational music, dance, modern classical opera (yes, opera in Hamtramck) and literary readings. It's a neighborhood catalyst, drawing people to the city to work, play and live. There is an episode of Model D TV you should see. It features founding member Steve Hughes, a writer, Kresge Arts fellow and Hamtramck guy, talking about Public Pool and the assets it brings to the community. Watch it here:

This Saturday, Jan. 15, the same night as the public opening of the North American International Auto Show, Public Pool fires its own car culture cannon shot: Automobiles: Shaping Our Landscape, Designing Our Lives. The show features the work of nine artists showing work that considers the huge impact cars have had on our lives.

Included is Carrie Dickason's 12-foot Carscape, outlining the interior of a 1997 Subaru Legacy that she lived in while traveling around the country; Ian Swanson's study of the effects of window tinting and Kate Daughdrill's (of Southwest Detroit's Soup series) performance piece that explores what can happen in intimate spaces, like a vehicle conveniently parked in front of the gallery. Longtime Hamtramckan Amy Kelly, who was in a serious roll-over accident where her pelvis was crushed, will also bring her own perspective to the show.

Other participating artists include: Christina Burch, Steve Coy, Rod Klingelhofer, Brian St. Cyr and Bethany Shorb.

There will be a special electro-mechanical performance outside Public Pool by Apetechnology. The piece uses 1/3-scale, robotic, fiber-glass cars. And they crash. But only after all audience members are safely positioned behind barricades. This must be seen to be truly believed and ap-



preciated. The performance will be documented by a film crew, making it possible for Public Pool (with the help of the city) to cord-off the area as a film production site.

Opening night hours are 7 - 11 p.m. Apetechnology performance is at 10 p.m. Refreshments provided courtesy of Traffic Jam & Snug (the Midtown restaurant owned by our friend Scott Lowell, who grew up north of Carpenter and attended Our Lady Help of Christians school). Music provided by Dethlab (Michael Doyle, David Blunk II and the multi-talented Shorb, who also performs under the name Toybreaker and makes awesome neckwear under the brand name Cyberoptix. Ties that don't suck is her motto).

An after-party (11 p.m.-2 a.m.) at Skipper's Hamtown Bar (9735 Conant Ave., Hamtramck) features food by John Lopez (his credits are impressive: Union Street, Majestic Cafe, Agave, Atlas Global Bistro) and danceable DJ set by nospectacle.

Make Caniff your destination on Saturday. It'll warm up a cold January night, guaranteed.

Public Pool is at 3309 Caniff Ave., Hamtramck and is open Saturdays, 1 - 6 p.m.

Obituaries

CHORONZY

Sophie Choronzy (nee Olbrys), 94, died January 9, 2011.

Mrs. Choronzy was a former Hamtramck resident and was a retired school crossing guard. She was preceded in death by her husband, Leo Olbrys (1965) and husband Joe Choronzy (1986).

She is survived by her daughter, Jeannette (Donald) Morawski; sons, Leo Olbrys, Thomas (Jan) Olbrys and Robert (Susan) Olbrys; sister-in-law, Paula Olbrys; 16 grandchildren and 29 great-grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements were made by Krot Funeral Home, and funeral services will be held on January 13 at St. Ladislaus Church. Burial was at Mt. Olivet Cemetery.

KANIEWSKI

Wanda Kaniewski, 92, died January 11, 2011.

Mrs. Kaniewski was a member of the Rainbow Seniors.

She is survived by her daughter,

Elaine (Bob) Young and Diane (Jim Cichy) Rzepecki; sons, Edward (Mary Ann) and Ronald; 12 grandchildren, and 22 great-grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements were made by Krot Funeral Home, and funeral services will be held on January 15 at St. Florian Church. Burial will be at Resurrection Cemetery.

RODGERS

Theresa M. Rodgers, 74, died January 3, 2011.

Ms. Rodgers was a Hamtramck resident and was retired from Michigan Bell where she worked for 30 years. She also worked many years at the former Woody Pontiac dealership.

She loved to feed the birds, squirrels and cats and was an animal lover.

Ms. Rodgers is survived by her daughters, Roxanne (Joe) Gruz and Monica (David) McCrary; sons, Mark Calcaterra and Curt

Jankowski; and her loving partner, Jerry Rodgers.

Funeral arrangements were made by Jurkiewicz & Wilk Funeral Home. There were no funeral services, and donations in her memory can be made to the Humane Society.

YOUNG

Michael Leroy Young, 61, died January 6, 2011.

He was a Hamtramck resident and served in the Army.

Mr. Young is survived by his wife, Linda; daughters, Sheila and Kaylee; sons, Matthew, Keith and Alex; six sisters and four brother; 10 grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews. Funeral arrangements were made by Krot Funeral Home, and funeral services were held on January 10 with Fr. Jaroslaw Nowak officiating. Mr. Young also received military honors. Cremation was Meadowcrest Cemetery.



Hamtown's movers and shakers...

Continued from page 3

We also know you have a pretty interesting background in music. You once sang back-up for Nikki Corvette "back in the day." Tell us a tale or two about that experience.

Komisarz: Oh, gosh. Those were the good old days. We used to tour in a van with no seats other than a driver seat and a passenger seat. Our equipment AND the seven of us (six in the band and a roadie) would all pile in that ONE van and tour the country.

Looking back on it, all I remember is the fun. I mean, sure, it was cramped and the road was long, but I was young. I remember stopping at a diner down south. We were so tired and had played so many one-nighters that we didn't even know what city we were in. We had to ask one of the diners who answered us in his southern drawl, "Why, ya'll are in the great city of Winston-

Salem, North Carolina."

We spent three weeks in North Carolina and experienced southern hospitality first-hand. We had home-cooked meals and were invited to stay at people's homes as they wouldn't hear of us staying in a hotel. I was even proposed to! We met Iggy in our hotel lobby in Toronto, I think it was.

After our gig, we went to his gig and went backstage. David Byrne of The Talking Heads came to see us at Bookies. We opened for The Motels, if anyone remembers them, at The Second Chance. But I'd say the highlight of being in Nikki and The Corvettes was opening for The Ramones at The Second Chance in Ann Arbor. And we were a "pick" in People Magazine's "Picks and Pans" section. I still keep in touch with "the gals" and the bass player.

Any last thoughts before we say goodbye?

Komisarz: People need to care. If you want to live in a great city, heck, even a decent city, you have to care. Start with one thing at a time and, hopefully, a snowball effect will be created. Care about your child(ren), your family, your pet, your home, your property. If we all just cared a little, Hamtramck could once again be a great city. Just care people. Here's a quote from one of my favorite songs by one of my favorite artists:

*I can't stop the war,
Shelter homeless,
Feed the poor.
I can't walk on water,
I can't save your sons and daughters.
I can't change the world and make things fair.
The least that I can do is care.
~Kid Rock*

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Town Hall meeting lays it on the table, but for some the writing is on the wall

Cont. from front page

said that “the most troubling question reporters and state officials have been asking me over the last couple of months is, ‘Why should Hamtramck exist?’,” stating that “the idea that people who help shape public opinion and who are making decisions that could decide our fate feel that we need to justify our existence is something that keeps me up nights.”

Next up at the lectern was City Manager Bill Cooper, who gave a much longer and more detailed speech. Focusing on the current financial situation, the steps the city is taking to address that issue and the reasoning behind its course of action, Cooper began by firmly acknowledging that the city is in fact in the midst of a financial crisis. While he conceded there are several causes for this problem, he said it is “first and foremost [...] Detroit’s failure to honor our revenue sharing agreement regarding the Poletown plant.”

He went on to provide specifics of the revenue sharing agreement between Hamtramck and Detroit, giving details on the interlocal contract which allowed the two cities to form the Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA) that sold the bonds to build the plant. Comparing the two cities, he highlighted the fact that while Hamtramck pledged approximately one-third of the land necessary for the project – with Dodge Main occupying most of that land – the City of Detroit pledged 240 acres, displacing nearly 4,200 residents, 140 businesses and six churches.

“Long-time Hamtramck residents know that the loss of all those Poletown people left an indelible mark on the institutions of our own town simply because Poletown Detroit was an interwoven component of Hamtramck,” said Cooper. “Make no mistake about it: the plant was originally conceived by then-Mayor Coleman Young as a catalyst for change in his city. But 30 years after its conception, the plant has had a much greater impact on our much smaller city.”

Cooper also explained the distribution of funds based on the revenue sharing agreement. He said that under that agreement taxes are collected by both cities, the proceeds are pooled together, and, according to the agreed-upon formula, the first \$3.4 million is divided evenly between the two. Anything over that amount is divided between Hamtramck by one-third and Detroit by two-thirds.

“The really nice thing about this agreement is that it continues until ‘the plant is no longer viable,’ said Cooper. “With the recent investment in the plant, this plant will continue to be ‘viable’ for a long time.”

According to Cooper, the prob-

lems began in the fiscal year of 2009 when the payments from Detroit came to an abrupt halt. In the aftermath of the ensuing discussions, Hamtramck would go on to sue Detroit for nonpayment. Detroit countersued Hamtramck, claiming it had overpaid the city by \$7 million. Countering accusations that Hamtramck has not done enough to collect what it is owed, Cooper pointed to a timeline that showed what has happened thus far and when it occurred.

“The Finance Director, Mayor, City Council and I, and even our City Assessor, have all been involved in efforts to get what is owed to us,” he said.

In addition to the problems with Detroit, Cooper also touched upon several issues that he says have converged into a “perfect fiscal storm.” First, he noted that property tax revenue has fallen over the last several years, which in conjunction with the lowest millage rate in 20 years has caused a significant decrease in city revenue.

Cooper said that the second part of the fiscal storm involves rising health care costs. For the current fiscal year the city experienced a 40 percent increase, taking the total cost to about \$2.6 million for active and retired employees. Next year it is expected to increase by another 40 percent, which means that in just two years health care will have nearly doubled in cost, mainly due to the actual use of the benefits, or what is known as “experience.” Through a change in the retirement plan for retirees over the age of 65, the city has only been able to offset costs by about \$400,000 per year.

A third contributing factor to the budget problem, according to Cooper, is the continuing escalation of pension costs. Crediting “creative thinking” by Finance Director Nevrus Nazarko, Cooper said that while the increase was kept to a modest 2 percent this year, in the coming year the city may face a 30-40 percent increase.

“Unfortunately, I think that Mr. Nazarko may have run out of rabbits in his magic hat,” said Cooper. “With pension costs running around \$3 million, this increase could amount to another \$1 million in cost.”

When everything is taken into account, Cooper says the city could face a potential \$3 million gap in the budget. He said the council took the first steps in eliminating the deficit by cutting expenses by about \$1 million in early December, but thanks to the refusal of Detroit to pay Hamtramck there is still a \$2 million shortfall. Cooper said that really leaves only a few options – mainly reducing services or raising taxes.

In the short term, the city has a four-point plan. The first point

is for the city to continue pursuing its lawsuit against Detroit. Though Cooper is not confident that the matter will be resolved quickly, he does believe Hamtramck will ultimately win.

“While this may not provide us with relief in the near future, we have to work on both short and long term solutions at the same time,” he said.

The second part of the plan is for Hamtramck to continue to manage its costs. Cooper said that though the city will “continue to look for ways to contain costs the old-fashioned way,” that would only solve some of the problem and the city must explore more drastic options – namely bankruptcy.

Saying that this measure would allow for protection from creditors seeking to foreclose on the city’s assets, but that it would not seek to eliminate responsibility of bond debt, Cooper noted a key aspect of bankruptcy is that Bankruptcy Code allows for municipalities to obtain relief from labor contracts they cannot afford. He said the city needs to save approximately \$1.2 million to \$1.5 million from both the police and fire unions for a combined savings of \$2.4 to \$3

million.

“While we view such relief to be extraordinary in nature and would hope to avoid it through negotiations with our unions,” said Cooper, “we cannot rule out the possibility of seeking protection from the Bankruptcy Court for contract provisions that we simply cannot fund, no matter how many other cost-savings or revenue-generating ideas we create.”

The third step of the plan was for the city to apply for a loan from the state. When the city approached the state to file for bankruptcy it was at first offered three loans options, then ultimately one more. And although Cooper said that taking a loan was an idea he had personally rejected in the past, he admitted that he thought it may be one of the city’s only options.

“The reality is that even if we are allowed to go into bankruptcy, we will need funds to get us through the next year or so until we can realize the impact of the cost reductions or concessions that we put into place,” he said.

For the final part of the plan, Cooper said the city must continue to seek out opportunities

for economic growth. Though this will not be easy given the current landscape – Cooper said that “the prospect of decreased city services and financial upheaval, together with the crime and blight that accompany both, admittedly [does] not provide us with the optimal conditions for private investment” – he maintained that it is still an important step in turning the tide of the economic flood.

“With the investment of NSP II funds (stimulus money from the federal Recovery Act) into our city, we hope that the curve will not be quite as steep as our current conditions seem to indicate,” he said. “Whatever the case, we remain committed to what many, perhaps justifiably, believe are insurmountable obstacles.”

When his presentation was finished, Cooper opened the floor for residents to voice their opinions to both him and the city council and mayor, who were seated to the right of the stage facing the audience. Many had sensed the imminent conclusion to Cooper’s speech and had already begun to line-up at the microphone. Though the time limit was set at two minutes, many

speakers refused to yield until they had made their point.

Based on the visible protest signs in the audience – like “BANKRUPTCY WAS NEVER AN OPTION” and “DON’T SCAPEGOAT UNIONS/DON’T SCAPEGOAT DETROIT” – it was apparent before the comments even began that many residents in attendance were not happy with the way things were being ran. Though their comments ranged from polite suggestions to spiteful insinuations, most fell along a few common threads.

One of the most prevailing points made by the commentators was that the city must not reduce its police and fire protection. Residents were adamant that it is paramount to the city’s future that it maintain adequate services, otherwise new people will not want to live in Hamtramck, let alone those that are already in the city. A few asked about the status of a cost-recovery ordinance that could bring in additional revenue.

Another point made by residents was that the city should enforce codes and make people pay fines. A chief complaint was that code enforcement is either

Continued on page 8

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Hamtramck, 2 Br. upper, very clean, \$475/month + security + references, 248-214-9573. 2/4

2300 Whalen St., 2 Br. upper, living room, dining, kitchen, next to Middle School, clean, Section 8 welcome, 586-806-5312, 586-354-6270. 2/4

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TOAST of the TOWN

By Charles Sercombe

When it comes to good food and great times, Hamtramck has plenty to offer. In this column, we'll talk about what's happening at our bars, restaurants and other events that can be found throughout the city.

Well, well, here we are with our first Toast column of 2011. In fact, we are writing this on a most peculiar date: 01-11-11. Add it up and ... Oh who cares. But for you astrology and numerology buffs out there, send us an email and let us know the divine — or maybe not so divine — meaning behind it all.

We'll drink to that. Hmmmm ... Looks like we're off to a rambling start. And with that in mind, it seems that the only bar here in town to take any notice of the King's birthday last week — and by that, of course, we mean Elvis — was the Belmont Bar with its annual birthday bash for the rock and roller.

Sheesh, people, it's not like he's some upstart like Michael Jackson. And the Belmont once again added an over-the-top touch: complimentary fried peanut butter and banana sandwiches. Just for inventing that combination, Elvis Presley deserves all the worship he receives.

All kidding aside, we hope Hamtramck's bars survive another year. We know this econ-

omy is beating a lot of places down. Hang in there guys. From where we sit, there's only one place to go: up.

Hey, we caught wind on one of the rock and roll Internets that our favorite recording/travelling band, The Reigning Sound, is making a stop here in Hamtown on March 4. Only thing is, apparently no bar has been booked yet. OK, guys, which one of you are bidding on this?

If you have never heard of The Reigning Sound, stop whatever you are doing — including reading this — and head over to the Internet and do a search and take a listen for yourself.

Freakin' incredible. If the universe was truly an orderly and fair thing, Reigning Sound would be huge. The band's twanger and song-writing wiz, Greg Cartwright, is up there on the genius level.

And speaking of rock and roll, we are still in a state of shock over losing our good friend Jim Shaw right before the holiday season began. Our heart and condolences go out to his widow, Sandy, and of course his family and friends. There is a huge hole in the soul of Detroit rock.

You know, City Councilmember Cathie Gordon sometimes takes a beating in these pages over her role as a city official.

But there is another side to

Cathie. She just so happens to be one of the best bar owners in town, which is a mighty achievement considering just about all the bar owners here are terrific.

You have to imagine this: On one night of the Hamtramck Blowout, we saw Cathie climb on top of her bar, line up customers, have them tilt their head up and open their mouths and then proceed to pour Jagermeister down their throats.

Now in our book, that is one hell of a bar owner. Good Golly!

So ... with that introduction, it's high time we sit down with Cath and dish. Her beginnings into the bar biz is kind of funny. She wasn't always the fun lovin' drink slinger.

Oh no, in fact far from it. Back in 1985 her husband, Lew, got the idea that owning a bar here would be a lucrative thing. And he was right. Yep, their bar, The New Dodge Lounge, was a hit — thanks largely to the workers at the Polietown Plant and American Axle.

"We'd serve 150 guys for lunch in 45 minutes," Cathie said.

Heck, with a glass of beer at 90 cents and a shot at 60 cents, you couldn't beat that deal.

At first, though, Cathie was verboten! from entering the bar. Yeah, that's right, banned from her own bar.

Back then, Cathie was a full-time nurse who specialized in helping people with substance abuse problems. When she first came to her bar, she would start counseling those who looked and acted like an alky. All that unwanted attention kind of drove away some customers, so out the door for her.

"I laugh about it now," Cathie said.

Eventually, as fate would have

it, she had to quit being a nurse after some heart trouble got in the way of work. So, she fixed her sight on the bar business and with her shrewd knowledge of how to make customers happy, business shot up by 30 percent.

Ah, the 80s and 90s. Those were sweet years for anyone who owned a bar. Hamtramck was one booming town. It got so good, Cathie and Lew said screw it to renting their bar space and decided to buy a building just down the street, on Jos. Campau on the southend.

With the help of a city-DDA façade grant, they were able to redo the front portion of the building and turned it into one of Hamtramck's premier show-cases. But almost at the same time, the economy slowed down, and then the unimaginable: The American Axle plant closed down, moving its production to Mexico.

That sucked on so many levels.

Cathie said it's been a struggle since. Business is down 40 percent, and she now has to rely on attracting special events, such as retirement parties or other such things.

One of those special events will be a memorial for the legendary Stanley The Madhatter — a longtime staple of the Detroit-Ann Arbor rock scene. Stanley recently died at the age of 62 from prostate cancer. The dude knew just about everyone and was around during the golden age of rock in Detroit during the turbulent 1960s.

His friends will hold a memorial at New Dodge on Thursday, Jan. 27. It's going to be a special night with folks talking about their pal. Also during the evening, there will be an auction of his vast rock and roll collection.

One more thing about Stan. His real name is Stanley Zillifro, and he grew up in Hamtramck. Does anyone reading this remember Stan from his Hamtramck days? If so, please drop us a line. We'd love to hear about it.

Talking about the 60s, Cathie, who is turning 64 in March, remembers that era fondly. As good as the 80s and 90s were for bar owners, this city was unhinged before that.

"If we could get back to the 60s-70s," Cathie said, "we'd rock the joint."

We're sure Stanley, God bless his soul, would toast to that.

Do you know of a cool bar, a great restaurant or just a nice place to hang out? If you have tips on special events or just want to shine some light on your favorite spot send a message to news@thehamtramckreview.com or call us at (313) 874-2100.

Town Hall meeting lays it on the table, but for some the writing is on the wall

Continued from page 6

lacking completely or arbitrarily enforced. Residents said that this not only made the city unsafe, but it also makes it less attractive to live in as well.

A third — but by no means final — concern was that the city's money was being spent irresponsibly. Questions were raised about whether or not some things in the city were necessary, like the Downtown Development Authority or sprinklers for city hall (the latter of which was later revealed to have been paid for by the Police Department's drug fund). Accusations of unnecessary discretionary spending were rampant, as were charges that the city overpays for some of its contracts, particularly its legal services.

At the meeting's conclusion, attendees were asked to turn in a survey sheet that would gauge their reaction to what they had just heard. In addition to asking residents to rank four options the city can take — bankruptcy,

tax anticipation notes, state loans and state revenue sharing notes — residents were also asked to rank their preferences for cost-saving options. There were also questions on how residents themselves would be willing to help the city and what services are most important.

While the results of the surveys are still being looked at, for some it was a promising sign that so many residents showed up in attendance. Councilmember Miah said he was extremely happy with the results, and though he took a moment during the meeting to encourage residents to remain involved and to attend regular council sessions, he said that town hall meetings are important to public discourse and should be held on a more regular basis.

"I thought that the public had a lot of good ideas and suggestions," he said. "I think we need to have more meetings like this — maybe quarterly."

What they had to say at the Town Hall meeting

Continued from front page

"I come from a small farming community and now it's one of the biggest tourist attractions. America doesn't have a crossroads (a destination spot for international tourists) — what's wrong with this city? We've got to attract people to our city. It's unique. I think them two girls who ran the festival should get involved. I've never seen anything like it. They took that festival from nothing and put it on the map." — *A man who lives on St. Aubin, providing a suggestion for a way the city can bring in additional revenue.*

"If you can survive the city of Hamtramck, this is the best bootcamp for you to go out there and be successful and do anything you want to do." —

Taha Alhumdi, program director of the Hamtramck branch of the Arab American Chaldean Council (ACC), on what he tells people is one of the benefits Hamtramck has to offer.

"One of the things that concerns me about Hamtramck is that sometimes we set up adversarial relationships in how we work with each other. The places I see turnarounds happen are places where historic enemies realize they have to work together and become allies instead of attacking each other." — *Rev. Dan Buttry, on ways that Hamtramck can work toward improving not only the city's finances but the relationship between the government and residents.*

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