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Volume 3 No. 18
May 13, 2011
50¢

The Review

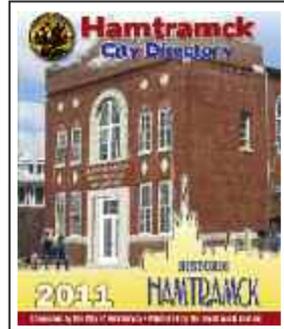
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Quick Hits

This weekend is going to be very special. The Review's city telephone directory is being delivered starting today (Friday, May 13). The directory will be hand-delivered to every single household in the city as well as the surrounding neighborhoods on the Detroit side of the border.

We're very proud of this year's directory, and we think you will also be impressed. If you don't get your copy by next week or if you need extras, stop by our office at 3020 Caniff. Also, remember that tomorrow, Saturday, May 14, the monthly recyclable collection program is underway at the city parking lot on Caniff at McDougall. You can drop off items from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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.

"The hardest thing about doing nothing is deciding when to stop doing nothing."

— HAMTRAMCK'S NEWSPAPER OF RECORD —

The final bell is about to ring for Dickinson West

By Alan R. Madeleine
The days of Dickinson West using St. Ladislaus' old elementary school building are nearly through. Per a memo released by Public School Superintendent Tom Niczay this past Monday, the Archdiocese of Detroit has been formally notified of the district's intention to relocate Dickinson West back into one of their own buildings, in this case Kosciuszko Middle School on Burger St. Also per the memo, the district gives notice of a meeting for parents this coming Wednesday, May 18, where there will be a power point presentation given on how things will work in the new arrangement. A Q&A session will immediately follow this presentation.



The district also plans a parade on June 9, a symbolic walk over from the old St. In several weeks Dickinson West Elementary School will be no more. The public school district is transferring students out of the former St. Ladislaus school to other public school buildings in order to save money.

Continued on page 2

St. Lad's Parish faces tough sell for former school

By David Piestrzynski
Special to The Review
Anyone interested in buying an elementary school? St. Ladislaus Elementary will soon be on the market. As a result of declining enrollment and budget cuts, the Hamtramck Public School system will no longer be leasing the building from the parish.

The school system had been leasing St. Ladislaus Elementary since 1998. The lease expires at the end of July. Rev. Andrew Wesley, administrator of the parish, said St. Ladislaus is currently looking for potential buyers but conceded it's a difficult seller's market. "There are so many build-

ings available all over," he said. "People have choices, and they're all trying to get the best deal for their money." According to Wesley, the building is best used as a school, but the parish has no intention of re-opening it. "If the Hamtramck Public Schools don't have enough students, then we don't ei-

ther," he said. "Keeping it is too much of a burden to for the parish." The Archdiocese of Detroit is hoping St. Ladislaus can find a fast resolution with the building. Joe Kohn, a spokesman for the Detroit Archdiocese, said it would be to the benefit of the parish for the building to be sold or occupied.

City Council election has 15 contenders

By Charles Sercombe
There are some new and some familiar faces lining up for the August Primary Election. So far, 15 candidates have entered the race for three City Council seats. Two of the three seats are being vacated by Councilmembers Catrina Stackpoole and Shahab Ahmed. Both councilmembers decided against seeking re-election. That leaves just one incumbent in the race: Councilmember Cathie Gordon.

The line-up could change by the end of today (Friday, May 13). That's the last day candidates can opt out of the election. As of Thursday, the day The Review went to press, the following candidates will be on the August ballot: Richard Fabiszak, Dilshad Chowdhury, Mohammed D. Hussain, Ian Perrotta, Kathleen Bittner, Roger Lamm, Robert A. Zwolak.



Continued on page 2

For now, city's tax takes a hike

By Charles Sercombe
Hamtramck is following in the footsteps of a number of suburban communities by passing a small property tax increase. At Tuesday's City Council meeting, councilmembers engaged in a lengthy debate over a 2.2 mill tax increase despite numerous budget work sessions in recent weeks in which the topic was covered. At this point, the tax proposal is not a done deal. The tax was wrapped within the city's budget for 2012 and the new water and sewer rates. Tuesday's vote approved the total package, but a second vote is required at the next council meeting, scheduled for May 24.

That will be the final vote. Although the vote was a solid 4-2, in Hamtramck anything can happen until the very last minute. Councilmembers Mohammed Hassan and Kazi Miah voted against the tax. Hassan insisted the city should first seek contract concessions from the police and fire unions before resorting to a tax increase.

Miah said that, if the city raises taxes, residents will move out. The tax will generate \$425,000 a year. For the average homeowner, the increase will translate into an extra \$50 to \$55 a year, said Finance Director Nevrus Nazarko. During the debate, Nazarko stressed that the city has cut as much as it can. He said that at some point, the city has to raise additional revenue. Although it appears property owners may not like the tax hike, but they have little to complain about because in recent years they have enjoyed a tax break. Three years ago, 11 mills fell off the city's tax rolls after a lawsuit award was paid in full.

Continued on page 4

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REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

The City of Hamtramck is seeking to create a list of qualified, experienced property development entities for development services for approximately thirty (30) to fifty (50) properties in the City. The thirty (30) to fifty (50) properties will consist of a combination of new construction infill housing and scattered site single-family rehabilitation.

For the full REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ) please visit the City of Hamtramck website at www.hamtramck.us, or email jfriedmann@hamtramckcity.com, or obtain a paper copy from the City of Hamtramck Clerk's Office located at 3401 Evaline, Hamtramck, MI 48212

A mandatory pre-bid meeting will be held at 10:00 AM, Tuesday, May 24, 2011, in the City Council Chambers, Hamtramck City Hall (2nd Floor), 3401 Evaline, Hamtramck, MI 48212.

Responses to the REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ) are due at 4:00 PM, Tuesday, May 31, 2011. No late responses will be accepted.

Public Budget Hearing will be held for the following Public School Academy:

Hamtramck - 11420 Conant, Hamtramck - May 25th, 6:00pm

Copies of the Budget for the listed Public School Academy will be available at the school office.

Legal Notice Regarding Zoning

The following individuals have made an appeal to the Zoning Board of Appeals for variance:

- Tenant Yazan A. Musleh, on behalf of the owner Abdul Rahman Alnajjar, property located 8910 Jos. Campau
- Owner Halal Algahaim, property located at 8842 Jos. Campau

Variance requests for the following section of Zoning Ordinance 497 of the City of Hamtramck is as follows:

- VI - 2.02.2. Permitted Commercial Uses
- f. Butchers that do not process live farm animals.

A public hearing will be held in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 3401 Evaline, Hamtramck, MI 48212, on Wednesday, June 1, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. thus affording the opportunity of your input being recorded on this appeal for a modification of zoning on the premises described above.

Any variation or modification granted by the Board would have no bearing on private restrictions. You may appear, authorize others to represent you, or you may express your views in writing. Communications must be received before the date of the hearing.

Zoning Board of Appeals

The final bell is about to ring for Dickinson West

Continued from front page

Lad's Caniff St. location to Kosciuszko. The older kids in grades fourth through sixth will make the trek first, starting at about 9 a.m., with the first through third grades following at around noon.

Parents are currently being surveyed - for a second time - on their intentions of keeping their children in the district. The initial survey, conducted a short while back, seemed to indicate that most parents were at least willing to give the new arrangement a try.

Niczay said that about "85 to 90 percent" of parents indicated, on the first survey,

that they would be staying. The remainder, he said, were for example renters, who weren't sure they'd be staying in the area, or in a few cases parents simply looking for "greener pastures."

"We can't blame a parent for trying to find the best situation for their kids," Niczay admitted.

Perhaps a few who were intent on leaving had some trepidation that their children were being asked to share space with older, more mature children?

Niczay downplayed that, saying it was really just more about numbers - some peo-

ple are always leaving between school years. Hamtramck deals with that more than other districts, since it has a higher percentage of renters.

The move out of St. Lad's school comes as the district faces a \$4 million budget deficit.

"We were simply unable to keep up with the costs of remaining in that building," Niczay said. "Rent for the year cost us \$192,000. Utilities ran us another \$276,966."

The students in grades first through fourth will be moved into 10 portable classrooms.

Niczay said the facilities are outfitted with air conditioning, are newly carpeted, and each have their own private toilets.

Grades fifth and sixth would be incorporated into classrooms in the main building, available due to the generally declining enrollment. As the numerous charter schools, and the availability of other nearby districts such as Warren's, pick up more of the local kids, you can be sure more consolidations are likely to follow.

For next year, at least, Kosciuszko will be brimming with kids.

City Council election has 15 contenders

Continued from front page

Anam A. Miah
Donald M. Kosin
Susan Dunn Rahdar
Abusayan MD Mahfuz
Abdul Algazali
Steve Shaya
Catherine Gordon
Shokat Chowdhury
Perennial candidates

Richard Fabiszak, Robert Zwolak and Abdul Algazali are once again seeking office. Algazali had previously been on council but instead of seeking re-election to his seat, he went head-to-head with Karen Majewski for the Mayor's seat two years ago.

Steve Shaya has also sought a council seat previously. He sits on the city's Plan Commission, and he also works for a contractor employed by the city. Anam Miah, Mohammed Hussain and Susan Rahdar have

also previously taken a stab at winning a council seat.

Rahdar is notable for her involvement with the Concerned Citizens for a Better Hamtramck, which improperly challenged over 40 voters - mostly those with Arabic sounding last names - in the 1999 election.

As a result, the Justice Department sent in monitors for several elections afterward to make sure voters' rights were not violated.

Rahdar also challenged Councilmember Shahab Ahmed to a boxing match

during a past Meet the Candidates forum, apparently in response to allegations that Ahmed assaulted his former wife.

Kathleen Bittner is well-known in the community for her family's business, The Polish Art Center on Jos. Campau. Bittner was a co-organizer of last year's successful Hamtramck Labor Day Festival, and will once again help organize this year's festival.

Ian Perrotta is a former reporter with The Review newspaper and is still asso-

ciated with the paper as copy editor.

Only one would-be candidate who pulled a petition did not return it. Former Councilmember Alan Shulgon apparently decided to duck out of this election.

If all 15 candidates remain in the race, they will square-off August 2. Out of that field, the top six candidates will move on to the November Election for one of the three council seats. Each seat is a four-year term.

This week at the library...

Movie Screening "Tony & Janina's American Wedding" - Friday, May 20 at 7 p.m. A deportation love story produced by Ruth Leitman, based on a history of a family torn apart after establishing roots in America over many years. Admission is free.

"Animals of Hamtramck" Photo Contest - If you want to share a unique beauty of your pet or any other local animal join us by taking photos of your furry friends. Submit no more than three pictures to the Library before Memorial Day. Contest winners will be announced on Saturday, June 4 at 2 p.m. during the opening of the "Animals of Hamtramck" photo exhibit.

Registrations for Summer Reading Program: All children are invited to register for the Library's 2011 Summer Program series which will start on Wednesday, June 29 with a 1 p.m. party for all who have registered.

ESL Class for Beginners - Saturday, May 14 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, May 14 at noon. All children are invited to library storytime. Join us on a hunt to butterflies, using butterfly wind catchers, in the community garden, right after reading, "Butterflies" by Fran Howard.

Computer Classes for Advanced Users - Monday, May 16 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.

Math Club Meeting - Tuesday, May 17 at 4 p.m. Mr. Nuo is the instructor for the math club and math tutoring.

Making Credit Work For You - Money Builder Workshop - May 17, 12:30 - 3 p.m. Free workshop organized by Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency for library patrons. To register, call (734) 824-6999 ext. 220, or the library at (313) 365-7050.

Keeping Your Credit in Check - Money Builder Workshop - May 17, 4 - 6:30 p.m. Free workshop organized by Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency for library patrons. To register, call (734) 824-6999 ext. 220, or the library at (313) 365-7050.

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

Movie Wednesday - Wednesday, May 18 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.

Friends of the Library Meeting - Thursday, May 19 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.

Math Kangaroo Award Ceremonies - Tuesday, June 7 at 5 p.m. Please join us for the award ceremonies of state and national Math Kangaroo Test award winners for 2011. Refreshments will be served.

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.



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Second Front Page

'Personal touch' is key to success for Mostek company

By David Piestrzynski
Special to The Review

After eight decades in business, Mostek Paint and Glass Co. is still going strong.

Later this year, the store will celebrate its 80th anniversary.

According to Ray Klos, President of Mostek, which is located on Jos. Campau, the secret to the store's success has been a personal touch.

"It's employee owned," he said. "Everybody here has a vested interest."

All eight Mostek employees share ownership. In the 1980s, the original owners of

the business, Joe and Carolyn Mostek, decided to step down from the paint and glass business. But rather than closing or selling the store, they turned ownership over to their employees.

"That's really kept us going," said Klos. "People usually remember us after coming here. A lot of business comes from referrals."

Many of Mostek's employees have experience, to go along with their share of ownership in the store. For example, Klos has been with Mostek for 37 years. Also, Jim Henri, the store's man-

ager, has been there for 27 years, and employee Jim Siwicki has 25 years of experience.

Some of the store's recent retirees had even longer careers. Richard Musialowski was at Mostek for 48 years, and Joe Ketchie spent 47 years there.

When employees retire or leave the store, it's handled

with a buyout from the other owners.

Employees with this much experience, and personal investment are features that very few of the large chain stores can claim.

Klos said these attributes have been crucial in getting the store through the past few years, which have been challenging in this economy.



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Repairs to start on Holbrook streetlights

"At the dark end of the street that is where we always meet hiding in shadows where we don't belong living in darkness, to hide alone
"You and me, at the dark end of the street
You and me"

"Dark End of the Street"

By Charles Sercombe

For furtive lovers, there is indeed a dark end of the street in Hamtramck.

Unfortunately for those living on Holbrook from Conant to Lumpkin who have no secret hook-up, night after night is almost pitch black because the streetlights have been out for months now.

The problem? DTE Energy has told city officials that the lines running from pole to pole are old and are breaking down. Trying to find the source of the break is no easy task, said Martin Ladd, Hamtramck's Director of Public Works.

The upshot is that DTE plans to replace the entire system on Holbrook and also on a stretch along Conant that is also experiencing problems.

Ladd said he was told the work will begin in June.

Until then, for lovers, Holbrook at night is the place to meet. For everyone else, keep your porch lights on at night.

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City Hall Insider ...

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

By Charles Sercombe

The City Council met on May 10, and all councilmembers were present. The meeting ran for a little over one-and-a-half hours.

Taxes. It's universal. No one likes them. You can add to that list an increase in the water and sewer rates. Put it all together, and you've got a packed council meeting and a guaranteed lengthy debate.

Perennial Candidate Robert Zwolak led the charge against a proposed property tax rate that the council would later discuss.

And perennial candidate Abdul Algazali also took issue with the proposed increase of 2.2 property mills that is included in the new city budget that will kick in July 1.

Algazali said many people

are unemployed and are having a hard time making ends meet. He said instead of raising taxes, the council should cut expenses.

"If we want the city to survive we have to make cuts," Algazali said.

He also said the police and fire unions must pitch in and make contract concessions.

There was a whole lot more discussed about the proposal later in the meeting. But before the council got to that topic, a lengthy talk was held on how to proceed with a review of the city manager's job performance.

Councilmember Tom Jankowski, who has been spearheading the effort, suggested the council meet and talk about each member's review and come up with goals

for the city manager.

Mayor Karen Majewski noted that in the past she has had a hard time getting councilmembers to participate in the review.

Councilmember Cathie Gordon asked City Manager Bill Cooper if there was anything in the review form he finds objectionable. Cooper said he had reviewed the form but would like to look at it once more.

Other than that, he said, he had no objections.

Councilmember Jankowski smirked, sort of, saying Cooper had the form for about month and questioned the need for him to take another day or two to review it.

Cooper shot back: "I've been kind of busy with a few other things."

Long story made short: the council agreed to meet in closed session after the May 24 council meeting to discuss Cooper's review.

(Editor's note: By law, Cooper can - and did - demand that his review be held in closed session.)

OK, on to the main bout in the evening's meeting. The council was presented with a resolution that was actually the first step in a two-step process in adopting not only the 2012 budget, but also the water and sewer rates as well as the property tax rate.

There was plenty to chew on, but as some pointed out, no fat.

First up was Councilmember Gordon, who asked what budget was being considered. Cooper said it's a version of the 2012 budget that he submitted to the council the previous night, but did not include the changes the council asked for. He said by the next council meeting, when the second reading takes places, the revised budget will be in place.

Gordon, repeating a theme from the previous night's budget session, called the proposed budget "unrealistic."

(Editor's note: Some context is needed here. The budget relies on significant contract concessions from the police and fire unions, which so far seems as unlikely as the return of 5 cent draft beer.)

Gordon also asked if the proposal before the council also includes the property tax increase of 2.2 mills. Yep, it did.

Gordon said the tax matter should be voted on separately.

(Editor's note: Also just for the record, this tax increase does not need the approval of voters. The tax raises the city's tax rate to its legal limit. Anything higher would then require voter approval.)

Gordon went on to say that "I don't have a problem with the 2.3 mills."

So, you're probably wondering what did Gordon have a problem with?

Well, she objected to the proposed water and sewer rate increase. Water was slated to go up 7 percent and sewer service was proposed to go up 4 percent. City Manager Cooper explained the increases were simply being passed on from the increases imposed by Detroit.

(Editor's note: Sorry for the interruptions, but it should be pointed out that Hamtramck gets its water and sewer service from Detroit. Detroit supplies about 100 communities with this service. There is probably not one community that hasn't complained about Detroit's service and its rates and its behind-the-scenes goings on and that Kwame guy.)

Back to Councilmember Gordon, who pointed out that recently (three years ago it turns out) 11 mills were dropped from the city's property taxes.

(Editor's note: It involved a lawsuit with the city's pensioners, a fierce and mighty liti-

Continued on page 5

For now, city's tax takes a hike

Continued from front page

Nazarko also pointed out that, because property values have sharply fallen, homeowners have been experiencing a further break in their taxes.

The city's total taxable value dropped by \$50 million because of the housing crash. While that has meant fewer taxes owed by property owners, the flip side has meant a loss of \$800,000 to the city's coffers.

Hamtramck's tax rate is about 45 mills, Nazarko added, which is comparable to suburban communities.

As for the city's upcoming budget year, it looks like Hamtramck can survive financially until the 2013 budget year arrives, at which point the city is looking at about a \$2 million deficit with just about nowhere left to cut.

Tax or no tax, Hamtramck

could be in a financial hole sooner than that. The upcoming budget year has some mighty big "ifs."

City Manager Bill Cooper will be asking the police and fire unions to make significant contract concessions. Without them, the city will go broke, he says, and that could likely lead to the state appointing an emergency financial manager to take over.

If an EFM does indeed come to town, that person will have the wide-ranging authority to break union contracts. Barring any successful legal challenges to the recently expanded powers for EFM's that were enacted by the state legislature and the governor, the police and fire unions will have to accept contract concessions whether they like it or not.

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Review: Opinion Page

Tax increase gives city time to plan

We're not going to say "Hooray" about this.

That's because no one likes to pay more taxes.

But the City Council (except for councilmembers Mohammed Hassan and Kazi Miah) did a brave thing – at least politically speaking – on Tuesday by raising the property tax by 2.2 mills.

Before we go further, let us point out that for the average homeowner, this increase will mean an additional \$50 to \$55 a year. That's a small price to pay to keep the city financially sound and to prevent the state from taking over and appointing an emergency financial manager.

Yes, there is a possibility that an EFM will one day

come into town. City officials say that by the year 2013 Hamtramck could be in serious financial trouble. The meager 2.2 property tax increase gives us some time to strategize.

Besides, by the year 2013 Hamtramck won't be the only city in financial trouble, given the state revenue cuts that Gov. Rick Snyder and his Republican cohorts have imposed.

In fact, just about every city is going to be trouble if the Republicans have their way. But that's a different story for another time.

What Hamtramck has to deal with in the immediate future is not only a slight increase in property taxes but also convincing police and

firefighter unions that they have to make severe contract concessions.

We're talking about a 20 percent contribution in their health benefit package, wage freezes and the elimination of minimum staffing levels.

It's a big deal. But this is the new reality for not only Hamtramck but communities nationwide.

The alternative is a state takeover of the city and who knows what would happen then.

In the meantime, we have some breathing room, unless of course a slight majority of councilmembers chicken out on the 2.2 property tax increase in the coming weeks before it's a done deal.

Other Voices: Guest Editorial

Schools Superintendent rails against proposed education costs

(The following is a letter written by Hamtramck Public Schools Superintendent Tom Niczay to Gov. Rick Snyder.)

Dear Governor Snyder, I am writing on behalf of the Hamtramck Public Schools. We proudly educate over 2,900 students.

Next week's Revenue Estimating Conference will reveal hundreds of millions of dollars in additional revenue that should be applied to the budget for fiscal year 2012.

In Wayne, Macomb, and Oakland counties alone 19 K-12 school districts are in a budget deficit condition negatively affecting hundreds of thousands of students. This

harsh reality will only expand too many other school districts if the proposed cuts are approved. We all know K-12 funding affects the very core of our children's academics. A decline in this funding – and its disastrous impact – is unacceptable when additional state revenues are still being identified.

The possibility of rising state revenues is all the more reason to limit the School Aid Fund to its voter-intended purpose: funding K-12 education. Voters passed Proposal A in 1994 with the specific understanding that revenue generated for the School Aid Fund would be limited to K-12 education. The precedent of

raiding the School Aid Fund for non-voter intended purposes should not be set.

On behalf of the staff responsible for the education of Hamtramck's Public Schools PreK-12 student population, I urge you to postpone voting on the state's education budget until every dollar in excess revenue has been accounted for and used to stabilize K-12 education.

The over 2,900 student's educated in Hamtramck Public Schools are counting on you to use any revenues previously unaccounted for to stabilize and restore K-12 education funding and prevent disastrous impacts to student learning.

Odds & Ends

Good news ... By now many of you have heard that GM plans to bring back 2,000 employees at the Poletown Plant.

This will have a little impact on Hamtramck. For every dollar paid in income tax, Hamtramck gets 30 cents. We'll have more on this in next week's issue.

Also, GM broke ground this week for a solar panel facility at the Poletown plant, which will help produce power for the plant.

Get on board ... It's never too early to plan ahead, and that's just what Hamtramck Labor Day Festival organizers Kathleen Bittner and Rachel Srodek are doing.

They have sent out email applications to potential vendors for the upcoming festival. If you act now, you can reserve a booth for a discount. To receive a discount, applications must be submitted by July 1.

For more information or if you didn't get the email appli-

cation, call Kathleen at (313) 874-2242.

Going green ... Dickinson East Elementary School Principal Nayal Maktari has some good news to share. His school recently earned the distinction of "Official Michigan Evergreen School" for its beautification efforts and recycling program.

Way to go, and what a great lesson for kids.

The Amazing CYNICALMAN[®] by Matt Feazell



City Hall Insider... Continued from page 4

gious tribe that has successfully sued the city several times for this and that and ended up jacking up property taxes to pay for their hefty awards. Man, the city should have hired their lawyers. Just kidding. Please don't sue us.)

Where were we? Oh yeah, point being, said Gordon, now's the time to raise the tax rate because the city's overall tax rate is the lowest it's been ... in 15 years (according to Finance Director Nevrus Nazarko).

Nazarko went explained that compared to other communities, Hamtramck's property tax rate is about even at 45 mills. Detroit's rate, he said, is in the 60s.

Also, Nazarko pointed out that with property values decreasing in the last few years the city's total taxable value fell by \$50 million, which translated into a loss of \$800,000 a year.

The proposed 2.2 mills will generate \$425,000 a year for the city. What does this increase mean – wallet-wise – to the average homeowner? About an extra \$50 to \$55 a year, Nazarko said.

Or as Councilmember Shahab Ahmed rationalized: 13 cents a day.

Another factoid offered by Nazarko: A number of area communities have recently raised their tax rates to offset

budget deficits. (Ferndale voters narrowly approved a 5 mill tax increase.)

(Attention younger readers: This discussion about taxes will one day mean something to you.)

Not everyone was cozy with the tax increase. Councilmember Mohammed Hassan said the city should first balance the budget with contract concessions from union employees and then revisit a tax increase if needed.

Councilmember Gordon circled back to the increase in water and sewer rates, saying the city should instead cut the Water Department budget by 11 percent.

"We have outrageous water bills," Gordon said.

City Manager Cooper didn't disagree with Gordon: "I agree."

(Editor's note: Is this a moment of peace in our time?)

Mayor Karen Majewski entered into the fray, saying the water and sewer rate increase is in response to what Detroit imposed on the city. She said the city can't afford to "subsidize" the water bills for residents.

Plus, she said, the city needs to spend money on repairing a frail and aging water system.

Councilmember Kazi Miah was also opposed to the property tax increase, saying

the council should hold off until contract concessions are made and then decide whether the tax is needed.

(Editor's note: The return of 5 cent draft beer can't be far behind.)

Mayor Majewski pointedly pointed out that had Councilmember Miah been at the previous night's budget work session, he would know that the tax is needed to balance the city's budget for the next two years and that it's the budget year of 2013 that will be "debilitating."

Miah responded that if the city raises taxes, residents will move.

Majewski said, basically, move where? She pointed out, once again, that the tax rate of area communities is similar to Hamtramck's.

"So where are you going to go?" Majewski said.

Miah said other communities have "incentives" to lure people away and then said something about "redlining" and then begged off discussing the matter further.

(Editor's note: We'll say it if Councilmember Miah is too reluctant: Hamtramck residents are charged triple the amount for car insurance compared to suburban residents – no matter how clean their driving record is. For years, insurance companies

Continued on page 8

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Muslim leaders hope for an ease in tensions

By Charles Sercombe

News of America's number one wanted man's death, Osama Bin Laden, drew the same reaction locally from the Muslim community as it did nationwide:

A feeling of relief and a hope that world tensions would at least ease.

Ahmed Al-Ammari said that many Muslims have insisted since the attack on the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001. He said Bin Laden's version of Islam and of a jihad against the west is not part of the belief of a majority of Muslims worldwide.

"He made Islam look bad," said Ammari, who works for the Arab-American and Chaldean Council in Hamtramck. "You won't find anyone in the Muslim community who sympathizes with that."

After the 9/11 attack, Hamtramck's Muslim community banded together with the greater community to hold a peace vigil at Veterans Memo-

rial Park. Muslim leaders across the globe dismissed Bin Laden as a radical whose espousal of Islam was in direct conflict with that religion's holy book, the Koran.

Ammari said, for example, that suicide and suicide bombings are not condoned in the Koran.

"Suicide is unacceptable in the Islamic religion," he said.

Bin Laden, he said, was an "extremist" and that there are, unfortunately, extremists in every religion.

Ammari, like many other people, hopes that Bin Laden's death will help bring an end to terrorism.

Latif Azon, the Imam of the Islamic Center of North Detroit, located on McDougall St. just north of the Carpenter-Detroit border, said he hopes at the very least Bin Laden's death is an "end of a chapter."

"If he's the one causing all the problems, then he had no right to be alive," Latif said.

Strawberry Festival kicks off warm weather season

By Charles Sercombe

Mother Nature finally cooperated last weekend and provided warm sunny skies for the St. Florian Strawberry Festival.

The sudden break from a long cold snap seemed to have driven folks out of their homes and into the beer tent. Or actually, the food line for a traditional Polish dinner.

"We could barely keep up," said Cindy Bonneau, the organizer of the festival. "Our head cook almost collapsed." Sunday's turnout was a little

less because it also coincided with Mother's Day. While foot traffic was about the same, Bonneau said, sales was down.

It appeared families took their mothers out for a meal instead of eating at the festival.

No matter. Bonneau said it was still a successful year.

This year's St. Florian Strawberry Festival was another success.



Obituaries

RUSSELL

Bobby E. Russell, 60, died May 10, 2011.

Mr. Russell was a Hamtramck resident, and was preceded in death by his brother, John (2011).

He is survived by his brothers, Thomas (Linda) and Roy (Julie); sister-in-law, Janine;

nieces, Wendy, Katie and Julie; nephews, Adam, Ryan, John and Josh.

Funeral arrangements were made by Krot Funeral Home, and funeral services were held on May 11. Burial was at New Antioch Cemetery in Lyles, Tennessee.

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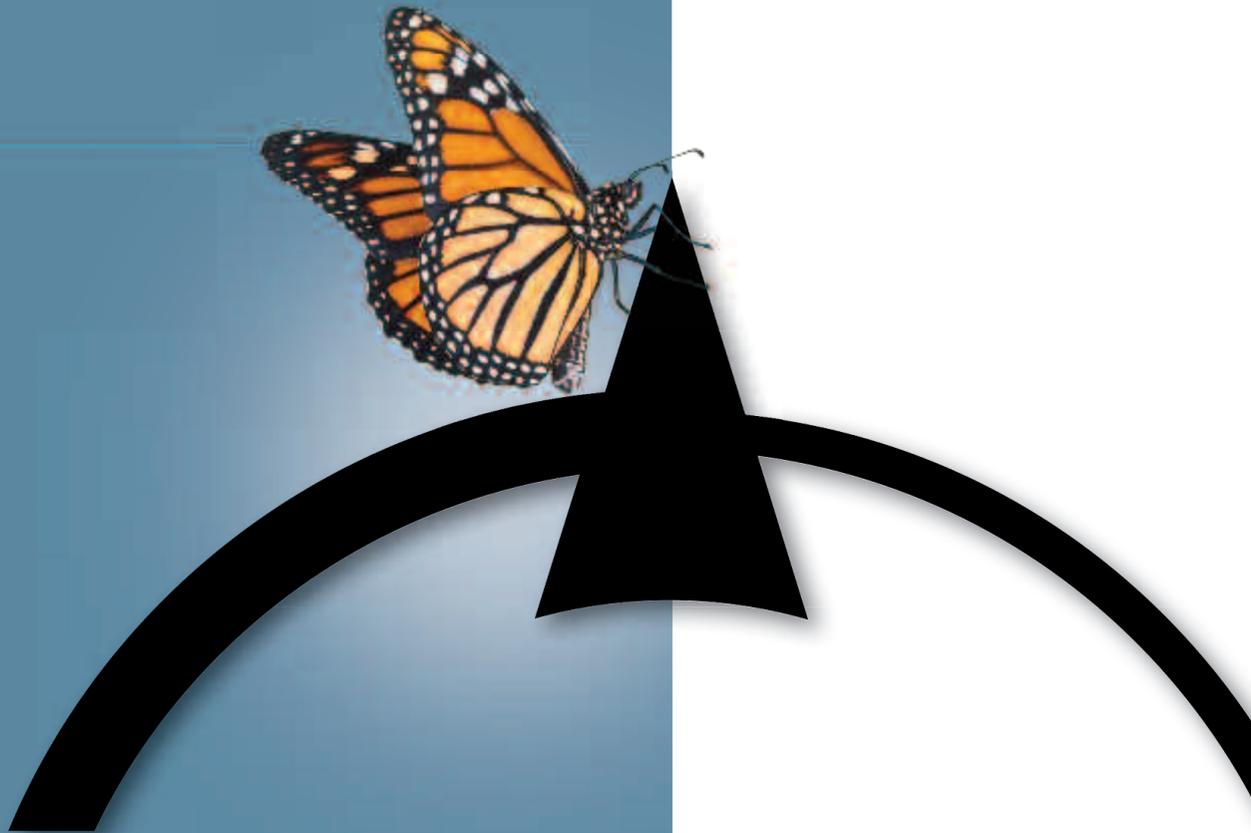
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City Hall Insider...

Continued from page 5

have denied they "redline" cities like Hamtramck. Yeah, but facts are facts and suburban residents indeed pay far less for auto insurance. Call it what you want.)

Councilmember Catrina Stackpoole said that if the council refuses to pass the tax, the city will go broke and an emergency financial manager will come in and impose the tax anyway.

Councilmember Jankowski said that if you divide the projected deficit by the number of city employees, the employees would have to give up \$51,000 each to erase the deficit.

Jankowski said the council has so far refused to raise property taxes. He said someone (he couldn't remember who) once said: "The hardest thing about doing nothing is deciding when to stop doing nothing."

Councilmember Hassan said that no matter what, by 2013 the city will be broke and taken over by the state. He also said that the recent announcement by GM that it is hiring 2,000 employees at the Poletown plant could mean a windfall of taxes for the city.

We're going to flash forward a little bit to the vote taken on the whole mess, including the tax increase. The matter passed with Councilmembers Hassan and Miah voting against it.

Modern technology is catching up to the city's Police Department. The council approved the purchase of "e-ticket" printers for patrol cars, which will allow officers to upload ticket information to the Hamtramck 31st District Court.

City Manager Cooper said this will cut down on work for court employees. Police Chief Mark Kalinowski said it will also free up officers to issue more traffic tickets.

Which begged the question, from Councilmember Gordon, whether the city's traffic patrol program will resume.

Yes, said City Manager Cooper, in about two or three weeks.

Anyone notice that the streetlights on Holbrook, between Conant and Jos. Campau, have been out for some time? Councilmember Gordon said she's received a number of calls about this issue.

"It's been months," Gordon said. "It's bad."

City Manager Cooper said that DTE Energy is working on the issue.

Councilmember Jankowski suggested that the city introduce the city's new code inspectors to the community.

City Manager Cooper said the inspectors will be presented at the council's May 24 meeting.

That's it for this week. Next week, we will continue with a new discussion.