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Volume 3 No. 5
February 4, 2011
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The Review

Hamtramck

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LIFT every VOICE
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Quick Hits

February is Black History Month, and in Hamtramck our public library has a number of programs celebrating it.

Check out the regular Library Happenings column in this issue. There are programs for youngsters, teens, adults and a special gospel concert later in the month.

Stop by. You'll be amazed at what fun you can have while learning.



Quote of the week ...

Who said this, and what is it about? You can find the quote and the story it belongs to somewhere in the pages of this issue.

"We're just the same people doing the same things that we've been doing. But now you can get the same great taste at a number of different locations."

— HAMTRAMCK'S NEWSPAPER OF RECORD —

Winter comes in with a mighty blast and a lot of TV hysteria

By Charles Sercombe

There's a word that wisecracks have coined for the overblown TV weather hype of snowstorms: "Snowpocalypse."

It makes fun of the over-the-top hysteria of weathercasters who might as well totally wig out and scream, "My God people, take cover!"

The "Snowpocalypse" alert level was ramped up with a very funny graphic created by local rocker, Rick Mills, who is no stranger to Hamtramck's bar scene. We printed it here just for laughs. (Hey, Rick, when are the T-shirts coming out?)

For those of us not in the TV weathercasting business, Tuesday's storm was more like, sheesh, it's February. It's winter. It snows.

Despite the heavy dose of weathermen meltdowns, this time their hyperventilation was, eh, sort of warranted. Sort of.

The brunt of the storm, which was categorized as a blizzard because of the high winds, skipped the Detroit area. But we did get a decent dumping of about five inches, maybe more depending where you live.

Other areas of the nation were hit much harder.

The expected storm forced local schools to close and the metro area in general to shut down.

In Hamtramck, the storm brought back a tradition thought to be extinct: residents putting out chairs to reserve parking spaces. On Wednesday, there were a lot of people digging out their cars. No wonder they didn't want some interloper to come along and steal their parking spot.

"The problem with Hamtramck," said a public school employee plowing the streets near the high school, "is that there is nowhere to put the



Yeah, the TV hype over this week's snowstorm was over the top, but we did get a significant dumping. Here are a few scenes of Hamtramck coping with the five or so inches of snow that fell. That "Snowpocalypse" graphic? Read on.

snow."

There was one thing this so-called monster of storms lacked: A name. Oh yeah, it was called "Blizzard of 2011" by the Channel 7 people, but that was lame.

We think our very own Wally Tripp of the Hamtramck Police Department came up with a winner.

"Ground Hog Day Blizzard."

Since the storm hit full force on Feb. 2 - which was Ground Hog Day - that made perfect sense.

Plus, it's funny. As for that pesky rodent, "Punxsutawney Phil," he didn't see his shadow, which means spring-like weather is coming early, or so the legend goes.

For those of you keeping track of these things, spring officially starts on March 20, a mere seven weeks away.



City hopes state settles Detroit dispute

By Charles Sercombe

Hamtramck officials took their dispute with Detroit to Lansing on Thursday.

Unfortunately, they didn't get back in town before we went to press that afternoon.

City Manager Bill Cooper said Hamtramck and Detroit officials were asked to meet with state Treasurer Andy Dillon to see if a settlement could be reached on the dispute over how much tax revenue Hamtramck is due - if any - from the GM Poletown plant.

Detroit is saying that it has overpaid Hamtramck \$7 million in recent years and has been holding up yearly payments for two years now.

Hamtramck denies it was overpaid and says that regardless of the disagreement, Detroit has been unfairly holding up yearly payments, amounting to \$2 million a year.

Cooper said without the yearly payments, the city is heading into a \$3.5 million budget deficit and payless paydays by March.

Continued on page 2

Traffic tickets cause backlog for court

By Charles Sercombe

Hamtramck drivers, you can ease up ... a little.

A backlog of traffic tickets has led to putting the brakes on the Police Department's overtime traffic patrol program.

City Councilmember Tom Jankowski called for a suspension of the program until the Hamtramck 31st District Court can catch up with the tickets that are pending.

According to the court, tickets issued now won't be heard until May or June.

City Manager Bill Cooper said he hasn't totally pulled over the patrol program. He said instead of allowing officers to work up to 20 hours overtime per pay period, officers can now work no more than eight hours per pay period on the program.

The traffic ticket program was resurrected in recent months in order to avoid layoffs in the Police Department. The union representing the officers promised to deliver at least \$60,000 a month in traffic revenue in exchange for the program.

Continued on page 4

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This week at the library...

Change in the Library Card Fees - Effective February 1, Library card fees will change: Hamtramck residents, no charge; non-residents - \$30/year or \$3/month. All Patrons must present their library cards to access Library Services (such as the Internet, etc.).

Black History Month Contest - "When I Think Africa..." contest is open to all school age children. All forms of media are accepted; for example, poems, short stories, paintings, drawings, photos, songs, essays, etc. All entries must be submitted by February 16, 5 p.m. Winners of the contest will be announced and prizes will be awarded on Saturday, February 19, during Black History Month Program.

ESL Class for Beginners - Saturday, February 5 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, February 5 at noon. All children are invited to the library's Storytime. Celebrate Black History Month by making African Masks during the arts and crafts program after the reading of a book "Water for One, Water for Everyone," by Stephen Swinborne.

Computer Classes for Advanced Users - Monday, February 7 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.

Computer Classes for Beginners - Wednesday, February 9 at 11 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, February 8 at 5:30 p.m. Jide Aje is the instructor for the reading and conversation ESL classes.

Math Club Meeting - Tuesday, February 8 at 4 p.m. Mr. Nuo is the instructor for the math club and math tutoring.

Movie Wednesday - Wednesday, February 9 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.

Black History Month Movie - Thursday, February 10 at 5:30 p.m. "For Colored Girls" is a movie based on Ntozake Shange's Obie Award winning play, a poetic exploration of what is to be of color and a female in this world. Everyone is invited.

Winter Teen Club - Thursday, February 10 at 5:00 p.m. Members of the Teen Club will learn how to make GAMBIA BRACELETS, pretty woven bracelets based on a design from Gambia, West Africa. Everyone is invited to join.

Jeopardy at the Library - Thursday, February 10 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 - 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, February 17 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.

Gospel Music Concert - Saturday, February 19 at 1 p.m. In celebration of Black History Month, the library will host the Inspirational Choir from Corinthian Baptist Church with their annual Gospel Music Concert. Everyone is invited. Refreshments will be served.

Art Exhibit - February 19, 2011. In celebration of Black History Month, the library presents an art exhibit of a local African American artist, Jacqueline Walker. Her paintings will be displayed in the library until March 5, 2011.

Special Thanks for Donations: Mr. Michael Wilk and Jurkiewicz & Wilk Funeral Home for a donation of potted plants to decorate the library.

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.



City of Hamtramck
Department of Community & Economic Development
3401 Evaline Avenue
Hamtramck, Michigan 48212
Telephone: 313.876.7700 Fax: 313.876.7771

The City of Hamtramck Department of Community & Economic Development is currently looking to fill the two (2) following positions to assist in the administration of approximately

\$15.4 M in Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP 2) funding that will be utilized to redevelop mixed-use and residential neighborhoods throughout the City:

1. Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP 2) Assistant Project Manager
2. Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP 2) Acquisitions & Marketing Manager

Both positions are 100% funded through the NSP 2 Grant "Administration" and "Project Delivery" components.

For complete job descriptions please visit www.hamtramck.us or, contact the Department of Human Resources, Hamtramck City Hall, 3401 Evaline, Hamtramck, MI, 313.870.0348

BRIDGE ACADEMY

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(313) 462-6100**

www.bridge-academy.org

A Michigan Public Charter School open to all Michigan students for a free public education is holding

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Bridge Academy is tuition-free

Open Enrollment dates:.....2/22/2011 – 3/08/2011
Monday thru Friday:8:00 am – 3:30 pm
Two Wednesday evenings
2/23/11 and 3/2/11:5:00 pm – 7:00 pm
One Saturday--2/26/11:9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Should we receive more applications than we have room for, a random selection drawing will be held in the presence of a third-party official on March 11, 2011, at 5:00 pm in the school's Gym.

Bridge Academy is a public school academy and does not discriminate on the basis of intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, handicapped status, religion, creed, race, sex, color, or national origin. For questions, please call the school at the above number.

— Bridge Academy welcomes visits from interested applicants. —

FRONTIER INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY

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www.frontier-academy.net

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2011-2012 SCHOOL YEAR**

Frontier International Academy is tuition-free

Open Enrollment dates:2/22/2011 – 3/08/2011
Monday thru Friday:8:00 am – 3:30 pm
Two Wednesday evenings
2/23/11 and 3/2/11:5:00 pm – 7:00 pm
One Saturday--2/26/11:9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Should we receive more applications than we have room for, a random selection drawing will be held in the presence of a third-party official on March 11, 2011, at 5:00 pm at the school.

Frontier International Academy is a public school academy and does not discriminate on the basis of intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, handicapped status, religion, creed, race, sex, color, or national origin. For questions, please call the school at the above number. Frontier International

— Academy welcomes visits from interested applicants. —

City hopes state settles Detroit dispute

Continued from front page

In the meantime, Hamtramck has been holding up water and sewer service payments to Detroit, but that money is not being tapped into. Instead, it is being held in an escrow account until the matter is resolved, which could take years to wind through the courts.

It was hoped that state officials could mediate the dispute. Cooper said state treasury officials initially sided with Detroit's version of the dispute until recently when Hamtramck officials gave a point-by-point counter-argument.

Cooper said he's not sure which way state officials are leaning now. However, even if the state sides one way or another, it's not legally binding.

That means if either Hamtramck or Detroit doesn't agree with what state officials decide, the matter will still move forward through the courts. But time is not on Hamtramck's side.

Cooper has warned that the city will find itself without cash to meet employee payroll come March.

Several weeks ago city officials asked the state for permission to file for bankruptcy, but state officials said there is no legal standing to take that action. It's a loose end in state law that lawmakers may actually tinker with to make it easier for cities to file for bankruptcy before they find themselves bankrupt.

If Hamtramck becomes broke,

the state could immediately appoint an emergency financial manager, who in turn can recommend the state to allow the city to file for bankruptcy.

Current state law requires an emergency financial manager to make that recommendation, not cities acting on their own.

Another option for the city, and recommended by the state, is to apply for an emergency loan. However, a majority of City Councilmembers have refused to apply for the loan. Cooper said that resistance to seek state help has baffled state officials.

The issue of a state loan will likely be on the agenda for next Tuesday's council meeting.

Hamtown's movers and shakers...

By Ian Perrotta

Who is she?

Joan Bittner

A Hamtramck fixture for the better part of 40 years, Joan Bittner is the co-owner of the Polish Art Center along with her husband, Raymond. As a multi-talented businesswoman, artist and activist, Bittner has her hands full with just about everything – from the hand-woven baskets that she makes herself to the "Countdown to Packzy Day Festival" that she helped create. We caught up with Joan earlier this week to find out a little more about one of Hamtramck's favorite residents.

Though you're now one of Hamtramck's movers and shakers, you weren't always a resident of the city. What was it that brought you here, and besides owning the Polish Art Center and a house here, what makes you stay?

Bittner: As you mentioned, the store, which the original owner opened in 1958, brought us here.

My husband and I both felt that we should support the community in which we did business. When it came time to expand, we made the deci-



sion to stay in Hamtramck. We wanted to be part of the solution, not part of the problem! When we moved from Farmington Hills to Hamtramck everyone thought we were a little crazy, but for us it made perfect sense and it cut out driving times, snow days and helped us grow our roots here.

I love the walkability of the city – not so much in weather like this week, I never get a 'Snow Day (laughs). I can go anywhere in 20 minutes – Downtown, Canada, Novi, the Grosse Pointes – Hamtramck is the epicenter! Everyone knows each other and neighbors care about each other. Try to find that same level of community life in the suburbs!

Speaking of the Polish Art Center, I hear there is a pretty good story on how you and your husband Raymond came to own it. Care to elaborate?

Bittner: On one of our shopping visits to Hamtramck we stopped by the store and the owner mentioned that he was retiring. Since Raymond was going to Poland every year to visit family anyway, we thought a Polish import business would fit perfectly into our future. Our parents weren't as convinced – we were both single, in college and only 23 at the time – but let us take the plunge anyway.

We married the following year at St. Florian's and after

Continued on page 4

Maria's Comida expands into the salsa business

By Ian Perrotta

Three years ago Maria's Comida was just opening its doors to the public, but these days the public is opening its doors to Maria's. The restaurant recently created the spinoff company Maria's House Made Salsa and has been selling its signature salsas at a number of area locations.

The journey from restaurant to refrigerator was an unforeseen development for the spicy sauce, which made its humble debut as a complimentary side dish. Though it was never intended to become a stand-alone business, shortly after the restaurant launched customers literally ate up the chance to get more salsa, and the idea to jar and market the product was born.

It took another two years of development before the salsa was ready to be sold in stores. After working with food scientists – first at Cornell and then at Michigan State University – the product was fully analyzed for nutritional value and declared safe for distribution.

"Our salsas have all been tested for quality control and have a shelf-life of 30 days," says Marie Pronko, co-owner Maria's Comida. "But we worked hard to keep the taste the same as it is in the restaurant."

Before the salsa can be sold in stores, it must first be jarred and labeled. That process occurs weekday mornings before the restaurant opens and on Sundays when it is closed, and, like every-

thing else, it's a family affair. Head Chef Al Pronko makes the salsa while his son Frederick and daughter Marie bottle and label the product.

have only gotten busier, and right now they show no signs of slowing down. As for how it feels to have their product sold in stores, Marie says it is still somewhat surreal



At just \$5.99 for a 16-ounce jar the salsa is a steal, and with about a half-dozen locations throughout the metro area it can be picked up even on a whim. However, that's not too likely, as since the salsa hit the market it has rapidly gained a following at each of its distribution points, with many customers eagerly awaiting the arrival of the next shipment each week.

In the future the Pronko family would like to see their salsa business expand – it has already helped bring in new customers to the restaurant – but for now they are taking things as they come. With last year's changes to the menu and this year's additional work of jarring the salsa things

but that it hasn't gone to anyone's head.

"We're just the same people doing the same things that we've been doing," she says. "But now you can get the same great taste at a number of different locations."

Maria's House Made Salsa comes in four flavors – Mild, Roasted Habanero, Roasted Habanero with Mango and Black Bean with Roasted Corn – and can be picked up Joe's Produce in Livonia, Holiday Market in Royal Oak, Kim's Produce in Detroit, Honeybee Market in Mexicantown and Saturdays at Eastern Market. It's also available at Maria's Comida (11411 Jos. Campau) so stop by and grab a jar.

Second Front Page

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

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.

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

the Convent of St. Florian's Church, on Florian Street

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 hamtramck-CBC@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

Street Life

After five months in a hospital bed, now comes the hard part

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

By Walter Wasacz

Last month, we reported the uplifting story of Hamtramckan Vladimir "Joe" Vujic, who received a lung transplant after months of waiting for the right match.

He first waited for a match at Detroit's Henry Ford Hospital, then was transferred to Duke University Hospital in Durham, North Carolina, where there is a national transplant center.

We have an update, and it's in the words of Vujic himself, who has been keeping a journal of his illness and recovery for members of "Joe's Army," a support group made up of family and friends. We've edited the report for space, but the words are all Vujic's.

Take it away, Joe:
"Yes, it's finally true! After our interminable gut-wrenching wait, I have a new lung. Last time I wrote I had just had a 'dry run' (a possible match that didn't pan out) on Christmas Eve.

"The nurses and staff were all telling me not to be too disappointed and that this happens quite often. But for some reason, I reacted quite differently. Having been in that horrible state of limbo for so long, I felt like "All right, coach is finally putting me in the game."

"And sure enough, one week later I was the New Year's baby of lung transplants for 2011, or so I'm told. So for all of you who don't want to hear the details (some of which are gory) let me encapsulate the situation.

"So far so good.
"Because I was a hard match and my donor only had a good left lung, I only have the one along with what's left from my old right one. But there are advantages to this. Although I won't be running any marathons, single lung transplants have significant improvement in long term survival chances. So I'll take it.

"I came out of surgery in the ICU and soon after saw my beautiful nieces Krissy and Maria. That was a true joy! Seeing their faces did me more good than all the meds I was on. So this is what ICU for six days was like: tests, x-rays, blood gases, tests, try to walk a few steps, vitals, more tests, change the IVs, in and out of sleep, rinse and repeat. No food, no water for four days and only a liquid diet since then. Two very unpleasant bio-

scopies without anesthesia.

"Then they transferred me to the step-down unit. Here is where they try to get you out of the hospital as soon as possible and was probably my toughest week in this entire ordeal.

"The big challenge was the walking. You have to walk 20 laps of the ward before you can get out. And when I've talked about how well I was doing laps, I didn't mean to give the impression that I was hopping out of bed and strolling about on my own. Even today I can only manage about a dozen steps without help. We used four wheeled walkers that support a lot of our weight. It's more like a stand up cart that you push with your legs.

"There was a point at which, when they were waking me every two hours to check my BP that I realized the numbers were consistent and would remain so. After

nearly five months, I was going to get out of the hospital!

"And that day could never have come without all of you. I want to particularly acknowledge my dearest friends Gary and Anita. They took on the awesome responsibility for another person's life. There are no words for this depth of commitment. Their acts of moral, physical and spiritual courage is like nothing I've seen in my nearly 60 years. A truly once-in-a-lifetime occurrence. (At least I hope it's only once.)

"A few days after the surgery,



my friend Sarah at Henry Ford Hospital sent me an email to congratulate me and she said "now comes the really hard part." I've been bedridden for a very long time and my muscles have atrophied considerably. It will take many months of hard physical therapy to get to a point of independent living. And I have to learn to live in new ways on all levels. This is a daunting task for an old curmudgeon who is set in his ways and deeply enjoys his creature comforts. But I'm up for it. And surprising myself, I find I'm looking forward to the challenge.

"One thing all this has taught me is that we are all capable of so much more than we imagine. When you're exhausted and sure you've got nothing left, I guarantee you can reach down and get more. And a lot of that reserve and strength comes from the people who care about you and are there for you. So some of you are already sick of hearing it and the rest of you soon will be, but you might as well get used to it because I am never going to stop saying: Thank you all from the bottom of my heart."

A website is set up to take donations as well as report on Vujic's progress. For more details, go here: <http://vujictransplantfund.org/>

Global Educational Excellence, a public charter school management company, is now accepting bids for school milk products. The bid is for a 2-year commitment, to start 7/1/2011 and run through 6/30/2013. A public meeting to discuss the bid requirements will be held on **Tuesday, 2/01 at 10:00 a.m. at the GEE offices.** Bid specs may also be found by visiting: <https://sites.google.com/a/gee-edu.com/milk-service-bids>.

Sealed bids must be received by 12:00 noon on Monday, 2/28. Bids should be addressed to: **Rushdi Issa, Food Svc. Coordinator and labeled "Bid document enclosed - Milk Products".** Only sealed, written bids will be accepted. Oral, telephone, or fax bids will not be considered. No bids will be accepted or considered after the designated deadline.

For further assistance contact Rushdi Issa, Food Svcs Coordinator, 734-369-9484, issar@gee-edu.com or Karen Fowler, Compliance Coordinator, 734-369-9440 or karen@gee-edu.com

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Hamtown's movers and shakers...

Continued from page 4

returning from our honeymoon in Poland starting looking for a place to rent – what's the point of renting a place while you're on your honeymoon?! So, we bought and ran a business together instead of living together! Our first flat just proved what a great idea it was to move here. Where else could you rent half a house for \$90 a month?

Wow, talk about jumping headfirst into things. Do you approach everything with that much gusto?

Bittner: Gusto, or you could call it looking for a challenge. I seem to like doing things that are not so easy. I am (or was) a green belt in Judo during my high school years, and I also played (or attempted to play) in the High School Band. My math teacher would have

something to say about me running a store, as math was never my strong suit!

For that matter, so would my Spanish teacher, who would be surprised that I actually can communicate in a language other than English! No, I didn't know even one word of Polish when we bought the store. I took classes at Wayne State University and learned from the customers who came in.

Also, I grew up camping and I taught my children to do primitive camping – it's another challenge I took the hard way! We took them all over the United States and even went backpacking with them.

Well you're just a regular Joan-of-all-trades, aren't you? Speaking of trade work, I hear you hold a pretty historical designation. Would you mind explaining what it is?

Bittner: Well, I worked my way through college with the most interesting job just before buying the store. I became the third woman working at Chevrolet - Livonia stacking bumpers on the line, and later I became the first woman skilled-trades apprentice!

Tool and Dye was the trade that I spent about 8 months in before I left to work in the store. Who knew then, but my Journeymen (the instructor) was Polish, and he later became a customer!

Switching gears – no pun intended – you're on the Hamtramck Historical Commission and the Downtown Development Authority. For our readers who aren't familiar with those organizations, can you tell us a little bit about them and why they are important to the city?

Bittner: History is very important, and remembering history is how you go forward. So, I became involved in it – I helped acquire pieces of past history and stored them because we didn't have a museum yet – and we felt that we should have some way of recording what happened. So the Hamtramck Historical Commission is the city's official historical organization, and, for the last 12 years, it has been gathering information and artifacts in order to build a museum, which we now have.

The new challenge is getting it open!

Continued on page 5

Traffic tickets cause backlog for court

Continued from front page

change for no layoffs.

While that has been a lucrative deal for officers and the city, it's been less welcomed by the district court.

For those of you who have lived here for awhile, get ready for a flashback.

In the 1980s, the city was also facing a fiscal crisis and then Mayor Robert Kozaren devised a traffic patrol program that allowed officers to work almost unlimited overtime.

That program brought in over \$1 million a year in revenue, but it also caused friction with the court. The court was forced to handle an addition of thousands of traffic tickets to process with out additional staff to help out.

That program came to an abrupt halt for a number of reasons in the 1990s.

Flash forward to today, and the city is once again preying on unsuspecting drivers to help make ends meet. But, once again, the court is expected to handle the

additional workload without additional employees.

"It gets to the point where there are too many tickets and not enough staff. ... Basically, we need more staff," Paruk said.

Hamtramck Judge Paul Paruk said it's worse than that. He said his staff has been forced to take a 5 percent pay cut plus 13 unpaid days off each year.

Paruk also said it's not just a staffing matter. He said his court has space limitations that prevents tickets being dealt with in a timely manner.

On top of those two issues, Paruk said his docket allows for only one day for traffic tickets, which is Tuesdays. He said a part-time magistrate handles the tickets, but the magistrate is budgeted for only six hours per week.

Paruk said he uses Tuesdays to catch up on office paper work while the magistrate hears traffic ticket cases. He said he

would be open to temporary staffing or additional days or evenings for the court to be open, but he said it would require first renegotiating his staff's salaries.

Paruk pointed out that compared to other cities in Wayne County with just one judge, he has the fewest staffmembers, and that they are paid lower than their counterparts.

Conversely, Paruk said, his court produces the second highest revenue, again, compared to other one-judge courts in the county.

Judge Paruk also pointed out that only his employees were forced to take pay cuts while the city's other employees – who are members of unions – could not be forced to take pay cuts because of contract obligations.

Court employees are not unionized. The city's other employees have refused contract concessions, except for the firefighters who agreed to a pay

Traffic patrol program has a familiar ring to it

By Charles Sercombe

Hamtramck's reliance on traffic ticket fines is nothing new.

And the fallout from it is a case of "déjà-vu all over again" (sorry Yogi Berra).

Oh, where to begin ...

It goes back to the 1980s when city officials were struggling to make ends meet and avoid a budget shortfall.

The mayor at that time was Robert Kozaren, who in a small irony never drove a car. Kozaren came up with a plan to allow police officers to work overtime to enforce traffic laws.

Sound familiar so far? Some called it a stroke of brilliance. Others called a deal with the devil.

The city indeed collected a lot of money from unsuspecting drivers. Cops would stake out areas along the I-75 service drive and at the bottom of downward sloping viaducts – areas where drivers would speed without even thinking about it.

Thousands and thousands of drivers were pulled over and ticketed. The city reaped in over \$1 million a year.

Police officers working the program on a regular basis racked up huge amounts of overtime. Some of them earned their basic salary and more. And all the overtime earnings were applied to how much officers would receive in retirement.

Some cops who worked long hours on the program are now enjoying pensions of \$80,000-plus a year.

So, a deal with the devil?

It gets worse – or better depending on your point of view.

Retired officers decided to file a lawsuit against the city over the earnings of the program. Basically, it boiled down to "me too."

"Me too" as in the sense that if overtime earnings from the program were calculated into pension payments of working officers, then the retirees ought to get a piece of that pie. In a nutshell, their argument was that traffic patrol is a basic police function, and thus, any extra earnings from that program ought to be calculated into retirees' pensions.

Long story made short, the retirees won. And to pay for the \$8 million judgment the retirees won, a judge placed a special tax on property owners because the city certainly didn't have that kind of money. The program had another ripple effect.

For years during the program, former Hamtramck 31st District Court Judge Walter Paruk vigorously argued for extra staff because of the volume of tickets that had to be handled by his employees.

His pleas were silently tolerated, but essentially ignored by city officials.

Things didn't change until Paruk's son, Paul Paruk, followed in his father's footsteps and was elected as the city's one and only judge.

Paul Paruk took up his father's plea for extra staffing and eventually won over city officials to allow for a second dis-

trict court judge and additional staffing.

All went well until a new mayor came along, Gary Zych, who fell into a wide-range of differences with just about everyone in City Hall and halted the traffic patrol program.

And then a state-appointed emergency financial manager took over, and he also discontinued the traffic patrol program.

The second district court judge resigned, leaving just Paruk, but this time with no deluge of traffic tickets for his staff to deal with.

Now, flash forward to last year, and the city is desperate – once again – for additional revenue.

City Manager Bill Cooper was about to lay off police officers when the police officers' union made an offer. The union promised to deliver at least \$60,000 a month in ticket revenue in exchange for no layoffs.

Well, that deal helped both police officers and the city.

But once again, the 31st District Court found itself being the odd man out.

Oh, one more thing. The city's relentless ticketing of drivers back in the 1980s earned Hamtramck the dubious distinction from the insurance company AAA of being one big speed trap.

Flash forward, once again, to 2010, and Hamtramck is again being called a speed trap by a national drivers organization.

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Office Paper – All types and sizes
Phone books – All types and sizes
Newspaper – Remove bags, strings and rubber bands
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Plastic Bags – Most retail and grocery bags
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Aluminum Cans – Empty cans only
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The Recycling Commission is fundraising to cover the cost of Hamtramck's recycling efforts.
Join us at the Belmont Bar Friday March 11th, starting at 8pm.
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DVD Players	

Review: Opinion Page

Cure for economy is turning into a race to the bottom

This week, Gov. Rick Snyder released what he calls the "Citizens Guide to Michigan's Financial Health."

We're going to bet a lot of folks will pass on reading this one. But the media have already talked about the most important point in the report: the wages and benefits of state government workers have grown 19 percent in cost during the past 10 years compared to 13 percent for those in the private sector.

Or, we should say, those of us who still have a job in the private sector.

Snyder's report serves as a foundation for his upcoming attempt to slash the pay and benefits of public employees. That's one way he hopes to

wipe away the state's \$1 billion deficit.

Hamtramck is also facing a budget crisis and is hoping to reduce what's paid to city employees.

The sad truth is that it's not that public employees are overpaid, it's that good-paying manufacturing jobs have been shipped overseas or down to Mexico.

What we are staring at here is a race to the bottom. We are all losing income, losing benefits, losing our middle-class status.

America is losing its financial footing, mostly because we let it happen. We elected leaders who allowed manufacturers to ship out their production and our jobs without penalty.

The result is we are losing our jobs and ability to stay afloat. This is a national security issue, but one we doubt politicians are willing to deal with head-on.

In the meantime, little cities like Hamtramck will go bankrupt. Our city employees will either agree to work for peanuts or have their jobs outsourced, or maybe the city merge will do that.

We are losing our jobs and our cities.

Gov. Snyder wants all of us to look at this as a shared sacrifice. Does that include American companies that have abandoned us for bigger profits from foreign plants?

Odds & Ends

Cocktails and art ... You have to hand it to Skipper's Hamtown Bar, the folks over there keep things interesting. This Saturday (Feb. 5), for example, the bar will host an art show called "Hello Again!"

The name of the exhibit has to do with the four artists being featured. Betty Brownlee, Lila Kadaj, Gilda Snowden and Tricia Soderberg were art students at Wayne State University back in the late 70s, and have decided to reunite with a shared art exhibit.

Our friend Betty Brownlee, who is also a very talented bass player, says the show is a mix of still life, figure and abstract paintings.

The fun starts at 7 p.m., and Skipper's is located at 9735 Conant. If you can't make the opening, you can still take a look at the exhibit through Feb. 26.

Kiss us, we're Polish ... This one sounds like our kind of fun. Next

Friday, (Feb. 11) the Wavel Folk Ensemble will hold a special Valentine's Day celebration which they are calling, "Love at first sight - Valentine's Dyskoteka."

Wow, what a title. It makes Valentine's Day seem even more romantic. Anyway, the celebration will help fund the folk dance group's trip to Poland this July to participate in the Festival of Polish Folk Dancers.

It's all happening at PNA Council 122 Hall, located at 10211 Conant. Doors open at 8 p.m. and there is a super cheap cover charge of \$5. There will also be a cash bar, food and music to dance by.

Sorry kids, it's 18 and up to get in.

Hot off the press ... Mayor Karen Majewski contributed five articles to the newly printed "Polish American Encyclopedia," which is a mas-

sive tome chronicling hundreds of Polish Americans who played a role in shaping the Polish experience in this country.

It's actually a fascinating read for anyone interested in American history. It does come at a hefty price of \$145, but it's well worth it. If you wait a few weeks, you might be able to pick it up a little cheaper through Amazon.com.

Some "Super" predictions ...

Like much of the rest of the country, on Sunday night the staff from The Review will be sitting down to watch the Pittsburgh Steelers take on the Green Bay Packers in Super Bowl XLV. Here are our picks for the game:

Al: Steelers 34-26
Chip: Steelers 34-26
Ian: Steelers 24-17
Jean: Green Bay 24-17
Jon: Green Bay 21-17

Hamtown's movers and shakers...

Continued from page 4

As for the Downtown Development Authority, I started with the Streetscape Committee because I felt that I would be able to have some input in the way Jos. Campau was presented from a business perspective. The DDA helps promote the development of the city's businesses district on Campau and entails the areas all the way from Carpenter to the viaduct. The main district is from Caniff to Holbrook, because that's where the street narrows.

We have worked extensively to bring commerce back to the city, and were responsible for the sidewalk sales, getting cameras installed, the holiday street lights - we try to make things better for businesses in the area!

Those are some worthwhile things to be involved in. For better or for worse, how has the city changed since you've been here?

Bittner: The streets have never looked as good as they do now, with the trees - I can't tell you how many years I looked out the door and didn't see any greenery, and now there is nature and that is nice.

But we still have the pigeons, for better or for worse. We still have some empty stores, which is interesting because that has always been the case. There are more now, but there isn't a city that can't say that.

I think we still have a great diversity in our shops and some of the best dress shops and tailors in the area - do people know that there are tailors in the shops? And when I first moved here, there were only a few restaurants, and now look what we have!

What about the level of involvement by citizens of the city?

Bittner: I have to say that I am proud of the level of capable and willing people in the city that have a passion for making Hamtramck a better place to live and work.

People are constantly reminding me that the city is in dire straits, but we're getting a museum, our art cooperative is gaining strength, and our library is doing fabulous. The recycling program is also coming into its own, so there is a lot that is positive and encouraging going on in the city.

What improvements would you like to see?

Bittner: I would like to see more merchant involvement in promoting Hamtramck as a great place to visit.

And what kind of effect do you think that would have on the city?

Bittner: I'll tell you what kind of effect that will have on the city, because it's already had an effect. AAA has put us in their tour guide telling people to stop by our store, and many people are doing so. And those people don't only visit the store; they go to the restaurants and bakeries and meat markets and soon the museum!

Merchants would be wise to realize this and pay attention to their storefronts. For instance - if you have an empty storefront next to you, if the area in front of it could get cleaned up as well, it makes the city that much nicer for everyone.

The same goes with snow and graffiti - if it gets removed immediately it makes the city much cleaner and nicer and raises the level of pride for everybody.

After nearly four decades of living here, where do you think Hamtramck is going?

Bittner: Decades - do you

know how old I felt when you said that? And four of them, whew! I think it's going up, absolutely. Detroit is coming back - when we first bought this store we thought it was on the cusp of coming back, but who knew it would take this long to happen?

Look at Wayne State - when I first bought the store it never felt like a university, because it just had a few buildings here and there, and now it's a major anchor for the area. The trend is reversing - people are now moving into the city rather than out.

That's what is going to be bringing people into Hamtramck, and our citizens should be wise to realize that and take care of their property. The values will only go up.

Thanks for taking the time to speak with us. Now that I've bombarded you with questions, would you care to add anything? Have at it.

Bittner: I think the thing that I would like to say is don't just complain about something - find out ways to make it better.

That's why I joined the DDA. There are plenty of ways to get involved and help make a difference. And right now it's a good time, because there are a lot of community projects available, like community gardens, programs at the library that would be happy to have volunteers, and festival committees - you can see what happened last year when people stepped in to make a difference.

Next month we have a Paczki Bake Off and Countdown to Packzi Day on March 5, and everyone can have the chance to have a little Polish in them with a free Packzi (one per person) - we hope to see you there!

The Amazing CYNICALMAN by Matt Fezell



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Volunteers are needed for new neighborhood patrols

By Ian Perrotta

The city has a new weapon in its fight against crime – the Hamtramck Neighborhood Patrol.

Beginning in late April, members of the community will start patrolling the city in an endeavor to prevent crimes before they happen. To maximize their effort, the organization – which has a mission “to ensure the safety and security of Hamtramck residents, their property and their homes” – will be in constant radio contact with the police.

These won't be just ordinary citizens, however. Though the squad will be comprised of volunteers, each member will undergo a training course that teaches the fundamentals of crime detection and radio communication. Classes will be a few hours long and are scheduled to begin right around the start of spring.

Training sessions will include an overview of the radio patrol as well as a basic law review. Once the course progresses the subject matter will delve into the topics of the patrol's limitations, safety and duties, as well as what comprises a crime and how

best to prevent it. After members are well-versed in those areas, radio protocol and how to record and report potential crimes are the final lessons.

Credit for the creation of the Hamtramck Neighborhood Patrol can be given to the city's Weed and Seed program, and more specifically to that organization's Community Policing and Law Enforcement subcommittees. Raphael Thurin, a community organizer for Weed and Seed, says that it was a natural direction to head for the committee.

“Tom Stackpoole was working on an effort to get his block club to do a patrol, and with all the info he had compiled it just made sense to expand the program to the whole city,” says Thurin. “Hamtramck is a small city – it's possible to patrol the whole thing.”

For anyone interested in becoming a member the guidelines are simple. Applicants must be at least 18 years of age, have an interest in the community – such as either living or working in it – and have a valid Driver's License and be insured. They must also pass a background check and



As part of a multi-pronged approach to weeding out crime and seeding in positive opportunities for the city, Hamtramck's Weed and Seed program will soon begin conducting city-wide surveillance through the Hamtramck Neighborhood Patrol.

comply with all rules and requirements supplied by the police.

Also supplied by the police will be the radios, thanks to a department-wide upgrade of the old systems. The department's new radios were mandated by the federal government and were paid for with grant money, which left the old equipment still usable but obsolete.

“At first we had just planned to

use cell phones,” says Thurin. “It was just a lucky coincidence that the police were upgrading their radios. When we realized that we could utilize their old ones, the decision to do so was a no-brainer.”

If you're interested in becoming a member of the Hamtramck Neighborhood Patrol contact Raphael Thurin at (989) 992-6278.

Obituaries

LISAK

Mark Lisak, 47, died January 24, 2011.

Mr. Lisak was an employee at Caniff Machinery Center.

He is survived by his wife, Krystyna; daughter, Angela; sons, Christopher; step-son, Grzegorz Plata; mother, Stanislaw; sisters, Krystyna and Alicia (Dominik) Jarzab.

Funeral arrangements were made by Krot Funeral Home, and funeral services were held on January 28 at St. Ladislaus Church.

PIENTA

Daniel S. Pienta, 68, died February 3, 2011.

Mr. Pienta was a former Hamtramck resident, and served in the Navy during the Vietnam War. He was a member of the Polish Legion of American Veterans Post 1 where he was a Commander.

He was preceded in death by his brother, Arthur.

Mr. Pienta is survived by his daughters, Kelly(Tom) Shimko and Yvette (Dan) Boudreau; sons, David and Christopher(Christine); and seven grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements were

made by Jurkiewicz & Wilk Funeral Home, and funeral services will be held at the funeral home on February 5 in the evening. Visitation will be earlier in the day from noon to 9 p.m.

SZCZEPKOWSKI

Veronica Szczepkowski, 86, died January 20, 2011.

Mrs. Szczepkowski was retired as a cook for the Archdiocese of Detroit. She was preceded in death by her husband, Sigmunt.

Mrs. Szczepkowski is survived by her daughter, Pamela; sons, David, James (Carol), Timothy (Shirley) and Sigmunt; six grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements were made by Krot Funeral Home, and a memorial service will be held on February 5, 10 a.m. at Our Lady Queen of Heaven Church, 8175 Lentz in Detroit.



Coming Events

FEBRUARY 9, Wednesday, 11 a.m. – The Daughters of Isabella Mystical Rose Circle will meet at Our Lady Queen of Apostles Activity Center, entrance on Harold St.

FEBRUARY 15, Tuesday, 7 p.m. – Preserve Our Parks meets every third Tuesday of the month, at the Senior Plaza at 2620 Holbrook. For more information, call Dick Kaleski at (313) 874-2651.

APRIL 3, Sunday, 2 p.m. – The Holy Cross Parish Mission Committee will host a bowling fundraiser to support the Hamtramck Friendship House. The event will be at Universal Lanes, 2101 E. 12 Mile Rd. in Warren. For more information and tickets, call (586) 558-7321 or stop by Srodek's Campau Quality Sausage at 9601 Jos. Campau. Ask for Maggie Srodek.

Prayer to the Blessed Virgin

(Never known to fail)

Oh most beautiful flower of Mt. Carmel, fruitful vine, splendor of heaven, blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in my necessity. Oh star of the Sea, help me and show me where you are my Mother. Oh Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth, I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart to succor in my necessity. (Make your request) There are none who can withstand your power, Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee (three times) Holy Mother, I place this prayer in your hands. (Three times) Say this prayer for three consecutive days and then you must publish it and it will be granted to you. Grateful thanks. C.J.L.

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Rental Properties and Real Estate

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Hamtramck studio apartments, good location, immediate occupancy, 248-229-4295, 248-229-4297. 2/25

Hamtramck, upper 2 Br. flat, \$525/month + security deposit, references required, 313-801-4001. 2/11

Hamtramck, 2 Br. lower, includes appliances + all utilities/heat, \$525/month + security deposit, 586-214-8407. 2/4

Hamtramck, upper + lower, stove-fridge and water included, ask for John, 586-943-8814. 2/4

22065 Hayes, East Pointe, 1 Br., large living room, dining room, ceramic tiled bathroom + kitchen, back patio, newly painted, clean, nice neighborhood, \$500 / month, includes water and heat, 586-806-4888. 2/18

2 Br. upper, kitchen, living room, clean, fridge and stove, pets welcome, 313-378-6229. 2/18

2 Br. upper on Caniff, \$450/month, includes water and basic cable, no pets, 586-531-9722, 313-418-8791. 2/18

2 Br., appliances, freshly painted, new carpet, 313-220-8961. 2/11

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Hamtramck, Belmont St., 1 Br. upper, 1 living room, kitchen, bath, very nice, call after 11 a.m., 313-368-9326. 2/4

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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Hamtramck 12020 St. Aubin, 4 Br., single-family house, full basement, huge attic, \$655/month, water included, 313-516-1053. 1/28

HOUSE FOR RENT

Detroit, 12601 Gallagher, 3 Br., no pets, Section 8 OK, 313-892-8963, 313-703-8928. 2/4

Hamtramck, 2 Br. or 3 Br., 11325 Lumpkin, 3870 Sobieski, appliances, 313-575-3698. 2/4

Hamtramck, single-family, 2 Br., garage, full basement, very clean, security + references, \$550/month, 248-214-9573. 2/4

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McNichols and Conant area, 2 Br., 1 bath, central air, high efficiency furnace, new windows, new kitchen, \$25,000 or best, 313-595-0268. 2/4

Hamtramck, Lumpkin at Commor, spacious 3 Br. bungalow, kitchen, living room, dining, 1-1/2 bath, pantry, full basement, 2-car-garage, newly painted, newer water heater, 90% efficient furnace, A/C, land contract available, 31-977-8100. 2/18

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Experienced panel wiring professionals needed, full-time, \$12/hour, call 734-397-4932, or apply within to: Work Force Network Inc., 5751 S. Sheldon Rd., Canton, MI, 48188. 2/18

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Hamtramck veterans show their love for fellow vets

This year's Valentine's Day will be a little more special for Hamtramck veterans.

And they could use some affection from the community as well.

Hamtramck vets will join up with metro-area veterans to host a fundraiser on Feb. 12, featuring Dennis Edwards and the Temptations Review.

Gerald Murawski, and VFW Post 4162, represented by member Dennis Giveins, presented Bill Browning the Chief of Voluntary Services for the Detroit VA Medical Center with 1,000 U.S. Flags that will be distributed to patrons of the "Motor City Valentines for Veterans Concert, a Veterans Appreciation and Welcome Home Celebration."

Services Detroit VAMC at (313) 576-1301.

There is more information at www.detroit.VA.gov. The show is open to the public at Detroit's Masonic Temple Theater, 500 Temple Ave. Tickets must be picked up in person at 4646 John R Street in Detroit. The theater opens to the general public at 1 p.m.



Hamtramck veterans are helping out in an upcoming benefit concert for fellow vets who are hospitalized.

Proceeds from the benefit will go to helping out hospitalized vets, especially those coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Hamtramck's AMVETS Post 14, represented by Past Commander and VA Hospital Volunteer Richard Walczyk, PLAV Post 6, represented by PLAV Dept. of Michigan Dingell VA Hospital Volunteer Service Representative

The concert/celebration is part of the VA's National Salute to Veteran Patients, to show appreciation to veterans and increase community awareness of the needs of VA medical centers, especially for volunteers.

This is a free concert with a maximum of four complimentary tickets per person, but tickets are required. Contact Voluntary

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For more information please contact:
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Joel L Young, MD
441 South Livernois, Ste. 205
Rochester Hills, MI 48307
If interested, please contact
Karolina Redziniak, MA, tLLP at
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