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 December 17, 2010
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The Review

Hamtramck

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ATTENTION ADVERTISERS:
 Please note that our deadlines have moved up one day for each of the next two weeks, to Wednesday, Dec. 22 and Dec. 29 at noon, as the paper will hit the streets on Thursday rather than Friday for these two weeks.
 Thank you – The Review.



Quick Hits

Next Tuesday is the first day of winter, which is also known as the winter solstice.

Actually, you don't need a calendar these days to tell winter is here. This week's sub-freezing temps have been an unpleasant reminder that we have 13 more weeks of this stuff before spring arrives.

And with the arrival of winter, we know what else isn't far behind. Merry Christmas everyone.

— HAMTRAMCK'S NEWSPAPER OF RECORD —

For parody polka rockers the Polish Muslims, it's a homecoming

By Alan R. Madeleine

Perhaps you remember the first time you ever heard of Hamtramck's Polish Muslims. Maybe it wasn't that long ago, or maybe it was a very long time ago.

Maybe very, very. You see, this particular institution has been chugging along, delighting or perplexing crowds for almost three decades. Tonight (Dec. 17), at Paycheck's Lounge in good old Hamtramck, the group will perform a show marking its 29th year in the business of entertaining you, the beer drinker.

Whether you can recall that first time, or whether it's hazy, you probably wouldn't be alone – even among band members. Frontman Ken Kondrat estimates that the band has performed approximately 450 to 600 shows – “about 20 a year, more or less, but definitely way too many!” – in their nearly three-decade career. Of those, a couple that stick out for him include the time they played Pine Knob in the late 80s (needless to say, for a crowd substantially larger than the usual Hamtown club would offer), and the time, also in that era, where they headlined a sold-out show for their faithful at St. Andrew's Hall that left some fans still outside, unable to squeeze in.

Having formed from the remains of his former band The Reruns (whose surnames were cribbed from Golden Age TV characters, like “Haskell,” “Bodine,” “Ricardo” and “Fife”), and incorporating a couple of members of rival group The Cheaters, the Muslims were a popular musical parody act even slightly before “Weird Al” plied his demented 80s trade. Grounding the whole project in polka music, though, certainly gave their re-creations a beloved hometown flavor.

Hamtramck's favorite party band, The Polish Muslims, will celebrate their 29th year entertaining us. They will play a show tonight (Dec. 17) at Paycheck's Lounge.

And the roots do run deep.

Kondrat's father was an organist and choir director at St. Florian's before he passed away in the mid-late 70s, while his three sons will form one-half of the opening band Headlights Over Hills on this, their next big night. Kondrat's voice swells with pride when he talks about his third generation musical progeny.

“They won the WRIF \$10,000 Battle of the Bands competition this past September,” he crows. “They love the city, and it'll be fun having them open for us.”

Kondrat and founding member Dave Uchalik will also perform in another musical project, The Earworms, the following night at the Northern Lights Lounge.

Queried on the current economic and political state of his revered Hamtramck, Kondrat demures.

“I prefer to stay apolitical. Even though ex-Mayor Kozaren, for example, was a big fan of ours back in the day,” he laughed.

“Although I do love (current Mayor) Karen (Majewski), and (councilman) Tom Jankowski, for example, there's nothing to be gained for us, as a band, to go off on any political rants.”

Continued on page 6



What's the 'news story of the year'?

By Charles Sercombe

In a year filled with one major news story after another, what was the one constant story of the year?

That's easy: the city's deteriorating financial picture which culminated in recent weeks with the city's effort to file for bankruptcy.

And so, without much to debate about, the city's fiscal plunge off the cliff is the “News Story of the Year.”

Naming the top news event and/or newsmaker of the year goes back to a tradition that began with the former Citizen newspaper. We tip our hats to The Citizen with our own humble continuation of that tradition.

Yeah, we know. Just about everyone is weary of talking about how broke Hamtramck is. But it's a story that the national press has picked up.

Why? Well, as one person was quoted saying, Hamtramck is like the proverbial canary in the coalmine: what is happening to us is what is happening or is about to happen to hundreds – if not thousands – of other communities in the state and across the country.

Continued on page 8

There was big news all year-long

By Charles Sercombe

While choosing this year's top news story was a no-brainer, that's not to say this was a slow news year.

Far from it.

We could have easily picked from several other topics that came up during the past 12 months. Next week, we will feature part one of our two-part recap of what happened during the year. But for now, let's take a quick look back at some of the other top news contenders of the year, in no particular order.

The beginning of the year sure looked promising. In February, local elected officials and dignitaries gathered together at the newly constructed state Department of Human Services building on the northend of Jos. Campau for a grand opening ribbon cutting.

It was, as State Rep. Bert Johnson said, a “magical day.”

The 30,000 square-foot building put hundreds to work

Continued on page 8

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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 Dec. 14 with all councilmembers in attendance. The three-hour meeting was chaired by Mayor Karen Majewski.

Just to give some perspective, prior to writing this column, Insider was picking up dog poop in the backyard. We're not sure what kind of segue this is – from picking up a bagful of poop to writing about Tuesday's meeting – but we swear it is purely coincidental.

And certainly not metaphorical.

Honestly.

On the other hand, dear

readers, would you rather hear about the Insider's dog? She's a Chesapeake Bay Retriever who sometimes answers to the name "Pearl," and is one smart gal who likes to jump the fence and chase after stray cats.

We're working on that (by building a taller fence).

OK ... back to City Hall news. The council spent most of the meeting debating whether to begin an application process to get a state loan worth \$3 million in order to keep the city afloat financially for another year-and-a-half.

The upshot: the council de-

decided to hold off on submitting an application until the city manager provides more background financial information. More on that later.

To start off the meeting, the public was allowed to speak. Stepping up to the podium was perennial confabulator, and wearer of many former city hats, Robert Zwolak, who took umbrage over a proposal to cancel the Dec. 28 meeting. He said the council can't afford to miss a meeting during the city's current financial crisis.

He added that a number of councilmembers already take too much time off for vacations and conferences.

He also weighed in on a proposal to ask the state for a loan to cover the city's upcoming payrolls and bills.

"You are not solving the problem, you're prolonging the problem," Zwolak said.

He also said that getting a state loan will only serve to allow "others to bide time to get out of here."

(Editor's note: Get out your Hamtramck decoder ring, kids. ... Just who are these sinister sounding "others" and why are they "biding" their time to "get out of here"? Well, we're going to take an educated guess that he is talking about cops and firefighters, mostly, and maybe some longtime city hall employees, and maybe even the city manager, who need just a little more time until they qualify to retire with a full pension. What "they" need during this time is for the city to remain financially solvent just long enough before the city goes bankrupt and ruins their pension deal. Because Bob really doesn't want "them" to have a pension from the city, especially since he doesn't have one.)

Zwolak's comment about conferences and vacations stirred up an emotional response from Mayor Majewski,

who has attended a few conferences this year. She said conferences are not vacations and constitute work. And as for taking a vacation, Majewski, with her voice cracking with emotion, said to Zwolak: "How dare you." She said she has not seen her mother in a year despite being just five hours away in

development Director Jason Friedmann cautioned that before the council goes much further with the issue, he said the only thing the council approved was for permission for the party store to open in an otherwise residential-only zoned area.

He said part of the deal was that the party store could not

to.

Finance Director Nevrus Nazarko said that by transferring pension cost responsibility to the library, the library will have a clearer understanding of its budget.

Councilmember Jankowski said it's "amazing" that an unelected Library Board has sole power over the library budget.

Cooper added that the library is funded by its own special property tax.

Perhaps as a foreshadow of things to come, earlier in the meeting Councilmember Catrina Stackpoole cautioned that councilmembers need to treat city employees fairly and with civility during the city's financial crisis. She said the council also needs to work as a team, and not single anyone out during conversations.

Speaking of city finances, Councilmember Gordon proposed adopting a "Cost Recovery" law that allows the city to charge DTE for the time firefighters spend guarding fallen electrical lines.

The proposed law would also allow the city to charge drivers for damages they cause to public property, such as a fire hydrant or street sign. And on top of the cost of replacing damaged goods, the city would also be able to charge back the hourly costs of police and firefighters who have to respond to accidents.

Many other cities already have a similar law in place.

Councilmember Kazi Miah said adopting the ordinance is a "no-brainer."

Councilmember Stackpoole, with tongue only slightly in cheek, questioned whether the law could include costs of lost service from Comcast.

Said City Manager Cooper: "It's called competition."

File the following discussion under "I am woman, hear me roar."

Kidding.

A heated discussion took place on whether to reinstate the city manager's secretary back to full time with benefits. Councilmember Stackpoole said if the secretary – who is a woman – has to take benefit cuts then men should also be required to do the

Continued on page 7

As required by AFSCME contract, the City of Hamtramck is in the process of creating a List of Eligibility for accounting positions. Experience related to accounting procedures and general ledger maintenance preferred. Complete job description available online at www.hamtramck.us. Applications are available at City Hall or on the City's website. Send completed applications via mail to HR Dept.,

3401 Evaline, Hamtramck, MI, 48212,
email: jneel@hamtramckcity.com
or fax: (313) 872-0399.

Respond by 12/17/10 - 4:00 p.m. Qualified applicants will be notified of testing date and location. The City of Hamtramck is an EEOC employer.

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This week at the library...

Holiday Concert "History of Black Madonna" - Friday, December 17 at 6 p.m. Holiday concert with a musical history of Black Madonna will be presented by local musician and historian, Kazimierz Jedralczyk. Everyone is invited. Refreshments will be served.

ESL Class for Beginners - Saturday, December 18 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, December 18 at noon. All children are invited to storytime featuring "Dewey's Christmas at the Library" by Vicki Myron. Afterwards, we will make photo frames from gingerbread.

Computer Classes for Beginners - Tuesday, December 21 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, December 21 at 5:30 p.m. Jide Aje is the instructor for the reading and conversation ESL classes.

Math Club Meeting - Tuesday, December 21 at 4 p.m. Mr. Nuo is the instructor for the math club and math tutoring.

Movie Wednesday - Wednesday, December 22 at 3:30 p.m. Every Wednesday is movie day at the library. Come and enjoy our fea-

ture presentation, which includes popcorn and snacks.

Computer Classes for Intermediate Users - Thursday, January 6 at 11:30 a.m. Adults with basic computer skills can enhance their computer literacy each Thursday at the library. Number of participants is limited to available computers.

Winter Teen Club - Thursday, January 6 at 5 p.m. Members of the Teen Club will make their own "ginger bread buddy" for the upcoming holiday celebrations (registration required). Everyone is invited to join.

Jeopardy at the Library - Thursday, January 6 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.

Meeting of the Library Board - Tuesday, January 13 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.

Special Thanks for Donations - Norm Anderson, books and magazines; Anna Harrington Hughes, books.

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.



"Pearl"

travel time.

(Editor's note: Bob, getting a little red in the face were we? And to clear the matter, Mayor Majewski later told The Review she has no travel plans for the holidays.)

As it turned out, the council decided against cancelling the Dec. 28 meeting.

Moving on, Councilmember Tom Jankowski questioned how to bring back an issue already voted on and approved. After a short discussion he was allowed to offer a resolution to rescind permission for a party store to open on Lumpkin St. in the southend.

Jankowski said he brought the issue back onto the table because the party store owner plans to sell beer and wine. Jankowski said he is opposed to that.

(Editor's note: Hypocrisy alert! Jankowski later in the meeting objected to revisiting a motion by the council to cut the city manager's secretary from a full-time position with benefits to part time with no benefits. He said the council should not get into the business of reversing prior decisions in these financially unstable times because "we need to steady the ship." Aye, Captain.)

Community & Economic De-

velopment Director Jason Friedmann cautioned that before the council goes much further with the issue, he said the only thing the council approved was for permission for the party store to open in an otherwise residential-only zoned area.

He said part of the deal was that the party store could not sell beer and wine – which he had to repeat several times – slowly. The would-be party store owner must get permission to sell beer and wine from the council or state.

Oh, we're just getting warmed up.

Councilmember Gordon said she had a "simple" question, which turned out to be not so simple. She questioned whether the city has control over how the library spends its money.

City Manager Bill Cooper said the city doesn't control the library's budget, and that the Library Board has that power. However, in further discussion of the library's budget, Cooper said the city has oversight on whether the library properly bids out contracts.

Gordon's question dovetailed into a proposal to separate the library's employee pension costs from the city's costs. Library employees belong to the same union that City Hall employees belong

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Second Front Page

Governmental genie wishes you some grants

By Ian Perrotta

Here's a great gift this Christmas: a grant from the government.

Thanks to the city's strong relationship with the state, that's actually an option this year. There are currently several grants waiting to be applied for, and the only thing they need is you.

The first grant available is one you may have read about already – the Brownfield Redevelopment Incentive. To qualify for this grant through the Environmental Protection Agency a property must be designated as a Brownfield, which means that it may have stored or used hazardous materials at one time – including asbestos.

If a property has been declared a Brownfield, it can be granted a "tax freeze" that effectively freezes the tax rate at its current level for up to 30 years. Though the property owner must still pay taxes, any amount that is collected above the frozen tax level is returned to the tax-

payer, with the balance paid by the government. This type of grant is one of several that property developer Mark Hausner tapped into to help fund the improvement project in the four-story building at Jos. Campau and Belmont.

The second type of grant is similar to the first in the fact that it is also a tax freeze. This grant, called the Obsolete Property Recovery Act (OPRA), freezes taxes on commercial buildings for a period of up to 12 years. To qualify, a building must be deemed "functionally obsolete." This can mean a number of things, which makes the grant's umbrella large enough to encompass a variety of buildings.

A third type of grant available is one through the Upper Story Rental Rehabilitation Program. This grant, offered by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), is a cash grant used to build or revitalize residential apartments on top of commercial buildings. Buildings that meet this guideline

can qualify for up to \$25,000 per unit for existing residences and up to \$35,000 for new units.

After the building has been renovated, the owner must then offer the residential units at an affordable price for at least five years in order to be recouped for costs. Hamtramck Community & Economic Development Director Jason Friedmann said that the goal of this grant is to bring more people into the city to live in mixed-use buildings.

"The idea is that it will get more people to live in the business district," he said. "And hopefully that will create more business overall. And with more people living in the area, it will create a safer environment, which will hopefully lead to even more businesses coming in."

If you would like more information on these and other grants available through the city of Hamtramck contact Jason Friedmann at (313) 876-7700, extension 294.

Hamtramck football teams score big in national tournament

By Ian Perrotta

In a few years, Hamtramck High's football team may be a force to reckon with.

Well, that may be the case if the success of the MC All-star teams from Hamtramck is any indication. Last week, the two teams – a 7th grade and 9th grade team – were in Orlando, Florida to compete in the American Youth Football League's national championship.

The teams each played in the Big City Football League, which was founded in 2006. After a long hard season, both MC Allstar teams finished as league champions. This gave them the opportu-

nity to play in the tournament, but not before they raised \$13,000 through fundraisers to offset the cost of getting and staying there.

Once at the tournament, the Hamtramck teams were in competition with a field of 140 teams each. Incredibly, though they were in just their first year ever, both teams made it to the final round and ultimately finished in third place.

"It was an amazing run," said Kevin Binion, founder of the Big City Football League. "This was just the first year of this team, and they'll probably only get better."

Obituaries

MILLER

Rita M. Miller, 79, died December 13, 2010.

Mrs. Miller was a Hamtramck resident.

She is survived by her daughter, Maureen (Jim); son, Gary (Terri); sister, Elsie Boger; and seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements were made by Krot Funeral

Home, and a memorial service was held on December 16 at the funeral home.



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Friday, December 24 • Christmas Vigil - Family Mass4:00 pm
Solemn Midnight Mass12:00 am
*Celebrated in English and Polish (Preceded by the singing of Christmas Carols at 11:30 pm)
Saturday, December 25 • Christmas Day
Mass in Polish.....10:00 am Mass in English12:00 Noon
Sunday, December 268:30, 10:00, 12:00
Friday December 31 - New Years Eve.....4:00 pm
Saturday, January 1, 2011 • Blessed Virgin Mary10:00 am Polish ..4:00 pm English
Sunday, January 2, 2011 • Epiphany of the Lord8:30 am, 10:00 am Polish
Chalk and Incense available12:00 Noon

Thank You
to Wally Tripp, President of R.O.A. (Ranking Officer Association Union) for volunteering to provide music for our Christmas party. Your participation in this very successful event, and ongoing support of our community are greatly appreciated.
I would also like to thank everyone who attended for making this a truly memorable gathering.
— John Ulaj and Everyone at The Review

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Capo Lounge: No Cover Charge. Tuesdays – Karaoke, Thursdays are Thirsty Thursdays Ladies Night live DJ; Dress to Impress. Fridays and Saturdays – Live DJs. Sunday is SEXY SUNDAY live DJ 11625 Jos. Campau (313) 365-CAPO (2276).

Carbon Lounge: 11474 Joseph Campau.

Celina's Sports Bar: Lots of TV's, sports and hot women, 11667 Jos. Cam-

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Jeans: As they say, characters are always welcomed, 12002 Jos. Campau; (313) 892-9689.

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Motor City Sports Bar: Great burgers and beer – \$1 domestic beers every Tuesday, draft beer \$1 every day, \$2 well mixed drinks every day, best char-grilled burgers, hands-down – put us to the test, karaoke every Thursday, 9122 Jos. Campau (313) 875-4710.

Painted Lady: Mondays – \$1 beer night w/ Todd. Tuesdays – B-movie Night. Wednesdays – Opium Den; Thursdays – Honky Tonk/Ladies Night, \$2 wells; 2930 Jacob; (313) 874-2991

Paycheck's Lounge: 2932 Caniff, (313) 874-0909 – Live music every weekend, cheap drinks, open all day.

Small's: Sundays - Nurse your weekend hangover with Dave and Melody, \$1 off everything. Acoustic performances on select nights. Mondays - Karaoke with Squid and Jared! Tuesday - Trivia Night! Game starts at 9 p.m. with tons of great prizes and cheap drinks; 10339 Conant, (313) 873-1117. Free WIFI.

7 Brothers Bar: Hamtramck's hippest hangout for actors, 11831 Jos. Campau; (313) 365-6576.

Skipper's Hamtown: Hamtramck's newest neighborhood "almost dive" bar. Skipper's offers a wide selection of bottled beer as well as six non-alcoholic beverages. Stop by for a good drink and a great time!; 9735 Conant at Evaline.

Suzy's Bar: Chat with owner Suzy – one of the best local bar owners; 2942 Evaline; (313) 872-9016; Free WIFI.

Turtle & Inky's Place: Small and cozy 2656 Carpenter.

Whiskey in the Jar: There's likely few Irish folks to be found here, but there is plenty of blarney. Seriously, though, a great dive bar and the fellow drinkers are easy to chat up, 2741 Yemans.

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Hamtown's movers and shakers...

By Ian Perrotta

Who she is: Named the 2008 Toyota Literacy Teacher of the Year, **Katy Kibbey** is the Family Literacy Director for Wayne Metro Community Action Agency. She oversees the Even Start Family Literacy program, which provides adult education, parenting development, parent-child interactive literacy and on-site early childhood education for the children of enrolled adults.

Katy is also in charge of the Early Learning Communities, a program that provides child development training workshops to any caregiver of young children from birth to age seven. In addition, she coordinates both US Citizenship and computer classes at the Wayne Metro site for the community at large.

And if that's not enough, she volunteers as the secretary of Hamtramck United Social Services (HUSS). We recently caught up with Kibbey to find out more about what she does.

Wow, that's quite an impressive bio – there wasn't even enough room to include the fact that you got your undergrad degree from the University of Michigan in Honors English/Communications and a Master's in Literacy Education from Madonna University. It seems like you've always been pretty busy, how do you find time to balance your work and private life? Or by now have the two become one-and-the-same?

Kibbey: The term workaholic would apply to me, but it's only because I have a strong



work ethic and truly enjoy my work. I do try to keep work and life in balance, but like everyone, I sometimes have to remind myself to stop and smell the roses.

That's an interesting way to look at it. Speaking of professional life, before coming to Wayne Metro in 2002 you were a third and fourth grade teacher in the metro-Detroit area. How did you make the transition from teaching to administrating? Was it hard to leave teaching behind, or was it a natural step in your career course? And what was your favorite part about the job?

Kibbey: In my last position, working for Edison Charter schools, I transitioned from lead classroom teacher to national mathematics consultant. I was responsible for training and providing on-site support to teachers on the Everyday Mathematics curriculum in California, Texas, Georgia and Nevada. While it was supposed to be 30% travel, it became 90% travel, particularly after 9/11. I came to the realization that I wanted to stay grounded in Michigan and subsequently left the position. By luck I answered Wayne Metro's ad in a local newspaper for the Even Start Coordinator position. I was ex-

cited about the opportunity with Even Start because it combined many of the things I am passionate about: quality teaching, helping families and children meet with educational success and literacy (Books! Books! Books!)

Now that you work at Wayne Metro, what's a typical work day like? Most people know the Wayne Metro building by the giant crayons on its fence, but what exactly goes on in there?

Kibbey: Wayne Metro's Early Childhood Center is a busy place everyday! In addition to our Even Start program, we provide on-site Head Start services to over 200 children. Our agency outreach staff also provides weekly office hours for Weatherization services, Employment and Training assistance, seasonal Tax Preparation, and Michigan Enrolls. Our Early Learning Communities also offers weekly workshops on child development for parents and other caregivers of young children.

In addition to working at Wayne Metro, you are also actively involved in HUSS. In fact, if I have to say so myself, you practically keep the organization running by keeping everyone updated and informed through your role as secretary. What brought you into the fold at HUSS, and even though your plate is already full, why do you think it's so important to volunteer?

Kibbey: I first attended a HUSS meeting at the invitation of one of my colleagues, who was serving as HUSS President at the

Continued on page 10

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Go Out on the Hamtown!

Review: Opinion Page

New governor is still silent on Hamtramck's future

Lately, we've been overwhelmed by the ongoing developments of the city's financial woes.

Without a doubt, Hamtramck is facing tough times, and it's beginning to wear on residents and city employees. The coming year will be full of new twists and turns for the city.

With a new governor coming on board, it's hard to say which way the winds will blow for the city. That's because Gov-Elect Rick Snyder has refused to say much about anything he plans to do.

And that begs the question: how in the heck did this guy get elected? Seriously, he managed to win the election by a whopping majority without divulging specifically what he plans to do for the ailing state and its financially distressed communities.

Why would voters support a guy who refuses to lay out his specific plans? We blame our local Detroit

dailies, both of which enthusiastically endorsed Snyder, for failing to do their job. The papers turned their backs on pressuring Snyder to talk about specifics, and instead allowed him to get away in his campaign by blathering generalities.

Recently, though, Snyder was reported saying that if anyone comes to his office asking for money, forget it.

So, what does that mean for Hamtramck, which was promised a loan to see it through for another year?

Will Hamtramck get the loan, or will it be allowed to file for bankruptcy, which is what City Manager Bill Cooper wants to do?

This is has been a frustrating process, but then again, these are uncertain times.

One thing we know: Hamtramck is resilient. It has survived economic crises in the past. We are strong enough to survive this one.

But this time around, the

only people who can preserve our city the way it is today are city employees. The city needs to lessen its cost of health insurance.

Employees have refused to budge on this issue – even though they could conceivably get broader coverage under a less expensive plan.

It's their call.

Some employees – especially those in the Police Department – have interpreted our urging for concessions as bashing. Far from it. We are just pointing out that refusing to take contract concessions will only lead to the possible loss of their jobs.

We don't mean to dump on city employees, but there is nowhere else to turn. Hamtramck will survive one way or another; it just may operate drastically different in the coming months.

Odds & Ends

Donating ... A big thanks goes out the Hamtramck Knights of Columbus for handing over a nice fat check to John "Hippo" Hynarowicz to help offset costs for his annual Christmas party for special needs kids in the Hamtramck Public Schools. On hand to present the check were Fred Masters and Joe Marecki.



Thanks guys, your donation helped save the day.

Jammin' ... Hamtramck's own Danny D will be putting on his Christmas show next Thursday at the New Dodge Lounge. We're not sure what he has in store but you can bet he will deliver something extra for the holidays.

He hits the stage from 9 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.

New Dodge is also offering free food and beers for a buck. We'll see you there.

Trailing ... Be sure to stop by the Senior Plaza apartment building on Holbrook next Tuesday evening (at 7 p.m.).

That's when the city's Di-

rector of Community & Economic Development, Jason Friedmann, will talk about ongoing plans for a bike trail. The trail has been a long time in the making, and Tuesday's discussion will give us the latest on where it's heading.

The meeting is sponsored by Preserve Our Parks.

Contract talks ... The public school district has been negotiating with its teachers' union about contract concessions in order to stem a nearly \$3 million deficit. If the district does not get concessions, expect to see a number of teachers receive layoff notices.

But there is one snag. We've heard grumblings from some teachers that their union leadership hasn't been exactly forthcoming about what offers the district is making. Here's a suggestion: you can go around the leadership by appealing to higher-ups in the union.

Let them know you are not satisfied with the representation you are receiving and demand some accountability.

Your livelihoods are at stake folks, and there are some who are more interested in feathering their own nests than what happens to their so-called union brothers and sisters.

Block Club Corner ...

First Thursdays, 4 Cs Neighborhood Watch (if you live or have a business between Carpenter, Conant, Caniff, and Campau), 7 p.m. Hamtramck Recreation Center, 1135 Charest, lower level

Second Mondays, Eastside Block Club (if you live or have a business East of Conant) 7 p.m. Our Lady Queen of Apostles Church, Activity Center, entrance on Harold Street

Second Wednesdays, 3 C7 Neighborhood Watch (if you live or have a business between Carpenter, Campau, Caniff, and I-75) People's community Services Senior Center on Caniff, across from the Public Library

Third Wednesdays, Midtown Neighborhood Watch (if you live or have a business between Caniff, Campau, Holbrook and I-75) 6:30 p.m. in the Convent of St. Florian's Church, on Florian Street

Fourth Thursdays, Southend Neighborhood Watch 6:30 p.m. in the People's Community Center on Joseph Campau and Danforth, for all residents and businesses

south of Holbrook.

The Central Neighborhood Watch (the area bounded by Caniff, Conant, Holbrook and Jos. Campau) will meet the first Wednesday of each month, 7 p.m., at the HATCH building, 3456 Evaline. For more information, go online to hamtramckCBC@gmail.com. Facebook: Hamtramck Central Block Club group page.

The Hamtramck Housing Commission Neighborhood Watch is now called the W75 and it meets the second Wednesday of every month at 12025 Dequindre (housing commission activities center) at 1:30 pm.

Neighborhood Watch meetings are open to the public and all are welcome to attend. If additional information is needed contact the Weed and Seed office at (313) 281-8150.

For more information about Hamtramck's network of block clubs, go online to: www.hamtramckblockclubs.com



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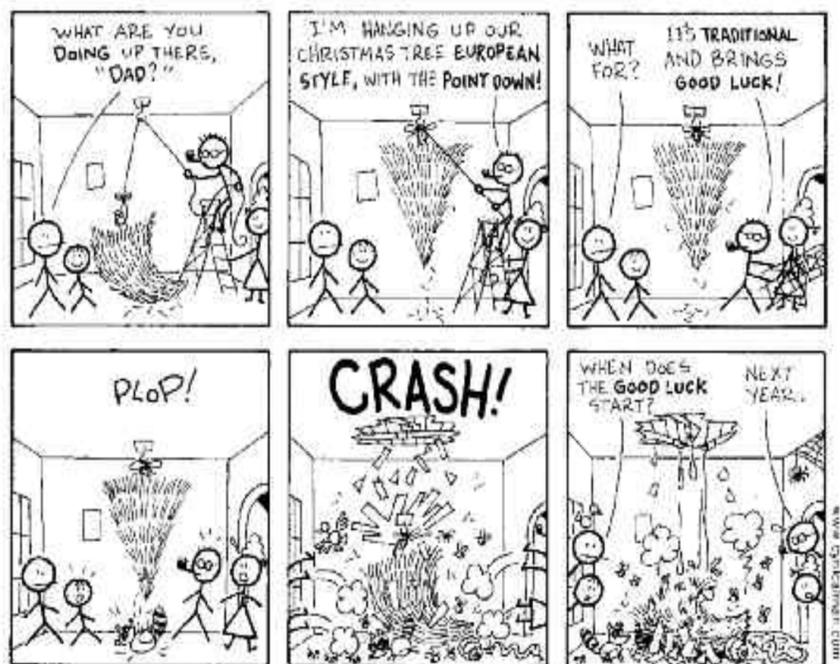
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The Amazing CYNICALMAN™ by Matt Fezell



Hamtramck student is this year's 'Sojourner' essay winner

By Catherine Gasior
Special to The Review

Everybody could always use a bit more cash.

Nafisa Nuzhat, a Hamtramck High School senior, was able to cash in on extra money by simply entering an essay contest. Nuzhat was the winner of the "Sojourner Truth Essay Contest," presented by Sen. Martha Scott through her M. G. Scott Foundation.

She received \$500 as an award for constructing the best essay that elaborated on a Sojourner Truth quote and connected it to modern times.

Nuzhat used her own childhood struggles, which included a horrible burn resulting in a lifelong scar, in

order to explain Truth's quote: "If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these together ought to be able to turn it back and get it right side up again."

Nuzhat's take on that quote questioned society's view on what is considered beautiful.

"Now, I have the courage to face anyone who would have negative comments about people and their beauty," Nuzhat explained in her essay. "I have grown to love my life and all that comes with it. Now I see the true meaning and believe that I have the potential to change the world."

She admires her mother, teachers and friends that

helped her "turn her life right side up" and help her overcome adversity.

Nuzhat plans to attend the University of Michigan and study genetics, where she hopes to find a cure for mutation diseases.

"I believe every woman is special regardless of their looks, and when they are mistreated for an imperfection, I'll be there the first one standing by them," she said. "I'll be there helping them get through and I'll be there telling them they are beautiful."

(Catherine Gasior is a Hamtramck-based freelance writer. You can contact her at news@thehamtramckreview.com.)

This year's winning essay ...

Hamtramck High School senior Nafisa Nuzhat is this year's winner of the annual "Sojourner Truth Essay Contest," sponsored by Sen. Martha Scott through her M. G. Scott Foundation. Here is Nuzhat's winning essay:

Being born on St. Patrick's Day, you'd think all the Irish luck and clover leaves are behind me, showering me with strength and charisma. Think again.

It's been 17 years since I've started stumbling over flat surfaces and minute objects. I was only eight months old when I first decided to climb up the study table, only to topple over an extensive array of files, pens and office supplies. Thankfully, I landed safely on the daybed that

rested on the right side of the table.

This was the beginning of a life that consists of trips and tumbles. It's November now and I'll be attending college in less than a year. My experiences being on the minority side of life have opened my eyes. I aspire to become a geneticist and hope to find a cure for gene mutation diseases. I believe every woman is special regardless of their looks, and when they are mistreated for an imperfection, I'll be there the first one standing by them; I'll be there helping them get through and I'll be there telling them they are beautiful. I've learned it the hard way, and I hope no one ever goes through what I did. This is a memoir of an event that turned my world . .

. right side up.

When I was three years old, because of my constant clumsiness and/or reckless curiosity, I landed myself under a bubbling hot pail of water that my aunt was carrying. The minutes that followed were a jumble of shrieks, clamors and tears. I ran back to my mom, my purple turtle-neck sweater drenched in water, burning and sizzling my skin to depths I couldn't fathom. My cries were loud enough to eclipse my mom's. I was taken to the emergency unit immediately afterwards and the doctors informed my mom about my third-degree burn on my neck. Because of the turtleneck, most of the damage was on my neck and everywhere else it was only

Continued on page 7

Street Life

Hamtramck, a home away from home for some

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

By Walter Wasacz

It's always nice to open up a computer – or, now, a phone – and stumble across a story about the real Hamtramck.

When I say "real" what I really mean is authentic "experience" – not a news story or an opinion about politics, finance or the intervention of law. That's out there, too, of course, the latest round of reporting centered around (in no particular order) budgets, city managers, unions, General Motors, Detroit, the State of Michigan, bankruptcy.

That's some hard stuff, and it's getting play across the country and around the web – the latest piece (largely sym-

a blog called Visualingual, which originates from a design studio in a Cincinnati neighborhood with the charming name Over-the-Rhine.

The writer talks about how each time she is in Detroit, she makes "a customary stop in Hamtramck," where she always does the same things: make pilgrimages to Srodek's, Polish Art Center



Polish-Americana in Brooklyn, one neighborhood above hipster magnet Williamsburg) and (Hamtramck) isn't at all like Detroit – it's dense and walkable, with independently



pathetic to Hamtramck's position in this dispute) published this week in the online zine, the Huffington Post.

But to see Hamtramck differently, for assets that transcend the news of the day, to see it for values that go beyond the headlines, is where I come in. As you all do, Street Life readers, if you invest your heart and soul in a place. And if that place takes a hold of you and just won't let go.

Where I stumbled was into

and Under the Eagle.

But she also puts into perspective that Hamtramck is a fluid, changing community, not the same as when she attended Cranbrook (exactly when, she doesn't say), and now increasingly, she writes, "a mixture of Yemeni, Albanian, Bangladeshi and Polish."

She puts a fine point on the distinct nature of this place by saying it's "more Polish and still less hipster than Greenpoint (my note: Greenpoint is the nexus center of

owned stores..."

Her words muse on the fleeting nature of "home," but the permanence of "place." She wonders how different her life might have been had she grown up in Hamtramck. She comes back to her theme throughout her short piece, which can be found in its entirety here: <http://visualingual.wordpress.com/>

And she concludes it this way, with a mix and match of another Brooklyn neighborhood: "Actually Coney Island is a kind of home to me, even though I've never lived there. Hamtramck, too, has a strange hold on my heart, as the home that might have been."

It's a nice read, strewn with photos of landmark local businesses. It tells us a lot about what we have here, too often taken for granted or hidden by the fog of conflict over money or power.

For parody polka rockers the Polish Muslims, it's a homecoming

Continued from front page

Given their uber-longevity, what might the end look like for a band that once backed a commercial for the now-itself-defunct Highland Appliance

(including with voice-over work) sometime back around 1992? Would they willingly let the group fade into the sunset, or prefer to have to be dragged squealing from the stage – or maybe simply collapse upon it?

Kondrat ponders only briefly.

"I guess, yeah, we'll go until we have a total revolt of our fan base, or one of us drops dead up there," he philosophizes.

Though now streamlined down to a mere eight members from a former 11 (including constant core mates, and ex-Reruns Kondrat, Dave Uchalik and Al "Phife", along with former Cheaters member Mike Miller), there is always a chance the maturing hipsters may one day find

there's simply no interest left.

For one thing, there's always the siren call of the Hamtramck Labor Day Festival, where folks traditionally line the front of the stage to follow the swells of their accordion-based boogie.

For Kondrat and his pals, it's a sight perhaps too dear to imagine it gone. And so the band plays on.



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This year's winning essay ... Continued from page

first-degree burns. I was taken to the ICU for clean-up and dressing. In the beginning, I was given a very small dose of anesthesia, but none of it worked. My eyes were wide open and my screams still loud and clear. They had to inject me with a half dose

of anesthesia for me to doze off. To this day, the memory kills me inside. I still carry the scar, my mom still carries the painful memory, and my aunt - she carries the worst of all, the guilt. It's been 14 years and she still can't come to

terms with her accident. Tears escape her eyes every time our paths cross. I am still pelted with her apologies and I forgive her, but not the consequences.

My school life became a soap opera. I was questioned an interrogated by many; some would make fun of the deformity, and others would feel pity. There would be times when I'd come home crying about being called 'Frankenstein's invention,' and my mom would sit there beside me, arms wrapped around tight, consoling me. I felt her tears on my scalp, hot and steady until she moved her hands off of me and wiped them away. I felt like my world was slowly slipping out of my hand and my future disintegrating into the blackness of human cruelty. It was like that for a while until I moved to America.

Here I have friends who stand by me no matter what, and my teachers are one of the most important pillars of

my success. Not once was I called ugly and I was never questioned about the scar. I feel normal now.

It has been tough on me but I believe the worst is over. Now, I have the courage to face anyone who would have negative comments about people and their beauty. I have grown to love my life and all that comes with it. Now I see the true meaning and believe that I have the potential to change the world. The quote by Sojourner Truth, "If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these together ought to be able to turn it back and get it right side up again," has become the mantra of my life. I was clumsy, naïve, and sensitive. Living that way would've turned my world upside down. But my mom and all those teachers and friends stepped into my life, changed it, and turned it right side up again.

City Hall Insider ...



Continued from page 2

same thing.

(Editor's note: Still have your decoder ring out? The strident defense of the secretary comes a week after the council reversed its decision to downgrade the Director of Public Works - a man (Marty Ladd) - from full-time to three-quarter-time - whatever that is.)

City Manager Cooper pointed out that the cut amounts to a savings of only \$31,000. Councilmember Miah said that the council has to start somewhere to find savings and that each cut adds up.

Miah also added that if a full-time secretary is needed so badly, then Cooper should take a cut in salary.

A moment of uncomfortable silence followed that comment.

The council split 50-50 in the vote to bring back the secretary to full-time status, with Councilmembers Shahab Ahmed, Cathie Gordon and Catrina Stackpoole voting in favor.

That tie vote required Mayor Majewski to cast her vote, which she did by voting in favor of restoring the cut.

On the issue of applying for a state loan, the discussion went in several directions. Cooper said if the state did approve the loan for \$3 million, the city would have 20 years to pay it back with a very low interest rate.

He said the loan will give him time to try to convince the city's labor unions to agree to contract concessions, most notably by changing to a less expensive health

insurance plan.

Cooper said if the council fails to take any action, the city would eventually run out of cash to meet payroll and pay bills.

He said if the state appoints an emergency financial manager to run the city, the first thing he or she would do is raise the property tax rate to its legal limit.

Councilmember Jankowski needed Cooper about what he said was a lack of financial information for the council to review and what exactly Cooper wants the city's unions to give up.

The council agreed that information was crucial before going ahead and applying for a loan. Long story made short, Cooper said he would have that information for the Dec. 28 meeting and that the council will decide whether to move forward with the loan at its Jan. 11 meeting.

Oh, this meeting. ... There was more, but we'll save that for next week.

The meeting, however, reminded Insider of this chorus from the tune "Mad World," which was part of the soundtrack from the movie, "Donny Darko."

"And I find it kind of funny, I find it kind of sad

These dreams in which I'm dying, Are the best I've ever had

I find it hard to tell you, I find it hard to take

When people run in circles it's a very very....

Mad World, Mad World"

Written by Gary Jules

Coming Events

DECEMBER 17, Friday, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. - State Se. Martha Scott will host a free senior citizen Holiday luncheon at Soul Harvest Ministries (16300 Woodward in Highland Park). Space is limited so make a reservation as soon as possible by calling, (800) 726-8878.

DECEMBER 21, Tuesday, 7 p.m. - Preserve Our Parks meets every third Tuesday of the month, at the Senior Plaza at 2620 Holbrook. Hamtramck's Director of Community & Economic Development, Jason Friedmann, will talk about bike trails in the city. For more information, call Dick Kaleski at (313) 874-2651.

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- 20140 14 Mile Rd. - \$45,000 NEW!
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- 46634 Shimmel - \$139,900 NEW!
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There was big news all year-long Continued from front page

building it, pumped hundreds of thousands of dollars into the local economy and houses 200 employees who oversee thousands of clients.

The development was much needed in the city's blighted

also meant planning for the upcoming 2010 national Census. The count officially kicked off in April, but the city prepared well before by forming a Census committee to make sure our ethnic neighborhoods partici-

ment has had a rocky relationship with the community over the years. There have been accusations of discrimination and excessive use of force. Well, those accusations reared up again after the arrest of a local pastor.

The NAACP and other civil rights activists held a rally in Zussman Park, right across from the police station in City Hall, to protest the behavior of some officers. Activists pointed out that there are only three African-American officers in the department, which has about 50 officers and detectives.

Months later, one of those African-American officers filed a racial discrimination lawsuit

That lawsuit was settled for over \$200,000.

And there were more police-related developments. A new state law was proposed to close down so-called speed traps throughout the state. Hamtramck was cited by an independent organization for having several speed traps.

It was also noted that Hamtramck, like many other communities, failed to conduct street surveys to calculate appropriate speed limits, which is required by state law. And to make matters more embarrassing, the union representing Hamtramck's police officers promised that officers working a special traffic enforcement program would issue at least

150 students.

In short, the district is facing a \$2.8 million deficit and will be forced to close down Dickinson West Elementary School next year. The school is located in the former St. Lad's school, which drains the district of lease money.

There were some other questionable money issues within the school district. But this time it was a case of an embarrassment of riches. In the Recreation Department, some \$5 million a year is collected from a special tax.

Just where does that money go? Over half of it goes directly into the pockets of employees. The remainder of the money is spent on what appears to be over-inflated projects, according to study conducted by The Review of the Recreation Department's budgets and projects.

For example, the Recreation Department spent over \$115,000 on a spit-sized splash pad – costing about twice more than what other communities have spent on

was for one bathroom for men and one bathroom for women. Worse yet, the restrooms are closed most of the time.

Rec officials said they keep the restrooms closed because of the threat of vandalism, which posed the question: why build it in the first place?

After years of waiting, a dream came true. The city's Historical Commission was able to tap into a state grant to purchase the former PLAV Post 1 on Holbrook to convert it into the city's first-ever historical museum.

Fundraising for the new museum is ongoing, but there should be something in place for the public within the year.

There was also good news over at the Hamtramck Housing Commission. For the third year in a row, the city's public housing agency earned the rating of "High Performer."

The federal housing agency HUD gave Hamtramck that rating based on the commission's management of its 400 low-income apartment units and for coming within budget.



northend where one business after another closed down in recent years. Mayor Karen Majewski noted that the site of the new building was the former Woodrow W. Woody's famed Buick dealership.

Woody was a well-known businessman in town and was also known for his selfless philanthropy. The new state building was aptly named after Woody.

"It's a concrete reminder that we move forward only by recognizing our past," said Mayor Karen Majewski at the ribbon cutting.

If only the rest of the year looked so optimistic.

The beginning of the year

pated.

The Census happens only once every 10 years, and the population count is used to calculate how much each city will receive in federal grants and projects. Just as every vote counts in an election, so does every resident when it comes to the Census: the more residents we get counted, the more Hamtramck would be in the pipeline for federal grants.

Ah ... lofty words indeed. Sad fact, though, is from what we heard, the Hamtramck population count will be down a thousand or so despite the city's best attempt to "get counted."

Hamtramck's Police Depart-



against the department, saying a supervisor used the "N" word in talking to him and denied him participation in a training exercise.

\$60,000 a month in traffic tickets.

Police Departments, technically, aren't supposed to have quota systems.

OK, let's move on beyond the Police Department.

The public school district also suffered financial problems. The state was forced to cut back on the money it shares with all of the school districts in the state, and at the same time Hamtramck lost an additional \$1 million in student revenue because of a loss of



similar projects.

Perhaps the most eye-raising expense was for an outdoor restroom at Playfair Park that cost taxpayers \$55,000. That

Housing Executive Director Kevin Kondrat said there will be more "big" news in the months to come. But that will be a story for next year.

The spirit of giving is alive and well at Hamtramck's 31st District Court

By Ian Perrotta

It may not be December 25 yet, but it's not too early for a Christmas miracle.

That was the case at the 31st District Court yesterday (Dec. 16) when the employees presented the proceeds from their casual Friday fundraising drive to two needy Hamtramck families. After a year of collecting at least one dollar from each worker, there was enough money to purchase a \$150 gift card from the shopping store Meijer for each family.

It was the second year that the court employees went casual for a cause. Judge Paul Paruk initiated the practice last year after hearing about a similar idea at a ceremony for Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson. Enough money was raised this year to also provide a gift basket for a senior citizen who lives alone with his dog on Holbrook St.

At the ceremony, Judge Paruk chatted with this year's recipients, who were referred

by Holbrook Elementary School and Our Lady Queen of Apostles Church. As he spoke with them, he learned about their situations and circumstances.

Also learning about the situations facing the recipients were the other recipients, and that was when the true meaning of Christmas shined through. After hearing about

Laura Porterfield explained that even though her family faces hardships, she is fortunate enough to still be employed in this economy. She said that in light of the Hughes' situation she would feel best if her family's gift card could be given them.

"It wouldn't be right to accept it," she said. "So if it's alright, we would like to pass



Employees of the 31st District Court went casual for a cause this year. On casual Fridays they each donated at least \$1 toward helping needy families during the holiday season.

the struggles facing Carmen Hughes and her family, Laura and Glen Porterfield generously announced that they would like to donate their gift card to the Hughes family.

it on."

There weren't any objections, but it's safe to say that if there were, they would have been overruled.



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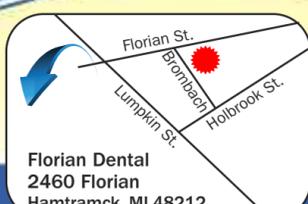
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What's the 'news story of the year'? Continued from front page

Hamtramck's financial meltdown is a result of a perfect storm of things coming together: the ongoing rise in costs of healthcare coverage for employees, decreasing state revenue sharing, falling house values, loss of tax collections, joblessness, escalating pension costs and the top: Detroit withheld tax money owed to Hamtramck from the GM Poletown plant to the tune of \$3 million.

That was \$3 million the city expected to receive. Without it, Hamtramck will be without cash on hand to pay its bills. The city is disputing Detroit's action and has filed a lawsuit.

That lawsuit could potentially drag on for years.

By the end of January, Hamtramck will be \$3.3 million in the hole and won't have so much as a nickel to pay employees and contractors. In 2009, city officials were boasting about how healthy the city was, financially speaking.

By the early weeks of 2010, however, that rosy picture suddenly turned ugly when Detroit withheld Poletown tax money.

There was talk of asking voters to raise property taxes to make up the city's budget deficit but City Councilmembers refused to even allow voters to make that decision.

Instead, councilmembers insisted on budget cuts and even the layoffs of police officers and firefighters. However, because of contract requirements, the laying off of

cops and firemen will only send the city deeper into debt because of mandatory minimum staffing levels.

City Manager Bill Cooper has been asking the unions to accept a less expensive health insurance plan but the unions have refused.

In the last month, Hamtramck's financial woes went viral when Cooper asked Gov. Jennifer Granholm's administration permission to file for bankruptcy. Cooper said that going bankrupt would allow him to tear up the city's union contracts and switch to a cheaper health insurance plan.

That move, Cooper said, would save the city \$1-\$2 million a year.

While that request garnered national media attention, Granholm's people were not amused.

They flat out said no to Hamtramck's request, saying there is no legal basis to allow the city to go bankrupt.

Instead, the state offered the city four – yes, four – loan options that would keep the city afloat for another 12 months or so.

Never had anyone seen the state so quickly offer a loan.

Cooper initially declined the offer, however, saying it would only delay the city's financial problems for another year and worse, obligate the city with yet another debt.

So, he again asked the state's OK to go bankrupt. And again the state said no. And then Cooper and the City

Council agreed that, heck, they'll take the loan. The thinking is, the loan of about \$3 million will give the city another year to win over labor unions and get contract concessions, and also maybe force Detroit to make good on those Poletown tax payments.

Sure. At the time we went to print, the city was still looking into a state loan.

The story doesn't end there. You see, Gov. Granholm has only two more weeks left in office. She was termed out of office, and state voters overwhelmingly elected a self-described "nerd" outsider Republican candidate to office: Rick Snyder, who has never held elective office nor mingled with the Lansing crowd.

During his campaign, Snyder refused to say what specifically he would do. And voters still elected him.

We have not been able to penetrate the Snyder circle to find out what he will do about Hamtramck's financial crisis. Will Snyder agree to a loan? Will he allow the city to file for bankruptcy? Or, in a fit of fiscal streamlining, will he force Hamtramck to merge services with Detroit or Highland Park?

For now, Snyder ain't saying. But he was recently quoted saying don't bother come knocking on his door asking for money.

To say the least, Hamtramck's new year is going to be interesting reading.

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Hamtramck, 3134 Belmont. 2 Br. lower, stove-fridge, call for appointment, no pets, 586-604-0553. 1/7

Beautiful 3 Br., lower, hardwood floor, washer-dryer in basement, deposit + references required, \$550/month, 586-484-7466. 12/17

Hamtramck, Belmont St., 2 Br. lower, Wallside windows, \$500/month, clean, **313-492-8302**. 1/7

Hamtramck, 3257 Lehman, upper + lower, 2 Br. each, separate entrance, stove-fridge, washer-dryer, no pets, \$400/month + \$600 security deposit, 586-354-5343. 12/17

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Hamtramck, Roosevelt St., 2 Br. upper, cozy flat, \$400/month + \$425 security, water included, heat and electric separate, near shopping and schools, don't have to cut grass or shovel snow, 248-543-4884. 12/17

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Please note that our deadlines have moved up one day for each of the next two weeks, to Wednesday, Dec. 22 and Dec. 29 at noon, as the paper will hit the streets on Thursday rather than Friday for these two weeks.

Thank you – The Review.

Brrrr ... wintery blast grinds region to a halt

By Charles Sercombe

If this week is any indication of what our winter season is going to be like, book us a flight to Florida right away.

Oh wait, Florida isn't much warmer either.

Bitter cold winds whipped through Hamtramck and the region at the beginning of this week, which also included a dumping of about four inches of snow that turned streets into skating rinks.

Because temperatures were below 20 degrees - not counting the wind chill factor that put us in below zero temps - no amount of salt could melt the ice away. Only the appearance of the sun led to some of the ice melting, but come night, the ice reformed.

Needless to say, driving in Hamtramck was perilous. And driving conditions in the metro region were horrible. On Monday, traffic on I-75

was stop and go for miles up and down.

Raise your hand if your car

were all sold out?

Also raise your hand if you took a spill trying to walk over

Monday and Tuesday because of the icy roads and dangerous sub-freezing wind. And although the kids had two days off, you could hardly tell.

There was barely a sight of any kid outside enjoying the fresh snow and not having to be cooped up inside. It's a good guess that the bitter cold was too much even for youthful exuberance.

Or maybe there is a more cynical explanation: it doesn't matter what the weather is outside, kids would rather be inside playing video games.

School reopened on Wednesday when temperatures crept up to the 20's.

Wow, a relative heat wave.

And on top of it all, winter doesn't officially begin until next week, Dec. 21.

And just to rub it in further, the first day of spring is March 20 - a mere 13 weeks away.



How bad was it to get around town this week? Well, this pair of electric wheelchair users decided it was better to navigate down Jos. Campau on the street instead of using the sidewalk because of the ice and snow.

was so frozen over you couldn't open the doors until the sun melted enough ice. And keep your hand up if your ice scraper broke apart trying to chip the ice off.

And did you try to buy a new ice scraper at the local auto supply stores only to find they

that evil ice.

By the way, Hamtramckans, we noticed way too many people walking around town with the thinnest looking jackets and no hats or gloves. Get thee to a thrift store now.

Hamtramck Public Schools were forced to shut down on

Hamtown's movers and shakers

Continued from page 4

time. Through my attendance at meetings I was able to make connections with other local Hamtramck non-profits and organizations who have become great partners to our agency. As secretary, I enjoy being able to facilitate the sharing of resources and event announcements among the members. I know firsthand that that because of the resource sharing of HUSS members, many of my program parents and children have been able to access services and supports in the city that they would otherwise not have.

What's your favorite part of working in Hamtramck? And what's your favorite part about Hamtramck in general?

Kibbey: I love Hamtramck's diversity. Our program participants are some of the hardest working, motivated, and generous people I have ever met which is also symbolic of the city. I love the relationships my staff has built with our participants- nothing makes me prouder than when a parent gets their GED or graduates from our ESL program or when they come back months and years later to tell us about new successes in their life.

about your private life a little. Are you originally from the Detroit area? Are you married? Kids? What do you like to do in your spare time?

Kibbey: I grew up in Detroit and Northville. I just celebrated my second wedding anniversary. When not working, I like to exercise (pilates, tennis, running - I like to run 5 and 10Ks; read, and travel - when I get the opportunity).

Just two more questions. First, since you're a huge advocate of reading, what's your favorite book? And since it's next week, what's the one thing you definitely want for Christmas?

Kibbey: My favorite adult book is "To Kill a Mockingbird," and my favorite children's book is "Where the Wild Things Are." My Christmas wish is just continued health and happiness for those around me.

Wayne Metro is part of the National Community Action Network, an initiative to help lift people out of poverty, improve lives, and make our community a better place to live. For more information about the services available at the Hamtramck site stop by 12031 Mitchell Street or call (313) 369-4600.

Switching gears, let's talk



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