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The Review

Hamtramck

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Quick Hits

The Hamtramck Historical Museum has some exciting news.

The Friends of Historical Hamtramck received a \$15,000 grant from the Michigan Humanities Council to hire local artist Dennis Orlowski who will be painting a huge mural in the coming year at the museum.

The mural will depict the many ethnic communities in Hamtramck.

This is where you come in. On Jan. 11 at 6:30 p.m. the museum is hosting a get-together of community folks to coordinate who will pose for the painting, and also to put together the history of your ethnic community.

Call the museum at (313) 893-5027 to let them know you are coming. The museum is located at 9525 Jos. Campau.

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’ve seen an explosion in this in recent years.”

— HAMTRAMCK'S NEWSPAPER OF RECORD —

Alhambra group donates 100 turkeys to needy families

By Charles Sercombe

The good folks from Alhambra Caravan 261 of Warren went an extra mile once again to make sure needy families have a nice turkey meal for the holiday.

Here’s a recap of the good work they do:

For over a dozen years the group has distributed free turkeys to the families of special needs students.

It all started many years ago by retired public schools bus driver John “Hippo” Hypnarowicz, who specialized in driving those students to and from school.

Many of the families are low-income and have a hard time scraping by. Over



Members of Alhambra Caravan 261 of Warren and other volunteers helped purchase and distribute 100 turkeys to local needy families this holiday season.

100 families recently received a free turkey. The Alhambra group also gets a huge helping hand from the generosity of Hamtramck’s own Srodek’s Sausage Co. which supplies the turkeys at a special low cost.

Year in review: A look back at the first half of 2016



By Charles Sercombe

Every year at this time we take a break from the normal week-to-week coverage to look back during the past 12 months.

And once again we are amazed at the amount of

Hamtramck voters said yes to a recreation millage renewal, which will ensure the program continues for another 10 years.

news this little town produces.

So, grab a coffee, tea or a beverage of your choice and enjoy this stroll through the first six months of 2016.

JANUARY

Hamtramck ushered in a new political era with the new year.

Cont. on next column

Three city councilmembers were sworn into office at the public library by Hamtramck 31st District Court Judge Paul Paruk: Anam Miah and Abu Musa, who were both incumbents, and the city’s newest member, Saad Al-masmari.

With Almasmari’s election to city council, Hamtramck had the distinction of being the first American city council with a Muslim majority.

The library was packed with over 100 spectators and a large group of police officers who were on hand to witness another historical moment for Hamtramck’s 102-year-old police department: The first-ever female chief was sworn into office.

For several months Anne Moise had been the acting police chief. City Manager Katrina Powell announced in December that she had appointed her as the permanent chief of police.

Moise first came onto the Hamtramck force in 1999.

In her opening remarks Mayor Karen Majewski noted that despite Hamtramck’s often contentious elections, the community has a deep bond.

“We are lucky to live in a place where we know that we are part of such a community, where we can know our neighbors, our council members, and the person who bakes our bread; where we can walk

Continued on page 5



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Year in review: A look back at the first half of 2016

Cont. from front page

to our favorite spot for coffee and be sure we'll run into friends; where we know we are part of something bigger than ourselves," Majewski said.

But not everyone was pleased with Moise's appointment. Councilmember Miah took issue with City Manager Katrina Powell making that appointment without involving the city council.

In a letter he submitted to The Review, Miah said: "My concern involves the process (or the apparent lack of one) by which you arrived at your decision to make a permanent hire

and your failure to follow the mandate of the Hamtramck Charter to appoint a police chief subject to a majority vote of the mayor and council.

"Not more than two weeks ago, the council made it quite clear that it was looking to you to demonstrate transparency in your decision making. Instead, without providing any notice (except for the program you created for the New Year's Day swearing in of new city officers), you scheduled a ceremony to swear in a permanent chief.

"As a councilmember, I

would have liked to know what other candidates you had for the position. In addition to their relative qualifications, I would have liked to know the process by which you identified alternative candidates."

City Manager Powell responded by saying she followed the directives laid down by the former state-appointed emergency manager, and to not follow that procedure would have violated state law.

The directive gave the city manager sole authority in hiring a department head.

In her response, she

said: "I do not know why the former Emergency Manager chose to deliberately exclude Council from the decision making process, and it is not my position to guess at her motives. My job is to follow the law and the Emergency Manager's Orders in an effort to guide the City completely out of receivership. Violating such Orders, as is being publicly advocated by Councilman Miah, would only serve as a significant setback for the City."

Tension between Miah and Powell continued to

Continued on page 3

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This week at the library...

Notice – In observance of the Christmas and New Year's holidays the Hamtramck Public Library will be closed to the public from Friday, December 23 thru Monday, January 2, 2017. The library will reopen Tuesday, January 3 at 11 a.m.

Cooking Matters for Adults – Free cooking

and nutrition classes featuring healthy cooking on a budget, smart shopping ideas, culinary secrets, free cookbook and free groceries. Classes meet 2 hours each week and are 6 weeks long. (Commitment to all classes is mandatory.) If interested please call the Hamtramck Public Library at (313)

365-7050.

Michigan Activity Pass – The pass will enable Library card holders to obtain a one-time free entry into any Michigan State park or recreation area, and free entry into over 100 participating cultural institutions. Ask at the circulation desk for more details.

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

Second Front Page

Year in review: A look back at the first half of 2016

Continued from page 2

flare up throughout the year.

Hamtramck School Boardmember Mohammad Huda's residency status finally caught up with him.

At the monthly board

cancy exists then "the remaining school board members shall fill each vacant office by appointment" pursuant to Michigan Election Law, MCL 168.311(1)."



Paczki Day rolled around in February and once again attracted thousands of visitors.

meeting, Huda's seat was declared vacant, which allowed the board to seek a replacement.

In the prior year the board authorized an investigation into Huda's residency after a Review investigation revealed he was claiming a 100-percent Homestead tax exemption for a Warren house. That exemption meant Huda lived in that house.

Huda had claimed to live in a house on Fleming, but in repeated visits to that house there was never anyone home.

The school district's investigation, conducted by private investigator David Adamczyk, confirmed The Review's findings and uncovered more evidence that Huda did not live in the city.

The findings were sent to the Governor's Office. The district had asked the governor to remove Huda.

A representative from the governor's office sent the district a letter saying removing Huda was not necessary because technically the seat was vacant.

"On the advice of the Attorney General, we will not pursue removal action because, if all the allegations you provided are true, then

Will local control ever return?

That was the question we posed regarding the continuation of a state-appointed financial advisory board's supervision of the city's financial decisions.

When the state appointed the Transition Advisory Board there were no guidelines given on how to gauge when local control can return.

Terry Stanton, a spokesman for the state's Treasury Department, told The Review that while the TABs were never meant to be "here for years and years and years," there are a number of factors to consider.

Hamtramck's financial crisis a couple of years ago was one thing, but the state pointed to another problem when the city applied for state intervention: The city's culture of disruptive politics had to change. Mayor Karen Majewski said that was still a problem.

"I'm alarmed by the statements of some council members who, with not one iota of understanding of sound municipal management principles and with a questionable commitment to the city's overall well-being, still seem

less desirable to investors and residents," Majewski said without identifying who those councilmembers were.

Former Emergency Manager Cathy Square agreed that the city's political culture – which some have said is more in line with a wrestling show – is still toxic and would only plunge the city back into crisis if local control was restored today.

"One of the major things is cooperation," Square said. "Everybody has to get on the same page. It's one of the things the state looks at: Are they getting along?"

FEBRUARY

Just as winter's icy grip was getting tighter, Hamtramckans knew how to beat the deep freeze.

Celebrate Paczki Day. Hamtramck bakeries began working around the clock to prepare for the onslaught of thousands of visitors looking to buy the Lental pastry treats.

Many came here to party down at the local bars as well. In all, it was another successful Paczki Day.

Hamtramck joined dozens of other cities in helping Flint residents survive their water crisis.

Since January there were a handful of water bottle drives and deliveries from here to Flint. Councilmember Anam Miah made a delivery as well as the folks at Al-Haramain International Foods.

Councilmember Saad Al-masmari delivered over 22,000 bottles of water.

The Common Word Alliance kicked in its share – a 53-foot-long tractor trailer stuffed with pallets of bottled water. The water was donated by a former Hamtramckan who now owns a trucking firm, Velic Transportation.

The company also donated a truck and service

of a driver to deliver the water.

The driver, Elvedin Paric, who emigrated from Bosnia 20 years ago, said the company was moved by an old saying in Bosnia.

"Your neighbor is more important than your own brother."

How's that?

"Because if your house catches on fire who are you to run to? Your neighbor," he said.

A rogue tow truck operator was on the prowl in the city.

Police officials said it was a "gypsy" tow truck operator who had been possibly illegally hooking up cars that were parked in business lots that have signs designating parking for customers only.

The tow truck operator was working after business hours and apparently without permission from business owners.


Several customers who parked in the US Fish lot to grab an order of paczki at New Martha Washington Bakery were forced to pay the tow driver \$400 to get

Continued on page 4

As the church bells ring proclaiming the birth of Christ we at
Our Lady Queen of Apostles Parish
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Saturday, December 24 - Christmas Vigil Family Mass (English)	4:00 pm
Solemn Midnight Mass (Polish & English)	12:00 am
Preceded by the singing of Christmas Carols	11:30 pm
Sunday, December 25 - Christmas Day Mass (Polish & English)	9:30 am
Saturday, December 31 - New Year's Eve Mass (English).....	5:30 pm
Sunday, January 1 - New Years Day, Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God - Mass (English)	8:00 am
Solemnity of Mary (Polish)	9:30 am
Saturday, January 7 - Mass (English)	5:30 pm
Sunday, January 8 Feast of the Epiphany (Three Kings) Mass (English).....	8:00 am
Mass (Polish)	9:30 am
Blessed chalk and Incense available	



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Dec. 25 - Christmas Day Mass, 9am,
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The Hamtramck School Board voted to declare Boardmember Mohammad Huda's seat vacant after they determined he was not a resident of the city.

Mr. Huda does not reside in the district and thus has voluntarily vacated his seat effective immediately," said Travis Weber, a Deputy Legal Counsel.

"If the office is vacant, then removal proceedings are neither proper or necessary. Instead, if a va-

intent on outsourcing our fire department, among other actions that, rather than making Hamtramck more attractive and desirable as a place to live, work, and play, would actually walk back the progress the city has made and make us less viable and

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& Walnut Rolls
• Cheesecakes

Year in review: A look back at the first half of 2016

Cont. from page 3

their cars released.

Sue Briskey, who owns Suzy’s Bar, witnessed the encounters.

“The tow truck driver was circling the area like a shark,” she said.

In an expected move, former Hamtramck School Boardmember Mohammad Huda filed a lawsuit against the public school district to get his job back.

Huda’s seat was declared vacant in January after a majority on the board agreed that he did not live in the city. The board replaced Huda with Salah Hadwan.

In his lawsuit, Huda insisted he is a resident and that the board overstepped its authority to remove him.

Huda was seeking reinstatement as well as reimbursement for attorney fees and “disbursement” to himself.

If you were one of those people who finagled your water bill to keep it right below the minimum threshold to avoid a shut-off, the city was on to you and put a stop to the practice.

“Previously, customers would just pay portions of their bill and allow it to accumulate until it met a certain ‘shut off’ threshold and then they would pay another portion, never paying the entire bill,” said City Manager Katrina Powell.

“Unfortunately, the city doesn’t get the option of paying a portion of its bill

to the Great Lakes Water Authority. It must pay its bill in its entirety, monthly.”



Parishioners at St. Ladislau protested the possible closing of their church. As it turned out, the church was spared, but services were greatly reduced.

Powell said the city had reduced the threshold over the past year to \$500, then \$200 and once again to \$50. In each instance, the threshold level was abused by too many customers.

So, now the new threshold level is \$5.

If you are even a few cents short, the city will threaten to end water service.

Back in 2014 it was announced that St. Ladislaus Church would be closing.

That turned out to be premature.

But suddenly it appeared that day was coming. On a Sunday about 40 parishioners demonstrated in front of the church over what looked to be an impending closing.

Protest organizer Walter Bankowski said the parish council had voted to close the church. The plan called for merging the Parish with

Transfiguration Church in Detroit.

Both churches were part

of what’s called the Pope John Paul II Parish.

Bankowski said a decision on whether to close the church was expected to be made by the Detroit Archdiocese in the coming weeks. The parish council vote, he stressed, was only an advisory vote

Despite that vote, which was a close one, Bankowski said the church is on solid financial ground.

“This is a financially viable church,” he said.

As it turned out later in the year, St. Lad’s was spared and allowed to remain open. However, church services there were greatly reduced.

Hamtramck cracked down on claims of financial hardship when homeowners appealed the value of their house.

City Assessor Jay Singh said that for a number of years some homeowners

were claiming they were too poor to pay their property taxes during the annual Assessment Board of Appeals.

Before Singh took over the job as assessor a few years ago, they were granted that exemption for several years running, he said, which is not allowed by law.

The city council adopted the federal guide of what’s considered to be in poverty.

Plus, if a homeowner meets that threshold, the maximum they can receive that claim is three years, Singh said.

But it got even tougher.

Singh says he reviews all income tax returns to verify



The Jos. Campau alley near Caniff became a magnet for illegal dumping. City officials said there is little they can do to stop the practice because it often happens at night when no one is around.

claims of poverty.

Guess what?

Things aren’t what they always seem to be.

“Often I find their tax return is wrong,” he said.

This move was part of the overall effort by the city to cut various loopholes residents had been taking

advantage of for many years. The changing of the rules led to a budget surplus for the city.

MARCH

Hamtramck began seeing more men and women in blue.

Earlier in the month Gov. Rick Snyder asked the state legislators to set aside \$1.5 million so he could assign state police officers to several distressed cities, including Hamtramck.

The program was part of the “Michigan’s Secured Cities Initiative.”

State police began boosting the city’s regular patrols during the month,



but they weren’t here every day.

Instead, the patrols rotated between Hamtramck, Highland Park and Harper Woods.

For what appeared to be an indefinite period of time, the idea of allowing medical marijuana dispensaries to operate in Hamtramck went up in smoke.

City Manager Powell was asked a year earlier when she first came on board to tweak an ordinance to regulate the industry.

“The issue was tabled by

the city to observe pending litigation in other cities and proposed legislation,” Powell told the city council when she was asked about a follow-up.

Hamtramck voters weren’t quite feeling the “Bern” like other Michigan voters.

In the presidential primary vote, voters here gave Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton the slight edge over her main competitor, Bernie Sanders. But Clinton won by just a hair here, edging out Sanders 1002 to 953.

Statewide, Sanders barely beat out Clinton in what was called an upset win.

On the Republican side of the presidential primary ballot, frontrunner Donald Trump left his challengers in the dust with 192 votes compared to second runner-up John Kasich, who garnered 55 votes.

Trump also won in the statewide election results.

Trump and Clinton eventually squared off in the November General Election. That election proved to be historical.

What a difference a few years made for the public school district.

About six years ago the Hamtramck Public School District had a \$5 million budget deficit and was facing state intervention unless the financial crisis was cleared up.

It was a huge challenge, but Superintendent Tom Niczay and his staff promised they would tackle it.

And they did.

At the monthly school board meeting, it was noted that the district had

Continued on page 5

Hamtramck Recreation Department

WINTER SPORTS



Saturday, January 21, 2017 - Saturday, April 8, 2017

Location: Community Center Game Day: Saturdays

Time: 2:30 p.m. Fee: \$10/R \$20/NR by Dec 27

Ages: 8-13 \$15/R \$25/NR After Dec 27

NO GAME FEBRUARY 18



Saturday, January 21, 2017 - Saturday, February 11, 2017

Location: Community Center Days: Saturdays

Time: 1:15 p.m./Ages 4-6 Fee: \$10/R \$20/NR

2:00 p.m./Ages 7-12 Ages: 4 and Up

3:00 p.m./Ages 13+ NO PRACTICE FEBRUARY 18



Saturday, January 21, 2017 - Saturday, March 11, 2017

Location: Community Center Days: Saturdays

Time: 12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Fee: \$10/R \$20/NR

Ages: 5 - 18 NO PRACTICE FEBRUARY 18



Tuesday, January 10, 2017 - Thursday, February 16, 2017

Location: Community Center Days: Tuesdays & Thursdays

Time: 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. Fee: \$25/R \$35/NR

Ages: 7 and Up

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Year in review: A look back at the first half of 2016

Cont. from page 5

In Michigan, all schools in the Washtenaw district have been trained.

The philosophy is pretty simple: figure out escape routes from classrooms where students can run to a safe area.

It also trained students and staff to throw desks and other objects at an intruder if they come face-to-face – anything to distract and hold up the person on a rampage.

Hamtramck was set to act as a stand in for Detroit in an upcoming major movie production scheduled for the summer.

A portion of Jos. Campau, somewhere between Holbrook and Caniff, was going to be transformed back to 1967 where scenes of the Detroit riot would have been recreated.

But as it turned out Michigan lost the production to the City of Boston because of special tax credits offered.

Still, there was some minor filming done here.

So far, the title of the movie has not been chosen but it is still going under the moniker of “Un-



Hamtramck Disneyland was saved thanks to local investors. The city's art collective, Hatch, held an online fundraiser to cover expenses to purchase two houses that support the folk art creation.

titled Detroit Project.”

The director of the movie is Kathryn Bigelow who won an Academy Award for her movie, “Zero Dark Thirty” – about the hunt for and killing of Osama bin Laden.

A group of investors purchased the two houses on

Klinger that have long been the home of the folk art creation called “Hamtramck Disneyland.”

The massive collection of whirligigs, knick knacks

and other whimsical items are spread out on the top of two neighboring houses once owned by the creator of the piece, Dmytro Szy-lak.

Szy-lak died last year at the age of 92, but his family did not wish to continue

owning the properties.

There was concern among artists and residents that the piece would be dismantled and removed, or worse, just rot away.

But there was still a ways to go to fully secure the property.

Hatch, a Hamtramck art collective, had to repay the investors. To do so, the group created an online fundraiser to raise \$100,000.

Guess what? They managed to reach that goal, plus a little extra several hours before their deadline expired.

Chris Schneider, of Hatch, said the purchase was something that took a few months to come together. He said the plan is to “restore the installation and also create a new opportunity.”

That included a novel way to bring in funding in an ongoing basis.



Professional soccer came to Keyworth Stadium, and it proved to be a spectacular success.

“With the four apartment units, we would like to rent three of them to people who appreciate the art-work, and then use the final unit to invite artists from all over the world who specialize in installations to live and work,” Schneider said. “Their work would also be open to the public to view.”

The sound of loud chanting and drums banging at Keyworth Stadium became

a familiar thing.

The first home game for the Detroit City Football Club, which is part of a semi-pro league, kicked off the season for the team.

The premiere was a couple of years in the making. The football club worked out a deal with the Hamtramck School Board and Superintendent Tom Niczay to relocate their home games here in exchange for fixing up Keyworth.

Continued on page 8

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